

# The Dallas Jewish Community Helps Build New Therapy Center for Israel's At-Risk Youth

By Cheryl Bier



Every day, children in Israel are removed from their homes due to abuse, violence, abandonment, or neglect. Hundreds of these children find refuge at Ahava Village for Children and Youth, where they benefit from a supportive and stable living environment and a range of therapeutic programs, from psychological counseling to animal therapy. These treatment methods contribute greatly to rehabilitating the traumatized youth and helping them overcome the challenges of their pasts.

Unfortunately, there is currently no designated space for the children to receive these therapies. Instead, the therapists and their tools are spread out across the Ahava Village campus, often in spaces that are not intended for therapeutic activities.

"Right now we don't have a therapy center, so we have different rooms," says Liat Lei-

bovich, a clinical psychologist at Ahava Village. "Many therapists work in bomb shelters. I work in this place that has plastic walls, and it's shaky, and you can hear what's happening in the next room. We don't have enough rooms, and we don't have enough space to conduct the therapy."

Ahava Village's staff is doing incredible work with the resources that are available, but they desperately need a designated therapy center to provide the children with the care they need. That's why Bnai Zion Foundation has been raising funds for a new therapy center that would unite all of Ahava Village's therapeutic offerings in one place, allowing these children to receive more customized, coordinated, and cutting-edge treatment to heal from their traumas and create a foundation for a happy and healthy life.

Bnai Zion Foundation is a nonprofit organization that identifies and funds capital projects in Israel in the areas of social inclusion, health, and culture. Over the past 110 years, Bnai Zion has raised tens of millions of dollars and completed over one hundred humanitarian projects in Israel that have contributed to the physical, mental, and social well-being of the people of Israel, including several projects benefiting Ahava Village.

According to Yoav Apelboim, Ahava Village's Executive Director, the center's construction is set to begin this May. However, the funding for the structure and its furnishings is not yet complete. Bnai Zion Foundation still needs to raise another \$500,000 to reach the fundraising goal for the project.

The new therapy center will benefit the over 250 abused and neglected children currently residing at Ahava Village and the thousands that will follow, allowing them to transcend their traumatic pasts, maximize their capabilities, and embrace opportunities for their future.

Proceeds from Bnai Zion Foundation's Annual Texas Spring Reception, to be held at Temple Emanu-El in Dallas on May 10, will go toward the building of this therapy center. The event will honor Lowell Michelson, Summer Paillet, and Caleb Waller for their tremendous contributions to Israel and the Dallas Jewish community. The evening will include a cocktail dinner buffet with Israeli wines and foods at 6:00 pm, and the program, which will begin at 7:30 pm, will feature a panel on Israeli cuisine with special guests Josh Feldman, Jordana Kohn, and Alyssa Wernick. To learn more and reserve your seat, visit [bnaizion.org](http://bnaizion.org).

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