

Mesamche Lev Does It Again: A Massive Chessed Project With Heart and Soul

The Yom Tov season is upon us, and everybody is busy preparing for Sukkos, an *esrog* here and a pack of *sechach* there. Long lines form in the grocery stores, butcher shops, clothing stores, and hardware stores. Everyone is happy to shop for Yom Tov and buy all the necessities for this enjoyable holiday.

But what happens when the family's financial resources fall sadly short of this need? When the burden becomes too much to bear? With Mesamche Lev, they need not despair.

Thousands of needy families from all walks of life, from Yerushalayim to Bnei Brak, from Ashdod to Beit Shemesh and Beitar, were relieved and delighted to hear that Mesamche Lev will - again - come to their rescue, and help them bring the holiday in.

Altogether, Mesamche Lev reached out and lightened the hearts of an astonishing 11,000 families during this past month alone.

On the occasion of the upcoming Yom Tov, Mesamche Lev distributed more than 156,000 pounds of chicken, 58,000 pounds of beef, and 132,000 pounds of fish to thousands of needy families, totaling almost 350,000 pounds of food.

In fact, the poultry and meat distribution is of such magnitude that Mesamche Lev utilizes its own "store" bearing the unobtrusive sign, "Meat & Fish." As truck after truck pulled up in front of the store on Rabeinu Gershom Street and unloaded more fish, chicken and meat, bystanders had no inkling that the "patrons" of this store were anything but standard consumers, picking up their Yom Tov orders.

From mid-Elul, a large staff of chareidi *yungeleit* donned white coats and began serving the customers with the efficiency that characterizes Mesamche Lev. The "customer" handed the Mesamche Lev electromagnetic card - which every family received subsequent to filling out the applications - to the cashier, who swiped it. The computer brings up the preprogrammed information regarding the amount of produce the family is entitled to. In a pleasant and accommodating manner, orders were filled according to the family's preferences, no less than if they were cash customers.

For the last three weeks, the store was constantly open for over 13 hours a day! During the whole time, people kept filling the store, getting their orders filled. It looked like a big marketplace in the heart of Manhattan or Machne Yehuda. What a Kiddush Hashem!

The pleasant, good-natured demeanor of the volunteers serving the "customers" was tremendous. In fact, some customers were overheard saying, "We've never enjoyed such courteous service in a butcher shop - even in the most expensive one, where we paid top dollar!"

Truth be told, the courtesy and friendliness of all those involved



The noble "Fish & Meat market", where thousands of needy families got there Yom Tov orders, was open to the public 13 hours a day, for the last 3 weeks, generating an enormous Kiddush Hashem!

was no coincidence. Mesamche Lev's mantra, which it consistently instills in all its volunteers, is courtesy and respect for its "clients," making sure that they are never made to feel inferior or humiliated in any way.

This year, a new kind of *chessed* joined the list: the distribution of coupons for clothing and dry goods for thousands of needy families. Mesamche Lev didn't even consider the big additional burden this will put on their already-overdrawn budget; they just imagined how many families will rejoice at having new clothes for Yom Tov, and jumped right in! Mesamche Lev just didn't have the heart to say "no" and turn down the numerous requests they got.

Even greater than the many different types of distributions Mesamche Lev coordinates is their knack of identifying and finding out about those in need. In fact, when one *askan* approached the office of Mesamche Lev with the intention of telling them about a particularly proud but needy family that could badly use the help of Mesamche Lev, he was flabbergasted to learn that the family had already been found out by the dedicated Mesamche Lev organization and was already "in the system!"

The noble activities of Mesamche Lev are not limited only to Pre-Yom Tov distributions. To date, there are 430 widows and thousands of destitute families that Mesamche Lev supports all year round. More than \$600,000 has been issued in checks for these needy families this Sukkos alone.

Mesamche Lev is multi-branched, with numerous activities throughout the year. For example, all year round and especially before Yom Tov, there are special debit cards that enable needy families to "purchase" much needed provisions in the Hachi Kdai Supermarket. But of all their amazing projects, the massive pre-Peach shoe distribution that provides tens of thousands of children with new leather shoes is its most famous.

For 36 years, Mesamche Lev has been steadily growing, and is currently a multifaceted organization, with an annual budget of \$5 million. Mesamche Lev stands out like a beacon of light, lending new meaning to the words, "Mi ke'amcha Yisrael." Surely, no other nation in the world can produce *tzedakah* and *chessed* of such monumental proportions.

While much credit for this massive accomplishment unquestionably goes to the founder of Mesamche Lev, it is surely shared by the countless donors, who have opted to be partners in this holy work by contributing generously to this very worthy cause. Indeed, when they sit in their own sukkah, surrounded by their families and loved ones, they can bask in the heartwarming joy that comes from knowing that, because of them, so many destitute, needy families are having true *simchas Yom Tov*.