

# Girls Spread Kindness and Joy to Others

BY REACHING OUT TO THOSE WHO are less fortunate, one's own situation becomes more bearable. That's what the girls at GIOH have discovered by participating in the school's many community outreach activities.

The all-volunteer program, called "Chasdei Yafit," finds our students flocking to hospitals, old age homes, special ed. schools and private homes to spread kindness and joy to the sick, elderly and disadvantaged. When they aren't distributing candies and "get well" notes in hospital wards, they are busy packaging food for needy families, entertaining long-term patients with songs and dances, performing skits and holiday shows at special ed. schools and homes for the elderly, and assisting physically handicapped persons in their homes.

"We just added a program to teach girls how to play a musical instrument so that they can perform for their audiences," says one teacher. "This program will especially benefit our dormitory students who never had the chance to learn how to play. Some of our teachers have volunteered to teach guitar and electronic keyboard."



The stage is set for another lively performance by girls eager to make their audiences smile.

Although many girls want to learn, the school only has one guitar and one keyboard. Donors are sought to provide additional musical instruments for the benefit of the girls and their grateful audiences.

"When our students make

others happy, it gives them satisfaction, too," observes Rabbi Weingarten, principal. "For those who are very poor or disadvantaged, visiting people who are less fortunate than they helps them appreciate and accept what they have." ■



Girls from all backgrounds and nationalities learn and play in harmony thanks to the dedicated support of GIOH friends around the world.

## Make Your Generosity Eternal

The wise parent draws up a will to provide for his family after he is gone. As a valued friend and supporter of our organization, we ask you to remember your daughters in Israel when you plan your estate.

Our estate-planning experts can help you draft your directives in clear, legal language — and realize a tax benefit for yourself and your family as well. By planning your estate now, you can rest assured that your generosity will live on and protect the hundreds of orphaned and homeless girls who turn to you for support.

Write to GIOH, 132 Nassau St., New York, NY 10038 or call (212) 267-7222 and we will be happy to put you in touch with our estate lawyer.

# A Graduate of GIOH Tells Her Story

"MY VINEYARD" is the name of a new book written by Chagit Shrutman and published by the GIOH alumni organization in Jerusalem.

Mrs. Shrutman was orphaned at the age of eight and was accepted into the home during World War II. Her engaging memoir takes the form of a personal diary, describing her initial experiences in the original GIOH building on Jaffa Street and her wartime memories. After graduation, Mrs. Shrutman became a teacher.

The book extols the dedication and warmth that the institution and its directors bestowed on Mrs. Shrutman and other young orphans caught in difficult circumstances. The title chosen by author is a play on the name of GIOH's esteemed founder, Rabbi Weingarten ("Weingarten" is Yiddish for



Cover of the new book, "My Vineyard."

"vineyard").

Due to the book's popularity in Hebrew, the alumni organization seeks a donor to underwrite the publishing of the book in English for the enjoyment of our many friends abroad. For more details, please call GIOH New York at 212-267-7222. ■

*"Embroidery is one of the most pleasant occupations I have known here in the Home. The joy of creating is so great. We embroider mainly Jewish topics like curtains for the Ark, mantles for Torah scrolls, and wall pictures depicting the holy sites in Israel. Many years later I came across our work in different synagogues around Israel. Every item is beautifully embroidered with the words, "Made by the girls of the General Israel Orphans' Home in Jerusalem."*

— excerpted from "My Vineyard" by Chagit Shrutman



NEW HORIZONS — An outdoor hike is one of the many interesting activities GIOH offers its girls to broaden their horizons and nurture friendships that will last a lifetime.

101 YEARS

# GENERAL ISRAEL NEWS

ADAR  
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## The Terror Has Reached Our Home

TERRORIST ATTACKS have, unfortunately, been front-page news in Israel for several years now. The thousands of murdered and maimed men, women and children are our brothers and sisters, and we pray that these attacks will soon end. But until now, the terror has always struck somewhere else, somewhere far away.

This time, to our deep sorrow, the terror has reached our doorstep.

The life of one of our students, 14-year-old Yafit Revivo, was cruelly snuffed out by a suicide bomber on an early-morning bus packed with commuters. Yafit, a ninth-grader at our high school, was one of the many children traveling to school on the No. 20 bus through Kiryat Menachem when a Hamas-backed terrorist detonated himself, killing eleven and injuring 45.

Yafit's sister Orit, an eleventh-grader at our school, should have been on that bus, too. But

she didn't feel well that morning and stayed in bed, thus sparing her life.

Yafit leaves behind a mother and two sisters to whom she was extremely devoted. The single-parent family lives in a rundown apartment in a poor section of the city. Yafit's mother cannot work outside the house.

*"Without you, Yafit, life will never be the same. We have lost a precious diamond..."*

This piece, an extract of a poem dedicated to Yafit by one of her classmates, as well as countless other farewell letters and poems, expressed the feelings of love and friendship her fellow students had for this special girl.

Yafit's sunny nature was contagious. She enjoyed visiting patients in hospital and volunteered to visit autistic children in

special ed. schools. "She always found the time to help others," says a friend. "When I was sick, she cared for me like a sister."

In a remembrance gathering in our high school assembly hall, GIOH staff and students, Yafit's family, and representatives of the Israel Ministry of Education reflected on Yafit's special personality and the tragic loss of a girl just beginning to flower. Rabbi Weingarten

announced the decision of the pedagogic council to rename the school's community outreach activities "Chasdei Yafit" in her memory.

In accordance with Ministry of Education regulations, security measures have been stepped up to ensure student safety. One of our teachers has assumed official responsibility for all security and safety procedures. ■

*Yafit's sunny nature was contagious. "She always found the time to help others," says a friend.*



Yafit Revivo, 14, was killed in a suicide-bombing attack on the bus she took to school every day.

## Historic Gathering Climaxes GIOH's 100th Year

TO MARK 100 YEARS OF ACTIVITY in the fields of education and social services, an historic gathering of GIOH graduates took place in Jerusalem. At once a nostalgic look back at the thousands of girls who were nurtured to adulthood within the home's sheltering walls, and a proud look forward to the many new programs GIOH has established, the centennial event was both emotional and uplifting.

Before an audience of hundreds of graduates, many of them now grandmothers and great-grandmothers, Rabbi Y. Fishel Weingarten, Executive Director and a grandson of the founder, opened the proceedings with barely-concealed emotion. For more than 50 years, Rabbi Weingarten has led this flourishing institution which, with the assistance of GIOH in the U.S., now encompasses dormitory facilities, kindergartens, day-care centers, elementary school, high school, after-school programs, professional career training and other welfare enter-

prises.

One after another, representatives of different periods in the home's long and distinguished

history ascended to the podium to describe how their start in life began in the home, which weathered two World Wars and

the struggles of the nascent State of Israel.

The gathering left a lasting impression on all the attendees,

who decided to hold a biannual gathering and organize educational and spiritual activities for graduates in every locale. ■



Some of our recent high school graduates proudly show off their diplomas.

### GIOH Snapshots

- 120 students filled 6 new classes opened last year
- 30 girls with learning and emotional difficulties or special needs participate in 5 different afternoon clubs
- 10 new immigrants from Yemen were integrated into our dormitory and school
- 13 GIOH graduates became brides last year

# Who is an Orphan?

AS AN INSTITUTION that has cared for orphans for more than 100 years, we are often confronted with this painful, difficult question: What defines an orphan? The answer illuminates the vital role GIOH plays in the lives of so many girls.

A child who has lost both her parents, whose entire world has fallen apart — can only she be called an “orphan”? To the best of our knowledge, in the English language this is indeed the dictionary definition of an orphan — a child who has lost both parents.

However, in the Hebrew language and in Jewish tradition, an orphan is one who has lost one parent. Biblical verses teach us: “Your women will be widows and your sons orphans” (Exodus 22:23), and, “May his children be orphans and his wife a widow” (Psalms 109:9). The prophet Jeremiah laments the plight of the Jews during the destruction of the Temple: “We are orphans without a father, our mothers are like widows,” mean-

ing, we are orphaned of a father only, whilst our mother is alive and is compared to a widow.

It is not our intention to quibble over semantics. Unfortunately, we must deal daily and even hourly with the practical difficulties that genuine orphans experience. There are psychological, emotional and social difficulties, feelings of isolation, the pain of having to go to school without a parent’s moral support, the pain of knowing that an older sister or grandmother must attend an upcoming “parent’s meeting,” etc.

Yet our standpoint on the status of “orphan” is broader than the accepted belief of society and other academic institutions. To us, an orphan can also be a child whose physical, emotional or social wellbeing is in jeopardy because of a breakup in the natural parent-child relationship. Even if one (or both) of the parents are alive but are dysfunctional for one reason or another (e.g. due to a physical or emotional handicap, a criminal offense



that calls for the removal of the parent from the home, a negative or alienated attitude to the child, or the trauma of divorce), a child can become lonely and endangered, in need of physical and psychological assistance.

At GIOH we have found a concrete and effective solution to care for this kind of “orphan”: a surrogate home, staffed by trained

educators, which promotes a warm, congenial, family atmosphere in which all the child’s needs can be met. This solution has proved itself time and time again throughout many decades, in which the best of our energies and efforts were invested for the benefit of our girls.

Lately, the scope of our work has developed a new dimension as we welcome the special-needs child, such as one born with Down’s Syndrome or other learning or behavioral disabilities. In this case the child is not orphaned of her parents, but her special needs cannot be met by her biological family. For all intents and purposes, she, too, is an “orphan” whose circumstances call for a different type of educational set-

ting. Our special afternoon program provides separate learning and mealtime arrangements administered by a warm and caring staff.

The solution sounds simple but the reality is complex. An enormous burden rests on our shoulders and if not for the help of our Father in heaven, the Father of all orphans, we would not be able to provide for our children in the way they deserve.

You, our faithful friends, fulfill an important role by serving as fathers and mothers to young girls who face a difficult fate. Together we can continue and expand this holy work, and may all of G-d’s blessings rest on you in the merit of your kindness and generosity. ■



**EYE TO THE FUTURE** — After successfully raising its students from kindergarten through high school, GIOH imparts valuable employment skills in its advanced education division. Girls may choose to study computer graphics, bookkeeping, or medical secretary work, all vital skills that will make them productive members of Israeli society.

## Israeli Schools Lag in Reading, Math and Science

AN INTERNATIONAL STUDY reveals that Israel lags behind most Western countries in reading, math and science comprehension.

PISA, a Swiss organization which sets and assesses examinations worldwide, ranked Israel 30th out of a field of 41 countries. According to the report, one-third of all 15-year-olds in Israel’s general school system are deficient in basic reading skills.

“The educational system has been in decline for years,” admits Ronit Tirosh, director of the Ministry of Education. According to her, the fault lies with the previous government.

Low teacher’s salaries are also to blame. In Israel, teachers earn 69% of the average wage. Compare this to Finland, where teachers earn 91% of the average wage and students scored first place in PISA’s international

examination. In Canada and France, teacher’s salaries are exceptionally high, reaching 123% of the average wage.

Difficult learning conditions further contribute to Israel’s low ranking. For example, the number of students in a typical Canadian elementary school class is 20; in Israel it is 28.3. The average number of students in a Canadian high school class is 23; in Israel it is 31.6.

PISA’s survey of the religious school system in Israel offers the only positive mark on Israel’s otherwise dismal report card. Students in a religious framework achieved higher grades in general subjects such as reading, math and science than their secular counterparts. These findings sent shock waves through the educational establishment. Senior decision-makers expressed their astonishment

and undisguised disappointment at these results.

PISA noted that religious schools devote more hours to reading comprehension and that “teachers see in their profession a sacred mission rather than a lack of a better alternative.”

It is worth noting that the elementary and secondary schools operated by GIOH are based on small classes, which are further divided for the study of Hebrew, English and math. The warm rapport that exists between students and teachers continues into the off-hours, when teachers interact with both students and their parents. The results speak for themselves: GIOH students score higher than the average Israeli student and successfully pass the difficult matriculation examinations (Bagrut) to qualify for post-high-school education and employment. ■

## Less Sleep Lowers Test Scores

A CHILD’S ATTENTION SPAN, concentration and memory are significantly impaired by the lack of only one hour of sleep per night.

In a study conducted by the Tel Aviv University Psychology Department, the test performance of fourth- and sixth-grade students was evaluated after increasing or decreasing their regular night’s sleep.

In the first two days of the experiment, the students went to bed at their usual bedtime. The next day they were given tests that assessed their attention span, concentration and memory retention. Over the next three nights,

half of the group was told to go to sleep an hour earlier than usual while the other half went to bed an hour later. Then all the students took the same tests again.

Those who lengthened their night’s sleep did remarkably better on the test the second time around. Those who slept an hour less than usual showed considerable impairment.

“These and other studies prove that most of our generation’s children are lacking sleep, with the problem intensifying as they reach adolescence,” said Professor Avi Sadeh, one of the researchers. ■

## 1.3 Million Live in Poverty, Including 600,000 Children

A SHOCKING REPORT published by the National Insurance Institute revealed that every fifth person in Israel is poor, and about 30% of Israeli children are starving. Tens of thousands of adults and children slipped below the poverty line in the last year alone.

An estimated 1,321,000 individuals currently live in poverty, including 618,000 children. The highest concentration of poor children are found in Bnei Brak and Jerusalem. In contrast, Rishon Letzion, Ramat Gan and

Holon have the fewest poor families.

Minister of Welfare Zevulun Orlov predicted that the situation will only worsen in the coming year.

“The problem lies in the distribution of national resources,” he said. “In contrast to the difficult situation of the low-income sector, the upper tenth of the population is not affected at all.”

Among the factors fueling poverty are rising unemployment, government benefit cuts across the board, a 15% slash in child benefits and reductions in income support. Orlov estimated that in the coming year, the number of poor families will increase by another 10%. ■

# Letters from Friends

DEAR RABBI WEINGARTEN, GIRLS AND STAFF,

Rebbetzin Weisblum, David and I loved every moment of being with you on our recent visit to the home.

Each girl is so special and has a special place in our hearts. Although the time we spent with you was short, the memories will last forever.

Please give a big hello to Aliza, Odella, Bat-El and Ilanit!

We are enclosing \$100 as a gift from our family to yours. Please have a party for the girls!

Sincerely,  
Linda and David Greenberg  
Annapolis, Maryland

DEAR RABBI WEINGARTEN,

I hope and pray that you, the girls, and your devoted staff are doing well. Enclosed is a contribution to assist your excellent work.

We are praying for a strong Israel, and the protection of the citizens of our beloved nation. It is my hope to return to Israel as a volunteer, perhaps in a hospital. I am a professional speech therapist and a specialist in communication disorders.

With best wishes in the New Year and kindest regards, I am,

Sincerely yours,  
Norma Jo Abramson  
Dallas, Texas

DEAR RABBI WEINGARTEN,

Enclosed please find a check for \$250.00, which is our annual donation to the home. The Sisterhood of Adas Israel Synagogue is very happy that our successful donor luncheon helped us raise the funds for this important contribution.

Our prayers are with you for a peaceful existence. With the help of G-d, we hope it comes soon.

Sincerely,  
Ruth Nerenberg  
Treasurer  
Adas Israel Sisterhood  
Somerset, Massachusetts

DEAR RABBI WEINGARTEN,

I am sorry that it has taken me so long to reply to your last and as always lovely letter.

It is always so gratifying to hear of your wonderful work with the girls. I am sure your greatest nachas is in seeing them grow up and make their own homes with their families.

It is so sad that there is still no lasting peace in Israel, and I pray that this year will see this come to pass. The situation worldwide is so precarious, but I wish all of you in Israel peace for the future and the continuation of your wonderful work.

Enclosed is a cheque which I hope you will use to buy something special for the girls.

With warmest wishes,  
Sybil Conway  
Middlesex, United Kingdom



UJA DIRECTOR TOURS GIOH — Mr. Stephen Donshik, director of the Israel office of UJA-Federation of New York, toured our schools and dormitories this winter. At his meeting with Rabbi Y. Fishel Weingarten, Executive Director, he expressed his admiration and appreciation for GIOH's tireless efforts to create such a warm and supportive environment.



CHANUKAH LIGHTS — Girls in our elementary school performed charming skits and dances to celebrate the winter holiday at GIOH. Decorations, singing and special holiday treats made Chanukah a memorable time for all.

## Unemployment Enters the Classroom

THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION recently instructed teachers and principals to make classes on unemployment part of the regular curriculum. An estimated 200,000 boys and girls in the educational system have parents who have lost their jobs.

The lesson plan, developed by the Ministry's board of pedagogy and psychological counseling services, includes discussions about Israel's current financial crisis, role-play

exercises and stories about families who are weathering hard times. Teachers will also receive inspirational posters for their classrooms that bear mottoes such as, "It's Only Temporary" and, "Money Doesn't Make the Man."

The Ministry emphasized that teachers should act with caution and not bring sensitive details about a student's situation or his parents' financial state of affairs into class discussions. ■

# GENERAL ISRAEL NEWS

132 Nassau Street, New York, NY 10038 • (212) 267-7222  
David Geffen, Editor

## Facing the Future with Hope

FOR MORE THAN 100 YEARS, GIOH Jerusalem has stood at the forefront of the effort to save lives. The girls who seek our help come from broken families and poor socioeconomic backgrounds. We rehabilitate and rebuild their lives with much love and devotion in a caring, family atmosphere. Generations of girls owe their very lives to the dedication of GIOH directors, teachers and support staff.

Throughout its remarkable history, the home has continually adapted to the needs of Israel's disadvantaged population by developing and introducing effective social-educational projects. But for all its success, today's institution faces a new and difficult challenge from an unexpected quarter.

Three years of Palestinian terror and the security burden it levies have caused a severe economic crisis in Israel. Hotel and business closures and rising unemployment tell only half the story. To shore up the failing economy, the government is siphoning funds away from the general community, at the expense of the sick, the handicapped and the underprivileged. Welfare and educational institutions have been especially hard-hit by deep budget cuts and spiraling expenses. Having stood strong for more than 100 years, GIOH must now grapple with daily decisions such as how to supply food for its girls and how to cover the salaries of its indispensable staff.

All this may sound extreme and barely comprehensible, but, unfortunately, this is the situation in Israel today.

The crisis is very real and we turn to you, our friends, both old and new, to help us at this time, each of you according to your resources, to strengthen our vital programs and sustain our lifesaving efforts. Only with your dedicated support can we continue our holy work on behalf of orphaned and homeless children who depend on us for their very existence.

May the Father of orphans bestow His many blessings upon you and your families, granting you good health, happiness and prosperity in the merit of your charity and good deeds.

Sincerely,

D. Geffen, Editor

## Sponsor Opportunities

HERE ARE SOME PERSONAL WAYS you can translate your care and concern for our girls into a meaningful gift. Become a partner in a young girl's education, or share in her "simchas" with these unique ideas:

**Establish a Scholarship.** For only \$100 per month (\$1,200 per year), you can establish a scholarship fund for a deserving student. We invite you to dedicate your scholarship in honor or in memory of a loved one, to give lasting merit to both the living and the departed. We will send you the name and personal details of the girl who receives your scholarship, as well as reg-

ular updates on her educational progress.

**Make a Bat Mitzvah Party.** Each year our eighth-grade class celebrates their Bat Mitzvah year with a special school party. Along with singing, dancing, and refreshments, each girl receives a beautiful gift to mark her entry into Jewish womanhood. Whether you wish to combine your own daughter's or granddaughter's Bat Mitzvah celebration with that of our daughters, or you desire a memorable way to bring joy to homeless girls, your gift of \$720 will sponsor a Bat Mitzvah party for an entire class.

**Celebrate a wedding.** Just as a parent gives his daughters everything they need to start their new lives, GIOH does no less for its daughters. Each new bride receives clothing, basic home furnishings and a rent-free apartment for the first few years of her marriage. Your wedding gift of \$1,800 makes you a partner in the meritorious act of hachnossas kalla, benefiting needy brides, while at the same time strengthening the Jewish people and the State of Israel with the establishment of a new home.

Please complete the form below and send to: GIOH, 132 Nassau St., New York, NY 10038.

**YES, I would like to give a meaningful gift to enrich the lives of GIOH girls.** (Please check all that apply)

**Establish a Scholarship Fund**  
Annual donation: \$1,200 in the name of \_\_\_\_\_

**Make a Bat Mitzvah Party \$720**  
(please indicate name of your own Bat Mitzvah girl) \_\_\_\_\_

**Celebrate a Wedding \$1,800**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Check enclosed  
 Credit Card  Visa  MasterCard  American Express  
 Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Card No: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on card \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail to: GIOH, 132 Nassau St., New York, NY 10038.