



Heartland Stories

*Thank you for making a difference in the
lives of so many people.*

At the close of a very long and trying year, we at CFOIC Heartland wanted to pay tribute to the incredible generosity of you, our donors and friends, with this booklet of testimonies and thanks. In this booklet you will find true stories from the Jewish pioneers of Judea and Samaria. Stories of perseverance, survival, and utmost gratitude from the people you have helped throughout the years. ¶

With all our hearts, we say thank you. □

HEARTLAND STORIES | FALL 2020 ¶
CHRISTIAN FRIENDS OF ISRAELI COMMUNITIES □

Bet Yatir

PAYING IT FORWARD

There is a compounding effect to kindness. A single act of kindness, compassion, or charity, given freely from the heart, will create a chain reaction of kind acts that spread and branch out, growing stronger with each new charitable act, catching people up in a wave of goodness as each one pays that

kindness forward. In the Hebron Hills community of Bet Yatir, the kindness that you have shown to their youth has become not just a chain reaction, but an overflowing fountain of good acts paid forward.

The youth of Bet Yatir are very active in the religious Zionist youth group Bnei Akiya.

Young children attend from ages nine to fourteen, and teenagers in high school act as counselors and mentors for their young charges. But over the years, the Bnei Akiya youth building — little more than a converted shipping container at the time — had deteriorated. The walls were peeling and the windows and doors did not fit their frames; in winter, icy winds had the children huddling and freezing in their coats, and in summer, dust and grime blew right in through the cracks, where it rubbed into eyes and soiled the youths' pristine Shabbat clothing. Youth participation dwindled.

So when you stepped up to help renovate their dilapidated Bnei Akiya building, the Bet Yatir youth were floored. They couldn't

believe that someone — you! — would be kind enough and openhearted enough to help them. But you were.

Kindness is at the root of every activity at Bnei Akiya. The youth of Bet Yatir frequently give to others less fortunate than themselves, visiting sick children in the hospital and cheering up injured soldiers and veterans with letters and sweets.

The kindness you showed to them by helping to renovate their youth building “changed everything,” said Odeya, one of the youth leaders. The kids had always been the givers, never the receivers of kindness and charity. “Once the building was pleasant and comfortable, the kids felt the difference and returned in droves for our activities.” And now, the kindness that you showed to these children and youths by renovating their gathering space will be paid forward to countless others across the Biblical Heartland of Israel.

The renovations have changed the lives of the youth of Bet Yatir and driven Bnei Akiya participation way up. Said Odeya, “What you have done is amazing. It makes such a big difference!”

The kindness that you showed to the Bet Yatir youth has become not just a chain reaction, but an overflowing fountain of good acts paid forward

The Bnei Akiya youth building in Bet Yatir was so broken-down that the youth of the community had stopped attending the activities.



Thanks to you, the Bet Yatir youth now have a beautiful Bnei Akiya building to hold their activities and gatherings!



Samaria

REPLANTED IN THEIR LAND

Shovels in hand, saplings balanced between them, the youths of Leshem trekked eagerly over the hills outside their community to the place where they finally planted their trees. It was a bright day and the sun beat down on sunscreened necks and hatted heads. The teens began to dig. Dry earth broke under heavy pickaxes, rocks were hauled away, and bright green saplings were lowered gently into their respective plots and then deluged with water. Laughter and energy filled the valley.

That morning, Israeli teens from the hills of Judea and Samaria forged an inextricable bond to their Homeland: with their own hands they planted the trees that you provided for them, bringing forth more greenery to the land and actively helping Israel bloom. There is no greater connection to the land than being able to sink your hands deep into the earth and bring forth life from it, and it is you, and people like you, who are responsible for that connection. Your donations towards trees have filled the forests and revived the hillsides of Judea and Samaria.

In Ofra, Yoav and Rachel Sorek, parents of the late Dvir Sorek who had been murdered by terrorists in 2019, planted some of the



saplings that will grow into the Dvir Sorek Memorial Forest. They spoke of the kindness of their Christian friends – you! – who provided the means to memorialize their son in such a meaningful way. Their gratitude was overwhelming.

In Karnei Shomron, a new grove of fruit trees was recently planted. Normally, a

The parents of Dvir Sorek – "I planted trees in memory of their son, who was killed in a terror attack in 2019"



CFOIC tour group would have done the planting, but in this age of restricted travel, the planting was carried out by CFOIC Israel Director Sondra Oster Baras, mayor of Karnei Shomron Yigal Lahav, and a few masked workers from the community. Even though corona restrictions forbade the local



Mayor Yigal Lahav of Karnei Shomron (left), Sondra Oster Baras (right), and local workers planted your trees in a new grove in Karnei Shomron

Your donations towards trees have filled the forests and revived the hillsides of Judea and Samaria

residents from participating in the planting, the residents still glow with pride when they speak about their little grove. Said one resident: "It's incredible – I walk out my door, and suddenly I'm in this paradise of fruit trees. All thanks to our Christian Zionist friends!"

In 1867, author Mark Twain visited Israel and pronounced it "rocky and bare," noting that "there was hardly a tree or shrub anywhere." Today in 2020, **thanks to you, the Biblical Homeland of the Jewish People has become an unrecognizable paradise**, a place of patchwork farmland and lush forests, sparkling springs and emerald-green hills. Israel today bears no resemblance to the desolation described by Twain so long ago, and as Amos the Prophet prophesied, **the People of Israel have been replanted in their land — thanks to you.**





SAVING HEART OF BENJAMIN



When COVID-19 descended, it hit the families of the Heart of Benjamin program in Ofra especially hard. If this had been a normal year, the special-needs children of Samaria's Benjamin region would have attended after-school programming and daycare at the Heart of Benjamin campus during the school months, and camps over the summer and during holiday break. Camp counselors and supervisors would mentor and watch over the children and young adults who attend the Heart of Benjamin camps, and activities, games, and exercises would be held in large groups. Special-needs adults live in Heart of Benjamin hostels and work in sheltered employment environments. But not this year. Not during coronavirus.

Heart of Benjamin's families were preparing for the worst when you stepped in

"For the families of Heart of Benjamin," said Heart of Benjamin's director Shlomit

Kahan, *"it was an incredibly difficult time."* The first wave of lockdowns occurred over the Passover break, and meant that



Thanks to you, the Heart of Benjamin program, was able to hire extra camp counselors to compensate for the smaller group sizes now mandated by COVID-19.

special-needs adults living in Heart of Benjamin hostels had to shelter in place while their sheltered employment was cancelled. They could not be sent home to their parents, even for the holidays, and Heart of Benjamin had to recruit extra staff to supervise them instead of the daytime activities which had been cancelled. Schools for special-needs children closed and the children were home with families struggling to meet their needs. Some parents lost their jobs, others were forced to stay home to care for their special-needs children.

Many suffered financially, as Corona imposed a financial burden on families already burdened.

Heart of Benjamin's families were anxiously preparing for the worst when you stepped in. **Thanks to the wonderful contributions of you and others like you, Heart of Benjamin was able to buy equipment and arrange activities for their young adult residents during lockdown.**

To the families that were now confined to their homes with special-needs children (in addition to their own neurotypical children), you provided food vouchers for much-needed groceries. With your help, huge burdens of anxiety were lifted from the shoulders of these Heart of Benjamin families.

Many thought that the summer camps would have to be cancelled as well, just as the Passover camps had been. But again, you came through: thanks to you, Heart of Benjamin was able to hire extra aids and counselors to assist in a one-of-a-kind summer camp that catered not just to the special needs of their participants, but also to the tough coronavirus restrictions. Volunteer counselors came from all over the country to help out, young Israelis who understood, as you did, how important it was for these special-needs children and young adults to be cared for and occupied during such a stressful period.

You brought love to the most vulnerable members of Israeli society in a time of great need, and their gratitude knows no bounds. *"We have no words to thank you for these gifts,"* said another Heart of Benjamin parent, *"From the bottom of my heart, thank you! You are truly messengers of God!"*



Your donations were lifesavers for the special-needs children and young adults of Heart of Benjamin!



Judea & Samaria

SAFETY ABOVE ALL ELSE



When the Shin Bet – the Israeli military intelligence service – calls, they don't show up on caller ID. So when Einay's Head of Security felt his cell phone buzz, he didn't hesitate at the NUMBER BLOCKED message and answered immediately. "We're tracing a suspicious vehicle," the unidentified voice cracked over the line. "We need you to keep an eye on your perimeter, and alert us if you see it." The voice dictated a license plate number and description, and with a final "Keep us updated," terminated the call.

A suspicious vehicle was out there, a real and present danger, but all he had on his side were a few ill-equipped volunteers from the community

A velvety dusk was settling over the red-roofed community of Einay, and the head of security felt his senses sharpen with anxious energy. He radioed the community's rapid responders and let them know to stay alert, but something inside him was twisting. A suspicious vehicle was out there, a real and present danger, but all he had on his side were a few ill-equipped volunteers from the community. Huge blind spots gaped between the community's few surveillance cameras, and the head of security knew that threats

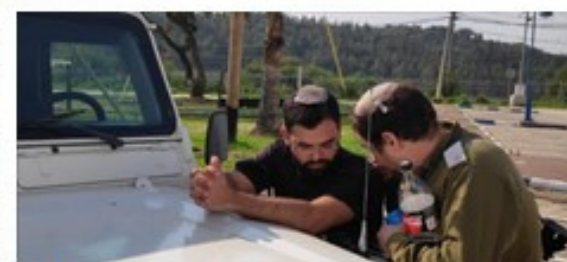
could be lurking even now along those dark roads, just waiting for the perfect moment to strike. Without surveillance coverage in those areas, he was helpless.

How could he protect them – his neighbors, his community, his friends, his family – without eyes?



Volunteer rapid responders in Judea and Samaria rely heavily on special radio communications in the mountainous terrain.

The outcome of that mission is not something we can discuss. But what we can say is a huge thank you — when you heard about Einay's security needs, and the security needs of so many other communities across Judea and Samaria: **you reached out. You helped. You saved lives.**



Volunteer rapid responders in Judea and Samaria take their responsibilities very seriously. The equipment that you have donated helps them in their duties every day.

Einay now benefits from a brand-new array of surveillance cameras, donated so generously by Christian Zionists like you. No longer will suspicious vehicles or unknown threats sneak up on them in the dark; now they can protect their perimeter from attacks before anyone gets hurt. But you didn't just give to Einay.

When Rechalim needed emergency life-saving equipment, you were there. When Doley needed radios and protective helmets, you stepped in. When Hermesh asked for a security patrol jeep, you answered the call. Over the course of this difficult year, you provided surveillance cameras and security equipment for the communities of Alon, Argaman, Karnei Shomron, Kedumim, Leshem, Mitzpe Dani, Ofra, Otniel, Revava, Sde Bar, Tekoa, and Zufim. The impact you have made is immeasurable.

Thanks to you, the people of the Biblical Heartland can now sleep more soundly. They can walk and work and live in relative safety. And while they may not be completely impervious to the threats of terror from their enemies, **you have helped bring them peace of mind as they strive to protect both themselves and their Homeland.**



Gush Etzion

HONORING THE ELDERLY



All of us experienced difficulties this past year. Families were separated and confined to their respective homes. Friends were kept apart from each other. Children were kept home from school and playdates. All of us experienced the boredom, the frustration, and the anxiety that accompanied the lockdowns – but none so much as our senior citizens.

The seniors were sent home and tucked out of sight, kept away from those of us who could have made them sick

Senior citizens are the age group most vulnerable to COVID-19. When the pandemic reared its head, seniors were the first to be shut up in their apartments. They were sent home and tucked out of sight, kept away from those of us who could have infected them. But in Gush Etzion, the struggles of the seniors did not end when they locked their doors.

The seniors of Gush Etzion were once the vibrant, vital generation that first brought life back into the Judean Hills. With their own hands they built up the communities of Gush Etzion.



Thanks to you, the pioneers of Gush Etzion — now senior citizens — are receiving the care and love that they so deserve in their old age.

Many of them were immigrants, coming to the Land of Israel specifically to resettle and develop it. They fought for their Homeland and they raised children in Israel's Biblical Heartland. They were pioneers, a united force of realized dreams.

Now, as senior citizens, they are alone. Many of the seniors in Gush Etzion were already struggling before coronavirus hit. But as their children and grand-children were staying away to protect

them from infection, these seniors slipped even further into desperation. There was no end in sight until you stepped in.

You supported the Gush Etzion seniors in their time of gravest need. Even before Corona hit, you supported programming for seniors with advanced dementia and you covered their medical and dental needs, including transportation to medical appointments. As the corona crisis deepened, you provided food vouchers to those who could not afford to buy groceries and supported corona-adapted activities. **Without you, 2020 would have been unbearably bleak for the seniors; you brought hope back into their lives!**

"You have made all the difference in the world to our elderly," said Limor Perl, Gush Etzion Regional Representative. "We can't thank you enough."



Seniors in Har Gilo, one of the Gush Etzion communities, participate in a ceramics workshop for occupational therapy and social-distanced socializing.

Christian Friends of Israeli Communities was established in 1995 in response to the Oslo Process, which ceded land to the Arabs in the heart of Biblical Israel. For more than twenty years, CFOIC Heartland has stood steadfastly with those Jews who are at greatest risk in Israel—those whose very homes are threatened with destruction, those who face terrorism on a daily basis, and those whose core values and daily lives are based on Biblical principles.



HEARTLAND
CHRISTIAN FRIENDS
OF ISRAELI COMMUNITIES

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