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From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles <[editor@ascentofsafed.com](mailto:editor@ascentofsafed.com)>

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## THE FLYING FOUR-CORNERED GARMENT

*On Oct. 12, 2023, 5 days after the Simchat Torah-Shabbat massacre, at a sheva brochos (post-wedding week of celebration meals) in Kiryat Sefer, Rabbi Chayim Zaid told the following incredible story:*

This week one of the girls from Ohr Hachaim seminary contacted me and said she had 6000 shekels saved up, which she wanted to use to help *Klal Yisroel* (the entirety of the Jewish People). She asked me to buy 6000 shekels worth of **tzitzis** [thin sleeveless four-cornered garments with tzitzis ('tassels' – twisted strands) attached to each corner, usually worn by Jewish males between their shirt and their undershirt<sup>1</sup>) to distribute to soldiers in the south of the country. I tried to dissuade her from giving away all her savings, telling her there's a limit to how much one is allowed to give to *tzedaka* ('charity'), but she was adamant.

In the end, I managed to find a way of acquiring 6000 shekels worth of tzitzis without her having to pay the entire sum. After I got them, she said to me, "Wonderful. Now I would like you to go with my brother to the south and distribute them."

"You've got to be kidding" I retorted. "I helped you until this point, but look for someone else to do the rest."

But this girl was persistent. She said, "You can do it. You have *protektzia* ('connections')."

After arguing for a while, I agreed to try to find a way to do it. I contacted the *Hidabroot* organization and they arranged for an army officer to take me in an army vehicle to a base in the south.

We set out in a car full of tzitzis garments and drove until we reached Route 262. There we were stopped by an army blockade. "You can't go any further," they said.

As much as we explained and argued, they wouldn't give in. Eventually they told us that 3 terrorists had infiltrated nearby.

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<sup>1</sup> Each corner has eight twisted strings knotted five times along their length. The numerical value of the letters in the Hebrew word 'tzitzis' is 600, + 8 (strands) + 5 (knots) = 613, the total number of Torah commandments. Thus, the tzitzis serve as a constant reminder for their wearer of all the mitzvot.

Two were intercepted, but one got away and was somewhere in the vicinity, so no civilians were being allowed into the area.

After waiting about an hour, I approached the officer in charge and used all my powers of persuasion to get him to let us through. He agreed to try to see what he could do. He walked off and made some phone calls, and then came back and told me that they would arrange for a convoy to accompany us to the base - a few jeeps in front of us and a few behind us. A *תת אלוף* ('Brigadier General') got into my vehicle and we set off.

As we were driving, he said to me, "After this is over the government will certainly appoint commissions to investigate all the mistakes and omissions that took place on that Simchas Torah morning. But I already know what the conclusions will be. It's as clear as day: *מאת ה'* *היתה זאת*—"It was the hand of G-d" (Psalms 118:23).

We traveled until we reached the base, where we got out of the car and started giving out the tzitzis. I saw a soldier standing a little distance away and wanted to go over to him to give him a pair of tzitzis, but he motioned to me not to come closer. So I rolled the tzitzis up into a ball and threw them to him. It was windy, and a gust of wind blew the tzitzis ball away from the soldier towards a bush.

Suddenly, someone stood up from behind the bush. It was the terrorist. He saw something flying towards him and it startled him.

The soldiers shot at him...and propelled him to his deserved place in the Afterlife wrapped in tzitzis!

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Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from a report by Mrs Devorah Plaut, whose son was present when Rabbi Zaid told the story.

Why this week? The last Aliyah of this week's Torah section, *Shelach*, presents the mitzvah of attaching tzitzit to four-cornered garments. [The text also comprises the final paragraph of the *Shma Yisrael* prayer.]



*Biographical note:*

**Rabbi Chayim Zaid** is a head of the *mesivta* [yeshiva for younger teenage boys] in Yeshivas Nachalat Shlomo, located in the Kiryat Herzog neighbourhood of Bnei Brak. He is well known for the hundreds of video and audio *shiurim* (lectures and lessons) in Hebrew, many with English subtitles, he has provided for KolHaLashon.com and TorahAnytime.com.