

"WE ARE ALL ONE": THE JEWISH RESPONSE TO HURRICANE KATRINA

By Bayla Sheva Brenner

Photo: Menahem Kahana

Hurricane Katrina, and the widespread havoc it wreaked, was not entirely unexpected. For years scientists considered the possibility of a major storm hitting the United States Gulf Coast, reporting that its ramifications could be devastating—particularly for the city of New Orleans. “It’s not if it will happen,” said Dr. Shea Penland, a coastal geologist at the University of New Orleans. “It’s when.”

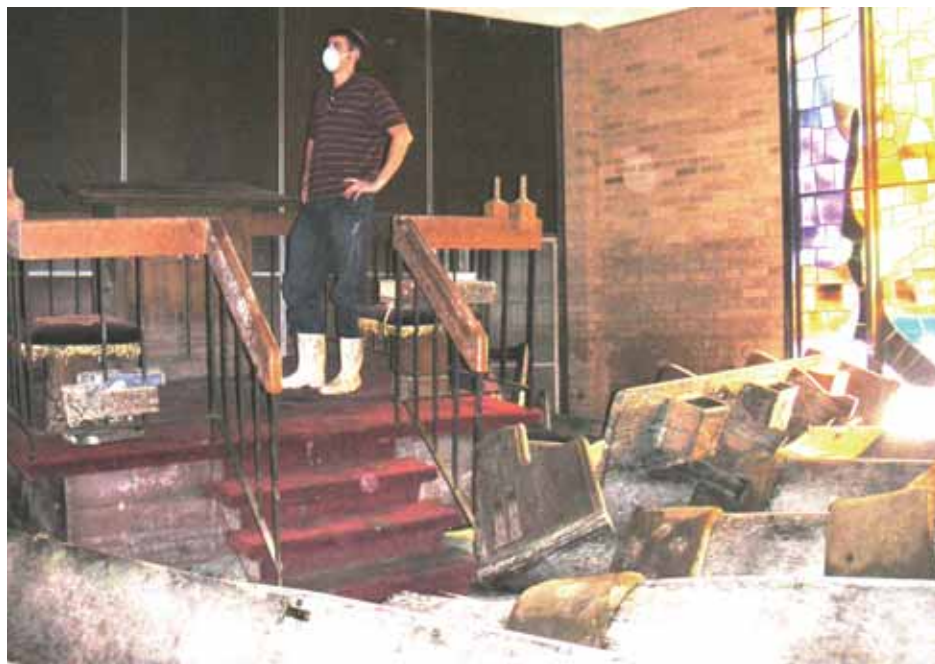
On Monday, August 29, 2005, the dreaded “big one” finally hit. The catastrophic predictions proved to be eerily on the mark. In a matter of hours, people lost their homes, possessions, livelihoods and some, their lives. Entire communities lay torn and shattered in miles of mud and water. In time, the saturated streets will dry; the demolished structures will again stand erect, and thousands of people will slowly put their lives back together. And long after the media will have moved onto more timely topics, it is the unpredicted outpouring of human kindness following the devastation that will have left a farther-reaching and more powerful impact on New Orleans’ Jewish evacuees than the fierce 175-mile-per-hour winds.

Like many other evacuees, early that August morning, just hours before the storm’s onslaught, the Katz family, of Metairie (a New Orleans suburb), considered the quickest escape routes out of New Orleans: Highway 10 to Houston or Highway 55 to Memphis. They chose Memphis, expecting to stay for a few days and then return home. God had other plans.

I can’t say for sure, but it looks like we, along with the rest of New Orleans, have lost everything that was in our homes.

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Please, please, I’m begging you, have me and my family in your thoughts and prayers, and if you can spare a moment, maybe say some Tehillim [Psalms]. At this point we really have no idea what’s in store for us, or what we’re going to do next. It’s an incredibly devastating event, and I really appreciate all of your support.



YU student Elyasaf Schwartz surveys the damage to Beth Israel Congregation from the shul’s bimah, which floated into the women’s section.

These are the words of Jordan Katz, the eighteen-year-old national president of the National Conference of Synagogue Youth (NCSY), in an e-mail sent to her NCSY friends shortly after her arrival in Memphis.

Upon receiving news of the growing number of displaced families seeking refuge from Katrina’s deluge, Jews throughout the country promptly mobilized to provide assistance. Hearing that many of these families were heading their way, a number of Memphis families arranged an impromptu meeting at Ari’s Grill, a local kosher eatery, to discuss what they could do to help. Shimon Kaminetsky, executive director of Margolin Hebrew Academy (MHA),

an Orthodox Jewish day school in Memphis, caught wind of the gathering and decided to show up. Without delay, he contacted the Jewish Family Service, the local Jewish federation and Jewish Community Center, among other major local Jewish organizations, as well as the shul rabbis, and brought them all along.

“The original group was overwhelmed,” he says. “We had representatives from about six agencies, identifying what they do and how they can be contacted. From there, the ball started rolling.”

MEMPHIS OPENS ITS ARMS

Stories abound of Jewish families opening up their hearts and homes. After a week in a hotel, the Katz family accepted Irving and Eileen Cherny’s generous invitation to live in their home. “We never for a minute felt it was a burden for them,” says Pam Katz, Jordan’s mother. “The kindness here has been endless.” She reports that many of the local doctors have seen patients without insurance and refuse to accept co-pay-



Rabbi Robert Shur, a program coordinator in the OU Community and Synagogue Services Department, stands amidst the ruins of New Orleans' Beth Israel Congregation; the shul had the only daily minyan within a 350-mile radius.

ments. Whether supplying needed information or services, donating *sukkot*, *sefarim*, school supplies or furniture, the community demonstrated no-holds-barred *chesed* in its quest to make individuals and families feel at home.

As Jewish evacuees flocked to Memphis (eventually totaling close to four hundred individuals), Kaminetsky and David Fleischhacker, executive director of Baron Hirsch Synagogue, an OU member shul in Memphis, spearheaded the effort to get the evacuees accounted for and placed with families for Shabbat, the first Shabbat since their unexpected displacement. Fleischhacker approached Joyce Levine, a congregant and longtime resident of the community, and asked if she and her husband, Sidney, could host the Savions, a New Orleans family of five, for the Shabbat day meal. She eagerly acquiesced.

The day before Katrina hit, Dr. Igal Savion, an Israeli reconstructive surgeon living in Metairie for the past two years, heard that the hurricane had turned monstrous and had begun a rapid advance toward New Orleans. He, his wife and their three children promptly headed to Memphis. Upon their arrival, they checked into a motel room in a seamy section of town. When Dr. Savion drove to Baron Hirsch to catch Minchah, he had no idea what warmth awaited him. "From that

moment on, we were completely embraced by the community and made to feel like welcomed members," he says. "They saw to every detail of our daily needs."

Amid festive Shabbat meals and congenial conversation, New Orleans met Memphis. The Savions savored the twenty-five-hour oasis of peace with their new friends, safe from the sudden turmoil and displacement. As soon as the Levines learned of the awful conditions in

which the Savions were currently living, they offered a ready alternative. "I told them to look around our home to see if they would be comfortable here," says Levine. "I assured them that we would arrange for the children's schooling and

carpools and that they were welcome to stay as long as they liked. They walked around the house, went into the living room, sat down on the couch and asked if I was serious. They moved in the next morning."

ALLIANCE OF SUPPORT

When news of the hurricane's devastation broke, the Orthodox Union made an immediate appeal for funds on its web site and united fundraising efforts with the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) and Yeshiva University (YU). The OU also sent Rabbi Chaim Neiditch, the director of NCSY's Southern Region, which is based in Atlanta, to Memphis on a fact-finding mission to determine the needs of the Jewish evacuees. "There aren't [any] Jewish organizations for disaster relief in America," says Rabbi Neiditch. "So we had to quickly put it all together. It was remarkable to watch everyone rise to the occasion and meet this community's needs on such short notice." Rabbi Dr.



Executive Vice President of the OU Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb presented Margolin Hebrew Academy leaders with a \$20,000 check from the Hurricane Katrina Relief Fund (a joint appeal by the OU, the Rabbinical Council of America and Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future). From left: Rabbi Yisroel Shiff of Beth Israel Congregation in New Orleans; Pace Cooper, immediate past president of MHA; Rabbi David Israel of Yeshiva University's CJF; Michael Stein, president of MHA; Rabbi Weinreb; Rabbi Nosson Schreiber, dean of MHA and Shimon Kaminetzky, executive director of MHA.

Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, the OU's executive vice president, soon joined Rabbi Neiditch in Memphis. "I found a true tragedy," says Rabbi Weinreb.

During their stay, Rabbis Weinreb and Neiditch sat in on a critical counseling session for the hurricane victims led by Dr. David Pelcovitz, professor of education and psychology at Yeshiva University's Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration. Dr. Pelcovitz, a trauma specialist who has worked with people who lost family members on 9/11 and children who suffered from terrorist attacks in Israel, also met with teachers and rabbis of the Memphis community to help them better understand the hurricane's effects on the children and their parents.

"It's one thing to read about [the hurricane] and see it on television," says Dr. Pelcovitz. "But to actually sit in a room with children who are suffering; it's a difficult thing to see." He urged parents to monitor their children's media exposure. "There is strong evidence that children who watch television news after a disaster, especially those directly involved, are at a much greater risk for post-traumatic symptoms down the road," he says. "I encouraged parents to tell the children that it's fine to talk about all their concerns, while reassuring them that they are safe."

DAY SCHOOLS OPEN DOORS TO EVACUEES

Despite the dramatic upheaval in the lives of the evacuees, parents had to prepare their children for the fast-approaching school year. Offers to enroll the children free-of-charge came in throughout the country. Responding to the large concentration of observant Jewish evacuees taking refuge in Houston and Memphis, the Robert M. Beren Academy in Houston and Torah Day School of Houston, as well as MHA and its high school, Feinstone Yeshiva of the South (FYOS), promptly took in many of the children.

"Our response was *'na'aseh venishma*," says Kaminetsky. "We committed ourselves without even thinking for a

moment about how we were going to fund it. The parents had tremendous issues they needed to contend with. I told them to let us worry about the children from 8:00 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. so that they could focus on their livelihoods and their homes." School administrators at MHA/FYOS report that some of the students are integrating well, while others are experiencing more difficulty. And seven of them are attending a Jewish school for the first time in their lives. "This is not new for us," says Kaminetsky. "For years, we've had students coming with limited or no background. We carefully consider each student's needs and work with him."

The school initiated an after-school art class for children from New Orleans to help them work through their difficult feelings. "I think it's a great route for emotional expression," says Dr. Norman Ickowitz, a hurricane refugee whose children currently attend MHA. Before the hurricane hit, Dr. Ickowitz, a psychologist, was on a fellowship in New Orleans with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to study the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder.

On behalf of the OU, the RCA and YU, Rabbi Weinreb presented MHA with a \$20,000 grant to help the school provide for the new students. This marked the first disbursement of funds from the three organizations' joint appeal. "Such a gesture speaks volumes about the support of the OU, [the] RCA and YU to the resettlement of the children from New Orleans," says Kaminetsky.

According to Dr. Savion, his children love their new teachers as well as the Jewish studies curriculum. "My family and I are Israelis, and we have never had direct exposure to a major Jewish religious community in the United States," he says. "To find an area in which such a high percentage of members are involved in Jewish life together came as a wonderful discovery for us."

Although she misses her friends from the Country Day School (a private secular school) back home, Jordan is rev-

Headed for Houston

The 5,000 Jews who vacated New Orleans and went to Houston were also greeted with open arms. "Our community immediately mobilized to absorb the evacuees for as long as necessary," says Rabbi Barry Gelman, *rav* of United Orthodox Synagogue, an OU member shul. "The head of every [local] Jewish agency convened and brainstormed to come up with all the areas of need that the evacuees are going to have, short-term, mid-term and long-term."

Rabbi Gelman's congregation ran a campaign to collect clothing, toys, food and *sefarim* and immediately set up a twinning program, linking local families with families that had just fled from New Orleans. Each family entered the Yamim Nora'im feeling connected to another family within the community. "All Jewish families are being helped, no matter the affiliation," says Rabbi Gelman. "We are distributing Target gift cards and gift certificates at clothing stores for *yom tov*. Most of those funds came from the OU-RCA-YU fundraising efforts." In addition, the OU-RCA-YU partnership donated \$5,000 to the Robert M. Beren Academy, a local day school.

Before the country could catch its breath, the nation's next hurricane, Rita, roared straight toward Houston. Not taking any chances, Rabbi Gelman and his family drove twelve hours to Dallas (which is normally a five-hour trip). "Just the other day, we were in the position to help others, and in a blink of an eye, we were refugees," he says.

eling in her Torah studies at FYOS. "It's great being in a Jewish school," she says. "I knew a lot of people in Memphis through NCSY. It made the transition a lot easier not to have to completely re-explain myself." Learning of Jordan's avid interest in the French language, the school arranged for a teacher to help her continue her studies. Jordan is now also actively involved in the Memphis NCSY chapter. "I'd like to help make it more outreach oriented, to try to get more public school kids involved," she says. The chapter conducted an ice cream-eating contest and her sister's team walked



Rabbi Yisroel Shiff, formerly the rav of Beth Israel Congregation in New Orleans; Jordan Katz, national president of NCSY, and Rabbi Weinreb met up in Memphis where Jordan is now enrolled in Feinstone Yeshiva of the South. Jordan and her family evacuated New Orleans just before the storm. "The kindness here has been endless," says Jordan's mother, Pam.

away satisfied winners and a few pints richer. Truth is, both the Memphis teens and their grateful New Orleans visitors walked away satisfied winners. Yet, the magnetic pull toward home persists.

After settling into their temporary residences and absorbing the reality of their situation, some Jewish evacuees ventured back to New Orleans to assess the damage and bring back clothes and other salvageable items. "Trust me, you don't want to be here," Jordan's father told his wife from their storm-torn neighborhood. He

THEY CHOSE MEMPHIS, EXPECTING TO STAY FOR A FEW DAYS AND THEN RETURN HOME. GOD HAD OTHER PLANS.

reported seeing people in boats navigating through flooded streets. Fortunately, the Katz home, standing on higher ground than most structures, had stayed clear of the rising water. "My friend and her family lived adjacent to the area of the canal and lost virtually everything," says Pam, fighting back tears. "We're all dispersed now. One friend went to Atlanta, another to Baton Rouge. That's really the hardest part. Everybody needs their friends at times like [these]."

Yanked out of their daily routines, the New Orleans evacuees came face-to-face with what each of them truly value. "Initially, what I would get the most upset about was that I couldn't go back to school or that I wouldn't be able to see the families I used to see every Shabbat in shul and watch their kids grow up," says Jordan. "Not being able to see the people that I normally see every day—like at the dry cleaners. I took them for granted. I didn't realize they were all part of my life. I thought that finding out my house was okay would make me feel more settled inside. But it wasn't having my clothes or my possessions that ultimately made me feel better.

Home for the Holidays

It all started seven years ago, when Fountain View, a retirement community in Monsey, New York, needed *machzorim* (High Holiday prayer books) for its newly formed congregation. Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz, spiritual leader of the fledgling shul, learned through the RCA of a congregation that had just purchased new *machzorim* and was interested in donating its older ones free-of-charge. Rabbi Sepowitz promptly accepted the offer.

Fast forward to October 2005. Fountain View congregation purchased new *machzorim* for the upcoming Yamim Nora'im in memory of Aaron Steinhart, the shul's recently departed *gabbai* (layman responsible for the proper functioning of a synagogue). The congregation looked for a proper home for its old *machzorim*. Rabbi Sepowitz immediately thought of the New Orleans Jewish community and the devastating losses it had just suffered.

The OU included Fountain View's *machzorim* offer on its web page listing donated services and items for Katrina victims. Shortly before Rosh Hashanah, the OU received a phone call from Edward Gothard, acting president of Beth Israel Congregation in New Orleans, requesting help in organizing Yom Kippur services for the community members who had returned to the area. Rabbi Daniel Rockoff, a program coordinator in the OU Community and Synagogue Services Department, promptly contacted Rabbi Sepowitz to see if the prayer books were still available. During their phone conversation, Rabbi Sepowitz mentioned that the shul wanted to donate the *machzorim* in the memory of its departed *gabbai*. Rabbi Rockoff then informed him that one of the tragic casualties of Katrina was Meyer Lachoff, Beth Israel's *gabbai*. They were both moved by the Divine hand, obviously at work here.

Rabbi Sepowitz fedexed the *machzorim* with the following inscription:

To our dear brothers and sisters in New Orleans: This year the shul of our retirement community purchased new prayer books in memory of our beloved gabbai, who passed away several months ago. We have learned that included in your tragedy was the loss of your gabbai. Please accept this gift from our congregation to yours, in memory of our gabbai, Mr. Aaron Steinhart, and your gabbai, Mr. Meyer Lachoff. May God bless this New Year with good health, prosperity and peace for all of Israel. Fountain View at College Road, Monsey, New York.

While preparing the inscription, Rabbi Sepowitz noticed the original congregation's name clearly imprinted in the *machzorim*. "That's when it hit me. That's when I remembered," he said. "The congregation that originally shipped the books was from New Orleans! Like the members of Beth Israel, those prayer books were going home for the holidays."

What was important was not my stuff. I have my things, so it's a different perspective from someone who lost everything. But the fact that I wasn't comforted by having [my things] told me that there is something more important. I find that what's really important is community."

WEIGHING THE LOSSES

Joel Brown and his wife, Natalie, longtime OU members, are hoping to revive a major component of that vital sense of community of which Jordan speaks. They ran the Kosher Cajun New York Deli & Grocery, a popular mainstay of New Orleans' Jewish population. Their invaluable establishment has provided kosher food for the entire city for the past eighteen years. Although many of their clients may not return, the Browns hope to reopen. While they work out the insurance and reconstruction details, the Browns plan to keep their children in MHA for the full school year.



The Browns (clockwise, from left): Joel, Ruth, now 14, Natalie, Rebecca, now 6, and Sarah, now 10, at Ruth's Bat Mitzvah in December 2003.

During his first return to Metairie, ten days after the hurricane, Brown stopped at ten gas stations along the way before he found one with gas. Once he



Joel Brown is working hard to reopen his kosher grocery store in Metairie, Louisiana, which was ravaged by Katrina. Jews throughout the Gulf Coast have shopped at Kosher Cajun New York Deli & Grocery. "They rely on us daily to feed their famil[ies]."

arrived in town, he stopped to check on his store, unprepared for what "stood" before him. "My pole signs were smashed, shingles were bent and crumbled like twigs, with debris everywhere," he recounts. "I went inside to find absolutely no electricity. The smell of 20,000 pounds of rotting food could have knocked me over. No power for ten days in one-hundred-degree weather; the musty stench of mold hung in the air." He encountered a comparable catastrophe at his home. "The mold was growing up the walls and the hardwood floors buckled under me." Each of his children had supplied him with a list of longed-for possessions. "I went from room to room; anything left on the floor was gone. The mold grew from floor to bed frame, up the sheets and onto the comforters. It's truly amazing what water can do." He quickly retrieved whatever items he could, locked up and left.

"We drove back through the night feeling filthy from head to toe," he says. "We couldn't shake the smell from our bodies. I felt a tremendous sadness. My wife and I built this business from a small store of 900 square feet ... [the store underwent] a major expansion six years ago. We added 3,500 square feet. We had a restaurant that seated one

hundred people in addition to a full grocery." Brown received a barrage of phone calls from vendors and customers throughout the world, worried about his

"NO POWER FOR TEN DAYS IN ONE-HUNDRED-DEGREE WEATHER; THE MUSTY STENCH OF MOLD HUNG IN THE AIR."

welfare. As he begins the lengthy insurance claims process, the future remains uncertain. "We thank God that our family is safe and healthy."

The constant gestures of care continue to quell the evacuees' gnawing feelings of uprootedness. Rabbi Yisroel Shiff, formerly the *rav* of Beth Israel Congregation, an OU member shul in the Lakeview section of New Orleans, received an anonymous letter, written on notebook paper, with ten dollars enclosed. It read: "I know this isn't a lot of money, but it's what I saved from babysitting. I'm sending it to you, to let you know that I care." Rabbi Shiff reports that a truckload of clothing, sent from the Jewish community of Queens, New York, fills the garage of what was

his temporary home in Memphis. He also heard from an individual ready to send him a truckload of essential household items. "I expressed how very difficult it was to be on the receiving end of charity," says Rabbi Shiff. "He replied: 'We are all family, and this is what family does for one another.'"

The Shabbat morning before the hurricane, Rabbi Shiff celebrated the naming of his new daughter in shul, knowing he would be up late Motzei Shabbat nailing boards over the windows of his home. "I was taken by sur-



About forty-five people gathered in a hotel conference room near New Orleans International Airport for Yom Kippur davening. The Torah was brought from YU, but the Torah cover (on the table to the left) and the Beth Israel Congregation sign were rescued from the flooded shul building.

prise when I arrived at shul [and] one of my congregants asked, 'So, rabbi, are you planning to evacuate?' I hadn't yet heard that the storm's path had switched dramatically and was headed straight at us." At 5:00 on Sunday morning, the rabbi and his wife threw a few days' worth of clothing into a bag, loaded the family into the car and headed for Memphis. The following day, the levee at the 17th Street Canal ruptured, submerging both the synagogue and the rabbi's home in ten feet of water.

In the aftermath of the storm, one of Rabbi Shiff's elderly congregants died while being evacuated from a nursing home. Isaac Leider, a volunteer with ZAKA, the rescue and recovery organi-

zation, came to New Orleans to retrieve the body, along with those of other Jews who were killed by the hurricane, ensuring that they be treated in accordance with Jewish law. Rabbi Shiff arranged for Leider, who was joined by members of the National Guard and other ZAKA volunteers, to go to Beth Israel Congregation's main sanctuary to retrieve seven one-hundred-year-old Torah scrolls from the *aron kodesh* (holy ark). Leider trekked through four feet of toxic floodwater and, upon opening the ark, burst into tears as he removed the drenched scrolls. "It's heartbreaking," says Rabbi Shiff. "Our synagogue had been an oasis of Torah on the Central Gulf Coast with the only regular daily minyan within a 350-mile radius."

STARTING ANEW

Each member of the New Orleans Jewish community approached Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur with a fervor markedly different from previous years. "I have much more humility after this experience," says Dr. Ickowitz. "I'm more aware that this is truly a new year. If God puts us where we are supposed to be, we just have to go from there." He readily concedes that he is better off than many. "I had a counseling session with a non-Jewish woman, a social worker, living in a shelter with her two children.... I'm in a community where I have a home, and my family is being cared for. For this, I feel an enormous amount of gratitude."

No doubt, the constant acts of kindness prove to be the most heartening outcome of this disaster. On the Monday before Yom Kippur, the OU received an urgent call from Edward Gothard, acting president of Beth Israel Congregation. The congregants who had returned to New Orleans expressed their need for proper Yom Kippur services.

The OU promptly dispatched Rabbi Robert Shur, a program coordinator in the OU Community and Synagogue Services Department. YU supplied a *sefer Torah* and two students to assist with the *davening* and *layning*. Yom Kippur services were held at the Comfort Inn Suites near New Orleans International Airport.

After the Yamim Noraim, a letter arrived at the OU offices:

More than the Red Cross, FEMA and State Farm Insurance, our community needed to be together, in a traditional minyan for Yom Kippur. Rabbi Shur, Menachem Butler and Elyasaf Schwartz [YU students] were really great. Our serv-

ices were beautiful and moving. Through our hugs and tears and prayers, you could feel the healing taking place and feel some peacefulness re-enter our lives. We feel a debt of gratitude to them, and particularly to the OU, that has created a permanent bond and friendship.

As they seek to alleviate their state of limbo, the evacuees have begun searching for job opportunities in Memphis and elsewhere, while others are looking into rebuilding their lives in New Orleans. "From the get-go, some families were considering relocating to Memphis," says Kaminetsky. "We tried to find people work by matching them up with our *ba'alei batim*, as well as coordinating with the Jewish Family Service, since it has experience finding employment for people. I'm pleased to say one gentleman got a job with FedEx, another with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

In an effort to help the evacuees find employment, ParnossahWorks (www.parnossahworks.org), the OU's job-placement program run in conjunction with FECS (Federation Employment and Guidance Service, Inc.), a non-profit health related and human service organization, contacted OU member synagogues in the Memphis area to coordinate a job-search effort. The program also worked closely with the Jewish Family Service of Memphis to effectively use the ParnossahWorks web site, expediting applications from the victims of Katrina interested in relocating to the New York metropolitan area. ParnossahWorks also reached out to the New Orleans evacuees who fled to Atlanta.

"In the Unetaneh Tokef prayer on Rosh Hashanah, we say, 'Who [will die] by fire and who by water,' and we wonder when these things actually occur," says Kaminetsky. "There is no way that one could have a mitzvah come to life more than when it happens in front of one's eyes. My wife and I attended a dinner the other night. I introduced her to one of the individuals from New Orleans. He told us that he got a job and plans to stay on in Memphis. He

said he feels he is finally landing on his feet and expressed how very grateful he is for what we did to help him. So, I schlepped a few beds, set him up with some meals, got his kids in school; what I did paled in comparison to what he went through."

Throughout her family's ride up to Memphis, Jordan's cell phone rang with call after call from people who were worried about her. "I said to my Mom, 'I love being Jewish! We take care of each other. That's what we do.'"

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Unable to find employment in the Memphis area, Dr. Savion returned with his family to Metairie. Rabbi Shiff has been offered a position as executive learning rabbi at Aish New York (a branch of Aish HaTorah, an international Jewish outreach program). As we go to press, Rabbi Shiff and his family plan to move to the New Jersey area. Dr. Ickowitz secured employment with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs in Memphis and just bought a home in the area. The Katz family plans to return to Metairie in January. "I'm going to miss the people of Memphis," says Jordan. "but it'll be good to be home."

Brown feels strongly committed to rebuilding his kosher food establishment in Metairie. He is back in New Orleans, busy with renovation plans for his business, and contractors are now working to reconstruct his home. Brown's wife and three daughters will remain in Memphis for the remainder of the school year.

Brown says that throughout the neighborhoods in New Orleans, visible lines on the buildings clearly mark where the flood waters had once been. In some places, the atmosphere is "solemn ... there's an odor in the air. There are no birds, no life," he remarks. "Ash and dust cover the cars." Yet, the indomitable human spirit and its wondrous power of renewal prevails. **JA**