The B’nai B’rith Riverdale Unit has begun a major drive to collect English language books for Israeli public schools. The effort is part of an inter-national campaign known as the Books for Israel Project, which is in its second year. The Project was initiated by sisters Jade Bar-Shalom (who teaches at Haifa University) and Rena Cohen (who lives in the United States) to remedy the dearth of English books at already financially strapped Israeli schools that are reeling from budget cuts. The books are critical for students in elementary and high school who are seeking to improve their English-language skills so they can go on to higher education, according to Bar-Shalom. “English is an international language of commerce and technology, as well as the current ‘lingua franca’ of diplomacy,” she added. “You cannot go on to study many subjects at universities without having a skilled ability to read the books, journals, and web sites that are published in English.”

The Books for Israel Project has collected some 14 tons of English-language books for Israeli schools from North American collection drives at synagogues, churches, schools, and other organizations, as well as through private donors. The books have enabled 28 school districts throughout the country to create English-language libraries serving Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Bedouin, and Druze students. Collection bins will be placed in various synagogues and other community institutions to enable Riverdale residents to contribute used books that are in good condition for students in grades K-12. The Riverdale Unit also hopes local residents will donate funds to help pay for the shipment of the books. The average cost of sending books by ship is $1 per pound. Volunteers also are being sought to help pack the books and take them to the post office. For more information, please contact Miriam Young at 718-549-7695 or Louis Falkenstein at 718-543-0757.