

mitzvot

Booking it to Israel

REPAIR THE WORLD

If Israeli kids are running out of English books, who better to lend a hand than American students?

EMILY TROTZ

After finding out that my BBYO (B'nai Brith Youth Organization) region elected me to the position of Regional *Sh'lichah* Chairwoman—the vice president of Jewish Heritage, Social Action and Community Service—I was ecstatic. I was all ready to spread my love for Judaism and community service throughout the Cotton States region, which encompasses Tennessee, Alabama, Louisiana, Arkansas and Mississippi. What I was not expecting was for my efforts to soon be felt in another country.

I started my new position by searching the Internet for interesting service projects that I could tell my region about. After a while, I came across the Books for Israel Project.

Due to the high-security situation in Israel, most of the money that was used for schools to buy English-language books for Israeli children has been cut. These children are in desperate need of these books because they have no other way to practice the English language. This situation is not only affecting Jewish children, but all children attending Israeli schools—Jews, Christians, Druze, Bedouins, Baha'is and Muslims.

idea what I was getting myself into.

Then I contacted the representatives from each major city in our region to tell them about the Books for Israel Project. I explained that the reward of providing children with books and a chance for literacy—children who, otherwise, might not have such an opportunity—would be

we sent, count how many books were in each box, fill out lots of paperwork, obtain M-Bags from the post office and make sure that everything was perfect so that it would pass through the customs office. It took a very long time, but it was well worth our effort.

Being involved in this project gave me the opportunity to speak with teachers in Israel and really understand the impact we were making. I now have a greater understanding of the lives of children in Israel and know that what we have done will help future generations.

This project also revealed the intense support of the Jewish communities in our region. Without their help, our efforts would have gone nowhere. Our communities are strong, and we can't ever forget that.

The children in Israel needed our help, and they still do. Like one of our participants Maya Rabinovich from Memphis, Tenn. says, "Education is the gift of a lifetime. I felt like I was giving this gift to a child. Even in a time of great conflict, it is important for the children of Israel to know that teens thousands of miles away are thinking of them." ★

If you are interested in helping children all over Israel, please email booksforisrael@verizon.net or visit www.booksforisrael.com.

EMILY, 15, is from Memphis, Tenn. She is the Regional Secretary of Cotton States BBYO region and enjoys dancing.



Israeli students enjoying their new library

worth their small effort. Most seemed extremely excited, but some just felt that it was going to be too much work.

My BBYO region set up collection boxes throughout the region in Jewish Community Centers, schools, synagogues—everywhere, you name it. We sent out flyers, made phone calls and were well on our way to collecting as many books as we could. Within a few short months, the Cotton States collected almost 1,600 books to be sent to two different schools in Israel.

Collecting the books was easier than we thought, but shipping was definitely more difficult. Sending multiple boxes overseas is very tricky. We had to label each book that

"ONE WHO POSSESSES LEARNING AND PIETY IS LIKE AN ARTIST WITH TOOLS READY IN HAND." Avot d'Rabbi Natan 22:1



The Books for Israel Project promotes English-language literacy and supports international communication. Volunteers help coordinate local efforts to run successful book drives and collect money. I learned all about the shipping, writing, money-collecting—everything had to be so particular. At the time, I had no