

Ohr Meir and Bracha Helps Displaced Families From Northern Israel

While the media continues to focus on Lebanese refugees, tens of thousands of Jews in northern Israel have fled their homes. Many will not have homes to return to.

Leora Tedgi, founder and director of Ohr Meir and Bracha Terror Victims Aid, called us and begged us to let Jews in America know what is happening and enlist their help.

"When the war began," she told us, "the families in the north thought it would end quickly, so they tried to hang around the bomb shelters; but as time went on the rockets came more and more frequently, and more and more people were getting hurt or killed. Many people in Tzefat decided to leave.

"However, even leaving was difficult. One woman from Tzefat told us that as she tried to pack, sixteen Katyushas fell, so she had to pick out what she needed most, but it was close to impossible to do with the rockets falling. After one last missile exploded nearby, her son became so frightened that he kept repeating, 'Mummy, I want to live, I want to live.' It was terrible.

"This family contacted us at Ohr Meir and Bracha, and we received them warmly. We put them up in a yeshivah dormitory of Netzach, which we have rented for refugees. We hosted them for Shabbos and they are doing much better."

Leora told of a young couple who survived the terror attack in Beit Yisrael in 2002. They had

moved to Haifa because of their fear of further suicide attacks, and when the bombings began in Haifa, they were very frightened. Someone in Jerusalem offered them a place to stay, so they came back.

The 'place to stay' turned out to be a basement storeroom without a single window. With a small child, and no stroller even to go out with, the stress was enormous, leading to tension between the couple. Ohr Meir and Bracha stepped in and restored *shalom bayis*, finding the family an apartment that had once been used as an office.

Leora described another woman with a young daughter whom she had been putting to sleep when the first Kaytusha fell in her town. As she was saying *Shema* with her daughter, it exploded loudly near their house. The situation got worse and worse, and the child went to sleep in her mother's bed. When another bomb fell, she called out, "Ima, I don't want to die." That was the last straw. The mother left home and came to Ohr Meir and Bracha, which put them up in the Netzach dormitory building.

Many families had funding and went to inexpensive hotels, but now their funds have run dry and things have become very difficult, especially for large families.

Ohr Meir and Bracha is getting more and more requests for housing. In Leora's words: "From the beginning of this war,

my nights have turned to days. I feel the pain in my heart; I am very tired and I feel pressure from all directions. We now have 60 people placed in Yeshivat Netzach, 35 people in Ramot, 45 in Neve Yaakov, 60 in Yishuv Kisalon, and 20 in Hashmonaim. Fifteen families from Tzefat who just contacted us are in the Serotzkin area, and they are urgently requesting baby bottles, pacifiers, diapers, formula, wipes, towels, bedding, and other items.

"We just received a special request from the mayor of Kiryat Shemona. People are in shelters, and the grocery stores are closed. There is no business, and 2,000 people have run out of money and are in crisis. The mayor sent us a list of basic grocery items that he is requesting for each family. We have already ordered 2,000 loaves of bread from Berman Bakery and a big truckload of vegetables. We hope that the Yidden, *rachmanim bnei rachmanim*, will open their hearts to help us."

If you would like to make a donation, checks can be made out to Ohr Meir and Bracha and sent to Ohr Meir and Bracha Terror Victims Support Center, 3/1 Yakim Street, P.O. Box 41055, Jerusalem 91410 Israel. To contact the organization, call 972 2 5824630, or mobile 972 528330901.

Donations in the U.S. can be sent to Ohr Meir and Bracha, 35 Dr. Frank Road, Spring Valley, N.Y. 10977. Call (845) 270-8801.