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October 19, 1971

Dear Rabbi Lamm,

Enclosed please find the latest "Dear All"
letter from D^aniel. It speaks for itself
in terms of the success and enthusiasm of
the latest Gesher projects.

Hoping that this finds you well and having
enjoyed a pleasant Yom Tov,

Sincerely,

Ahava Gross
Ahava Gross
GESHER FOUNDATION



the gesher foundation

JERUSALEM:
GAD BUILDING
HASSOREG 2

NEW-YORK:
10 EAST 40th ST.
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Oct. 12, 1971 (Yom Tov Sheni shel Galuyot)

Dear All,

You have not received a letter from me in about three weeks only because of the unusual work load which we have been carrying. However, it has all been worth it because we've just scored a grand success on top of the summer success. B'li Ayin Hara things are proceeding so very very well for us in the last few months.

Before getting to the Sukkot seminars I must tell you about the Yom Iyun which we had in Tichon Boyar in Jerusalem on Friday, Erev Shabbat Shuva. The Yom Iyun was for the entire school -600 students- in 2 shifts. First the Freshmen and Sophomores heard a lecture by Rabbi Chaim Brovender. They then broke up into 20 kvutzot diyun led by 20 volunteer madricim from Mercaz, Yeshivat Hakotel and Heb. U. Halfway thru the workshops the Junior and Senior classes listened to a talk by Chanan and then as the first group ended workshops the second group began led by the same team of madrichim. Each group then came together for a summation and amazingly enough one girl got up and said just about word for word the quote which appears in the last Jer Letter in the name of the girl from Kfar Saba. Over three quarters of the madrichim succeeded and the administration seemed quite satisfied. We will probably receive a thank you letter from them shortly. One of the lessons learned from this experience is not to conduct a Yom Iyun for so many kids--the workshops end up too large and the 2 shift system leaves too little time for successful workshops. In about 3 weeks we'll be having another one for the junior or senior class in the Gymnasia in Rechavia--we hope to cover a substantial portion of all lo-dati tichonim here in Jer in the course of the year.

Now to the Sukkot seminars: Two weeks before Sukkot we concluded an agreement to hold 3 Sukkot seminars, one in Kfar Ezion and two in the Yeshiva. Each was to have between 30-40 participants for a total of between 100-120 kids. One of the three would be a special seminar for vatikim, i.e. kids who have passed thru 2 or more seminars or one seminar + chugim, etc. A special intensive study program was arranged for this one in which each Madrich prepared a sicha on a different topic and delivered it before all the workshops of the seminar by a rotating system. It worked out very well. Now we suspecting that in view of our summer success there might be a rush on registration, we purposely opened registration very late - 2 days after Rosh Hashana - and we gave it all very little publicity. Don't ask what happened. We were innundated with requests. There were so many registration forms, parents' approvals, medical certificates and cash coming in that we never had a chance to get our bearings and knew only that the number 120 would be hit easily and that we might reach as high as 150. We called the Kfar and Yeshiva but they remained adamant: the Kfar would not feed above 40 and the Yeshiva explained that they only have about 90 beds and thus cannot possibly take more. So we turned

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down many applicants, closed registration and braced ourselves for the first day of Chol Hamoed when the seminar began. Well, we were wrong. Neither 120 nor 150 kids showed up but 160!!! Don't ask what went on. The food problem in the Kfar was solved by the fact that our new secretary in Gesher is an ex-Kfar Ezion girl who knows the kitchen help well and got them to provide more. The sleeping problem in the Yeshiva was solved when we ~~we~~ announced that anyone willing to sleep in the Sukka may do so--this took care of 20 kids with sleeping bags. We then raided the Kfar Ezion storhouse and brought about 20 mattresses over to the Yeshiva which we set up on floors. On top of all this, each day new kids arrived until by Shabbat we had all of 200 kids at seminar!!! The Yeshiva dorms were covered with wall to wall mattresses and the girls were forced to sit outside the sukka for meals. To put things mildly the people in the Gush are quite angry at us for what we did--but we just couldn't turn down kids. They were misled by their friends into coming without registration. ^a

The kids came from all over. For the first time we had ~~about~~ significant number of lo-dati kids from kibbutzim, about 15.

As for the seminars themselves they were an unparalleled success, far better even than the summer seminars. Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen spoke and Rav Neria M.K. was our guest for Shabbat. Another Shabbat guest was Baruch Chait who contributed significantly to the success.

The climax to the seminar was the most touching experience thusfar in Gesher. On Mozaei Shabbat the kids packed up, cleaned their rooms, brought their baggage to the collection point and entered the Yeshiva dinning room (all 3 seminars) for a simchat Bet Hashoeva. First the lights were turned down and a few candles lit. Chanan then read and discussdd the Simchat Bet Hashoeve of the Bet Hamikdash as it is described in Mishna Sukka. Then we began the 15 Shir Hamaalot. First a kid read one of the Shir Hamaalot. Then a madrich said a brief dvar tora on it. Then Baruch led in songs from the Shir Hamaalot and some outside ones. A beautiful mood was developed. In the meantime Mishmar Hagvul (the Armed Forces responsible for the territories) escorted 4 trucks to the gush at 12:00 and the trucks were loaded with the luggage. At 1:30 at the fourth Shir Hamaalot we marched the kids outside and danced wildly for about an hour. At 2:30 the kids boarded the trucks and escorted by two Mishmar Hagvul "nagmashim" (sort of tanks) they left for Jerusalem. At 3:30 they disembarked on top of Har Hazeitim and Chanan read to them from some Gaonic works describing various Tefillot held on Har Hazaitin on Hoshana Rabba in their era (this was Hoshana Rabba). I missed this part since in the meantime I took Faig and the kids home and went to a bakery in Mea Shearim to buy 400 bagels for breakfast. I arrived at Shaar Hashpot (the gate near the kotel) at 4:45 to await the kids. They walked down from Har Hazeitim after Chanan's talk to work their way to the kotel. As I stepped out of the car I heard singing in the distance--there could be no mistaking who it was,. The song was a new one which Baruch had taught the kids. In a few minutes I saw it--what a beautiful sight!! 200 kids marching up the road ~~from~~ to Shaar Haashpot from Nachal Kidron led by 5 kids holding lulavim and singing ~~ה' עמנו ה' עמנו~~ . Naturally, I joined the march. We came to the kotel. A day earlier a grenade had been tossed in the Shuk leading to the kotel and the guards had orders to check everyone entering the kotel--even Etrog boxes were opened. The guard tried to let us in one by one. The kids refused. They jumped higher and sang louder. The guard couldn't resist. ~~He~~ raised the barricade ~~and~~ in we came dancing and singing. We danced a bit and then davened kevatikim--at the moment of sunrise. What an end to the seminar!



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#3

We ate breakfast at Yeshivat Hakotel and there the kids sprang 2 surprises on us. First they announced that since Yaakov and I refused to organize anything for Simchat Tora (we were shot and just couldn't do it) they took things into their own hands and rented 2 busses to return to Ezion on Mozaei Simchat Tora for Hakkafor Shni-yot (actually I knew about it in advance. The madrichim told me, I gave the green light providing that it was not an official gesher project and thus that we carried no responsibility. I also agreed to ~~carry~~ pay the deficit in case not enough kids showed up and ~~thus~~ the rental cost couldn't be covered). Secondly--they really surprised me. Since our first seminar was held last Sukkot they decided to have a birthday party for Gesher. There were grammen and a delicious cheesecake baked by the kids themselves in the Kfar. There were speeches, kibbutzing and then a singing march to Shaar Yaffo where the trucks were waiting. I said *in the name of the Lord* and sent them on their way.

Last night both busses were loaded with kids for the return to Ezion for Hakkafor, though neither Yaakov nor I went. Kol Yisroel radio was there and they interviewed a Gesher girl for about 15 minutes on the seminar and Gesher. I didn't hear it but I understand that it was excellent. I'll try to get a tape.

I met some of the kids this morning and they're still up high in the sky. The agreement seems to be unanimous: the best yet.

Conclusions:

1. For the foreseeable future our potential for expansion is unlimited. Word gets around and kids come.
2. Our present rate of expansion is phenomenal---30 kids in last Sukkot seminar and 200 in this one. That's a 650% expansion!!!
3. We cannot possibly handle the load anymore ourselves. We must immediately hire a new man to help Yaakov. I don't know where the money will come from but we must pick it up somewhere.

When I come to the States PG in about a month I'll tell you a few more interesting sidelights, e.g. how when the Kfar cut off the Yeshiva's supply of water we had a cup of coffee at 1:00AM with an Arab, Salem, and got him to transfer water from Hebron to the Yeshiva!!!, and many more.

Alls just great here and I hope to see you all very soon.

L'hitraot,

P.S. The plans for our Institute in Ezion are being sent back with Reuvain Chait tomorrow.

PPS. David Miller a Seminar-NCSY veteran was one of the madrichim. He was excellent and was very impressed with it all. He claims that our operation compares favorably with anything of the type in the States.

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