



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENTS Janet & Irwin Tobin

Dear Friends,

Simchat Torah, October 7, 2023 – a day that should have been a day of rejoicing, became a day of unthinkable devastation across Israel and has had an unimaginable effect on the children at Neve Hanna. Itzik Bohadana, NH Director and his incredible staff and volunteers faced unthinkable challenges. With their Israeli spirit they continued to work tirelessly to instill in our children the incredible Jewish resilience that has carried them through all the too many crises they have endured. When called upon by Itzik, the staff took turns staying for 24 hour shifts so that the children could feel safe. Maya Amir, Director of Education and Cultural Programs, created many extra creative activities: art projects and asked each flat to share a performance of their choice for everyone to enjoy. Extra physical activities were essential since the new playground was under construction. Additional ping-pong tables were bought. Basketball and soccer tournaments were held and the Israeli volunteers created new fun games for all.

Our librarian, Judith Preger-Reshef, made additional times available at the library and during story hour, large beanbag cushions were provided for the children to lounge on.

Rabba Liron Levy worked with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Class of 2024 so that they would be prepared for their big day and celebration on Thursday, June 6 when they were being called up to the Torah. Their celebration continued on Friday and Saturday. It was truly a fantastic time for the NH family.

American Friends of Neve Hanna once again has been able to begin the programs and projects we sponsor. We are proud today that each of you makes a difference

with your generous support and commitment to the future and well-being of our children. The Neve Hanna family greatly appreciates the meaningful visits some of you made to the children's home during your Israeli missions. Many, many thanks.

May your families enjoy a safe, peaceful, healthy and enjoyable New Year.

Shanah Tova Tikateivu!

Janet and Irwin Tobin

Faith Amidst Crisis: Reflections from Neve Hanna During the 2023 October War

Rabba Liron Levy Rosenshaft, Spiritual Leader of Neve Hanna Children's Home

The events of October 7, 2023, and the subsequent war have deeply affected all



of Israel, but perhaps nowhere more profoundly than in the communities near the Gaza border. Here at Neve Hanna Children's Home in Kiryat Gat, we have experienced first-hand the challenges,

fears, and ultimately, the incredible resilience born of faith during these trying times.

When the sirens blared on that fateful Simchat Torah morning, our world was turned upside down. The children, many of whom have already faced significant trauma in their young lives, were suddenly confronted with a new, terrifying reality. As their rabbi and spiritual guide, I found myself grappling with difficult questions: How do we maintain faith in the face of such brutality? How do we explain to our children that the God we teach them about allows such suffering?

Finding Strength in Unity and Tradition

In the immediate aftermath, as we huddled in our bomb shelters, I was struck by the instinctive response of our children.

Without prompting, they began to recite psalms, sing and pray for protection. Their faith, pure and unwavering, became a source of strength for all of us. As the

days past, we established a new quality time centered around our Jewish traditions. We increased our prayer services, adapting them to be shorter but more frequent, allowing the children to find comfort in the familiar rhythms of our liturgy. The act of coming together, even in our shelters, to pray and study Torah, provided a sense of normalcy and community that proved invaluable. What has amazed me most during this crisis is the depth of faith displayed by our children. Despite the constant threat of rockets and the knowledge of the atrocities that occurred on October 7, they maintain an unshakable belief that God is protecting us. One of our teenagers, Arel, expressed it beautifully: "Rabbi, I know God is with us. Even when we're scared, I can feel Him keeping us safe." Many of our children, who often remind me that our current trials are part of a larger divine plan that we may not understand but must trust, echo this sentiment.

Acts of Kindness as Expressions of Faith

Our children's faith extends beyond words into action. The youth council have taken it upon themselves to write letters of encouragement to soldiers, Panas Rechov (the Streetlight *chesed* group) every week create care packages for displaced families, we are proud to say that before Passover 120 packages were sent from our home to needy families. When I asked Doron, one of our youngest, why she was so dedicated to these projects, she replied, "If God is protecting us, we should help protect others. That's how we say thank you."

This perspective — that engaging in acts of kindness is a form of partnership with God — has become a guiding principle for our community during these difficult times.

Challenges and Growth

Of course, maintaining faith during war is not without its challenges. We've had moments of doubt, fear, and anger. Some of our older children have asked hard questions about why innocent people suffer. As a rabbi, I've had to dig deep into our traditions and my own rabbi beliefs to provide answers that acknowledge the

complexity of our situation while affirming the fundamental goodness of God. These conversations have led to profound discussions about free will, the nature of evil, and our role in bringing light to the world. In many ways, this crisis has accelerated the spiritual growth of our community, pushing us to engage with our faith on a deeper level than ever before.

Looking to the Future with Hope

As we continue to navigate this uncertain period, I am consistently inspired by the resilience and faith of our Neve Hanna family. The children's unwavering belief that God will see us through this crisis and bring peace to our land is a powerful testament to the strength of the human spirit and the enduring nature of faith. Their perspective reminds us all that even in our darkest moments, we are not alone. As we pray for the safety of our soldiers, the return of the hostages, and the swift arrival of peace, we do so with the pure faith of children — a faith that sees beyond current hardships to a brighter future.

In these challenging times, the children of Neve Hanna have become not just recipients of care and guidance, but teachers in their own right, showing us all the power of faith, hope, and love in the face of adversity.

May their example inspire us all, and may we soon see the fulfillment of the prophet's vision: *"Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."* (Isaiah 2:4).

Neve Hanna in Turbulent Times

Antje C. Naujoks, PR Director NH

This year is the 50th anniversary of the Neve Hanna children's home. In summer 2023, the management decided that a



Path to Peace logo

big celebration somehow does not suit us. Instead, we planned to tell our children more about the unique history of our special home and its remarkable people at every possible opportunity.

On October 7th, Israeli reality changed, and, with it the reality of our children and employees. Reporting what has happened since then would fill entire volumes. I would like to present a brief aspect that is not often noticed by the world. The attack on October 7th was

aimed at Jewish Israel resulting in the biggest pogrom of Jews since the Shoah, and yet many non-Jewish citizens were also murdered. The Muslim-Bedouin community, including our immediate partners from Rahat and Neve Hanna who have been working on peaceful coexistence projects for around 40 years, were hit particularly hard.

While the children residing at Neve Hanna were quickly gathered following the attack, Neve Hanna's daycare centers were unable to meet in the first months after the pogrom. Home front command orders did not allow children from Rahat to travel to our daycare center, Path to Peace, until the number of rocket attacks decreased. This project got off to a slow start.



Brightly painted bomb shelter

Although all Israelis, Jewish and non-Jewish citizens, came together after October 7th, certain concerns and fears had also grown. In predominantly Jewish cities, people were afraid when they heard Arabic or saw women wearing hijabs. It was difficult for Arab citizens to move around the Jewish majority society because they feared rejection or even hostility. Fear dominated the atmosphere. It was an extremely sensitive situation, no matter which point of view you looked at. Fear is not a good companion in everyday life and not in a multicultural society. When the first Muslim-Bedouin children returned to Neve Hanna, with their caretaker, Jewish children living in Neve Hanna shied away from them and Bedouin children themselves felt highly uncomfortable with this situation despite our former solidarity that affected the entire Israeli society for weeks. For Neve Hanna and its Arab partners, the Muslim-Bedouin society, one thing was clear, Neve Hanna maintains its peace projects precisely to master such situations and learn valuable lessons from them. We initiated talks with both sides, gave space to fears and addressed concerns, but at the same time we clarified, explained and brought the sides together in a renewed dialogue that turned out to be even more intense, but fruitful than ever before. Jews and Arabs have long been coming together side by side in Neve Hanna — adults working hand in hand, children learning

and playing together. Last year's events have intensified many "Path to Peace" activities. Our Jewish-Arab youth meetings, which take place alternately in Neve Hanna and Rahat, started again at the beginning of 2024.

Neve Hanna feels it is a privilege to be able to touch the lives of people, to actively live the values of pluralism, which are a lighthouse to the Masorti Movement and at the same time to be a shining example that reduces all claims that the State of Israel is an apartheid state to absurdity.

My NH Volunteer Experience

Victor Ronis-Tobin

Last May, I volunteered for two weeks at Neve Hanna. It has been a very meaningful and engaging experience. I will definitely do it again, and will bring my entire family and get my congregation interested in Neve Hanna. I am a Russian, Israeli American psychologist, and professor in an American university. My friends and family in Israel were affected by the events of October 7th and I felt helpless to assist. When the academic year was winding down, I decided to travel to Israel, and volunteer. My mother who lives in Israel told me about her experience of visiting Neve Hanna and how impressed she was with the work done there. NH is a lush oasis of blooming flowers, beautiful walkways, playgrounds, and well-maintained buildings. Staff and leadership



were welcoming and supportive, and I had a tour of the place and an explanation of how it works.

Neve Hanna works like a family. Kids from tough backgrounds live in family like groups. Up to 14 kids live in a flat with two kids to a room. Such a foster family group is managed by a house mother and father and two volunteers at all times. Adults provide a corrective experience very similar to parenting (good parenting). They have a strict schedule and do chores, have activities, have pocket money, do homework, engage in extra-curriculars, and work for example in the in-house bakery, Yeladudes. Older kids live with younger

kids. Everyone gets individual attention from multiple adults, everyone gets mental health care, and they have fun, goof off, and celebrate. Kids engage in sports, and arts, have ceremonies, follow religious traditions, and have a bar/bat mitzvah. A very normal home environment for those who come from nothing. As a native Hebrew speaker, I joined the family



Victor with NH children at Holocaust exhibit

in cooking, and chores. I helped kids with homework, and played games. Kids, who chose to, asked for individual time, to play or talk. And some of the conversations were with staff. Overall, I was the grandpa who came to help. The highlight of my stay was when one of the kids shared that he received an 'A' on an exam thanks to me helping him prepare. I also was fortunate to attend the Holocaust memorial ceremonies, which were coordinated and conducted by the kids. It was moving beyond tears, and very well done. When one of the kids struggled with their lines, the entire community rallied to support him, and praise him for perseverance. Neve Hanna is a paradise of sanity in a crazy world. It provides kids what many households do not — safe and loving supportive structure that allows kids to thrive. You need to come visit.

Crisis to Care: NH's Resilience and Hope Amidst Adversity

Tom Sudow



In the macro sense, this has been a difficult year for most of us, beginning with the horrific terror attacks on October 7th.

Continuing through a difficult war that has

had multiple fronts against Israel. And as we have looked around the world, and yes even in our own communities we see the rise of antisemitism we have felt uneasy, uncomfortable and questioning our own security. Now bring this down to the micro level of a child living in the southern

part of Israel, who comes from a home where there are family challenges, living in less-than-ideal conditions and now has the situation of October 7th and its aftermath as a very personal experience. The children that come to be nurtured in Neve Hanna come from troubling backgrounds that have only been acerbated by the world around them in the past year. The children aged 6 to 18 serviced by NH live in family-like unit groups on the campus. NH also offers three programs designed for children who return to their homes in the evening. And even one that is a joint Jewish-Bedouin program.

The highly devoted staff plans individual as well as group programs and therapies, with the goal of rehabilitating severely traumatized children, empowering them and promoting their educational and social development while imparting to them the tools to build successful, independent, self-sufficient future lives. Neve Hanna is a warm, loving home environment for children, which offers support, assistance, guidance and care. Children grow up to become self-confident and independent adolescents and young adults. The staff is always there to offer a helping hand and gently guide the children through challenging times.

Neve Hanna is only able to support these children, because of the generosity that donors provide and the support volunteers provide. *"To save a life is as if you have saved the entire world."* Together we are saving lives and have done so through a most difficult and challenging year. We have only been able to do this because of the big-heartedness of each of us. On behalf of the children, Todah Rabah – Thank you!!

As we approach Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur our thoughts and prayers are for a better year, for us and our families, for Israel and the people of Israel, and for the world. A year of peace and prosperity. Together we are bringing peace to the children of Neve Hanna. Just as the goal for our fast on Yom Kippur should be to focus less on what we place in our bodies (food) and more about how we use our minds, hearts and physical beings for good, so too is our hope the children of Neve Hanna can find peace and security within the nurturing environment we create. I wish you and your families L'Shanah Tovah and happy, healthy, sweet, and peaceful year ahead.

Our Visit to Neve Hanna

Stephen & Rena Wertheim

Last May we spent two and a half weeks volunteering in Israel ending with a visit to Neve Hanna – the highlight of our trip. We gratefully thank Antje Naujoks, PR Director at NH for organizing our visit.

After the October 7th attack, Shaarey Tikvah, Park and B'nai Jeshurun Synagogue Men's Clubs came together in Cleveland to raise funds for Neve Hanna just 15 miles from Gaza border. Some of these children come from communities like Ashdod, Ashkelon and Sderot that were under rocket fire even before October 7.

What we saw at NH was a caring staff serving Jewish children whose families



Stephen and Rena with NH children

originated from Ethiopia, Russia, North Africa and the Middle East. The children were happy and healthy. Neve Hanna has its own zoo and bakery, and a new lovely, modern playground. We ate lunch with one of the children's group families. A highpoint for us was meeting Rabba Liron Levy, who as a teen met American Jews on the March of the Living in Poland. When we met her, she was teaching a B'nai Mitzvah class. The class was a cross section of Israel's ethnic Jewry. Rabba Liron explained that as a female she had to convince others that she was indeed a Rabbi and that it was okay for their daughters to have a Bat Mitzvah. Watching these children daven together was awe inspiring, and we were saddened that we would miss their B'nai Mitzvot ceremony. A ceremony that most of the doubting families were now attending.

The work that the staff at Neve Hanna does is difficult, but the children we met were well taken care of in a beautiful and healthy environment. One feels that they are loved and cared for by true professionals.

B'yachad (Together)

Lisa Pollack

Together we engage the Religious Schools, Men's Clubs and Sisterhoods within the Conservative Movement to help support Neve Hanna Children's Home, a loving

Masorti Kehillah and Mishpacha in Israel. There is no greater mandate than to leave this world better than we found it. The obligation to perform *gemilut hasadim* (acts of loving kindness) and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) are pervasive precepts in our work. It is our hope that we partner with more Religious Schools, Men's Clubs and Sisterhoods. We thank the following:

Men's Clubs Dinner Dance

In January 2024, the Men's Clubs of B'nai Jeshurun Congregation and Park Synagogue – Anshe Emeth Beth Tefilo Congregation in Pepper Pike, and Congregation Shaarey Tikvah in Beachwood came together for a special Dinner and Dance Fundraiser in support of Israel to



benefit Neve Hanna. Since Neve Hanna is 15.5 miles from the Gaza border, it was imperative that we build stronger fences and more safe rooms, increase security and step up the therapies to overcome the trauma the children experienced in the months that followed the October 7th attacks.

Throughout the Shabbat weekend, I spoke with the congregations, leadership, rabbis and community on the importance of emergency needs for children. On the evening of January 20, the Men's Clubs and congregants of all three synagogues gathered for a special Dinner Dance to benefit Neve Hanna. Over 250 members of the community attended. Yasher Koach to the Men's Clubs, lay leadership, congregants and community from Park Synagogue, B'nai Jeshurun and Shaarey Tikvah. Special thanks to Tom Sudow and Rabbi Joshua Skoff of Park Syna-

gogue, Stephen Wertheim and Rabbi Scott B. Roland of Shaarey Tikvah, Joel Herman and Senior Rabbi Hal Rudin-Luria of B'nai Jeshurun and the sponsorship who helped make this happen. The Men's Clubs are a member of the Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio and Michigan (KIO) Region affiliated with the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs (FJMC).

FHJC Sisterhood Supports NH

On Sunday, January 21, 2024, the Forest Hills Jewish Center Sisterhood and the School Board gathered together for an afternoon of Baking Challah with Amy Bochner Newman. It was a multi-generational event with 60 attendees. Funds raised, proudly went to support American Friends of Neve Hanna.

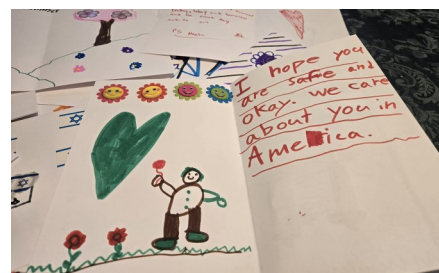
On May 5, 2024, FHJC Sisterhood held a Zoom Webinar: "A Visit to Neve Hanna." Antje Naujoks, Public Relations Director of Neve Hanna was the special guest speaker. She took everyone on a virtual tour with a meaningful video and told the in-depth story of Neve Hanna followed by Q&A. Rae Theise Kerzner and Debra Weil of the FHJC Sisterhood co-chaired the program, FHJC Sisterhood is a member of the Brooklyn, Queens and Long Island (BQLI) Region affiliated with the Women's League for Conservative Judaism (WLCJ).

Thank you, FHJC, for all your interest and support of the children at Neve Hanna!

WJC Supports NH

Yasher Koach to the 3rd Grade Gimel class, Rabbi Jeffrey Arnowitz and Aleza Kulp, Education Director of the Westchester Jewish Center and the Dan and Beverly Cannold Religious School in Mamaroneck, New York. The students made beautiful meaningful cards in loving support of the children at NH and Israel. They were deeply moved by their messages.

In thanks the NH children created



Shanah Tovah cards to be presented to the Westchester Jewish Center.

Covenant Foundation supports NH

Annually, the Covenant Foundation awards an organization for incredible work within the field of Jewish education in Israel. Neve Hanna was the 2023 grant award recipient.

In November 2023, over 450 people gathered at Chelsea Piers in Manhattan to celebrate Neve Hanna and three outstanding Jewish educators who received the 2023 Covenant Award. The evening was both poignant and joyful, filled with deep appreciation for these remarkable educators, and touched with the ever-present reality of the violence and loss of life since October 7, 2023, which has left a mark on all of us. The foundation believes those with the creativity and passion to be catalysts for change and innovation in Jewish education are worthy of recognition and support.

Thank you Covenant Foundation for your concern and support of Neve Hanna. Special thanks to Joni Blinderman, Executive Director of Covenant Foundation for your longstanding support.

NEW DATE TO COME for October 2025 TRIP

Join the leadership of AFNH on a special Israel Tour including a trip to Neve Hanna.

Watch for email notice.

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Library
Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program
Masorti Noam Youth Movement Activities
Holiday celebrations
Gardening Therapy/Sandy's Greenhouse

In addition: Horseback Riding Therapy, Petting Zoo (Animal Therapy), Summer Camp allocations, Remedial teaching and tutoring teenagers for high school exams, Tallis and Tefillin for B'nai Mitzvah children and Scholarships for former children of Neve Hanna pursuing academic studies.

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