

Meir Panim Relief Centers...

American Friends of
Meir Panim
Relief Centers in Israel

Front Line Report

People for People

FALL 2006



Battling Terror - Behind the Scenes

To my dear readers and partners in our lifesaving work:

Shalom and Greetings!

At present, we are engaged in a war in Israel. While some say this war is taking place in the north of the country, we know that many more areas of Israel are affected. The long and treacherous arm of terror does not distinguish between Sderot, Netivot, Sefad, or any other place. In their thirst for Jewish blood, terrorists will attempt to harm, destroy, intimidate and divide Jews, wherever they may be.

These last few days, I have been privileged to observe, support and be part of the resilience of the Jewish Nation, by means of our wonderful organization. Thank G-d, we have been able to play a critical role in generating the recent national display of generosity and unity. **Meir Panim has turned into a wellspring of endless support for the people of Israel.**

The unfortunate people whose homes were destroyed have turned to us for support. Private citizens and community leaders alike know that they can appeal to us for help with any problem. In a very short time, we have found ourselves running from shelter to shelter, feeding the old and young, while providing toys for children, thousands of mattresses, a listening ear, and a soothing hand.

We have made it our business to find immediate solutions for any issue, whether it be finding a place for a family to spend the night, bringing a meal to a lonely elderly woman, or transporting a newly homeless family with handicapped children. **The telephone rings around the clock with no respite.** The important thing is that we care, and each day I am made more aware of the critical importance of the help and support we provide.

The unfortunate people whose homes were destroyed have turned to us for support...



It is all in your merit – our dear friends who support our activities at the front line and behind the scenes. If only I could show you the smile of a frightened girl after receiving a pretty doll that helped her forget the awful images and sounds in her mind, the noise of the siren, broken walls, surrounding chaos, injured neighbors, crying parents.... And now in a moment of peace she can smile, for she has a place to sleep, warm food and even toys.

I urge you to take an active part in our essential projects. We need you to contribute and participate in our wonderful, widespread activities - all for the sake of helping the Jewish Nation.

David Roth, President
American Friends of Meir Panim





David Zilbershlag, Founder
 David Roth, President
 Michael Fromm, Chairman
 Chaim Buchinger, Administrative Director

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Meir Panim Relief Centers provide critical food and social services to Israel's tremendous needy population, helping to restore their dignity and independence. The largest charity conduit of its kind in the country, Meir Panim currently operates 28 centers in distressed locations statewide. Volunteers from a colorful array of backgrounds work side by side, restoring the traditional sense of community and caring in Israel.



MESSAGE FROM
our Chairman

As I write this greeting, war is raging in the Middle East. It is my hope and prayer that by the time you read my words, the immediate threats to Israel's security will have been neutralized.

Even if we are successful in reaching this objective, the crisis in Israel will be far from over. The war's devastating impact -- physical, psychological and economic -- on Israeli society, will have far-reaching implications and will require that the virtually instant build-up of social service capabilities that occurred when the fighting was at its worst is maintained for as long as there are families suffering devastating loss, residents displaced from their homes and workers with no source of income.

In between watching the jolting newscasts showing Hezbollah rockets falling on Israeli towns where I have visited friends, I have been reading reports of the heroic efforts of countless humanitarian organizations attempting to provide whatever comfort they can to those in need...and the needs are seemingly endless.

But once again, Israeli society and the entire Jewish philanthropic community have demonstrated that they are nothing short of remarkable in their willingness to drop everything to help. **The response among Meir Panim's donors, along with supporters of many other Israeli relief agencies, was immediate and emphatic.** The near spontaneous mobilization of resources on the ground by agency professionals, and the unhesitating reaction of volunteers who left jobs and families behind to rush to the front lines of the crisis, is awe inspiring.

During this time of utter chaos, one man was called upon by the Israeli government and large corporations to lead an umbrella organization responsible for coordinating the work of a vast network of social service agencies. Meir Panim founder Dudi Zilbershlag was asked to chair "Yisrael Beyachad" ("Israel Together") - the Civil Support Coalition, with the goal of optimizing resources and deployment of each participating agency's relief efforts.

I cannot foresee the status of the crisis when you read this greeting, but one thing is for sure: The resolve of Israel -- and of the Diaspora -- will have been tested once again, and the world will have seen our steely determination to preserve and protect a Jewish homeland.

On behalf of the board of directors of American Friends of Meir Panim, I want to thank all of our generous donors and our dedicated staff and volunteers for their contributions and sacrifices during these difficult times. I would also like to wish everyone a happy and healthy New Year, and most importantly, offer a prayer for sustained peace in the Middle East.

Michael Fromm, Chairman
 American Friends of Meir Panim

Bar Mitzvah Gifts that Keep on Giving

When James & Wendy Abrams invited guests to their son David's Bar Mitzvah, they included a message asking people to direct their gifts to Meir Panim (instead of the Bar Mitzvah boy) to help feed hungry people in Israel. The response was phenomenal – David's selfless appeal resulted in an outpouring of generosity totaling more than \$20,000.00!

The Abrams clan became part of the extended Meir Panim family back in December, when they visited Meir Panim in Jerusalem on a family Bar/Bat Mitzvah mission trip in honor of a triple simcha in the family. The entire family, including the children, rolled up their sleeves and helped prepare and serve meals to the diners at the Meir Panim restaurant. Everyone was extraordinarily moved and touched by the experience.

We are extremely grateful to the Abrams family for sharing Meir Panim's message, educating others about our important mission, and encouraging involvement in the cause. It is people like the Abrams family, being true role models in the wonderful realm of charity and loving-kindness, who ensure the continuity of our tradition and heritage.



One principal's motto: Never give up!!

Netzach Yisrael Elementary School in Kiryat Malachi recently competed for a regional prize among 300 religious elementary schools in the southern region of Israel – and THEY WON!

What makes this so remarkable is that only three and a half years ago, the school was scheduled to close due to its poor overall condition. But the principal hired right before the scheduled closing was determined to turn the school around, and with a lot of help from Meir Panim, she succeeded with flying colors.

The school is comprised of the poorest children in town – mostly immigrant children from Ethiopia. On a national socio-economic scale of one to ten, with one being the highest, it rates 8.3.

Coming face to face with the severe hunger and poverty endured by these students, the principal contacted Meir Panim and the school began receiving daily meals. Meir Panim also donated computers and set up an after-school youth club, among various other programs designed to help students succeed both socially and academically.

Grades and behavior in the school improved dramatically, leading to the recent receipt of the regional prize in recognition of superior scholastic achievement from Daas Hachinuch Hadaati. According to the grateful principal and staff, it's all thanks to Meir Panim's caring involvement and intervention.





Meir Panim Around the World:



Bazaar in Florida Helps Brighten Faces in Israel



A bazaar on behalf of Meir Panim recently took place in Aventura, Florida. It was coordinated by Dayana Susterman, daughter of dedicated Meir Panim supporter Alberto Susterman.

The bazaar brought about the essential community spirit that makes functions such as these successful, and helped familiarize people with Meir Panim's humanitarian work. The shoppers were delighted with the neatly arrayed merchandise, which was of excellent taste and quality. The buyers were also very pleased to know that the money they were spending was going to such a wonderful cause.



Solomon Schechter Day School's Yearlong Project for Meir Panim



Students at the Solomon Schechter Day School of Bergen County, New Jersey, collected money and participated in "hesed" (acts of kindness), as part of a yearlong project to benefit Meir Panim.

Across the grades, teachers created opportunities to teach about Meir

Panim Relief Centers, and students and the Schechter community responded with all kinds of activities.

Eighth graders volunteered their time to clean out a Meir Panim - Power of Giving warehouse on their pioneering trip to Israel, and the fourth and fifth grade choruses performed at the benefit concert in Avery Fisher Hall, Lincoln Center.

Other grades worked on projects including decorating and filling tzedakah boxes, creating and selling Hanukkah pins and "Tu B'shevat" goodie bags, writing and performing a play, running a snack bar, organizing bake sales, selling Meir Panim bracelets, etc.

The school raised more than \$8,000 and received a certificate of appreciation presented to Ricky Stamler-Goldberg, Judaic Studies Curriculum Coordinator, by Eli Shaharabany, Development Director of Meir Panim.



Children & Parents of Barkai Yeshivah Lend a Helping Hand

The children of the early childhood center of Barkai Yeshivah made bracelets out of different beads including "faces" (in Hebrew: panim). They were sold to other children in the school and parents, with the proceeds going to help

supply meals to the needy in Israel.

Meir Panim thanks the generous parents of Barkai who sponsored many other gifts that were sold alongside the bracelets. Rabbi Yehoshua Shani, Rosh Yeshivah of Barkai Yeshivah, and the leaders of the Mechinah deserve warm thanks for their outstanding devotion, and for presenting a sizeable donation to help further Meir Panim's humanitarian work



Fundraiser for Meir Panim Held at Congregation Bet Shaul U'Miriam



On Tuesday August 15, 2006, a benefit to boost Meir Panim's relief activities on the northern front was held at Congregation Bet Shaul U'Miriam in Brooklyn. The event was spearheaded by Mrs. Esther Simon and a wonderful group of volunteers who spared no time or effort to ensure its successful outcome. The program included a presentation and short video of Meir Panim, an enlightening lecture from Rabbi Daniel Mechanic of Project Chazon and a mini Chinese Auction, highlighting Israeli-made products. Raffles for two plane tickets to Israel were also sold. The raffle drawing is scheduled for Chanukah 2006.



ISRAELI EVENTS

Swieca & Zeffren Families Donate Refrigerated Truck



A state-of-the-art refrigerated truck was donated jointly by the Swieca family of New York and the Zeffren family of Los Angeles. Their generous donation is of great assistance to the food production plants, helping to deliver thousands of meals to hungry schoolchildren every day.

Meir Panim is grateful to David & Mira Zeffren and family, and to Henry & Estee Swieca and family, for their warm and gracious help throughout the year.

Yeshiva University Pitches In

Fifteen students from Yeshiva University in New York were in Israel this summer, volunteering with Meir Panim in Dimona and Yerucham for one month. Their volunteer work included improving the appearance of the cities, whitewashing homes and shelters, painting building facades, and operating English language courses in summer camps for children in Yerucham.



Mausner Fashion Chain Launches Clothing Drive in Cooperation with "Meir Panim"



The Mausner Women's Fashion Chain, in cooperation with Meir Panim, conducted a clothing drive for needy families throughout the month of June. Customers were encouraged to bring clothing they no longer used to the stores. In exchange for each item of clothing donated, the customer received a 25 NIS discount on clothing from the chain's summer collection. Mausner also matched contributions by donating one brand new item of clothing for every used item returned. Meir Panim will distribute everything collected to needy women..

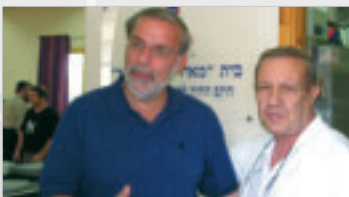


New Truck for Meir Panim - Power of Giving

A new truck, beautifully painted with the Meir Panim logo and graphics, was recently donated by a special family from Jerusalem in memory of Mordechai and Chaya Korach, ob"m. The truck will serve the southern region and will be used to collect and distribute furniture to needy families in the area.



From Brooklyn To The Frontlines of Chesed



Brooklyn Assemblyman Dov Hikind and Queens Councilman Dave Weprin, along with 16 others, flew to Israel recently in an effort to assist the beleaguered residents of Northern Israel.

Part of the group's mission was to assist Israeli citizens who were essentially marooned in Northern shelters without a sustainable source of supplies. Hikind, Weprin and others in the group helped hand out nutritious meals prepared at Meir Panim's Kiryat Malachi soup kitchen in Southern Israel and shipped to stricken Northern

communities via refrigerated trucks the same day.

One member of the group revealed, "The conditions in these shelters were beyond belief. People were living in cramped and hot shelters that were not

designed to hold so many people over a long period of time. It was important not only to give them something good to eat but also just to talk with the families and their kids in order to make them feel as if they weren't alone."

Councilman Weprin conjured up a disturbing parallel. "It's almost like what happened in New Orleans last summer. The poorer people had no means of escape. And in Northern Israel, we see the same thing as people with limited financial means are stuck here," he said matter-of-factly.



From the United States with Love



As soon as the war broke out about four weeks ago, the Schusterman family members decided to come to Israel in a show of solidarity with the northern residents. As Alberto Schusterman said: "As soon as I saw the pictures from Israel and the distress of the northern residents, I

wanted to be where my heart was."

Upon arriving in Israel, the Schusterman family visited shelters in the north, met with soldiers and distributed treats, towels and other personal items.

Alberto Schusterman is a tireless activist for Meir Panim and has a large following of pro-Israel friends in the United States.



A Miracle Takes Shape in Kiryat Gat Update #1

Meir Panim's Kiryat Gat mega-kitchen center recently moved into an accelerated phase of construction, thanks to a very generous two million dollar donation from New York publisher and philanthropist Mortimer Zuckerman, and warmhearted contributions from additional donors and friends.

When the project is completed in late 2007, 50,000 youngsters from Beersheba, Dimona, Sderot, Yeruham, Ofakim, and Kiryat Gat will enjoy a delicious, nutritionally balanced meal. The food will be prepared and packaged in the new facility and shipped to educational institutions via refrigerated trucks.

The Kiryat Gat facility will also provide much needed jobs for unemployed area residents and will integrate a group of one hundred emotionally challenged individuals via an occupational rehabilitation program created by the Israeli Health Ministry & National Insurance Institute.



While Meir Panim's longtime dream comes to life, brick-by-brick, in Kiryat Gat, there is still much work to be done. The sheer size of the facility and its daily operating costs represent a fundraising challenge and unique opportunities for willing donors.

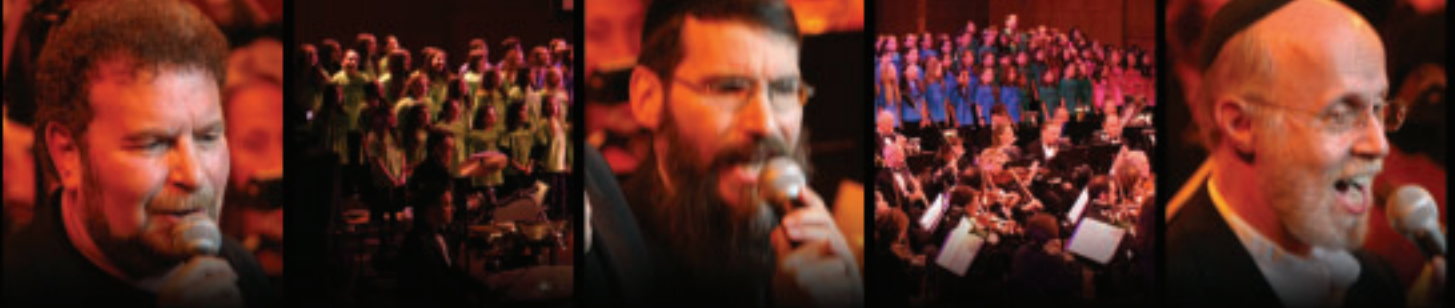


Representatives from Temple Am David of Rhode Island visit Meir Panim

On Tuesday, July 27th, Meir Panim was thrilled to welcome a visiting group from Temple Am David in Warwick, Rhode Island.

Led by Cantor Richard Perlman, a longtime friend and supporter of Meir Panim, the group proudly presented a generous donation to Meir Panim. The funds were raised through the annual pre-Pesach spaghetti dinner, and in their Hebrew school, through the efforts of teacher Barbara Dwares. Looking forward to next year's spaghetti dinner!





“Evening of Hope” at Lincoln Center

Thunderous applause punctuated the star-studded evening on Sunday, March 19, 2006, as Dudu Fisher, Avraham Fried, and Elli Kranzler, accompanied by 150 children’s voices and the World Symphony Orchestra led by Yonatan Raz’el, took to the stage in a concert benefitting the Kiryat Gat Meals for Children Project of Meir Panim.



The concert celebrated the legacy and timeless music of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach. The concert opened with a moving video-taped address by then Acting Prime Minister of Israel, Ehud Olmert, who spoke about his warm relationship with David Zilbershlag, Meir Panim’s founder, and welcomed and thanked all participants for their support of a cause that “helps bridge the wide gap between those who have and those who have not”.

Mortimer Zuckerman, Publisher of the New York Daily News, U.S. News & World Report, and Atlantic Monthly, served as concert chairman and spoke via pre-recorded video (a link to the video

is available on www.meirpanim.org). Mr. Zuckerman is also the CEO of Boston Properties and former President of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. His generosity, commitment and support were later hailed by his friend Malcolm Hoenlein who announced the dedication of the Kiryat Gat facility (which will be feeding 50,000 children a day in the Negev region) in honor of Mort and his daughter Abigail.

Elli Kranzler, a longtime Carlebach fan, well known for his singing on the D’veykus and Journeys albums, set the tone for the evening with a riveting Carlebach Shabbat Medley. International superstar Dudu Fisher’s moving rendition of “Neshama” nearly shook the walls and brought down the house. True to style, Avraham Fried’s performance was particularly and inimitably warm and enthusiastic.

A video-taped performance of a children’s choir from Kiryat Malachi by children who enjoy daily hot meals from Meir Panim was introduced by Ayala Hagag, their principal. Ms. Hagag’s cogent account of the circumstances in which many of her students live gave the audience an insider’s description of the terrible effects of poverty and hunger on young children and ended with an emotional thanks to Meir Panim’s founder, Dudi Zilbershlag, and President, Dudi Roth, for the tremendous positive impact the organization’s services have made in her school.

One of the highlights of the evening was the perfectly orchestrated children’s choir comprising 150 young and beautiful voices. Coordinated by Caroll Goldberg, Director of Performing Arts at The Ramaz School, the children were from Hillel Yeshiva of New Jersey, Moriah School of Englewood, North Shore Hebrew Academy, Ramaz School, SAR Academy, and Solomon Schechter Day School of Bergen County.

Toward the end of the performances, Malcolm Hoenlein, Executive Vice Chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, delivered a well-received inspirational call to action.

Mr. Hoenlein noted the presence of well-known philanthropist Ronald Lauder, a dear and true friend of the people of Israel. As President of the Jewish National Fund, Mr. Lauder is uniquely committed to the Negev – where the new Kiryat Gat facility will function to relieve hunger among children and to employ those hardest hit by the economic crisis and personal handicaps.

Mr. Hoenlein announced that over \$4 million had been successfully raised by the concert, bringing the dream of a mega-kitchen facility feeding 50,000 children a day very close to realization. Approximately \$1.5 million remains to be raised to complete the project. Mr. Hoenlein mentioned the recent Torah reading, which relates the counting of the Jews in the desert, and explained: “We Jews are not counted by numbers, but by giving.” Notable among other friends and supporters of Meir Panim was Cantor Avi Albrecht of Beth Tfiloh, Baltimore, a dedicated volunteer serving as Meir Panim’s Major Event Chairperson who was the driving force behind the concert.

The Carlebach family generously supported and attended the concert. In a letter thanking Meir Panim and printed in the playbill, they wrote: “He (Reb Shlomo) would have loved this event, and would have been so proud of what Meir Panim is accomplishing. May his music continue to inspire us all to open our hearts and our hands to those less fortunate in order to truly bring light and love into every dark corner.” Amen.



Soup Kitchens

Dignified soup kitchens/restaurants with a warm and caring atmosphere serve free nutritious meals in distressed locations statewide.

Meals on Wheels

Packaged meals are delivered every day to the handicapped, elderly, and Holocaust survivors.

Meals for Children

Hot, nourishing lunches are delivered to thousands of needy youngsters in kindergarten and elementary schools.

Kiryat Gat Mega-Kitchen Center

A state-of-the-art facility will soon provide meals to more than 50,000 needy children in the economically deprived Negev region, as well as employment opportunities for local residents.

After School Youth Clubs

After enjoying educational and recreational activities, including help with schoolwork and homework, participating children receive a nutritious hot meal.

Power of Giving

A chain of refurbished housewares and furniture warehouses delivers basic amenities and comfort including electronics, furniture, toys, and clothes to those in need.

Vocational Training

Hands-on vocational training courses provide students with marketable skills in a variety of fields ranging from computers and electronics to carpentry and shoe making.

Professional Training for Battered Women

Empowers women leaving shelters by guiding them toward personal and financial independence through counseling, training, and successful integration into the workforce.

Computers from the Heart

Teens and adolescents who have dropped out of educational frameworks are taught to repair computers donated by the public.

Project "A Full Plate"

Magnetic cards good for food products at supermarket chains are issued to low-income families, providing dignified assistance to low-wage earners.

Occupational Rehabilitation

Emotionally challenged individuals capable of preparing and packaging food are hired and trained. Vocational training is also offered to emotionally disabled adults, helping to establish them as functioning members of society.

Senior Citizens' Clubs

Among the activities enjoyed by elderly participants in the morning and afternoon are cultural events, creative projects, trips, learning a language, lectures, and – most importantly – a warm and filling meal.

This is the time for "Israel Together"

Since the beginning of the conflict in the north, Meir Panim has distributed the following items:

7,200 Nourishing meals each day to the elderly and young residing in bomb shelters, in cooperation with the welfare departments and local authorities that keep Meir Panim informed.

11,000 packages with basic supplies.

3,500 mattresses.

2,800 emergency lighting units.

1,800 cases of mineral water.

3,500 packages of diapers and formula for babies and toddler.

1000's of games, toys, and art supplies worth about 380,000 NIS. (There is a demand for more of these items at the equivalent of about 1,000,000 NIS.)

500 first aid kits. (A donation of the Israeli Medical Association.)

These activities were conducted in Kiryat Shmoneh, Acco, Nahariya, Haifa, Kiryat Yam, Shlomi, Ma'alot, Chatzor, Merom Galil, Mevo'ot Hermon, and Rosh Pina.

From Tour Guide to Board Member



Shana Tova Umtuka! I take this opportunity to wish all our friends and supporters a happy and sweet New Year. May you all be inscribed for good health, prosperity and peace in 5767.

It's been both an honor and a pleasure working with Meir Panim for the last several years, and I strongly commend the organization and the fine ideals it represents. I would also like to see people going to Israel on vacation come and visit the relief centers to see us in action and to let yourself and your children experience first-hand the wonderful gift of giving. That's how my family and I became involved with Meir Panim. It left an indelible impression on our children and on us.

I'd like to express sincere appreciation to Dudi Zilbershlag, our founder, Dudi Roth who spearheads Meir Panim in the US, Michael Fromm, our Chairman, and all our devoted volunteers, for their extraordinary dedication and efforts.

Hoping to greet you in Jerusalem,

Mira Zeffren
Board Member of Meir Panim



I discovered Meir Panim in November 2003, when I was in Israel for the United Jewish Communities (UJC) General Assembly.

The day after the conference there was a trip for conference attendees from New York, taking them on site visits to see agencies supported by the money they donated to UJA-Federation of New York. I was asked to lead the trip that visited Meir Panim and Koach Latet (Power of Giving).

When a good friend of mine heard I was going to Meir Panim he told me to look for a friend of his who was helping to run the program. I brought my group to the restaurant in Jerusalem. We began our visit with a video followed by a discussion of the needs and what Meir Panim was doing to address those needs led by none other than my friend's friend. After the presentation I introduced myself to him and then the group and I spent the next few hours preparing lunch and serving it. When lunch was over we walked a few blocks to the Koach Latet warehouse in Jerusalem and spent the rest of the afternoon sorting clothing and organizing household goods.

I was so touched by what I heard, saw and felt spending the day at Meir Panim and Koach Latet that I knew I wanted to find a way to spread the word. I went back to New York and discovered that another friend of mine, Michael Fromm, was quite involved with Meir Panim.

In the spring of 2004, my friends Susan Zilberman and Esther Chetrit and I had a breakfast for Meir Panim at Susan and Henry Zilberman's house in order to spread the word to our friends, mothers just like us, about the needs of the children in Israel. When Michael went on to become Chairman of the Board of American Friends of Meir Panim and asked me to serve on the board I was delighted to join. I was then fortunate to work on the concert held last spring to help raise funds for the facility in Kiryat Gat.

As much as I have put into my involvement with Meir Panim I have received so much more in return. I am honored to be able to give my time and resources to further the critical work undertaken by the organization to help those in need.

Jeniffer Gross
Board Member of Meir Panim



"It is only thanks to organizations like Meir Panim that residents of Northern Israel get the help and support they need. The help you give us is literally saving lives."

- Gabriel Naaman, Mayor of Shlomi



"I'd like to thank Meir Panim for a job well done. It is a sacred mission. Thank you all."

- Adi Eldar, Mayor of Carmiel



"Thank you Meir Panim for feeding us hot meals daily in this time of want and need."

- Resident of Tzefat



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