

The Jewish Agency Loses its Exclusivity

Private Organizations to Receive \$1,000 for Each New Oleh

By: Eli Bardenstein

A blow to the Jewish Agency: The government of Israel yesterday formally recognized organizations that deal with encouraging Aliyah to Israel, in order to enhance Aliyah from the west. For each Oleh that arrives through them, the organizations will receive \$1,000. The essence of this decision is that the Jewish Agency has lost the exclusivity it has enjoyed up until now in bringing new immigrants to Israel.

Beginning in 2008, the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption will handle the distribution of the support to the organizations. The decision comes following a decision made in November 2005, which was first revealed in Maariv. The two independent organizations are Nefesh B'Nefesh which operates in North America, and Ami which operates in France, who offer up to \$20,000 in grants for families of Olim.

According to figures from the Ministry of Absorption, the two organizations together with the Jewish Agency succeeded in bringing 2,000 Olim in 2005, and 4,000 in 2006. The Ministry of

Immigration Absorption will work to broaden the scope of the organizations.

Over the past few weeks, Chairman of the Jewish Agency Zeev Bielski waged a battle, in trying to change the wording of the decision— but was not successful. Until recently, the Jewish Agency cooperated with Nefesh B'Nefesh, and funded, for about four years, \$1,000 to the organization for each Oleh, apart from the government funding. However in the last few months the relations between the organizations have been strained.

“We congratulate the government of Israel on its historic decision” said Chairman of Nefesh B'Nefesh Tony Gelbart. “This decision has great significance for the future of the State of Israel” added Minister of Immigrant Absorption Yaakov Edri. And as for the Jewish Agency, they responded by saying that “the Jewish Agency invests millions of dollars every year in supporting organizations that encourage Aliyah. The Jewish Agency will continue to support any initiative that helps to increase Aliyah to Israel and to absorb the new immigrants as best as possible.”

