

it is impossible to know which supplies or piece of equipment will be needed to save the next life. Before we bought the motorcycles, we weighed the pros and cons very seriously. It meant a very large investment. For the price of one motorcycle, we could have purchased more supplies and equipment for every volunteer."

A week after the train disaster, the staff members of Hatzalah Ashdod met to discuss what they had learned from the experience. The first conclusion was that there must always be a large stock of medical supplies on hand: everything from simple bandages, to IV kits and heart defibrillators. Supplies are constantly being used up. "I was left without any supplies at all," says one of the volunteers, Raffi Gamzo. "I used everything in my kit at the train accident."

"Even my oxygen tank was taken onto a helicopter along with one of the injured," says David Shamos, another Hatzalah Ashdod volunteer who had nothing left to work with. "The first helicopter that arrived on the scene just happened to be passing by on its way to an army base, and was not equipped with any major first aid equipment. I gave the soldiers on the helicopter everything I had, and now I have to completely re-outfit myself."

Tragic Beginnings

It was a quarter to seven in the evening, and just like every other evening, Tzviki was getting ready to take a bath and go to bed. Tzviki loved to play in the water, and he brought many of his toys to put in the bath. Tzviki's mother didn't mind that so many of his playthings would be getting wet, because that was part of his nightly routine. Nobody imagined that the evening would end with anything but a warm pair of pajamas, a story, a kiss, and Shema.

Tzviki got into the bath, while his two-month-old brother lay in his crib in the adjoining room. The baby was hungry, and he began to fuss, and then cry loudly. The boys' mother wanted to feed the baby, but she didn't want to leave Tzviki alone in the bath, so she tried to calm the baby with a pacifier. She hoped he could wait to eat until Tzviki was safely tucked into bed. How much time could she have spent with the baby?

"Two minutes," she tells us. "How long can it take to put a pacifier into a baby's mouth and pat him on the back?" Suddenly, she noticed that not a sound was coming from the bathroom. She rushed over to check on Tzviki, and found him peacefully asleep on his back, in the shallow bathwater. She assumed that he was

so tired, he had simply fallen asleep in the bath. She called his name, and he didn't wake up. Instinctively, she lifted him out of the water, and then realized that he was unconscious.

In a panic, she tried to remember and do every lifesaving technique she had learned about in high school. She turned him upside down, and she tried to give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Today, two years after the event, she says, "I did everything I could think of." When Tzviki began turning blue, his mother screamed for help at the top of her lungs. One of her neighbors heard her, rushed in and said he knew CPR, and took the child from her arms. She ran to the phone and called Magen David Adom. She gave them her address, and then made more calls to friends and neighbors who knew first aid. But none of them answered the phone. Her anxiety increased by the second, as she had no idea how her son was faring with the neighbor, but she still managed to call her rabbi, and some family members, to ask them to pray for her child.

"There is no way to be prepared for such a horrifying event," Tzviki's mother tells us in a choked voice. "I was overcome with worry and helplessness. Who else could I call? What could I do to make the ambulance come faster?"

The Lost Sefer

In last week's Hebrew edition of **Mishpacha**, a small box accompanied an article on the train wreck. In the box was written the following:

"Hundreds of possessions were strewn about the area of the wreck, tossed among the sunflowers and lying in the dirt road beside the train tracks. Almost every item was torn, broken, and/or covered in blood — soldiers' berets, purses, books, a child's toy, a half eaten chocolate bar still in its wrapper, and — *sifrei kodesh*. The book *Lekach Tov*, which belonged to Rav Shlomo Stern who was injured but survived the crash, went with him into the helicopter. And a book belonging to Rabbi Dremer, *ztz"l*, accompanied him on his final journey. But one book has still not been returned to its owner.

"I found the holy book *Ohr HaChaim* at the sight of the accident," says Shlomo Dvir, a motorcycle volun-

teer with Hatzalah Ashdod. "It was already dark, and I couldn't see whether any name was printed inside the cover of the book, but I didn't want to just leave it lying in the field. Since I had run out of supplies, there was a place to store the book in my motorcycle, and I put it there for safe keeping."

"It is extremely important to discover whom the sefer belongs to, and whether its owner is still alive. The book is stained with blood, and a question arises regarding whether or not it must be buried in a *kever*. For the time being, the book is being kept in the Hatzalah Ashdod offices, in hopes that its owner will finally come to claim it.

Anyone who has any information regarding the possible owner of the book is asked to call Rabbi Gluzman at Hatzalah Ashdod."

That was the text. The paper was printed early Thursday morning, and put into circulation that day. That very afternoon, Rabbi Gluzman, the Hatzalah

Ashdod secretary whose phone number appeared in the magazine, received the following phone call.

"The book belongs to Rabbi Dremer, *ztz"l*," said the caller, who identified himself as one of the rabbi's relatives. "He studied that book constantly, taking it with him wherever he went."

Rabbi Gluzman saw no reason to ask for additional evidence in order to verify the identity of the person who lost the book, but the individual on the phone was adamant in his desire to prove it belonged to Rav Dremer. "Look to see if there are handwritten comments on different pages of the sefer," urged the caller. Rabbi Gluzman skimmed through the book, and soon discovered many pages filled with Rabbi Dremer's own handwriting.

"Sometimes," sighs Rabbi Dvir from Hatzalah Ashdod, "despite all of our efforts and desire, we can't save a person. But in this case, we were at least able to save his sefer."



Members of Hatzalah in Ashdod at a meeting the week after the accident.

At least ten minutes passed before the ambulance finally arrived. From the point of view of Magen David Adom, not a second was wasted. As soon as they received the call and the address, an ambulance was sent on its way. However, even with lights and sirens, an ambulance is not an airplane, and it took time for the ambulance to cross from one end of the city to the other and finally reach Tzviki's home.

But Tzviki was oxygen-deprived for those long ten minutes. And so, just a few days after the excitement of his third birthday and *chalake*, little Tzviki died.

"We don't know Hashem's *cheshebonot*" says Tzviki's mother, trying to control her emotions, "but I do know that under such circumstances, the first few minutes are crucial. Ten minutes is too long to wait and still hope to save a life."

This tragedy helped set the wheels in motion for the establishment of Hatzalah Ashdod. "We learned a number of lessons from this tragic story," says Rabbi Michael Schwartz, the founder of the Ashdod branch. "First of all, there should be as many people trained in first aid as possible in each city. Professionally trained volunteers, with state-of-the-art medical equipment can provide necessary lifesaving treatments during the first critical minutes of an emergency, before the ambulance arrives. Secondly, there should be a number of volunteers in each area of the city, so that each time a

**"Our greatest asset is our
volunteers. Without them,
the most modern
equipment in the world
would be worthless"**

call comes in requesting medical assistance, the response time will be almost immediate. When an address is given, there should be people on the staff who can say, 'I know where that is, it's near my home. I'll respond to the call.' No time will be wasted trying to get directions to the scene of the medical emergency."

Two years after Tzviki's accident, a dream has become reality. Hatzalah Ashdod, despite all the obstacles it faced until it was up and running, has truly managed to save lives. On the same street where Tzviki, z"l, lived, a volunteer named Aharon heard a call on his radio. "A child is unconscious!" Aharon listened closely, and ten seconds later heard the address of the call. He ran into his room, grabbed his Hatzalah first aid kit, and a minute later burst through the front door of his next-door neighbor's apartment. Ten minutes later, when the ambulance finally showed up, the previously unconscious child was responding to treatment, and breathing on his own.

"That is exactly why we established Hatzalah," says Rabbi Schwartz, who also coordinates the activities of Hatzalah Nachal Sorek. "Aharon was on the scene one minute after the call for help was logged. No emergency vehicle, no matter how fast it can drive, could have made it there that fast, especially if he was not familiar with the neighborhood."■



Avigdor Even (right), the man who reached the scene of the accident first, and R' Yosef Weisenstein (left), are both volunteers of the Nachal Sorek unit of Hatzalah Ashdod.