

Project Report

The Fund for Victims of Israel's Wildfires



What started as a single fire on November 22nd became a firestorm engulfing many parts of the country. Even though the flames that have caused havoc and despair have been extinguished, we are only starting to deal with the full blunt force of the tragedy that has struck hundreds of Israeli families, a month after the crisis, as we fully realize that a sense of uncertainty remains for them. **Together with its world-wide network of friends and supporters, Keren Hayesod – United Israel Appeal has been on the ground, providing victims and their families with emergency relief. We are proud to report on the following accomplishments:**

- More than 70,000 people fled their homes as the fires burned and approximately 130,000 dunams (32,000 acres) of land were eradicated. The selfless determination of firefighters and security forces ensured that not a single life was lost.
- Accommodations and relief have been secured for each family whose homes were charred and destroyed.
- The fires have brought heartbreak and despair to people from all parts of Israeli society, but they have also brought together every segment of Israeli society. Israelis across the country have opened their hearts and homes to help their fellow brethren.

On behalf of the victims of the fire and their families we would like to express our sincere gratitude for your solidarity and support. Together, Keren Hayesod – United Israel Appeal has been able to provide more than 350 emergency grants through the Jewish Agency's Fund for Victims of Israel's Wildfires to victims in areas affected around the country, including Haifa, Zichron Yaakov, Mateh Yehuda, Mateh Binyamin, Nirit, and Gilon. Thanks to your generous donations, victims have the strength to endure their current crisis and the resolve to rebuild their futures.



Keren Hayesod Steps In

"I was overjoyed to receive a phone call from the Fund for Victims of Israel's Wildfires... While the government will provide some compensation for the damages, this grant was an additional lifeline that reminded me, especially during these difficult days, that all of Israel is responsible for one another." - Shai Gabay, a resident of Haifa

As the fires raged and intensified across the country, Keren Hayesod and worldwide donors mobilized to offer immediate emergency assistance to the victims of this firestorm. From the very outset of the crisis, Keren Hayesod worked closely with the Jewish Agency's Division for Emergencies and Special Tasks (which manages the Fund for Victims of Israel's Wildfires) to maintain a mission-focused work to support Israel and Israelis in a time of need. Together, our on-the-ground emergency efforts have included:

- The establishment of an emergency information desk in Haifa situated alongside those from the Haifa Municipality, Ministry of Finance, and others. The desk is manned by Jewish Agency professionals and volunteers who continue to assist those in need and provide them with timely information.
- The ongoing distribution of emergency grants of \$1,000 to families whose homes were entirely destroyed or have been determined to be structurally unfit for inhabitation. Fire investigators and surveyors have continued to work to assess each damaged home. The Fund for Victims of Israel's Wildfires, supported by Keren Hayesod, is committed to delivering grants to families after receiving their information from the local municipalities. These grants enable victims to purchase supplies such as clothing, food, medication, and medical equipment in the immediate aftermath.

Eligible Recipients and Grant Distribution Chart:

Community	Number of Eligible Recipients	Number of Grants Prepared	Number of Grants Distributed
Haifa	392	362	300
Zichron Yaakov	24	18	18
Halamish	32	32	32
Beit Meir	5	5	5
Telmon	2	2	2
Gilon	1	1	1
Nirit	2	2	2
Nataf	1	1	1
Total	465	423	361

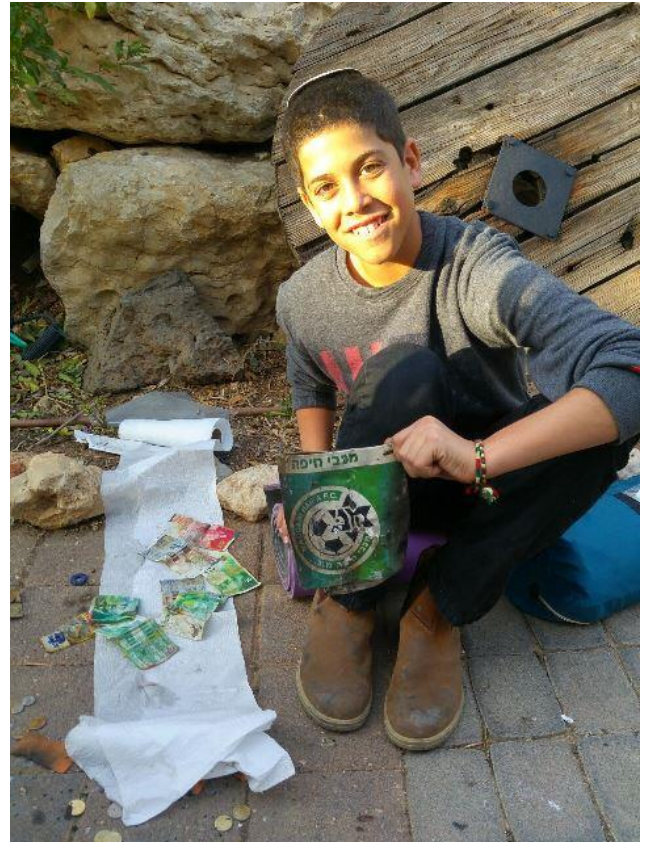
The Jewish Agency's Division for Emergencies and Special Tasks is responsible for distributing the checks from the Fund individually to each family. A professional from The Fund has been meeting with each family to personally deliver their check. Delivered with the grants is a letter with a message of support from Keren Hayesod and recognition of its major partners and worldwide donors who made it possible.



A Personal Story of Hope

We would like to share a story with you that shows the impact of Keren Hayesod's on-the-ground efforts to help the victims of the fires in Israel. **Members of the Fund for Victims of Israel's Wildfires have been traveling all over Israel – to every fire-ravaged city, town and neighborhood.** This team continues to deliver much-needed grants of US\$1,000 – each made possible by the generosity of our friends and supporters worldwide – to families who have lost almost everything to the flames.

On November 30, the Brat family in Talmon received a grant from the Fund for Victims of Israel's Wildfires. They met with Odelia Brat – wife to Ohad, and mother to their six children, ages 20, 18, 15, 13, 10, and 6. The Brat family had already evacuated their home once and returned when they received the all clear. They thought their home had escaped destruction. But sadly, they received evacuation orders a second time.



The family grabbed a few important items they had packed the first time they thought they were in danger. **The next time the Brats saw their house, the upstairs was blackened, and the outside of the home was unrecognizable.** (A picture of their house appears on the first page of the report.) Odelia and Ohad celebrated their son's bar mitzvah in the early fall this year. All his presents were under his bed, and were destroyed. After they evacuated their home, he thought his new tefillin – the parchment bearing leather boxes worn during prayers; a gift from his grandparents – were left behind in the house. The child was distraught. But after a few hours, he realized that his father had managed to take the tefillin along with the items he grabbed before they evacuated.

Another of the Brat's sons believed that the money he had earned this past summer mowing lawns in the community had been destroyed. But a friend unearthed the boy's badly burned tin bank a few days later, and found that the money – though dirty, and damp – was not destroyed. Hopefully by next summer, the Brats' son can return to his neighborhood, and mow the freshly regrown lawns. Buoyed by this small though happy finding amongst the remnants of what was once their home, the Brats are looking forward to rebuilding their house, and their lives. **Odelia said that the amount of care, concern, giving, help and support they have received thanks to Keren Hayesod and its partners has left her speechless.**

