

פעילות ג'וינט ישראל במגזר החרדי



JDC-ISRAEL Activities with the Haredi
Population



JDC Israel
Touching Lives, Transforming Communities

JDC-ISRAEL Activities with the Haredi Population

Initiatives, Projects and Partnerships

Hava Ullman



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**Initiatives, Projects and Partnerships
in the fields of Employment &
Children & Youth at Risk**

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Preface

In recent years, JDC-Israel has become increasingly involved in developing programs to address challenges facing the Haredi community in Israel. The connection between JDC and the Haredi sector is a historic one, which has been in existence for tens of years since the founding of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Support for religious institutions, Yeshivot and Talmudei Torah was specific and critical at the time, following WWII. Today though, the programs have a wide system impact, dealing primarily with employment and children and youth at risk. These programs operate through the partnership JDC has with the government of Israel.

Combating poverty through employment has been one of JDC-Israel's highest priorities since the second half of the 1990s. For example, during the period of the large emigrations from the Former Soviet Union and Ethiopia, JDC Israel was involved in support and consultation on subjects concerning employment for new immigrants, who required assistance during their initial absorption in Israel. More recently, issues of poverty and employment within the Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) community have come to the public eye and directed JDC's attention to this needy population. The Haredi community has grown and expanded within Israeli society and with it the "learning society" of men who are primarily engaged in Torah studies. However, a significant percentage of this sector is characterized as being socio-economically weak: living beneath the poverty line and under-represented in the general work force. Thus, the Haredi community joined the preferred target audience of JDC's efforts in combating poverty.

JDC's employment programs were developed to contribute towards a significant change in the economic situation of the Haredi community. It is aimed at changing attitudes towards the non ultra-orthodox public by the Haredi population, and at altering non-Haredi attitudes towards the ultra orthodox. It was believed that change would come from within, as an increasing number of people from the Haredi sector became integrated into the general workforce. The programs, as well as the extended thought that preceded them, took into account the antagonism and growing alienation between the Haredi and secular populations in Israel. The desire to act against this estrangement and mend the growing rift within Israeli society, were goals in and of themselves. However, as previously stated, the programs were initiated primarily in response to growing poverty and distress in the Haredi sector.

JDC's employment initiative, Tevet, was established in 2005 to provide solutions for underemployed groups in Israeli society. Today, employment and training for the Haredi populace are an important component of Tevet's entire range of programs. Evaluation studies, which accompany these programs, have indicated a high rate of goal achievement relating to professional training and job placement.

Ashalim, JDC's arm for children and youth at risk in Israel also targets children and youth at risk among the Haredi community. A number of Ashalim programs were planned from the outset for this sector, and others, which were developed for children and youth in general, were adapted to the needs of the Haredi public. The focal points to date are in the fields of education, health and safety, abuse identification and treatment, special needs and early childhood development.

This book on JDC's activities within the Haredi community joins the documentation series of JDC's activities with its various target populations. This document reflects JDC Israel's mode of operation, its vision and goals and its continuous work with JDC's major government partners.

Arnon Mantver
Director-General, JDC-Israel

Executive Summary

Background

Shortly after the founding of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in 1914 by Orthodox, Reform and Jewish Socialist workers relief organizations to support the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine, the organization began to support the yeshiva world. As early as the 1920's, the JDC Palestine office supported yeshivas like "Etz Chaim," "Porat Yosef" and "Mercaz Harav." In 1929, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee helped the Hebron Yeshiva to move to Jerusalem after the Hebron massacre of 24 yeshiva students.

A conference of all JDC representatives in Europe marked a new chapter in the history of JDC relief, going from basic emergency aid to rehabilitation aid. Committed to Rescue, Relief, and Rehabilitation, JDC allocated large sums to support Jewish institutions all over the world, known as "activity for Jewish culture."

By 1945, JDC supported 75 yeshivas, seminaries and Torah schools. JDC also supported over 30 yeshivas that had relocated from the Diaspora to Israel after the Second World War. In the first decade of the State, the number of yeshivas in Israel grew. The waves of immigration brought yeshiva students also from Moslem countries. By the 1950's and 1960's, JDC also supported rabbis who came as refugees from DP camps after WWII.

In 1964 - JDC's 50th anniversary year - the organization supported 109 yeshivas, with aid amounting to 25% of their budget. At the start of the 70's, JDC supported 157 yeshivas, comprising 25,110 students.

New Visio, New Programs

By the 1990's, a large percentage of the Ultra-Orthodox Haredi public was living under the poverty line and was unemployed and thus the Haredi sector became a part of JDC's agenda to combat poverty.

In recent years, JDC changed its policy regarding its activities with the Haredi population. No longer would JDC provide direct support for Torah institutions, but rather the organization would engage in a far wider scale of actions. With a new vision and innovative programs, JDC aimed to create a broad system impact that would significantly change the Haredi community's economic situation, its attitude to work, and its view of the Israeli non-Haredi and non-religious society. At the same time, JDC's growing activities and involvement with Haredi populations was also aimed at changing Israelis bias and notions of the Haredi society.

Dr. Yaakov Lopez's research study, "Turning-point in Haredi Society," deals with changes during the last decade in the attitude within the Haredi society to vocational training and academic studies. According to Dr. Lopez, the process can be traced to 1996 when the Haredi society was at the peak of its political and economic power.

One of those who believed that the problem was economic was Rabbi Adin Steinzaltz, a member of JDC Board of Directors. He called for the integration of the Haredim into the labor force and put this challenge to Arnon Mantver, Director General of JDC Israel.

JDC Israel introduced vocational training courses for Haredi men and women. The Haredi Center for Vocational Training, established in 1996 at the initiative of JDC Israel, was a trailblazer in the sphere of vocational training for Haredi

trainees, and led the way to the establishment of many other institutes. Today, courses are held by Haredi colleges (i.e. the Haredi Center for Vocational Training, the Haredi College for Women), but also by general institutions, which adapt themselves to specific Haredi requirements (The Ashdod College of Administration, the Open University in Jerusalem).

In 2000, JDC Israel opened its Haredi unit dealing with employment, indicating the new approach of JDC and its new policy concerning the Haredi population and its needs. By the end of that year, JDC Israel and the Government of Israel agreed to partner on employment programs. A budget of 100 million shekels was allocated and thus marked the expansion of JDC's Haredi employment project. The first program, "Parnassa b'Chavod," ("Making a Living with Honor") got underway in 2001.

Creating a New Strategic Partnership – TEVET

In 2005, the "TEVET – Tnufa BeTaasuka", strategic partnership of JDC Israel and the Ministry of Commerce and Trade was established. This was the most significant development in prioritizing employment programs for the Haredi community.

Special employment programs offered by TEVET for the Haredi public vary and aim at different Haredi candidates. TEVET has also developed a number of technological and academic training programs.

Following are some of the flagship employment programs:

- **Parnassa b'Chavod** (Making a living with Honor) – a pioneering

program for Haredi employment that offers dozens of courses for training “avrechim” (married yeshiva students of 23 or over) in a variety of vocations.

- **“Tzofia”** – employment training tracks for Haredi women is a program run by TEVET in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce & Trade. It offers employment training for Haredi women in a variety of vocations to increase the proportion of Haredi women in the work force and open up new employment and income opportunities.
- **“Mafteach”** (“Key”) Employment Development Centers for Haredim started to operate in 2006. The centers offer employment placement and guidance by putting Haredi job seekers in touch with potential employers. The program is an example of the cooperation between JDC-TEVET, and the Ministry of Commerce and Trade, the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs the Special Enterprises project of the National Insurance Institute as well as the National Employment bureau and local authorities.
- **“Shahar”** (“Dawn”) –focuses on the integration of young Haredi men in army service and in various IDF units that need quality workers, providing them with skills and experience for future integration into the civilian work force. The partners in this program are comprised of IDF, the Ministry of Commerce and Trade, the Industrialists Association and private employers.
- **“BrachaB’asakim”** (“Blessing in Business”) –business entrepreneurship for the Haredi public is a TEVET program for developing small and medium-size business enterprises for Haredi men and women aged 25-55, which won the approval of prominent rabbis.
- **Academic studies for Haredi students** - developed in 2008 and

received official approval with the signing of an agreement between JDC Israel and the Ministries of Commerce & Trade and Finance. Twenty eight million shekels were allocated for this program, mainly funded by the Ministry of Finance TEVET with 2.5 million shekels coming from TEVET. The program encompassed 700 Haredi students.

- **Chen** (Wisdom of Women) training program offers certified studies in technological subjects as an alternative option to young women who do not want to get training as nursery school teachers.

JDC-Ashalim Programs for Children and Youth at Risk

JDC-Ashalim, JDC's strategic partnership with the government of Israel and UJA-Federation of New York that focuses on children and youth at risk, also developed programs for the Haredi community. A number of Ashalim programs were planned from the outset for this sector, and others, which were developed for children and youth in general, were adapted to the needs of the Haredi public.

- **Training Programs in the Education System** - Ashalim developed a program for training Haredi male and female educational guidance counselors, with the aim of turning them into agents of change among the at-risk population.
- **Active Nurturing Playgrounds** is a program aimed at early childhood, to further early detection of children with developmental difficulties within Haredi kindergartens and Talmud Torahs.

- **Better Together (Mutav Yahdav).** In its first stages between 2004 to 2008, the program operated in 11 disadvantaged neighborhoods in various local authorities throughout Israel, including the Haredi Romema neighborhood in Jerusalem. The program introduced diverse intervention programs to improve the lives of children and youth at risk of all ages in the neighborhood.
- **Health Promotion** programs for at-risk children and youth provide answers in four main areas affecting children and their families: nutrition, dental health, physical activity and safety.
- **The Media Instruction program** for professionals dealing with parents and infants at risk in Bnei Brak was developed in 2003 by the Mental Health Center at the Geha Hospital, included the setting up of a long-distance support system for professionals dealing with parents and infants at risk in the Haredi population.
- **“Hakala”**, addresses children and youth at risk suffering from chronic disabilities or delayed functioning development. It was designed from its inception for the Haredi sector. The program provides temporary relief for families caring for a disabled child, and a source of income for hosting families. An evaluation study carried out by the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute between 2001 and 2003 found that most of the mothers reported improvement in the functioning condition of the child at the end of the year.
- **Programs for Abused Children and Youth** have been adapted and introduced to the Haredi sector:
- **The Emergency Center in Jerusalem** was opened in 1999, and is a national center that provides shelter and treatment for Haredi boys up

to the age of 14 who are victims of domestic abuse. The boys and their families receive diagnostic and care services in a Haredi environment. This center is part of a network of ten such centers established throughout Israel that were developed in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services, the Ministry of Labor, the National Insurance Institute, local authorities and non-profit organizations.

- **Sexual abuse** - A city-wide coordinating program for abused children has been operating since 2001 in 24 local authorities, of which four have large Haredi populations. Through this program, a special course for rabbis and educators on this sensitive subject was held. The partners for this program include the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services, and the National Insurance Institute.
- **Turning Point** (“Nekudat Mifne”) develops alternative answers for youth in employment and entrepreneurship. It operates in partnership with the International Bank of Israel, Matan ,the U.S. non-profit NFTE (Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship) and the Israeli business and philanthropic communities.

A Brief Summary

JDC is involved today in almost all the activities that exist in the sphere of developing Haredi human capital for the labor market. Between the years 2001 and 2008, JDC had invested 60 million shekels in programs for promoting employment in the Haredi sector in partnership with the government and communal factors in the Haredi world.

In February 2009, TEVET organized the first international conference of its kind for promoting employment in the Haredi sector, which was held in Jerusalem with the participation of about 200 prominent Haredi personalities from all over Israel and the world.

The involvement of JDC-Ashalim could not have taken place without the changes that took place in Haredi society, one of the expressions of which is the new openness in relation to remedial-educational interventions of different kinds.

he balanced approach, that does not try arrogantly to “correct” the target public, but comes from a stance of respect and understanding, is the secret of the JDC’s success in the Haredi sector. The Haredi and secular workers, who work harmoniously side by side and with mutual respect, testify to this.

