



# Update . . .

August 2009

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*David Buskila, mayor of S'derot, lights candles during a bar mitzvah project.*

## Coming of Age Under Attack

*by Sharon Spira, social worker*

Every Jewish child is entitled to experience the joy associated with joining the adult Jewish community and at-risk children especially need a positive experience! This single joyous occasion could potentially serve as a link for these children to their Jewish identity for the rest of their lives.

Our network targets S'derot as a place to help make bar mitzvah celebrations dignified times of joy for kids in need. Since S'derot has been under constant rocket attack for over eight years, children under age 10 have no memories of life without deadly attacks every day. We

cooperate with the local Department of Social Services who helps us identify the neediest of the needy kids. All the families we serve also receive financial and social support from the local office. Here are a couple of their stories.

"R" is the youngest of four or five children (the exact number is not clear) whose Ethiopian mother is a widow. His older brother and a cousin were killed as the result of a direct hit of a kassam rocket, while playing outside of his home. At his funeral, the grandfather spoke about the trek from Ethiopia to Israel and how they continued to

feel like immigrants despite living here. This child's death made them fully Israeli as their blood had become part of Israeli soil. Two years after the attack, another child died of cancer. As a result of the accumulated trauma, another child became extremely violent and resorted to crime. He is currently in jail. Needless to say, the mother's life has been turned completely upside down. The difficult decision was made to place "R" in a children's home where he could receive encouragement and treatment that he desperately needs.

"A" is the older child in his family. He has a ten year old sister with severe developmental challenges requiring constant supervision and attention. His mother is a very young single mom who devotes her every minute to the younger daughter's needs. The widowed grandmother lives in the community as well and helps out as she can. Currently, "A" is in a boarding school with regular visitation with his family. "There is no happiness in this home," stated his social worker. Celebrating this child's bar mitzvah will mean bringing the new experience of joy to this family.

Our bar mitzvah celebrations cover far more than celebrating each youth's coming-of-age. We strive to help put broken lives back together. Every \$25

buys a prayer book; every \$100 buys a prayer shawl and every \$300 buys a new wardrobe for each child. Whatever you can give from the heart can go very far to restore some dignity in the life of a needy child in Israel. On behalf of the young lives you impact, we appreciate your love for Israel.

**Sharon Spira** is the associate director and a social worker for Connections Israel, a non-profit humanitarian organization serving traumatized Israelis. Since 1998, they have helped hundreds of Israelis recover from severe traumas. Sharon and her husband, personally, have many years' experience helping people recover from traumas, including life-threatening situations. Their compassion for people has inspired their children; all of whom serve others like angels in many ways.

**Special events**, like weddings and bar mitzvahs, happen year round for hundreds of at-risk kids and needy young adults in Israel. Donations designated "special events" will be set aside for such use.

**You can donate online at:**  
<http://love4israel.org/donate.html>

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