

YEMIN ORDE CHILDREN'S VILLAGE
D.N. HOF CARMEL
ISRAEL 30895

December 2009, Kislev 5770

My Very Dear Friends - Shalom ,

Chanukah is about illuminating darkness. It is striking how relevant this holiday is to present times. All too often, we find our graduates at the forefront, expecting them to light the way in the face of darkness. Recently I received a call from Dima, who arrived here at 14 from Belarus and is now a police officer in Jerusalem. He wanted to share his experience of a frustrating encounter with aggressive Ultra-Orthodox demonstrators. Dima was looking for moral support and for logic. But is there really logic in face of absurdity?

The Chanukah story is about the struggle to foster Jewish identity – which obviously continues to this very day. Yemin Orde will continue to do its utmost, so that for Dima and his friends, the Menorah will shed the light of reason and hope, illuminating the spirit of humankind in the face of harsh realities.



At a time when Israel is challenged in the international arena, the visit of US Ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice at Yemin Orde was especially meaningful. The most heartwarming part for us was seeing her warm interaction with our children. After receiving an introduction about the educational methodology and touring the village, she spoke to an assembly of our entire community:

"I have been all over the world and seen many places, but I will never forget this place, which to me represents Israel and humanity as it should be".



In traditional dress, our Ethiopian children celebrate the Sigd of 2009 in its entire splendor.

We have just celebrated our Ethiopian brethren's meaningful holiday, the Sigd. This fascinating tradition, which expresses a yearning for Jerusalem, is observed exactly seven weeks after Yom Kippur. Yemin Orde was a forerunner in incorporating this meaningful tradition in its program, at a time in which it was far from

being accepted by mainstream Israel. We raised our children to uphold their unique Jewish culture, believing that the day of wide-spread recognition will arrive.

This year, for the first time, President Shimon Peres officially proclaimed the Ethiopian Jewish festivity as a national holiday in a special public event in

Jerusalem. The young man behind this breakthrough is our very own graduate, Danny Admasu, the CEO of the Israeli Association for Ethiopian Jews.

The word *Chanukah* in Hebrew literally means "inauguration" or "consecration" of a new building: "a *Chanukah* of a house". This holiday, Dr. Benny Fisher, our incoming director, will lead the festive inauguration of *Bet No'am*, a new house built to meet the needs of our youngest children. It is a spacious and beautiful home, with a large balcony overlooking the coastal plane at the foot of Mt. Carmel. Benny, his family and our entire community feel that this event is also symbolically Benny's own inauguration. Dr. Fisher, a renowned expert in child care and educational management - and a warm personality - is indeed a new blessing for the house of Yemin Orde.



During the holiday season, we experience the love of longtime Christian friends from South England in the form of beautiful, hand-knit sweaters. John and Mary Wartnaby, who see Yemin Orde as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, together with the ladies of their church, year after year send us this special token of their affection. Knowing that our children are engaged in Tikkun Olam- reaching out to low-income new immigrants- they entrust us with personally distributing these warm gifts to mothers and newborns in maternity wards. This Chanukah gift connects our children with the power of human relationships beyond religious boundaries, as a link in the chain of kindness from across the sea to newborns and families in Israel.



Speaking of newborns, there are no words to describe the privilege of holding a graduate's newborn baby. Children are meant to be the fruit of love, but when their parents are not able to provide the affection they need and deserve, we strive to be there for them.

Our graduate Tammy was such a girl. Her traumatic childhood entailed wanderings across hostile borders and countries. Settling down at Yemin Orde was not easy for her, and her true qualities really began to shine only after graduation, both during the army service and in her chosen career as Police Investigator. Her greatest wish, though, was to start her own family. Now,

happily married and embracing her first-born son, Tammy has provided us, the extended Yemin Orde family, yet another reason to rejoice.

May this continuous fountain of life be a source of spiritual blessing to all of us, as we make sure that Yemin Orde and what it represents continue to thrive.

Much gratitude for your friendship, care and support,

as ever - Chaim Peiri

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