



# Update . . .

November 2006

5767 Cheshvan



*Volunteers load boxes full of aid onto a delivery truck.*

## Helping Over 4,000 in Kiryat Shmona!

*by Richard Weisskopf*

The majestic mountains mesmerize our team as the bus enters Kiryat Shmona. The clean fresh air, fruit trees and lush greenery make apparent why some call this a gateway to the Garden of Eden.

We could not imagine the “apocalyptic scene” as a representative from the mayor’s office described the area only three months ago. Smoke had billowed from half this tranquil city. We learned during a debriefing with the mayor that nearly 50% of the city lived below the poverty level before the war. Now the local economy is in crisis. How could a place surrounded by stunning beauty have such severe problems?

We turn a corner and make our way to the community center. Hundreds of impoverished people are already pressing against the entrance. Long

lines of families stream from all directions. Many more are already inside collecting diapers, clothes, kitchen sets, toys and blankets. Much of the pavement sunk into the mud long ago. We have to be careful where we step along the path leading to the center.

We pass an elderly woman barely navigating the muddy path assisted by a cane in one hand and a grandchild on the other arm. She notices us walking by. “May G-d pour many blessings from Heaven upon all of you!” She cries out to you along with those of us physically present.

A volunteer at the door greets us warmly. Those inside react as if a group of kings just entered. We are the only ones here wearing new clothes.

It strikes me that these volunteers are as poor as the people they serve - yet behave wealthier in spirit than I. A camera and microphone are suddenly in my face. In a rare moment, I am at a loss for words. I manage a brief speech for the media and hurry to the adjacent meeting hall.

A pink elephant plays with small children while another volunteer prepares popcorn and juice. Cameramen scurry everywhere to capture the moment. Truckloads of aid from around the world occupy all the available space. Our partners have pitched in well over 1.25 million shekels worth of aid today!

I am humbled by the fact that many impoverished residents thought to help their neighbors ahead of themselves on this day. They inspire our team in a way we had not anticipated.

Two men from the team help the elderly schlep large boxes through the mud - in their best suits! Another from the team is on a cell phone for hours negotiating follow-up assistance. My administrative assistant has abandoned me to the cause. I find myself explaining to each volunteer that he or she is my hero.

The flow of people through the building never lets up all day. A volunteer comments that this day really inspires them to press on. It really comforts the local residents to have so many people visit in solidarity with Kiryat Shmona.

Volunteers have been distributing blankets to 700 elderly in the area who cannot afford to properly heat their apartments in the winter. We join them to deliver blankets to a few homebound elderly who shower tearful gratitude.

Supertime - the mayor whisks us away to dine with city counsel members and two former defense ministers from the

area. They are very grateful that so many people from around the world are helping in their time of need.

The evening culminates with a distribution honoring 500 young soldiers from the area living below the poverty level.

Late at night we arrive at a hotel overlooking this paradise that terrorists besieged with rockets three months ago. We managed to bring some comfort to over 4,000 people this day. There is already talk among our partners of a permanent local distribution center. What an amazing day this has been!

The team is already planning a similar Purim marketplace party in S'derot. The network's goal is to distribute over \$50 million worth of aid throughout Israel in 2007. May we truly strengthen and be strengthened!

The Love for Israel Relief Fund and its network partners wants to expand the work we do in 2007. We want to help hospitals, shelters, homes for at-risk children and many other humanitarian needs in Israel. We want to partner with you in order help Israel more effectively. Please contact us to explore ways in which we can work together. On behalf of everyone you bless - todah robah!

Please check out our website frequently for updates:

<http://www.love4israel.org>

Send checks to:

**Love for Israel Relief Fund**  
2020 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Suite 445  
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