

Statement of need

In the 1970s and early 1980s, political upheaval and famine shook Ethiopia. As the situation for Ethiopian Jews became increasingly difficult, the international Jewish community developed Operation Moses, a secret project to rescue Ethiopian Jews through Sudan. Unfortunately, news leaks and Arab pressure on Sudan limited the rescue to 7,000 Jews and nearly two thirds of the Jewish population was left behind in Ethiopia. In 1991, an increase in political upheaval in the region made the rescue of Ethiopian Jews a priority for Israel and in a project known as Operation Solomon, nearly 15,000 Ethiopians were flown to Israel in less than 36 hours.

The rescued Ethiopian Jews, known as Falusha, are Ethiopians who identified as Jews, kept Shabbat, celebrated Jewish holidays and even had their own Torahs written in an ancient Semitic language. The Jews still in Ethiopia are Falush Mura, Jews who converted to Christianity in the 19th and 20th centuries to escape economic and social hardships, but have recently returned to Judaism. The groups are believed to be related—either as descendents of King Solomon and Queen Sheba or the lost tribe of Dan—but given the Falush Mura's conversion, there was some question about their status as Jews. In February 2003, the Chief Rabbinate in Israel decreed that the Falush Mura are Jews and the Israeli government began to welcome the immigrants.

Today, more than a decade after the historic airlifts, the number of Ethiopian Jews in Israel has increased to roughly 80,000 and more arrive daily under the Laws of Return and Family Reunification. Although government support was considerable in the beginning—outfitting Ethiopians in temporary housing, providing acculturation classes and workforce training—the economic implications of the *Intifada* have reduced government resources even as the need continues.

The process of absorbing the Ethiopian community has been more difficult than for any other immigrant population in Israel. Due to a lack of educational opportunity in Ethiopia, less than one third of Ethiopian adults had any formal education in Ethiopia. Low literacy rates make it more difficult to find skilled employment and vast age differences between Ethiopian husbands and wives means that more than half of Ethiopian families lack a breadwinner. As a result, more than 10 years after Operation Solomon and roughly 20 years after Operation Moses, the Ethiopian community in Israel is still struggling. According to the UJC, 72 percent of Ethiopian Jews live below the poverty level.

Israeli schools are somewhat different from American schools in that students tend to have specific teachers for various academic subjects even as early as first grade. Students have a homeroom teacher who might teach math, reading and history, but then the students have specialized teachers for such subjects as science, art, geography and the Bible. The homeroom teacher then serves as the main contact for each student. The school day for Israeli students is shorter than that of their American counterparts and differs from day-to-day depending on their class schedules—for instance, three days a week, the children may be released at 1 pm with classes ending at 2 or 3 on the other days. Israeli students may not be in school for a full six hours daily, but they make up for the early release with substantial amounts of homework—up to three or four hours per night. The emphasis on homework assignments make the lack of homework assistance in the home that much more troubling—students who cannot rely on their parents for educational assistance are in danger of falling precariously behind in their studies.

Although there is an emphasis on educating children in the Ethiopian community, given the poverty and lack of literacy, few parents are able to help their children with homework or pay for expensive tutoring or study guides. Without assistance, the children struggle in school, often working much below their potential. Test scores on the *bagrut*, the highly competitive exam required for college admission—show scores for Ethiopians that remain lower than their Israeli-born peers. Frustrated by their difficulties, many simply drop out—the Ethiopian community has a drop out rate of 7.7%, more than double that of native Israelis.¹

Much like in the U.S., when youth drop out of school or fail to pass the college entrance exams, they severely limit their opportunities for gainful and personally satisfying employment in the future. The lack of educational credentials increases the likelihood of unemployment, which is positively correlated with larger families and leads to increased poverty. Although the fertility rate among African-born women is decreasing as they age, the rate is still significantly higher than that of Israeli-born women.²

The problems of the Ethiopian community in Israel are only expected to grow as the number of immigrants increases. In the spring of 2005, the Israeli government renewed its commitment to Ethiopian immigrants by promising to double Ethiopian Jewish immigration to Israel from 300 people a month to 600. The increase is part of an effort to complete the immigration and bring Ethiopia's remaining Jewish population of 20,000 to Israel. The process is expected to take two and a half years at a cost of \$30 million. The expense, although considerable, is likely to be simply the tip of the iceberg. At \$1,500 per person, the \$30 million is far short of the \$100,000 per person price tag the Israeli government expects for full absorption.

The [REDACTED] is working to fill the need for low-cost, highly effective education for the Ethiopian community and to level the playing field for Ethiopian children compared to born-Israelis. Our Beit Tzipora Centers for Study & Enrichment assist nearly 1,000 children and adults each year with strengthening their math, reading, computers and English and Hebrew skills. Through after-school enrichment for elementary and middle school children, *bagrut* study groups for high school students, community service scholarships for college students and adult language and parenting classes, the Beit Tzipora Centers for Study and Enrichment are making a difference.

The [REDACTED] is seeking a grant of \$ [REDACTED] from [REDACTED] for our Beit Tzipora Ashkelon Elementary School Program.

Objectives

With funding from [REDACTED], [REDACTED] will seek to accomplish the following:

- Partner with 7 local schools in Ashkelon to provide transportation for students from their local schools to the Beit Tzipora Center

¹ Israel Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport Facts & Figures Aug. 2004. Israel Central Bureau of Statistics

² Households Economic Characteristics and Housing Density 2001 (New), 2002 based on Labour Force Surveys

- Provide between 7 and 9 hours of after-school per week for █ of students
- Provide █ of warm, nutritionally-balanced lunches daily to children between the ages of 6 and 13
- Create individual learning programs for █ of youth focusing on their academic needs and working to strengthen those needs
- Improve student test scores by at least 15 points (the difference between an F and a B-)

Methods

Selection of students for the Beit Tzipora Centers is a difficult and at times heart-wrenching process. Each Beit Tzipora Center partners with up to 10 local schools in the local community. Homeroom teachers, working in conjunction with their school's principal, create a list of roughly 30 to 40 students who they would like to involve in the program. Unfortunately, space and funding limitations prevent the centers from accepting all of the recommended students and the center staff has the challenging task of deciding who will be invited to participate in the Centers for that school year. For the most part, acceptance to the centers is based on academic need, but as inspiration to the other children, each class of 15 typically includes three or four better performing students, youth with B and C averages.

Attendance at the Beit Tzipora Centers is entirely voluntary, but children who decide to accept the Center's invitation are expected to attend regularly. If a child is absent, the Center staff contacts the parents and the child's school to determine a reason for the absence. Students are also held to a very high level of discipline and are expected to behave. Obedience problems are handled on a three-strike basis with a warning letter, a parent-teacher conference and finally, a child is asked to withdraw from the Center. In the past decade, only a handful of children have been asked to leave the Centers.

When students join the Beit Tzipora community, they are given a series of tests in order to determine their strengths and weaknesses. An individual learning program is built for each student based on his or her test results, for example, a fifth grade math test will include at least 12 different subtests (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, percentages, geometrical shapes, word problems, etc.) If the student shows weakness in division and fractions, then his learning material emphasizes these sub-units. Students complete work on the sub-units and move on in their learning program only after demonstrating mastery of the sub-unit.

An average day at the Centers begins with a short, 15 to 20 minute van ride from the child's school in vans provided by the Centers. Once they arrive at the Centers, the students are served a hot lunch, for many, it is their only warm food of the day and usually their most nutritious meal.³ The students eat lunch while their teacher reads a story and then they begin their homework. In addition to homework and working on their individual learning programs, the youth also participate in teacher-led lessons in English and Hebrew. The Beit Tzipora teachers create

³ The Israeli school day begins at 8 am and it is common for school children to have a 10 am meal known as *'arukat 'eser*, when they typically eat a sandwich or snack. Due to the shortened school day, there is no subsidized lunch program.

special enrichment units that are not necessarily connected to the required curriculum such as Israel's presidents, fables, the four seasons, animals, Israel Independence Day and Holocaust Remembrance Day.

One of the most distinct elements of the Beit Tzipora Centers is their emphasis on the community in which the centers are situated. The Center director and teachers work hard to cultivate a strong partnership with local schools and with the children's parents. The center staffs are in an unusual position in that they interact with children from multiple schools at once and are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of local schools and specific teachers. However, the center staff is careful to never pass judgment on teachers or schools, instead focusing on the supportive aspect of the Centers. By recognizing the primacy of the children's local school, the center staff is able to build a strong environment of cooperation between the Centers and schools.

Parents are an integral aspect of any child's life and even though the Beit Tzipora students may not have the skills to assist their children with homework, the Center staff still strives to involve them in activities. All parents are invited to visit the centers at the beginning of the school year and at the beginning of the three-week summer enrichment session. Parent teacher conferences are held at least twice a year, more as needed and Beit Tzipora teachers regularly visit students at their homes. Parents are invited to attend special presentations and to accompany outings, especially during the summer enrichment session.

Administration

An active Board of Directors guides the Foundation's work and the efforts of the Centers. [REDACTED] serve as President and Vice President of the board, which includes physicians, lawyers, business leaders and public relations experts. The [REDACTED] are passionate about the work of the Centers and remain intimately involved in every aspect of managing the centers, including fundraising. Similar dedication can be seen within the Board and, in addition to their regular support of the Foundation, several board members have taken an active role in sponsoring the Center libraries and scholarship programs.

Administration of the Foundation's programs, publicity and funding is handled by [REDACTED].

[REDACTED], our Israel Programs Consultant, serves as a liaison between the Centers in Israel and the Foundation's office in New York.

Each Center is supervised by a Director who handles all aspects of the daily operations. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]⁴.

A team of more than 26 teachers⁵, teaching assistants and pedagogical advisors work on an hourly basis staffing the centers from September through July. The Centers also take advantage of the Israeli government's national service program in which young women fulfill their military

⁴ Staff biographies and qualifications are listed in the appendix.

⁵ At Beit Tzipora Kiryat Malachi, the staff includes 46 teachers.

service obligations by working as teachers and social service personnel. Each center typically receives three or four teaching assistants through the service corps.

Evaluation

The [REDACTED] has long since recognized the importance of evaluation in determining the success of our projects. Each Center administers two sets of standardized tests each year (one at the beginning of the school year and one at the end) in addition to routine skills testing as the children move through their individualized program. The results provide a before and after comparison and demonstrate the difference that the Centers are making in the children's academic success.

Additionally, with the 2005-06 school year, the Centers will also utilize more qualitative research in determining the success of our programs. At the end of the year, the Centers will forward evaluations to each child's local elementary school teacher and to the parents for their completion. Covering interactions with peers, self-esteem and the development of higher order and critical thinking skills, the Foundation will use these evaluations to build a more robust picture of the children's accomplishments and personal growth.

The Foundation will include the results of these evaluation tools in our end of year report, which will be forwarded to [REDACTED] by the end of September 2006.

Sustainability

The [REDACTED] in the process of growing our fundraising base by strengthening our programs through grant funding. We are working to build individual giving with outreach to current and prospective donors in the community and beyond. As part of these efforts we have begun developing a series of friend- and fundraising events, recently re-launched the Foundation's newsletter and re-designed our website to be more user friendly and e-commerce capable.

Acceptance of this proposal by [REDACTED] will allow us to strengthen the Beit Tzipora Centers while continuing to actively seek funding from individuals.

Background

[REDACTED]. The Foundation's mission, rooted in the memory of the Holocaust, is to combat indifference, intolerance and injustice through international dialogue and youth-focused programs that promote acceptance, understanding and equality.

The Foundation runs multiple programs both domestically and internationally. In the U.S., the Foundation organizes [REDACTED].

Internationally, the Foundation produces a regular calendar of conferences for youth in conflict-ridden countries and gatherings of Nobel Laureates and runs Beit Tzipora Centers for Study &

Enrichment in Israel that give Ethiopian Jewish children the opportunity to overcome early educational inequality and participate fully in Israeli society.

For nearly two decades, [REDACTED] has worked to fight indifference through education and the promotion of dialogue and equality. Our international conferences have attracted world leaders and policy makers to create solutions to the problems of hate while emphasizing hope. Our Prize in Ethics Essay Contest has inspired more than 5,000 college students to actively contemplate the role of ethics and how they can pursue ethical solutions to today's issues.

Since their humble and temporary beginnings in the remote caravan site of Hazrot Yassaf in Northern Israel, the Beit Tzipora Centers have grown to become permanent sites in the towns of Ashkelon and Kiryat Malachi. Since 1993, more than 8,000 children and parents have participated in the Beit Tzipora Centers and benefited from the Centers' classes and resources.

Conclusion

These Ethiopian Jews have experienced centuries of famine, war, persecution, torture and forced conversion. Their immigration to Israel, their return to the Promised Land, is the dream of generations of Ethiopian Jews. But, without assistance to succeed in school, without the resources provided by the Beit Tzipora Centers for Study and Enrichment, these youth are in danger of failing their classes, dropping out of school and never realizing their dreams of success and their ancestor's dreams of life in the Promised Land.