

Youth Aliyah Children

By JOSEPH L. KLARMAN
(World Head of Youth Aliyah)

Different jobs require different skills. However, before assuming my present role in Youth Aliyah, it had never occurred to me that one of the skills necessary in such a position is familiarity with foreign languages.

Our most urgent aim whenever we bring new children to Israel and admit them to Youth Aliyah is to teach them Hebrew. But there is invariably a span of time, usually a very short one, in which we have to communicate with them in their mother tongue.

In the past my problem has been complicated by the arrival of Youth Aliyah children from three new countries. Recently, we have had to make an attempt to learn many languages simultaneously, at least to the extent that communication would be possible. Luckily, I have a basic knowledge of a language which has lately been in great demand in Youth Aliyah.

At the first, when I visit them, I find they are quite silent. They don't usually talk unless spoken to. They are neatly dressed and well behaved, perhaps too well behaved. We find out that their knowledge of science exceeds that of their peers coming from other countries; that they are intelligent and curious. At the same time, we also discover that unlike children from other countries, their Jewish knowledge

is almost nil. You sometimes hear shy and timid confessions like: "Well, I didn't know I was Jewish until a year ago," or "I must say it was quite a shock to learn that I am Jewish."

Our sages instructed us not to rely on miracles. However, usually when you meet these children the second time, three or four months later, things seem to be different. There is still a strong Slavic accent, but the words themselves are those uttered in the prophecies of Isaiah or Amos. Their manners are still very good but instead of the serious reserve, there is a smile on every face!

We are now also receiving additional children from Iran for our new program. At first I almost could not communicate with them. Their Hebrew was very poor and my Persian, as you can imagine, non-existent. However, when several months later I met them again, we already had a common language -- not Persian. In our archives I read names which were practically unpronounceable. However, at their village, I met children with names such as EREZ, BROSH, KALANIT or RAKEFET. Those of you who don't know the Hebrew will be surprised to learn that these are Hebrew words denoting Israeli trees and flowers which grow in the vicinity of the children's village where the group is located. Trees---boys. Flowers ---of course, girls. Boys and girls coming from Iran!

And there is another language. The language is Hebrew and the children, this time, are Israeli children. Of course, not all Israeli children; however quite a large number of them. Some of them speak a very bad Hebrew.

"Be careful in the way you treat the children of the poor, because it is from them that Torah, the Law, will go forth."

However, it is not only because they are the bearers of Torah, that we should be careful in the way we treat disadvantaged children. We must do our utmost for their educational welfare, because this is Israel's MAIN SOCIAL PROBLEM AT PRESENT.

Talking to them, communicating with them, I could realize how painful and frustrating it is to belong to THIS miserable social stratum.

We have a real job ahead of us in meeting the educational problems of our culturally deprived, some 25,000 children. These disadvantaged youngsters live both in development towns and in the slums of the big cities. You will be surprised to learn that even in Jerusalem,

-- the heart of our nation and country, drop-outs from the school system are roaming the streets, neither working nor studying.

After three years as head of Youth Aliyah, I have one basic belief or principle: Let there be no deprived child in Israel! This should be the major goal of Youth Aliyah today.

I pray and hope that we shall prove to be capable of meeting this challenge for the sake of the Jewish child and the Land of Israel -- a State which will develop and strengthen and live in peace forever.

UNITED NATIONS (WNS)--Thanks to a cool reception from Egypt, the United States and the Soviet Union, Jordan cancelled plans to ask for a Security Council session on Israeli policies in East Jerusalem.

Happy New Year



DONALD & REMA GEE

Happy New Year



NICK KELLY

HAPPY NEW YEAR



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Happy New Year To The Jewish Community



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