

Hurricane Sandy: The Aftermath

By: Dr. Leah Adams

B"H for running water, lights, dry floors, gasoline, dry furniture and even B"H for plain walls that are standing at attention the way that they should be. B"H the storms are over and, for many, life is just about back to normal. Sadly, though, many of our brothers' and sisters' houses and belongings have been destroyed and the road they face ahead of them is challenging. Amazingly, it is during the lowest of times that we rise our highest. During the bleakest hours we truly become, "a light unto the nations". I received a call the other day from Shoshana Raff, a Business Coach (RaffBusiness.com) who also teaches at Bais Yaakov D'Rav Hirsch in Monsey. She had been a guest on my show Dr. Leah and You on JewishTalkRadio.com and knows that I try to use pen and airwaves as mediums for inspiration. She sent me on a mission, to spread the words below to both uplift the readers with the stories of amazing Baalei Chesed and to encourage them to join the action.

Shoshana used to live in the 5 Towns so the stories she heard were first hand from close friends, not just something she read in a newspaper. I quote her directly because often times the words of the messenger are as important as the content of the message. As a project driven Eishes Chayil she decided that she'd collect some things for her husband's co-workers who lived in the 5 Towns/Far Rockaway area. "My husband works in Teaneck with people from Far Rockaway and I figured I'd send him to work with a trunk full of stuff. I texted some people and within a few hours my living room was FULL of bags and donations." Ironically, as happy as Shoshana was to see the response, she was now faced with a new problem. "I'm going to have to figure out how to get it there because it won't fit in a minivan! I had a woman staying with me without power and some friends came over and we spent hours sorting stuff by categories to pack it and make it easier to distribute." Wait until you hear what happened next. . . "My husband was driving someone home from work and on the street was a huge U-Haul. Someone said that the U-Haul was going to Far Rockaway! My husband told them to come to our house, that we had some things. A few hours later they

came, (they got a flat on the way) with a huge U-Haul. It was already half full from what other people had collected.”

The appearance of the van really strengthened Shoshana in her resolve to keep collecting. “Sara Yehudis Rigler in her book *Hashem Winks* tells you that when you try to do something good, Hashem motions to you, as if to wink, to encourage you. I started a collection and received so much stuff from strangers and before I knew it there was a truck to take it all! The guy with the U-Haul, Shragi Lieber, he got the van and didn’t know if he’d get enough stuff to fill it. I filled the van. I started the work not knowing if or what I would collect and we, together with all the other amazing people in Monsey, have been filling the truck almost daily ever since. I heard of another man in Passaic who owns a truck company, he is helping by loaning trucks to take things.”

Besides for hauling clothing and supplies, Shoshana added that Mr. Lieber also flew someone out to South Carolina to pick up generators and had him drive them back to sell to people in Far Rockaway because there were none left to be bought in New York/New Jersey. “He has a group of people and they’ve been doing unbelievable things. Getting people gas, helping with clean up. . . Shor Yoshuv, through Achiezer has been turned into a store where anyone in need can ‘purchase’ for free new clothes, warm coats, boots, strollers, whatever they lost due to the hurricane. Cars have been destroyed, they were normal families and now they have lost a lot. It’s devastating.” “When the snow storm hit last week, after the hurricane, we were racing to get coats and boots there as fast as possible, the volunteers in Far Rockaway were going around rescuing the elderly who didn’t know they were yet again being evacuated. You can’t believe the extent of the destruction and the needs out there but B’H, Acheizer and the Chabad of 5 Towns are incredibly organized and are really taking care of peoples’ many needs. “

Our trucks were filled with chesed, the Monsey community is very generous and helped filled them. Shoshana was amazed, “They hear someone is collecting and just drop off bags and bags endlessly and show so much concern & love.” The cherry on the top of the chesed pile was the note that you see pictured in the article. “One family took the time to type and attach the note

pictured here to about 10 coats.” “Of course, there is real help that is desperately needed for a long time ahead of us as well – immediate needs of warmth, food, places to sleep, linens, boots, coats, cleaning supplies, to the physical labor of clean out and rebuilding their homes, lives & community. Shuls, schools, houses, cars, so much completely wiped away. I received a note that someone is starting an Adopt-A-Family program where families can be matched together so that a family in Monsey can help advocate, find out information, collect supplies, provide a listening ear, some warmth & support to the families in crises in those areas”.

To Adopt-A-Family contact Shani Hammelburger at 845-664-4021. To donate supplies (please no more clothes they are out of space) very gently used coats, boots, washers, dryers, strollers, heaters are needed. We are also collecting ONLY NEW in packages: bleach, toiletries, toys, linens, paper goods and non-perishable items, which are still needed. The needs change daily. To donate or volunteer, please text Shoshana at: 973-393-5581 or Shragie at: 845-304-6696. “Tisku L’mitzvos and thank you, we are so proud to be a part of such a generous and caring community.”

Shoshana added “Our thoughtfulness and help means so much to our friends and family in Far Rockaway/5 Towns, Seagate areas. A phone call, text message asking them how they are and showing your concern means so much. When they hear how we are working so hard to help them, it is as warm & comforting as the coats, boots and blankets we are sending. Knowing that we care & they are not alone provides a lot of relief in and of itself.” In reflecting on this project Shoshana said: “People keep telling me ‘wow’, ‘congratulations’, ‘I’m so proud of you’, ‘you’re doing such a huge chessed’. While I appreciate the sentiment I really don’t feel like I can take any kind of kudos congratulations for the little I’m doing. I used to live in the 5 Towns, it could have been me. If HaShem saved me, if He protected all of us who live here in Monsey we should remember that & work to praise & thank Him & make a Kiddush Hashem. If my fellow Jew was hurt, it’s as if I was hurt. I need to help him as if it was the house that I live in that was destroyed. We’re one people. It could have been us. It happened to all of Klal Yisrael not just the 5 Towns/Far Rockaway/Bayswater/Long Beach/Seagate. It happened to us.” This flurry of kindness all began with a simple idea and a few texts, and the chesed took the community by storm. Create your own whirlwind of chesed, it all starts with just a breath of inspiration and gains momentum from the collective puffs of others.

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