

בס"ד

From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles <editor@ascentofsafed.com>

Story #1207 (5781-19) 12 Shvat 5781 (Jan. 25, 2021) FREE [email subscription](#)

Discover! the "TillesTells" [WhatsApp Weekly Stories Group](#)

## ***The Irreligious Shabbat Observing General***

An elderly person asked Rabbi Aharon of Belz whether he was permitted to daven *Shemonah Esrei* while sitting down.

Rebbe Ahron replied, "According to Jewish Law, you may sit. However, my father, the Rebbe, (**Rabbi Yissachar-Dov of Belz**) would say, "A person shouldn't give in. Don't turn yourself into an invalid, into someone who needs to find shortcuts. One should always be prepared to overcome all challenges."

\* \* \*

An elderly Jew used to pass by the *cheder* (pre-*bar mitzva* school) of the Belzer chasidim in Tel Aviv in his wheelchair almost every day, because he enjoyed speaking with the children. He wasn't religious but was brought up in a religious home. The children spoke to him about faith in G-D, and encouraged him to keep Shabbos and the other *mitzvos*.

He said, "Don't speak to me about *emunah* (faith), because I believe in G-D more than you do," and he told them his story:

"When I was young, in Poland, I wanted to join the army. My father brought me to Rabbi Yissachar Dov of Belz. The Rebbe told me, "You want to join the army? OK, I will not try to stop you. But I demand from you one thing: You must always keep Shabbos."

"There were crutches in the Rebbe's room. The Rebbe pointed to them and said, "Just a few moments ago, an invalid came in wearing those crutches. I told him to leave my room without them, because he doesn't need them anymore. But if you won't keep Shabbos, those crutches are waiting for you!"

"I was afraid, and therefore I always kept Shabbos, even though I wasn't religious at all otherwise. Eventually, I made *aliyah* to Israel and reached a high rank in the IDF (Israel Defense Forces). In fact, I was a general in the 'Six Day War.'

"When the war ended I was invited to tour and see the new borders. The tour was long, and would be on Shabbos too. In the euphoria of the moment I didn't think much about it and joined the tour. I was riding on a tank. I didn't allow myself to think about Shabbos.

“On Friday night, the moment Shabbos began, the door of the tank suddenly opened and I fell out. Since then I’m on crutches. So don’t speak to me about *emunah*. I experienced the truth of *emunah*.”

The children asked him, “So if you believe, why don’t you keep all of the *mitzvos*? Why only Shabbos?”

“The man pointed to his heart and said, ‘this *treifa* (unkosher) heart!’” His impure heart didn’t permit him to act as he knew he should.

~~~~~

Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the Parshas Toldos 5777 email of “Torah Wellsprings: Collected Thoughts from **Rabbi Elimelech Biderman**,” as compiled by Boruch Twersky.

*Rabbi Biderman’s conclusion was:*

This man certainly had his challenges, and we can’t judge him. But we must realize that that isn’t any valid excuse. Challenges were given to us for us to overcome them.

Connection: Weekly Reading - Not to go on Shabbat more than a kilometer in an uninhabited area. [This is the first specific mention of Shabbat observance in the Torah. -- see *Beshalach* Ex. 16:25-30]

**Rebbe Yissachar-Dov (Rokeach) of Belz** [5612 - 22 Cheshvan 5687 (1851 - October 1926)] was the third Rebbe of the Belz chasidic dynasty, from 1894 until 1926. He was renowned as a miracle worker, and attracted thousands of devoted followers. A prominent leader of Galician Jewry, he strongly opposed the fledgling Zionist movement, which he saw as a threat to Jewish continuity. (based on Wiki)