

Tens of Thousands in Jerusalem Stream to Mesa

Over \$5 million value in assistance distributed

By Frimet Blum

Mesamche Lev was founded 35 years ago by Rabbi Zalman Ashkenazi, *shlita*. It serves thousands of poor Jews in Eretz Yisrael and has an annual budget of over \$5 million. The organization serves the sick, large families, *bonei Torah*, *baalei teshuvah* and others in need. At a cost of \$3 million (with a retail value of over \$5 million), the Pesach distribution is Mesamche Lev's largest project. This year, the falling dollar meant that money raised could not go as far as usual — but the organization did not cut even one person off its list. With tremendous *siyatta diShmaya*, and extensive effort, they were able to help as many people as ever. Over 11,000 families will celebrate Yom Tov with plentiful food, comfort and joy, thanks to their efforts.



The gigantic 25,000 sq. ft. tent at the entrance to Givat Shaul in Yerushalayim.

History was made this week, as tens of thousands of people in Jerusalem streamed to a massive tent, where the Mesamche Lev organization distributed millions of dollars in new shoes and food for Pesach. The distribution was epic, both in scope and in the degree of relief it provided to individual families. Organizers believe it was the largest relief distribution ever to take place in Jerusalem.

Over 60,000 pairs of shoes, 30,000 pounds (13,600 kg) of matzah, 300,000 pounds (136,000 kg) of fish, poultry and meat, 4,000 cases of wine, and

“I heard from Moreinu Harav Hagaon Reb Itzikel of Pshevorsk, *zt”l*, that when a person takes one step for others, it is considered a thousand steps for himself. If that is true, then it is impossible to calculate the many steps you have to your merit, in the *zechus* of the thousands of footsteps you have enabled, by giving shoes to tens of thousands of *Yiddishe kinderlech*. It is like the sand of the sea, which can't be counted ...

Rav S. L.
Jerusalem

hundreds of thousands of dollars in grocery and clothing vouchers were distributed to thousands of poor families. In addition, \$500,000 in cash was distributed to 413 widows and over 2,000 orphans. The shoes

and food will allow the poor to celebrate Pesach in dignity and joy.

Participants in the distribution were amazed at the tremendous efforts made by the organization to maintain the recipi-

ents' dignity and to provide a level of service rare even in expensive commercial establishments. The distribution was the culmination of months of concerted effort.

Recipient families, who were

referred to Mesamche Lev by Rabbanim, received an application in the mail, requesting information about their needs. The application included a section asking families to list the shoe sizes, and preference for Shabbos or weekday shoes, for every member of the family.

Families were then mailed a magnetic card, along with appointment times to pick up their shoes and food. The appointments were staggered, so that although 60,000 people were served, there was no crowding. Close to 200 volunteers helped families choose and fit their shoes. Every person chose a brand-new, top-quality pair of shoes. Families paid a token NIS 20 for the shoes, so that they felt they were purchasing them.

“The distribution was unbelievable,” says Malka, a mother of 12 from Beitar Ilit, who traveled to Jerusalem especially to get shoes for her children. “Everything was so organized and dignified. Every effort was made to make us feel special and well-treated, not like we were getting a handout.”

“My children are absolutely thrilled with their beautiful new shoes,” writes Moshe, an *avreich* from Jerusalem. “They never knew that shoes come in a box. We normally wear hand-me-downs or used shoes from a *gemach*.”

He exchanged Yom Tov greetings with a Sephardic father of eight, who was just ahead of him. Mesamche Lev serves Ashkenazi and Sephardic families from every segment of the Orthodox Jewish world.

The shoes being distributed were top-quality imports from



Hagaon Harav Auerbach, *shlita* visits the massive Mesamche Lev tent.



Hagaon Harav Sheiner, *shlita* is briefed about the tremendous shoe distribution of Mesamche Lev.