

10th Anniversary



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ASHALIM

Special 10th Anniversary Update

December 2008

Dear Friends,

Completing my three-year term as Chair of the Israel Ashalim Sub-Committee is bittersweet. I am filled with pride knowing that Ashalim's innovation has time and again impacted the development of new approaches, programs, and services for children at risk and their families in Israel, yet I am full of regret knowing how much more there is to do and that I will of necessity have less involvement with so worthy a team. I am filled with joy as we mark Ashalim's 10th anniversary and I congratulate Rami Sulimani and the incomparable Ashalim staff he has assembled, our colleagues from the Government of Israel, and the scores of Federations, foundations, and donors who have generously supported Ashalim's pioneering initiatives and made them a shining reality. Israel has much more to do in ensuring a bright future for its most vulnerable children, yet I am confident that under the leadership of its new chairperson Charles Ribakoff, Ashalim and its partners in Israel and the world will continue to lead the way, enabling Israel's children to have the support and care they deserve in order to fulfill their promise and potential. I thank all of you, our Israel Ashalim Sub-Committee members, for your on-going involvement with the Committee, for your support and encouragement, and for the concrete help you have continued to provide.

With my sincere appreciation,

Ken Witover

Chair, JDC Ashalim Sub-Committee

Dear Ken,

We would like to take this opportunity to express our utmost appreciation for all your efforts during the past three years as Chair of the Ashalim Sub-Committee.

Your commitment and dedication to JDC and to the future of Israel's children and youth is admirable. In the words of the blessing recited during the Sabbath prayer, we wish you: "...And all who are involved faithfully in the needs of the community - may the Holy One, Blessed is He, pay their reward and send blessing and success to all the work of their hands."

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Rami Sulimani
Director, Ashalim



Photograph: Vera Etzion

UJA Federation
of New York



www.jdc.org

<http://www.eng.ashalim.org.il>

Ashalim's graduates: Where they are today

Over the past ten years, Ashalim's pilot programs reached out to thousands of children and youth. Or and Sisat are just two of them, and their lives are different as a result. We thank them for sharing their stories with us.



Or Amzaleg Graduate of the Community Residential Facility program

Or and his twin brother were placed in a boarding school in first grade. He recalls the difficult separation from their mother, who was the sole parent in their lives. Later, his mother met another man and had a child with him, which further strained Or's relationship with her.

For many like Or, living in out-of-home residential settings weakens their relationship with their family members, and boarding school staff become their safety net and mentors for life.

Since its founding, one of Ashalim's guiding principles has been the focus on the family. Whenever possible an emphasis is put on rebuilding familial ties, and on helping parents learn to care for their children's needs and to forge healthy relationships with them. This task is especially difficult in homes where children have abusive or addicted parents, live in abject poverty, or suffer from severe neglect.

In 1999, Ashalim began developing the Community Residential Facility model. As part of this pilot, the Bet Singer school, where Or and his twin lived, reached out to the boys' mother to begin this healing process.

The Community Residential Facility program also spurred efforts to return children home. "We sought to identify families who could benefit from this change, where the parents demonstrated a commitment and an emotional connection to their child. After all, we can never fully become these kids' parents" says Eli Guy, director of Bet Singer.

With Or and his twin, discussion of returning home began in their early teens, and only after years of preparing both the boys and their mother did they ultimately return home when they were in 10th grade. The change, however, brought new challenges. Or and his brother switched to separate vocational high schools, and deeply missed their routine, friends and Bet Singer staff. Their younger half-brother felt displaced. With the Bet Singer social worker's continued support, the family reconnected, and worked hard to function better and overcome conflicts.

Both Or and his brother completed their compulsory army service. Or recalls his motivation to serve in the IDF, "I wanted to contribute and give back of myself to my country which helped me to grow and become who I am today."

Today, Or is 23 and a career IDF serviceman. He and his brother share an apartment near their mother's home and are able to support themselves financially. While he continues to define his adult path, juggling employment and a girlfriend, Or is also grateful that he has forged a relationship with his mother and that she has an important part in his life.

Yitzhak (Sisat) Igzao **Graduate of Youth Employment** **& Entrepreneurship program**

Sisat made aliya from Ethiopia with his parents and four siblings when he was just three years old. His family maintained a strictly religious lifestyle, and so he studied in the yeshiva school system.

In junior high school, Sisat had trouble fitting in socially and finding his place. A few years later, he tried moving to a different high school, but at sixteen he dropped out of school. He hoped to find a job and make some money. Instead, he ended up waking up late each day, wandered the streets, hung out and drank alcohol.

Two years ago, a truant officer offered him a second chance through Ashalim's It's a Deal youth employment and entrepreneurship program. Sisat could have the "cool" opportunity to be part of the local Galshan youth-run business, but would also have to commit to the program's therapeutic and educational requirements. Through It's a Deal, Sisat developed his public speaking and sales skills, and his charisma shone through.

Sisat stood out for his dedication and hard work at the It's a Deal venture, and he was invited to attend a weeklong BizCamp for at-risk youth, run by Ashalim in collaboration with the U.S. non-profit NFTE - The National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship. At the intensive BizCamp, he and his peers learned how to open and run a business. Sisat won first place in the BizCamp's business plan competition with his proposal for a black music club for immigrant youth. Sisat was

flown to New York to represent Israel at NFTE's annual international awards dinner, and his impressive turnaround through Ashalim's youth employment and entrepreneurship program even caught the interest of the U.S. media.

Sisat says, "I never thought I could make it in business because I didn't believe in myself. The project taught me how a person's faith in themselves can take them very far. Had it not been for It's a Deal, I would be in a very different place. Now my outlook is long-term."

Today, having completed his high school matriculation exams, Sisat is serving in the IDF and training to protect his country. The real-world business experience that changed the course of his life also helped him find his connection to Israeli society. We wish him a safe tour of duty and that he may one day open his dream business.



Ten Years of Achievement

Right from its founding, Ashalim – together with its Government partners and UJA-Federation of New York – began developing innovative models and exploring new approaches. These leading programs offer a taste of Ashalim's contributions to the services that care for children and youth at risk in Israel

1998 The **Parent-Child Center** model - developed to give families a chance to overcome problematic relationships and functioning before placing children in out-of-home care - offer a range of coordinated therapies to the child, his/her parents and siblings in a home-like, warm setting. Today: An expanding national network of 41 centers that will soon serve over 4,000 clients a year.

1999 The **Community Residential Facility** model pioneered new concepts in out-of-home care: keeping children removed from their homes in close proximity to their natural surroundings while working on repairing and rebuilding family relationships. Its success helped the Ministry of Social Affairs formulate a policy change, promoting community-based services for children at high risk. Today: 19 community residential facilities, serving 1,700 children and youth a year.

2000 **Nutrition & Health Enrichment** program development began when it became clear that poor eating habits and physical fitness among children and youth in residential facilities were affecting their daily functioning and their physical and cognitive development. Ashalim continues to create new healthy living programs for families and children/youth at risk. Today: Twelve city-wide programs inculcate healthy living habits in 18,000 children a year.



Photograph: Vera Etzion

2001 The **Beit Lynn Protection Center** model was introduced to replace the lengthy, repetitious and uncoordinated investigation process in suspected child abuse cases.

Its multi-disciplinary team works hand in hand to investigate and diagnose as thoroughly and quickly as possible, to minimize secondary trauma, reduce investigation time and produce higher quality court cases. Today: approximately 5,000 cases handled to date, recently passed legislation mandating replication, & upcoming opening of a second protection center.

2002 Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute research, showing gaps in services for girls in distress and a need to upgrade field professionals' knowledge and practices, led to the **Girls on the Map** initiative. This initiative creates special solutions for girls across the risk spectrum – from those who could easily slide into risky behaviors to those who are already in extreme situations. To date: 1,500 girls from all sectors of society served directly.





Photograph: Vera Etzion

2003 Ashalim, the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco and the Israeli Government established the **ECHAD (Early Childhood Achievement and Development) Partnership** in response to the poor quality and scope of early childhood services for Arab-Israeli children. ECHAD minimizes risk factors threatening early development, strengthens professionals' abilities and upgrades services. Today: comprehensive community programs in six Arab-Israeli communities benefit 8,000 children, 3,350 parents & 1,135 professionals.



Photograph: Vera Etzion

2004 Better Together was launched to revitalize services for the thousands of children and youth at risk growing up in inner city neighborhoods. It forges collaboration between service providers and local residents in order to create solutions for unmet needs, improve existing services, and increase participation in programming. Today: Nine neighborhood programs in six cities are improving services and opportunities for 15,000 children and youth of all ages.

2005 For many primary school students from disadvantaged or immigrant backgrounds, school success is often linked to personal struggles - domestic issues, lack of finances or emotional support, or cultural adjustments. **Merhav's** multi-disciplinary team approach enables schools to address their students' multiple challenges through personalized attention, counseling, enrichment and outreach to parents. Today: 20 programs in six cities are promoting the educational success and emotional well-being of 7,000 children.



2006 While partnerships bring potential for pooling resources and expertise, they often do not get going or continually struggle due to organizational obstacles. The **Eshkolot Program**, run jointly by Ashalim and JDC-ELKA, brings together senior officials from government ministries, municipalities and NGOs to foster cooperative thinking at the top levels of these leading bodies. Today: 25 participants in second course are gaining hands-on experience and new perspectives on inter-office and inter-sector collaboration.

2007 Children and youth with special needs who suffer physical, emotional or sexual abuse need an appropriate treatment response that cannot be provided within universal services. The lack of a treatment solution also discourages professionals and family members from reporting. The **Special Needs Treatment Center** is the first of its kind in Israel. Today: The new Treatment Center has already helped 26 children/youth with special needs & their families.

A Look to the Future

Mayda - Ashalim's Center for Knowledge & Learning



The first edition of the Et Hasadeh magazine (translated as: The Pen of the Field) coincided with Ashalim's 10th Anniversary celebrations in Israel earlier this year. It featured four major changes relating to children and youth at risk in which Ashalim played a leading role – new approaches for underachieving and at-risk students, changes in residential facility-family-community relations, changes in relating to and caring for girls in distress, and the growing awareness of the problem of abuse among children and youth with special needs.

After years of program development during which Ashalim garnered extensive experience training field professionals and building a knowledge base, Ashalim has chosen to intensify and centralize its professional development efforts. Mayda – Ashalim's Center for Knowledge & Learning, launched in 2007, fills a void in the ongoing education and training of field professionals who interact with children and youth at risk and their families. Mayda has already gained recognition among Israel's ministries and services as an invaluable resource, where field professionals can tap into practical knowledge and work methods from Ashalim's best practice interventions and from fellow professionals.

In addition to its courses, workshops, conferences and seminars, Mayda introduced two new initiatives this year – a bi-annual professional magazine and an Alumni club. The first Mayda Alumni Club event drew a hundred field professionals, all participants in Mayda courses and events. Through the Alumni Club, Mayda will offer quarterly peer learning opportunities for professionals to discuss, debate, learn and share the knowledge, understanding and expertise they have gained in their fieldwork.

Since its inauguration a year ago, Mayda has served over 1500 professionals – educators, social workers, school guidance counselors, psychologists, police and community services staff – who seek out Mayda's inter-disciplinary and hands-on approach. Dr. Liat Ben-David, director of Mayda, notes that "the rising participation in Mayda's activities and fact that the vast majority of attendees remain involved in Mayda's various activities demonstrates the real thirst among field practitioners for the best available tools and cutting-edge approaches." As Mayda continues to grow, Ashalim will be able to offer even greater support to the Israeli professional community and improve the lifesaving work they do with children and youth at risk.

New Approaches for a New Generation

In order to reduce the number of children and youth at risk in Israel, Ashalim is venturing into new approaches and interventions that reach large groups of children all at once and that stress preventive measures. The Better Together and New Beginnings programs are two prominent examples



Better Together: Community-based Intervention

The Better Together program takes a comprehensive community approach and targets whole inner-city neighborhoods where there are large concentrations of children and youth at risk. Historically, many service providers would operate in these neighborhoods, yet numerous children and youth would fall through the cracks and gradually drop out of school or slide into extreme risk situations.

With Better Together, all the neighborhood's children and youth are accounted for and their needs considered. Local residents are also encouraged to take greater responsibility for their children's futures through empowerment, leadership training and volunteerism activities. Better Together's planning committees – which include parents and youth representatives – examine existing programs and services to determine what is lacking for which groups of children and youth, and then Better Together sets out to respond to these unmet needs.

In the nine Better Together neighborhoods, the focus is now squarely on children – the next generation. The success that Better Together is having in reducing risky behaviors, raising achievements and building community capacity is inspiring. In the coming years, Ashalim plans to document the Better Together model and prepare it for replication in additional communities.

New Beginnings: Early Childhood Risk Prevention

As part of the Israeli government's efforts to shift priorities from rehabilitation to the prevention of risk situations, it is initiating a national early childhood intervention program, New Beginnings. This program will reach out to very young children at an early stage in life when they grow and develop quickly, and will work to ensure that they and their parents benefit from the appropriate services and support.

The Israeli government turned to JDC to lead the New Beginnings program, given Ashalim and JDC's expertise working with disadvantaged early childhood populations through community-wide programs. Thus, New Beginnings joins Ashalim and JDC's efforts with the two large-scale early childhood programs – PACT (Parents and Children Together) and ECHAD (Early Childhood Development and Achievement).

Looking forward, the challenge is tremendous. Israel is a young country, with considerable numbers of children from birth to age six, of which 80,000 are considered to be at some level of risk. The PACT and ECHAD experiences with community-wide programming for early childhood will be instrumental in establishing New Beginnings and in ensuring that parents become partners in their child's development and education from a very young age.





We are pleased to share with you excerpts from congratulatory messages received from Ashalim's partner ministries

State of Israel
Ministry of Education
Director General

Ashalim took upon itself a complex, complicated challenge of developing programs and intervention models for children and youth at risk in the State of Israel.

Ashalim is celebrating a decade to its founding, and we at the Ministry of Education congratulate and appreciate its endeavors year after year.

Ashalim's greatest achievement was, and still is, the fact that it was able to seat all the relevant governmental ministries around one table, creating a de facto partnership and pooling of human, professional and budgetary resources, with unprecedented success. Today this guarantees comprehensive, appropriate treatment for the target population.

It is truly gratifying to see how many government ministries rallied to this important cause of fostering achievement by children and youth at risk, and instilled many programs in part of their daily work.

Thank you for your initiative, earnestness and hard work!

Sincerely,
Shlomit Amichai
Director General

State of Israel
Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services
Office of the Deputy Director General

On the occasion of Ashalim's 10th anniversary, I would like to congratulate all those involved, for the special endeavors on behalf of children and youth at risk and in danger in Israel.

The Social Affairs Ministry views children and youth at risk as a central focus of its work.... and attaches great importance to its cooperation with Ashalim, an organization that provides an intellectual and entrepreneurial base for the planning, operation and examination of innovative programs.

Ashalim's unique composition provides a suitable infrastructure for cooperative ventures based on long-term thinking. This enables all those involved to plan their activity in a way that will ensure a better future for children and youth to whom life has not been kind. It is the essence of the saying, "think first before acting."

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of the partners from the various sectors in Israel and the Diaspora. May we continue to engage in fruitful endeavor!

Sincerely,
Menachem Wagschal
Deputy Director General

State of Israel
Ministry of Health, Mental Health Services

It is my honor to join in congratulating you on the occasion of Ashalim's 10th anniversary. The important role that Ashalim has taken upon itself – pooling resources, finding unique solutions and constructing innovative solutions for groups of children in Israel requiring special services – is a bright light in the profound darkness enveloping families of children in need of assistance and tremendous support.

The important role Ashalim has assumed in building treatment, rehabilitation and support programs for various populations in society is an example and a symbol of the important task that society must accept in providing for its weaker members as well.

This year, the State of Israel is celebrating 60 years of independence, and we are still contending with emergency situations that continue to have a significant impact on the citizens of this country, even more so on the children.

I sincerely hope that Ashalim's activities will continue to leave their positive mark on Israeli society.

Sincerely,
Dr. Yaakov Polakovich
Head of Mental Health Services, Ministry of Health
Chairman, Ashalim Committee, Children with Special Needs