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When the Chazon Ish Watched The Clothes of an Orphan

By Yoni Schwartz



The Chazon Ish

One day after WWII, a boy named Mottel, around ten years old, arrived at the orphanage of the Ponevezher Rav, ZT"l, in Israel, wearing filthy, smelly clothing, clearly starving. The orphanage mother gave him a meal. He ate a little and put the rest in his pocket. She gave him clean pajamas and hoped to bathe him and wash his clothes, but Mottel ran straight to bed, food in his pocket, shoes still on - and refused to change.

For four nights, she tried unsuccessfully to convince him to remove his dirty clothing. Eventually, the Ponevezher Rav, together with her and Rabbi Gurewitz (the

orphanage administrator), decided they needed guidance, so they brought Mottel to the Chazon Ish.



The Ponovezher Rav

The Chazon Ish spoke to the boy with extraordinary gentleness, feeling every ounce of his pain. When he asked, “Why don’t you want to take off your clothes?” Motel answered, “Last time I took off my clothing was in Bergen-Belsen, and they weren’t there in the morning. Before that, in Auschwitz, the same thing happened. If my parents aren’t here, I’m not taking them off.”

The Chazon Ish said, “If you take off your clothing, the orphanage mother will watch them.” The boy replied that he doesn’t trust her. “Then Rabbi Gurewitz will watch them,” the boy answered.

“I don’t trust him either,” he said.

“The Ponovezher Rav will watch them,” the Chazon Ish said.

“I don’t trust him either,” the boy replied.

Finally, the Chazon Ish said, “You know what - if you take off your clothing, put on pajamas, and take a shower, I will watch them. And you can trust me because I have never told a lie in my whole life.” Though saying such a thing was wholly unlike him - due to his immense humility - he said it for the child’s sake. Motel looked at him and asked, “You’ll watch my clothing?” The Chazon Ish gave him his word. Motel went to bathe and sent his clothing to the Chazon Ish.

Left alone, the Chazon Ish turned to the Ponovezher Rav and said, “This boy has no mother and father. Let you and me be his parents.” The great Chazon Ish, who almost never stopped learning for anything, went, found a bucket, filled it with soap and water, and together with the Ponovezher Rav, scrubbed the clothing until

they were perfectly clean. When the boy finished his bath, he asked, "Where's my clothing?"

The Chazon Ish responded, "It's hanging right there on the wall, and they'll be ready for you tomorrow morning."

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayigash 5786 email of Torah Sweets.

Food for Thought

By Rabbi Boruch Brull

Tani Schwartz made aliyah with his parents and two siblings when he was eight years old. At the age of eighteen, he enrolled in a Hesder yeshivah, which combines Torah study with service in the Israeli Army. After basic training, Tani was one of twenty-four soldiers chosen to serve in an elite reconnaissance unit, whose men were trained for dangerous and daring missions. Tani was the only "yeshivah boy."

Training in the elite unit consisted of a year and a half of difficult training courses, such as parachuting and fighting terrorists. From early morning until late at night, the soldiers took part in rigorous and grueling exercises. Sleeping for three hours in the evening was considered a good night's sleep.

During the last four months of training, Tani and his fellow soldiers were taught navigation, which required daily walks and runs of twenty-five to thirty miles across the country. Every mountain and valley in Israel became as familiar to these soldiers as their own backyards.

Each evening this small group of soldiers would conclude their day at a designated kibbutz. The kibbutzim were notified in advance of the soldiers' impending arrival and were asked to prepare a warm meal for them. The soldiers appreciated the hot dinners that awaited them at the end of every long day. However, there was one soldier sitting with the others who did not eat the prepared food.

Tani, the "yeshivah boy," had eaten kosher all his life and was not about to compromise his religious standards. Most of these kibbutzim did not have kosher kitchens and could not prepare kosher meals for the soldiers. And so, the army gave Tani vouchers to buy his own food at each kibbutz. Tani made do with whatever basic foods were available at each kibbutz: dry cereal and milk, fresh vegetables, canned foods.

It was not easy for Tani to watch his fellow soldiers devour delicious warm meals while he ate his cold food, especially on cold, damp winter days. But the idea of eating non-kosher food never crossed his mind.

One evening, as Tani walked into a kibbutz dining hall later than his comrades, he was bewildered by what he saw. His fellow soldiers were sitting at a table set with plastic silverware and paper plates, eating dry cereal and fresh vegetables.

“What are you doing?” asked Tani.

“We decided that it is not fair that we get warm food while you must eat cold food. Until you can get hot, kosher food, we will all eat what you eat,” one of his friends said.

Tani’s eyes welled up with tears. (Yes, even though soldiers get emotional at times!) He could not believe that his friends, who were not religious, would make such a sacrifice for him. He knew how much they looked forward to the warm dinners that awaited them and gave them strength for the next day’s difficult military exercises.

As soon as the commanding officer heard what had happened, he, too, was touched. He spoke to his superiors in the Army, and, from that day on, arrangements were made for a warm, kosher meal to await Tani at every kibbutz.

Without saying a word, Tani demonstrated his uncompromising Jewish values and thus earned the respect and allegiance of his irreligious comrades. In real life, actions speak louder than words. (For Goodness’ Sake)

Reprinted from the Rabbi David’s Parshat Hayye Sarah 5786 email of Shabbat Shalom for Cyberspace.

The Arizal’s Advice to His Distinguished Host

A distinguished Yid once had the special opportunity of hosting the Arizal in his home, and he went to great lengths to show his appreciation and Kavod for the great Tzadik.

Just before the Arizal left, he thanked his host for all his kindness asked him, “What can I do for you? How can I repay you for your outstanding hospitality?”

The host replied, “When my wife and I got married, Baruch Hashem we were bentched with children. But then suddenly, for no apparent reason, we have stopped having children for many years. Can you please daven for us to have more children?”

The Arizal said to the host, “At one time, there was a ladder that was at the side of your house, and the chickens would use it to reach the water bucket that was

on the shelf near the top of the ladder. One day, your wife instructed the maid to remove the ladder.

“Certainly, her intention was not to cause any pain for the chickens, but, inadvertently, this is what happened. The chickens couldn’t reach the water anymore. As a result of this, the chickens have been unhappy. Hashem has compassion for all of His creations, as we say in Ashrei, Hashem is good to everyone, and has mercy on all of His creations.

“Hashem sees the distress of these chickens. If you can correct this, Hashem will answer your Tefilos and you will be Bentched again with a child. The man immediately returned the ladder to its original place, and shortly after, the couple was Bentched with a child!

Reprinted from the Parshas Chayei Sarah 5786 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’ Tefilah.

The Powerful Bitachon of A Simple, Unlearned Jew

The following story illustrate the heights of Bitachon—faith one may ultimately reach. The Alter of Novardok (see Madreigot HaAdam page 197 and Yalkut Lekach Tov vol.1 p.157) relates a famous incident about Rabbi Moshe Alshich - The Alshich HaKadosh.

There was a man living in Tzefat who was a simple, unlearned Jew. He made his living by transporting sand and earth in an old broken-down wagon that was hauled by his donkey. In a Derasha—speech one Shabbat, he heard The Alshich HaKadosh say that at the highest level of Bitachon no hishtadlut—contribution is necessary. “If one truly trusts in the Almighty, then Hashem will provide him with parnassah—sustenance.”

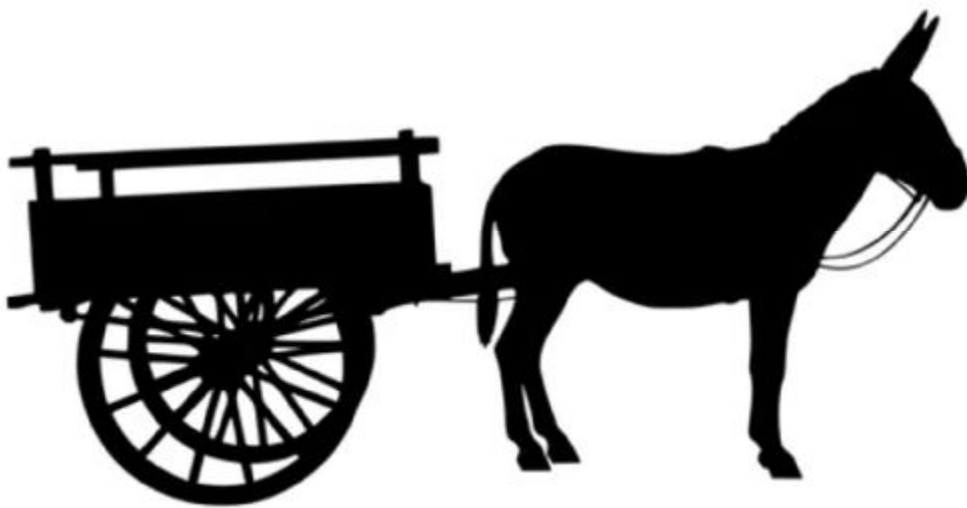
The man said to himself, “If this is true, why must I work so hard? If there is a level of Bitachon like this, then all my drudgery is unnecessary.” Then and there he made a firm decision to trust in Hashem with all his heart, and he proceeded to sit by the stove the whole day and recite Tehillim.

When his wife and family saw that he had stopped working, they demanded that he return to work and earn some money to support them. He, in turn, scolded them, and said, “G-d forbid! I heard The Alshich HaKadosh say explicitly that if a person trusts completely in Hashem, his livelihood will come to him without any effort whatsoever. If so, why should I slave in the cold and heat when everything is

going to come to me anyway? Come join me and say Tehillim, and you'll see that our parnasah will soon be here."

His wife finally gave up trying to convince him, and their situation worsened. The cupboard quickly became bare, and the household needed food. Soon she had to sell the donkey and wagon to a gentile so their family could survive.

The new owner used the donkey and wagon to travel around the mountains to dig sand and earth. One day, he happened upon a treasure of gold. He immediately filled his bags with the gold and loaded them on the wagon. Then he continued his excavation of the treasure.



Suddenly, a loose boulder rolled down the mountain and killed him. When the gentile didn't come back, the donkey, hungry and not knowing where to go, lifted its feet and out of habit returned to its original owner. When the poor man's wife saw the animal, and the wagon loaded with the treasure, she excitedly ran to her husband. "Keep saying Tehillim! Your bitachon worked! We're rich!"

Upon hearing of this remarkable occurrence, the talmidim of The Alshich HaKadosh came to their Rebbe and complained, "Why is that man so much greater than us? We have been studying with you for many years and our bitachon is surely praiseworthy, yet we remain poor. Then along comes this simple Jew, and after hearing about bitachon only once, he sits by the stove and is given a treasure!"

The Alshich HaKadosh answered them, "When you thrust a stick into hard ground it stands up by itself. However, if the ground has been broken up, and is soft and loose, the stick will fall over. You have to push it in deeper in order to steady it. When this Simple Jew heard about Bitachon, he accepted it without any doubts or fears, as if there was no other reality. You, my dear students are different. You are

too smart for that. You want to understand everything. So, you analyze and dissect the situation in order to understand it. This causes you to have some slight doubts and apprehensions. Therefore, you have not yet attained perfect bitachon.

The Baalei Mussar say that the best part of the story is how he reacted to his family when his family asked him to go back to work. His Bitachon didn't work at first, and the family needed to eat, but he said to them "Are you crazy? The Holy Alshich said that Bitachon alone will bring me sustenance, so why should I waste my time and energy working for no reason?!" Look at the way a real Baal Bitachon deals with negative "reality"!

Reprinted from the Parshat Vayishlach 5786 email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

The Amazing Ahavas Yisroel of the Rebbes of Lelov

The Rebbes of Lelov, zt"l, were all known for their incredible Ahavas Yisroel.

Rav Dovid of Lelov's Ahavas Yisroel was so intense that he simply could not believe that a Jew was capable of doing an Aveirah. He always judged his fellow Yiden favorably. Once, Rav Yitzchok of Vorka tried to prevent Rav Dovid from entering the home of a Jew who would brazenly commit terrible Aveiros in public.

He protested, "Rebbe, this man is truly a Rasha!" But Rav Dovid exclaimed, "But look! There is a Mezuzah on his doorpost! How can you say he's a Rasha?!"

One day, a visitor came to Rav Moshe Mordechai of Lelov and asked him to daven for a woman who was suffering from a heart condition and was in critical condition. The next day, the Rebbe asked a member of his family to find out how the woman was feeling.

When the family member later returned to the Rebbe to inform him that the woman's condition had improved, the Rebbe sighed with relief and told his son, "Now you can bring me a warm drink." Rav Moshe Mordechai was so concerned about the woman's welfare that he couldn't take a drink until he knew she was feeling better!

When Rav Moshe Mordechai fell ill, his pain was so intense that he couldn't sleep for more than a few minutes at a time. One day, after a rare fifteen-minute nap, the Rebbe told his Shamash that his grandfather, Rav Dovid Tzvi Shlomo, had visited him in a dream.

The Shamash said hopefully, “I’m sure the Rebbe took advantage of this opportunity to ask for a Refuah Sheleimah.”

But Rav Moshe Mordechai replied, “When I saw my grandfather, I didn’t think of my personal troubles. I asked him to plead with Hashem to put an end to the Tzaros of Klal Yisroel!”

Reprinted from the Parshas Chayei Sarah 5786 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’ Tefilah.

Rav Sonnenfeld and the British High Commissioner

By Rabbi Paysach Krohn



**Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld and
British High Commissioner Herbert Samuel**

R’ Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld personally embodied what the Beis Yosef writes in the first siman of the Shulchan Aruch regarding the Beis HaMikdash.

In 1920, shortly after the League of Nations gave Great Britain control of Palestine, the British appointed Sir Herbert Samuel — an assimilated Jew — as high commissioner. One of his first official functions was to pay his respects to the country’s prominent rabbis, including a visit to R’ Yosef Chaim in the Old City.

R’ Yosef Chaim lived in a simple basement apartment with no luxuries and not even electricity. R’ Moshe Blau, the leader of Agudas Yisrael who was arranging

the meeting, felt that such humble surroundings were not suitable for receiving the high commissioner with proper honor. He suggested that the meeting be held in a more fitting location. R' Yosef Chaim refused, explaining that it would be deceptive to create the impression that he lived on a higher standard.

R' Blau then proposed bringing in a new table and chairs to replace the Rav's rickety furniture. Again, R' Yosef Chaim refused, saying that this too would be deceptive. Seeing he could not persuade him, R' Blau arranged for Sir Herbert to visit the basement apartment as is.

A squad of police led the high commissioner's entourage, and Sir Herbert was personally escorted by the tzaddik Dr. Moshe Wallach, founder and head of Shaare Zedek Hospital. Dozens of people followed as the group wound through the narrow streets of the Old City to the Battei Machseh neighborhood.

R' Yosef Chaim, wearing his Shabbos clothes as a sign of respect, came forward to greet the representative of the King of England. Sir Herbert descended the steps and, entering the little abode, looked around and asked half-jokingly, "You couldn't find a lower apartment?"

R' Yosef Chaim replied, "Please come to the window. I would like to show you something."

From the window, the Kosel HaMaaravi was clearly visible, its small, unpaved area intentionally neglected by the Arabs. Pointing upward, R' Yosef Chaim said, "If He [Hashem] can live like that, I can live like this."

Reprinted from the Parshat Mikeitz 5786 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the new ArtScroll book "The Maggid on Tefillah" by Rabbi Paysach Krohn.

The Rebbe's Unusual Advice

Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz shared a hashgacha story that someone told him:

My day begins with a Shiur early in the morning, Davening, breakfast at home, and then I go to work. At night, I help in the house with the children, I go out to another Shiur, and then I go to sleep. It is the sweet sleep of a laborer, and then I get up early the next day and start all over again.

Despite being a diligent and dedicated worker, at work they started playing with my salary, even though I work long hours and I am very devoted. The next day, at a Bris, I met my Rebbe, who is one of the great Tzadikim of the generation, and I told him my situation and my reduction in salary.

Immediately, he told me to leave the job, and Hashem will help me from someplace else, and I will be able to learn more throughout the day. I hesitantly left the Bris. My Rebbe had never before advised me to leave my job, but now, I was afraid of the unknown, even though he assured me that Hashem would help me.

From there I went to Shul to learn Torah. The next day I met a good friend who asked me if I was looking for a job. I replied that I was, and I told him what happened, and what the Rav advised me to do. He asked me how much I was making until now, and he offered to pay me the exact same salary, which was enough to support my family.

He added that whenever I had free time, he would be happy if I learned Torah, as this would bring him Brachah for the business. He made everything dependent on the assurance and the Brachah of the Rav. I could not go tell my Rebbe what happened, since he was not seeing people just then, and there was no way to get hold of him. But the ways of Hashem are wondrous!

Right then, the Rebbe's Gabbai called me and asked if I could take something to the Rav. Of course, I readily agreed, but I asked him if I could deliver it to him in person, instead of giving it to the Gab bai who would bring it to the Rav.

He was pleased with this, but I was even more pleased. I entered the room to see my Rebbe and told him what had happened, and he gave me his warm Brachos. Today, I am able to learn several hours throughout the day, aside from my set time to learn, and there is no one happier than I am, because I get to be involved in Torah together with a job that allows this arrangement!

Reprinted from the Parshas Chayei Sarah 5786 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U' Tefilah.

A Volunteer Paramedic's Legacy

From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles

The story I want to tell you took place four months ago [in early Spring 2017]. We are a few families who have known each other from childhood, and it is our custom to go out on picnics every now and then. This time we went to Park Hayarkon [in TelAviv]. The kids were playing in the playground and riding their bicycles, the women sat together chatting and we men were in charge on the BBQ.

Close to us was a religious guy playing ball with a very young kid. We didn't really pay any attention to him. Although we are all secular people, we have much respect for our religion.

At a certain point my friend Tomer went to the car to bring the pita bread. He came back very angry and announced, "I couldn't get into the car, there's a motorcycle parked too close to the door."

Tomer is the natural leader of our group. He is tall, strong and angers easily. He has a good heart until someone gets on his nerves, and for some reason that motorcycle made him angry.

"Whose motorcycle is that?" he yelled out, as if there was a chance between the thousands of people in the park to find its owner. Nevertheless, surprisingly, the skinny guy that was playing near us with his son responded." Are you talking about the *Eichud Hatzalah* [1] motorcycle?

"Yes." Tomer replied. "Is it yours?"

"Yes, it is."



Undated photo of Efraim Gadassi

"So, move it already," Tomer tells him. Get it right now out of that parking spot."

"Why are you talking this way, it's not nice," the guy answered.

"Not nice?" Tomer shouts back. "In a second I'll stop talking at all and punch you instead. Get your damn motorcycle away from here before I get violent with you."

The guy looks at him, hurt. "How would you like it to be talked to in that manner in front of your kid?"

Tomer walked towards him wanting to hit the guy, but we stopped him. We asked the guy instead to just move it so the situation won't get worse.

In truth, in my heart, I felt bad. I didn't agree with Tomer, and I bet none of the others did either. But Tomer was our friend and that guy wasn't, and in our codes that was enough of a reason to stand by our friend. And the guy? He was not our problem. Humiliated, he simply took his son and went to move the motorcycle.

There was a silence, the kind that screamed what we each felt: why did he have to humiliate him like that? After all, Tomer had already gotten to the pita bread from the car door on the other side, so why was it so urgent to move the motorcycle at all?

As I said though, that was only in our hearts, We felt bad to be a part of the matter, even if only passively, but we didn't say a word, not even when a few minutes later the guy came back with his son and the ball.

What happened a few minutes after that turned this story upside down. We suddenly heard a scream: "Hagit fell off the big ladder!"

Hagit is Tomer's 6-years-old daughter. She was playing with our kids and a few others on one of the tall structures in the play area, and she fell from the top of the ladder. The kids were shouting that something is wrong. We ran there to find Hagit lying on the sand, totally blue. It was obvious that she wasn't breathing.

Tomer started screaming: "Help! Please! Somebody! Hagit!--please wake up!"

Someone called for an ambulance. A second later, that man with the young kid comes running, puts his son in my arms and asks me to look after him. Before I had a chance to answer, he was gone, running like crazy.

It is hard for me to describe these moments; we were a few dozens of people staring at a catastrophe and there was nothing we could do. I felt so helpless.

In the midst of that chaos, we heard an ambulance siren. How could an ambulance come so quickly?

We soon found out the answer. The siren came from that religious man's motorcycle, the same one inscribed with the words "Eichud Hatzalah" The motorcycle had a huge box on the back and the guy opened it quickly, took a few things out and went straight to Hagit.

It was so weird. Tomer, the big strong guy, was shivering, and that skinny gentle guy became the one in control. He gave orders to some of the people: "Hold this"-"Give me that"-"Go to the motorcycle and bring me the blue bag"-"Now open

it carefully." It turned out that he was a volunteer trained paramedic. At the same time, he was treating her, he was speaking on his special device: "Send an ambulance. Head injury and loss of breath."

He was our angel. He acted so coolly, so quickly and professionally. Hagit, who was just lying there and seemed lifeless, started moving and coughing. This unassuming humble man had brought her back to life!

Everyone cried, women and men. Our Hatzolah angel kept treating Hagit till the ambulance came and quickly removed Hagit from the scene.

Tomer approached the man, weeping. "Please forgive me, I'm so sorry."

The medic calmly replied, "There's no time for that;, Just go with her, it will all be ok."

We all approached him--hugging him, kissing him, asking for his forgiveness. We were all very excited: we understood that what happened to us was a once in a lifetime event. I have no words to describe it.

We asked for his name and number and said that we would keep in touch. Then we all accompanied him-Ephraim ["Effi"] Gadassi--to visit Hagit, and thank G-d, she was already out of danger.

Tomer felt broken and miserable; he was so ashamed of the way he treated the guy who saved his daughter's life. He called him, cried and begged for forgiveness. He also asked to compensate him with money, but Effi calmed him down, saying, "It's ok, I forgive you. In Eichud Hatzalah that is what we do, almost on a daily basis, and that is our "Payment." I will not take money from you!"

Tomer tried persuading him until he finally said: "if you want, you can donate to Eichud Hatzalah. I will not accept money from you."

After three days in the hospital, Hagit was released, but Tomer couldn't stop thinking about it. He was a mess. After a while, he informed us that he intends to do a *Seudat Hodaya* ["Gratitude Meal"] and invite the Hatzalah man as a guest of honor. He set the date for a *Motzaei Shabbat* and asked Effi to come. He promised him the evening would be a fundraising event for Eichud Hatzalah. He agreed.

This is supposedly where the story ends...but it's not. None of us could possibly have imagined how this story was really about to end. I warmly advise you to sit before you go on reading!

On Thursday, two days before the Seudat Hodaya, in the middle of the night, Effi Gadassi was on call and responded to an emergency medical event. On his way there, Effi was hit by a car and died.

When we heard that news, our life changed completely and never went back to how it was before. We all attended the funeral, crying like babies as we stood there. We had to hold Tomer who almost fainted.

I cannot begin to describe his grief and the deep feeling of guilt he was dealing with. We tried to comfort him saying he had asked for forgiveness and that Effi forgave him, but he still felt as if a part of his heart had died.

We all changed-- all of us came closer to G-d. Tomer made the biggest change: he now wears a big yarmulke, prays all the daily prayers, and keeps Shabbat.

Further, everything he does is for the merit of Effi and for his aliyat neshama (soul elevation), including collecting money to purchase an Eichud Hatzalah motorcycle and donating it to the organization.

This is the story of Effi Gadassi of blessed memory who represents the hundreds of people volunteering in Eichud Hatzalah, who do their holy work every day while expecting nothing in return. Sometimes, as our story shows, this includes getting humiliated, hurt and disrespected on their holy mission.

May this story and the message it carries be for the Aliyat Neshama of the selfless dedicated volunteer, Efraim "Effi" Gadassi!

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**Source:** Compiled and freely adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from a report on Arutz Sheva on May 19, 2017 at the time of his death, and from a follow-up first-person article about an incident a few weeks before that by an author and in a publication unfortunately not known to me.

**Postscript:** Efraim Gadassi, a volunteer paramedic in the United Hatzalah Ambucycle Unit, was critically injured in a car accident around 3:30AM on Menashe Ben Yisrael Street in Jerusalem as he made his way to the scene of a medical emergency. He is survived by his wife and three children.

**Footnote** [1] A non-profit volunteer emergency Jewish medical service founded in Israel that serves anyone in need of care, entirely for free, which now has branches all over the world.



*Yerachmiel Tilles is co-founder and associate director of Ascent-of-Safed, and chief editor of this website (and of KabbalaOnline.org). He has hundreds of published stories to his credit, and many have been translated into other languages. He tells them live at Ascent nearly every Saturday night.*

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