FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 26, 2008

Environmental Engagement in Orthodox Day Schools: Suggested Educational Strategies
New Study Defines a Path Forward

NEW YORK, NY—Canfei Nesharim today proudly announced the launch of its new study, “Environmental Engagement in Orthodox Day Schools: Suggested Educational Strategies.” The study explores current trends and available resources, and identifies strategies to enhance environmental education in the Orthodox Jewish day school community. This report is the first study of its kind in the Orthodox day school community, where environmental education from the perspective of Jewish tradition has often been conducted on an ad hoc basis, or not present at all.

“We are so pleased to offer this new study as a resource to the community,” said Evonne Marzouk, Canfei Nesharim executive director. “The report explores what is currently happening in Orthodox day schools, and charts a path that all organizations can use to bring this important Torah-based learning into Jewish schools.” Marzouk commented that connecting traditional Jewish wisdom to today’s modern challenges, such as the environment, can help young Jews recognize the relevance of our tradition to their lives today.

The study is based on a series of focus groups conducted by Canfei Nesharim in 2008, including 14 Orthodox day schools in the regions of Washington, DC; New York, NY; Boston, MA; Los Angeles, CA; and San Francisco, CA. The focus groups were conducted in partnership with the Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning (DC); the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York (NY); and the Bureau of Jewish Education (Boston). The series of focus groups, and educational strategy, were funded by an Ignition Grant from the Covenant Foundation (www.covenantfn.org).

“I was pleased to participate and learn from a lively group of educators who were clearly committed to teaching their students about the environment,” said the study author, Saundra Sterling Epstein of B’Yachad in Elkins Park, PA. “These strategies will help them learn from each other and help Canfei Nesharim provide what they need to take the next step. The results will make a difference for all of us as observant Jews – and as people who live on this planet.”

The study describes existing programs in the schools that participated, and recommends the development of curriculum resources which can be integrated into teachers’ existing classroom commitments over the course of the school year. Additionally, the study recommends opportunities for interaction between teachers who are already engaged in Torah-based environmental education, so that they can learn from one another and share resources. In response to the study, Canfei Nesharim will create a series of curriculum resources, in partnership with key schools, in 2009.

Canfei Nesharim (Heb: “The Wings of Eagles”) is committed to inspiring Jews of all denominations to take an active role in protecting the environment as a key Jewish responsibility. Canfei Nesharim also provides a weekly Torah commentary with a teaching on the environment, and maintains a full resource library of articles, programs, and suggested actions on their website. Download the full study at: http://www.canfeinesharim.org/school/index.php

# # #