

Feature

Seeach Sod, Jerusalem:

There is No Place Like Home

Seeach Sod  Israel's Leading Center
for Special Education

Founded by Rabbi Dov Levy z"l

Growing up in Monsey with a special needs sister, I was very familiar and connected with the organizations in NY that cater to frum children with special needs. We all know the incredible organizations who each excel in their own unique area of work; Yedei Chesed, Chesed 24/7, HamaSpik, Yachad, OHEL, Hasc, Beis Ezra, Cahal, Women's League, Sinai, Kiryas Joel, just to name a few. The work of these organizations and schools are remarkable and their accomplishments shine on the beautiful faces of their students and consumers.

Ahhh...Monsey. There is no place like home.

Or so I thought...but after moving to Israel in 2007 and starting my own family here in Yerushalayim,

I started to get involved with other special-ed organizations here. From my first encounter with a well-known organization in Jerusalem, I was stunned by the quality of programming here. I wondered why I had this misconception that Israel is "behind the times". With time I became affiliated with different organizations and recently, I have become part of an organization (a family really) called Seeach Sod.

Seeach Sod is a Charedei organization that caters to over 800 students and residents in Jerusalem. Their mission is to improve the quality of life of individuals with special needs and help them achieve independence and become accepted members of society. This is accomplished by providing advanced treatments in all areas of life, from the early stages of development all the way to adulthood.

Seeach Sod accompanies the child with individualized treatments every step of the way. Of equal importance, the organization aspires to change society's perspective on the special child and bring awareness to their rights to be fully integrated, independent, and respected in the local community. This is achieved by continuously initiating and promoting activities which incorporates inclusion and encourages respect for the disabled person in the community.

Seeach Sod was founded in 1971 for a small group of children with special needs by Rabbi Dov Levy zt"l, himself a father to a child with special needs. Starting with minimal accommodations, inadequate staff and nearly no funding, Seeach Sod met challenge after challenge with success. Over the years, Seeach Sod has grown into a multi-faceted organization and has earned the title of "trailblazer" and "frontrunner" in the field of special education in Israel.

The organization's 800 students, ranging in age from infancy to adulthood, are diagnosed with a wide spectrum of intellectual disabilities as well as minor motor disabilities. Seeach Sod's framework includes a developmental day care center, multiple preschools, an elementary and junior high school for boys and girls, a school for children with severe

communication disorders and a separate vocational training center for men and women aged 21+. Seeach Sod also currently offers 29 group homes for its adult population, an overnight Respite Center, a Center for Early Childhood Development (which provides services to the public) and family support services.

With 40 years of experience in developing and administering educational and rehabilitative programs, primarily in the metropolitan Jerusalem area, Seeach Sod now holds the "Proper Management Certificate" of the Office of the Registrar of Non-profit Associations. Alongside its general administration and financial departments, the organization employs trained professionals to ensure high quality service. The organization receives financial support of national and local government agencies for the maintenance

and enhance its important work. Seeach Sod is constantly forging ahead, developing and expanding its existing infrastructure of services while striving to promote society's inclusion of and respect for people with disabilities. More recently, a new initiative has come into fruition after the CEO, Rabbi Shimon Levy Shlita, became aware of the growing Anglo special needs population



in Jerusalem. Until now, there has never been a group home or vocational program for English speaking young adults with special needs in Jerusalem. Alongside Nefesh B'Nefesh, Rabbi Levy has committed to opening Seeach Sod's doors



of its services. However, for further developing projects, the organization seeks funding from various local and international foundations and individuals (which are then frequently matched by government sources). Seeach Sod encourages

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even wider to incorporate English programming and English speaking residential homes. There are numerous families already here in Israel who feel this breakthrough accomplishment is the beginning of a whole new era for special needs young adults in

Israel, as well as families whose Aliyah depends on this new development.

As I walk through the hallways of Seeach Sod's schools, as I sit in the living rooms of their group homes, or as I simply watch Seeach Sod students playing in a local park with their teacher, I see how Israel has not only "caught up" to American standards but it is even possible they are surpassing them. I am amazed... as a parent, as a sister of a special needs adult, as a teacher of special needs children and as a staff member in Seeach Sod... at how this unique organization has accomplished so much and how it has effected so many precious children here in Eretz Yisrael.

For more information on Seeach Sod, please visit our website at www.seso.co.il/en/