

Gimme Shelter

How humanitarian aid organizations are protecting the next generation of Jews

It's easy for a Hollywood celebrity to stand next to a starving child, stare into a video camera and remind us that children are our future. It's much more difficult to nourish that child—on a regular basis—with enough food, clothing and education to help him grow up and truly shape the future.

The same principle applies to caring for widows, immigrants, the impoverished and other people groups who, for various reasons, need assistance for a better life. In Israel, dozens of organizations have been birthed specifically to reach this swelling segment of the Jewish population. Amid the politics of the most contested land in human history, the following five humanitarian aid organizations have dedicated themselves to being a consistent presence in the Holy Land to shape a brighter tomorrow for the next generation of Jews.

Leket Israel

Many Christians are unaware of the poverty that exists in Israel. About one-fifth of Israeli families live below the poverty line, while 36 percent of Israeli children and 25 percent of Israeli Holocaust survivors live in impoverished conditions, according to a 2008 National Insurance Institute report.

Leket Israel (formerly Table to Table) seeks to care for Israel's needy, while showing them God's love, by offering a variety of food distribution efforts across the country.

Last year, the organization diverted 5,700 tons of produce and perishable manufactured food items from destruction and redistributed it to 230 nonprofits working with needy Jews. It also spared and gave out 700,000 unused, unpurchased meals

from restaurants, mall food courts and hotels that would have been thrown away.

One of the ministry's food pickups is turned around in five hours to feed 500 shut-ins, and more than 1 million sandwiches have been provided for school children from dysfunctional homes in 24 cities. In fact, Leket's reputation for its care of Israel's poor is such that last year a major grocery chain asked the organization to redistribute an overstock of cereal for the chain. Leket answered the call and rerouted 100,000 boxes of cereal to the needy.

"Think about the story of feeding the multitudes," says Ray MacDonald, one of Leket's directors. "What did Jesus say after everyone was fed? He wanted the leftovers picked up. Why? I believe He didn't want to waste."

Leket uses three methods to redistribute food: nighttime pickups from restaurants and other food outlets, gleaning from producers, providing meals for Israeli school children. For the gleaning, farmers leave 10 percent of their fields, usually the corners, for Leket. The total of school children fed with a sandwich, fruit and drink has now topped 1 million youngsters in less than seven years.

Leket's efforts have indirectly helped a hospice for autistic adults improve its facility. "[The hospice] told us recently that because of the food we help them with, they are able to spend money on other things like beds, staffing and programming," MacDonald says.

More than 40,000 people in a year donate their time to Leket, making it the largest volunteer organization in Israel.

House of David

The combined ministries of House of David initiate and execute a number of humanitarian-aid projects for the people of Israel. Projects range in scope from distributing food boxes

to the poor of Sderot—a town in southwest Israel that is a target for rocket attacks from the nearby Gaza Strip—to arranging for shiploads of needed food stuffs and supplies to be transported from the United States to Israel.

House of David differs from Israel-based humanitarian organizations in that its home operations are in Oklahoma. Curt Landry, founder of House of David, is an American pastor and former apple broker in Washington state who launched My Olive Tree () in Israel to provide jobs for local residents and benefit Israel economically.

The trees, which are sponsored for \$299 each, are cared for by an Israeli business, thus employing local business managers and professional olive-tree caretakers. The anticipated fruit is to be used for eating as well as for making olive oil and even anointing oil, thereby reinvesting the donated trees back into the economy.

For Christians, the project is a chance to give “a gift that keeps on giving—olive trees live for thousands of years,” Landry says. To date, more than 2,000 trees have been planted. “Last year we took a tour group to [see] some of the trees. It was very emotional.”

“We are sold out in dedicating our lives for the future of Israel,” says Landry, who founded House of David in 2000 with his wife, Christie.

House of David is also dedicated, as Landry says, to be a “support of Zion’s children.” To do this, it educates Israeli youth through two ministry emphases.

One is Young Adult Disciples, or YAD—which is similar to the Hebrew letter *yod*, meaning “hand.” YAD’s mission is to prepare a “special force” of young men and women to fulfill Matthew 28:18-20, influencing all nations for the kingdom of God.

The other is a focus on children, whom they categorize into

five age groups: Genesis: birth-2; Mustard Seeds, 2-3; Kingdom Kids, 4-kindergarten; .com (Children of Messiah), grades 1-5; and Heirborne, grades 6-9.

“Our goal is to disciple, train and send young men and women who are fully submitted to the Lord and committed to serving Him,” Landry says. “We train them to become proficient in areas that will help them answer the call—such as prayer, foreign languages, culture and protocol, spiritual warfare, utilization of the [spiritual] gifts, fundraising, humanitarian aid and preaching the gospel.”

Landry’s hope for training kids at an early age is strategic: “When you teach them the truth at an early age, they go nuts with it.”

Vision for Israel

Founded in 1994 by Barry and Batya Segal, the nonprofit Vision for Israel (VFI) is an international humanitarian-aid center operating in the Judean hills outside Jerusalem, primarily through its distribution outlet, The Joseph Storehouse. Each week, orphans and widows, homeless and handicapped, elderly and geriatric, new immigrants and victims of terrorism all receive food, clothing, toiletries, kitchen and household items, blankets, towels, linens and toys from the ministry.

“We have helped serve about 350,000 individuals in Israel, both Jewish and Arab, with humanitarian aid assistance in some form,” Barry Segal says. “Most people don’t know about the poverty. Israel doesn’t pride itself in letting people know. The country is perceived as a mighty nation and wants to present its best face.”

Segal says the primary aim of VFI is to distribute what it brings in, not to be a storehouse only. By touching people’s “hearts and physical lives” at the same time, their physical, emotional and spiritual well-being all are improved, he says.

The ministry also gives to children through its Operation Pack to School, in which school kids once a year are provided a backpack containing pens, pencils, paper, ruler and eraser. Since 1999 the ministry has equipped 140,000 children with the packs.

VFI's other ministries include Lonely Soldiers—for men and women who have no family or come from a high-risk home or environment; Family Welfare; Emergency and Medical Relief; and weekly food deliveries.

"Some of the recipients have tears in their eyes when we provide their goods," Segal says, adding that about 90 percent of VFI donations come from Christians—a gesture that usually touches the hearts of needy Jews. "They often say they didn't realize Christians love Israel."

Dugit

As a trailblazer among born-again *sabras*, or native-born Israelis, Avi Mizrachi opened Dugit as an evangelistic outreach in Tel Aviv, Israel's most cosmopolitan and worldly city.

"The youth in Tel Aviv are so lost," Mizrachi says. "They are into New Age, free sex, drugs and sexual violence. Tel Aviv is very secular, very dark. Like many major U.S. cities, Tel Aviv never sleeps."

Dugit, which means "small fishing boat," has many avenues with which to reach out, including running a coffee house in the heart of Tel Aviv, acting as a base for visiting groups to evangelize the city, providing Messianic literature in a variety of languages and being a hub for local believers to gather for fellowship, discipling and encouragement.

"Our heart is to preach, reach out in any way we can," says Mizrachi, 49, who went to the U.S. in 1984 to make money but found his Messiah instead and later was led by the Lord to

return to Israel and found Dugit.

One of the ways Dugit reaches out to the poor and needy is through the ministry of its Agape Distribution Centre, which provides food and clothing to the elderly, poor families and new immigrants.

Many of those who come seeking assistance are Russian immigrants and Tel Aviv's homeless. The center offers basic foods such as oil, rice, sugar, flour and more, as well as clothes for all, toys for orphans, household items and toiletries.

The distribution center complements Dugit's Messianic Outreach Center, a base for street outreaches and a safe place where Israelis can hear the gospel over a cup of coffee. Both are points of connection with the wider Tel Aviv community.

Mizrachi is also the senior pastor of Adonai Roi Congregation in Tel Aviv. He and his wife, Chaya, are graduates of Christ for the Nations Institute in Dallas.

Tents of Mercy

Providing goods to Russian and Ethiopian Jews living in the Galilee region is the focus of Tents of Mercy, a registered charity in Israel and network of five Messianic congregations located across Galilee.

Eitan Shishkoff founded Tents of Mercy in 1989 after having a vision in which he saw an oasis with tents full of provisions of every kind. He says God told him this represented his call to set up a place of refuge and healing for Jews immigrating to Israel.

Many of the immigrants would arrive with few economic resources. Shishkoff says God promised to "restore the tents of Jacob and have mercy on his dwelling places," referencing Jeremiah 30:18.

Six years later, Tents of Mercy was a reality. Today the organization derives its support from its congregational network, which comprises Tents of Mercy in Kiryat Yam, Shavei Tsion in Haifa, Netzer HaGalil in Nazareth Illit, Katzir Asher in Akko and Poriya Congregation in Poriya Illit. All are committed to helping the poor.

Primarily Tents of Mercy helps people in their 50s and 60s who live on state welfare. For the nearly 300 Israelis assisted by the charity each month, any goods are a help and a blessing—whether pasta, sugar, flour, clothing or furniture.

“We have embraced the prophetic mandate to share our food with the hungry, house the homeless and clothe the naked,” says Shishkoff, who leads the Tents of Mercy congregation. “We provide food, clothing, household goods and counseling to anyone in need, no strings attached.”

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5 ways to sow into Israel's future

1) **Pray.** “We’re under tremendous stress and pressure,” says Avi Mizrachi of Dugit. “There is a lot of spiritual warfare here.” Barry Segal of Vision for Israel suggests subscribing to the online newsletter Jerusalem on the Line ([http://www.jerusalemonline.com](#)) as a source for prayer needs.

2) **Engage.** Last year 3 million Christians visited Israel through various programs. Yet 99 percent never took the time to visit and spend time with a Jewish believer.

3) **Donate.** For Leket Israel, every \$1 donated generates \$5 worth of food. A gift of \$20 provides one child with a school backpack, including the necessary school items.

4) **Volunteer.** Nearly every organization depends on volunteers to help the full-time workers accomplish the mission and vision of the charity.

5) **Participate.** Help create jobs for Israelis by participating in programs such as My Olive Tree ().

To Help these organizations ...

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Watch how these organizations are changing Israel at