

Ohel Distributes 4,000 Care Kits For Displaced Israelis With Preschool Children Returning To Homes Near Gaza

Drawing upon its experience supporting people through trauma, Ohel Children's Home and Family Services is providing vital guidance to 4,000 displaced families with preschool children returning to their homes in the Gaza-area communities invaded last October 7.

The guidance consists of written materials to help parents identify some of their young children's responses to the trauma of the Hamas terrorist attack and to ease their adjustment back home. It also contains resources developed by Ohel Kestenbaum International Children's Services to help children express their emotions and feelings and to help parents in supporting them.

In this initiative, Ohel, a New York-based Jewish organization, is partnering with the Israel Trauma Coalition (ITC) and Mahut Israel. Since 1969, Ohel has provided the Jewish and wider communities with mental-health support.

Largely unknown in the wider world during the ongoing war, is the plight of displaced Israelis who were relocated and scattered across the country. Thousands of them have been returning home after staying up to six months in hotels, sometimes far from their homes. Some of the kibbutzim were decimated in the attacks.

A recent study conducted by the Israeli Pediatric Association found that 84 percent of Israeli children who were evacuated suffer from emotional distress since October 7; 93 percent of the children who survived the attacks are having emotional difficulties, 69 percent of them suffer from anxiety. Ninety percent of children living in areas where many incoming-missile sirens sounded are having emotional difficulties.

According to top Ohel officials, addressing children's emotional needs tied to October 7 is especially important for these families now. Knowing

what to expect, and where to turn for help, is critical in helping them to adjust to distressing feelings that may emerge.



Courtesy of Ohel Children's Home and Family Services.

"When people are under attack, are evacuated, and then are placed in temporary and unfamiliar surroundings, it is normal to have delayed reactions to trauma. Their immediate and basic needs for shelter and safety are so acute, they don't have the luxury of thinking about their feelings. But that is not good for children, especially," said David Mandel, Ohel's chief executive officer. "Responses to trauma can be deferred until weeks and months later. Upon returning home, some

people may experience intense feelings they may not be prepared for, and they may be especially vulnerable to mental-health challenges."

"Returning home is bittersweet for so many of these families, especially children, said Jay Kestenbaum, co-president of Ohel's Board of Directors. The longing for home is finally realized, yet many of these families will be returning to a home and community that looks and feels very different than the one they left behind in October. This can trigger many feelings that may have been suppressed until now. We at Ohel acknowledge the difficulty, and are providing them with tips and tools, drawn from our expertise, to help them cope with the adjustment to returning home."

The kit comes in a canvas bag that includes:

1. A tip sheet on helping adults after a return from relocation
2. A tip sheet on helping children after a return from relocation
3. Ohel's preschool book, *I Feel That Way and That's Okay*, to help children express their emotions after a traumatic experience
4. Two companion coloring books
5. Markers

The authors of Ohel's preschool book are Tziviv Reiter, L.C.S.W., the organization's director of children's and national trauma services, and Dr. Naomi Baum, Ph.D. from Israel.

The kits are being distributed to families in ITC trauma centers in Sha'ar Hanegev, Sderot, the Hof Ashkelon Regional Council, the Eshkol Regional Council and the Sdot Negev Regional Council. Ohel will distribute more kits in the coming weeks and months as needed.

In the photos below, Hadassa Baum holding a kit along with her two-year-old daughter, Tal Ahava.

'Israel On The Battlefield And In The Beit Midrash' Campaign Underway For Yeshivot And Seminaries

As the Israeli academic year of a particularly challenging school year draws to a close for overseas students, World Mizrahi is launching their annual crowdfunding campaign to help students planning to participate in the "Year-In-Israel" experience.

World Mizrahi's campaign is specifically working to highlight the critical role yeshivas and seminaries play for Israeli society, within the beit midrash as a place of spirituality and inspiration, while also acting as major feeders of IDF and National Service personnel.

"At Lev HaTorah, our pre-army students undergo a transformative journey of self-discovery and growth, uniquely equipping them to tackle the challenges of serving in Tzahal," said Rav Boaz Mori, Rosh HaYeshiva of Lev Hatorah. "Under the guidance of our inspiring Rebbeim, they immerse themselves in Torah study and practice, cultivating inner strength, unwavering conviction, and a clear sense of purpose. Moreover, they form deep bonds with their peers, each lending the other their own strengths, fostering camaraderie and solidarity. By the time they enter military service, they emerge not just as soldiers, but as fearless warriors, armed with the resilience and determination needed to overcome any obstacle."

Particularly in this very critical time for Israel, the roles of yeshivas and seminaries is even

more important in helping the Israeli Home Front through volunteering and community support. "Here at Midreshet Amudim we mobilized – packing meals for *chayalim*, donating blood, taking shifts volunteering in Hadassah Hospital, running a day camp for displaced children from the South, tying tzitzit for soldiers, taking up collections for food and supplies, all the while continuing to daven and learn Torah with our teachers, many of whom have been directly impacted by this war," shared Dr. Julie Goldstein, Founder, Director and Rosh HaMidrasha at Midreshet Amudim.

"Supporting Torah in Israel has never been more important, especially this year" said Rabbi Doron Perez, Executive Chairman of World Mizrahi. "Open your hearts to supporting this incredible campaign of Defending Israel in the Beit Midrash and the Battlefield, making sure that the land and the State of Israel is as strong as possible both on the battlefield and of course in the Beit Midrash."

The participating schools for the 2024 campaign include: Yeshivat Yishrei Lev, Machon Maayan, Yeshivat Orayta, Ruach HaNegev, Yeshivat Torat Shraga, Tomer Devorah Seminary, Yeshivat Hakotel, Yeshivat Lev HaTorah, Midreshet Amudim, Baer Miriam Seminary, Hamidrasha Hatzionit, B'not Torah Institute, Yishrei Lev, Yeshivat Mevaseret Zion.

"Most of the hard work, challenges and even-

tually accomplishments you'll have in the army, specifically the ones that don't come easy, are made possible when accompanied by a deep-rooted understanding of why you're doing what you're doing. And that's where Yeshiva prepares you in a way that few other experiences can," said Moshe Tzvi Shapiro, and alumni of Yeshivat Hakotel.

In addition to promoting the seminary and yeshiva experience, World Mizrahi helps provide support for students throughout the year that focus on connecting them with the land and state of Israel. This year, Mizrahi brought over 2500 students to the Gaza envelope, to bear witness to the events of October 7 and beyond, and become ambassadors for the Jewish people when they go back to university. The organization brings together students for a variety of social and cultural events, particularly around commemorative days like Yom Hazikaron, Yom Haatzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim.

Mizrahi serves as the official representation of the Religious Zionist movement to the World Zionist Congress promoting the interests of Orthodox pro-Israel Judaism in a wide variety of platforms both in Israel and across the Diaspora. Founded in 1902, the organization has long worked to support the ability of young people to come and learn in Israel.

To donate visit [Mizrahi.org/campaign](https://www.mizrahi.org/campaign)