

# The Tefillin Shadchan

**The Inestimable Zehus of Matching Mehudar Tefillin  
With Those Who Use Them Daily**

A local bar mitzvah bochur whose family needs some assistance. A teen-aged boy whose tefillin were ruined in a fire. A middle-aged man whose tefillin were stolen. An elderly man who found his tefillin had become posul. A baal teshuva who never owned his own pair of tefillin and now wants to take on this great mitzvah.

In all these cases, the address that is turned to is the Tefillin Shadchan – one of Klal Yisroel's beautiful chesed initiatives.

Two years ago, local askanim were contacted regarding a number of local men desperately in need of a pair of tefillin. After they were able to procure tefillin for them, they realized the need for an organized initiative to match up donors with people in such situations. And the "Tefillin Shadchan" was born.

After word of the program got out, the organizers were inundated with requests from people from far and wide asking for help in finding a pair of tefillin for themselves or someone they were aware of in need of a pair. Each story was different, yet in each case a man above bar mitzvah age was in need of assistance to obtain a kosher pair of tefillin. For example, in one story, the son of a local ben Torah had his tefillin stolen. The father was unable to afford the cost of a new pair, and turned to the Tefillin Shadchan for help. Other stories involved people who found that their tefillin was not kosher or simply wanted to begin putting on tefillin for the first time as adults and needed help purchasing them.

Mrs. Selengut, a Tefillin Shadchan coordinator, relates, "We receive calls on a regular basis about urgent cases of people in need of tefillin. We simply

can't keep up with all the requests and currently have a waiting list of people waiting for their tefillin. The calls range from an Alzheimer's patient who misplaced his tefillin and cannot communicate where he left them to a young man whose tefillin were ruined by bedbugs and who cannot afford to replace them. Another call was about someone whose tefillin were burnt in a fire. There are some cases of families who cannot afford to buy tefillin for a bar mitzvah boy and stories of newly observant, or on-the-way to observance, men who need help obtaining tefillin."

Recipients often send letters or call in to express their gratitude and thank the Tefillin Shadchan for the tefillin they don every day. Fathers of bar mitzvah boys relate how their sons were able to celebrate their special day with joy and use their beautiful new tefillin with pride, along with the provided tefillin bag – never even knowing that they had come from the Tefillin Shadchan.

Numerous rabbeim of baalei teshuva have called to thank the Tefillin Shadchan and relate that men wearing tefillin they received from the program are now putting them on every day and have embraced this mitzvah. In many cases, their friends have seen how much this mitzvah means to them and have asked for their own pair as well.

One rebbi thanked Tefillin Shadchan for providing a pair for his student, who is 23 and never owned his own tefillin before. When he recently lost a grandparent, he was inspired to take on this mitzvah. The rebbi told him about Tefillin Shadchan and the young man was extremely moved by the kind act of chesed they did for him by providing him with his own pair. Another newly observant man reports being blessed with his first child after putting on tefillin for a year. The source of his tefillin also was the Tefillin

Shadchan.

Calls come in from all over the world, as such a program is unique and does not exist elsewhere. In addition to local families, calls come from all over America and beyond. In fact, people have called from as far away as Eretz Yisroel to inquire about Tefillin Shadchan's services.

Over just the past year, the program has matched up over 100 men in total with a needed pair of tefillin. In each case, the tefillin are used every morning, providing incredible zechusim to the donors.

The Tefillin Shadchan program was founded as a zechus for the memory of the unforgettable Rav Yitzchok Wenger zt"l, whose second yahrzeit is this Monday. When Rav Wenger first heard about the idea for the program, shortly before his petirah, he was very excited about it and strongly encouraged its founding.

Rav Wenger was a tremendous talmid chochom who was well-versed in all areas of Torah. As the first Director of the Lakewood Cheder and Bais Yaakov of Lakewood (later renamed Bais Faiga), he was a pioneer of chinuch in Lakewood, and his legacy lives on through the massive mosdos haTorah these schools have become. He was involved with scores of tzedakos and chasadim, spending his later years helping chashuvah mekomei Torah around the world remain functional. Yet, despite all his great accomplishments, he remained so humble and unassuming that most of his greatness was never revealed, and probably will never be known.

Rav Wenger spent hours every morning learning while wrapped in talis and tefillin. The mitzvah of tefillin was very dear to him and he always treated his own pair with utmost sanctity, never uttering a word of divrei chol while wearing them and being very careful with their kedusha. It is thus very fitting for such an initiative to serve as an everlasting memorial for this incredible individual.

In recent months, Tefillin Shadchan has undertaken a new initiative – a Tefillin Gemach to lend out tefillin for those who need them for temporary use. There have been numerous cases of bar mitzvah boys whose tefillin were not ready on time. Especially during the months of COVID, many sofirim found themselves backlogged and a number of bochurim saw their bar mitzvahs arrive with their tefillin still not ready. The Tefillin Shadchan provided a loaner pair, easing the minds of the bochur and his father until their pair was ready.

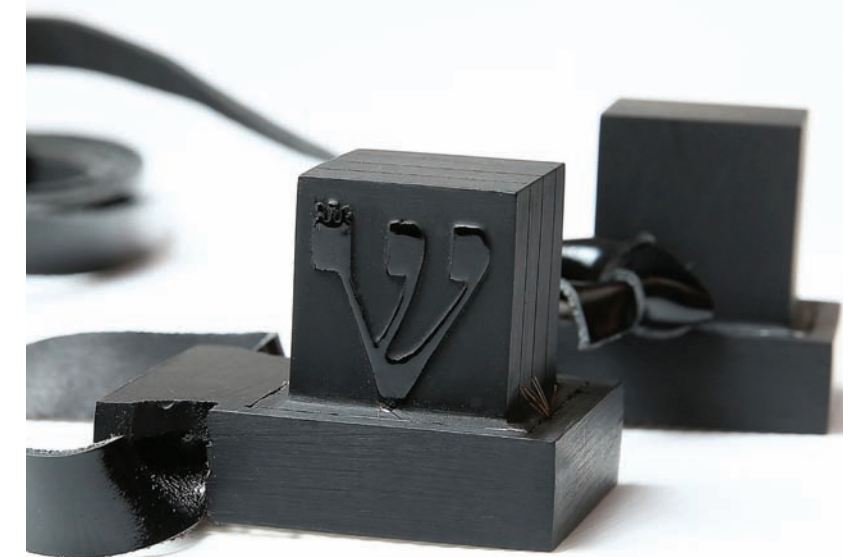
In just one story, a father related how due to COVID and other unforeseen circumstances, his son's tefillin were not ready on time. When he placed a call asking to borrow tefillin the response was, "Absolutely! We have a pair of beautiful tefillin for him. If you need, you can keep them. Not only that, we will give you a tefillin zekel as well."

The father relates, "They responded so warmly and went the extra mile so that the bochur should feel good about his brand-new tefillin."

Another father related that his son's tefillin were stuck in Eretz Yisroel and would not be arriving in time. The Tefillin Shadchan responded "b'sever

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panim yafos" and "allowed him to feel geshmak – like very other boy with a brand-new pair of tefillin."

A mother of a bar mitzvah boy – whose father sadly passed away a few years ago – relates that she was at a complete loss with where or how to obtain tefillin for her son. She needed help both because of the expense and because she simply didn't know whom to speak to about tefillin. The Tefillin Shadchan was contacted by her Rov and took over. They provided the bochur with a mehudar set of tefillin that he is proud to wear every day, as well as his personalized zekel.

Donors have also expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to be part of this project. Many fondly recalled Rav Wenger and related what a tremendously appropriate merit this is for him. One donor, for example, related that she had, unfortunately, been unable to attend her grandson's bar mitzvah. As a zechus for him, she sent a check to donate one pair of tefillin for someone who needs it.

Another project on the horizon is a comprehensive curriculum on hilchos tefillin for boys to learn before their bar mitzvah, and to continue reviewing for a few years thereafter. The Tefillin Shadchan askanim are currently working with expert rabbeim to create this program and have it ready soon.

Currently, there is a list of many men, urgently waiting for a pair of tefillin. The cost to sponsor one pair of tefillin is approximately \$1,500. The tefillin will be used every day for the performance of this great mitzvah, and each time they are donned it will surely be an everlasting merit for the donors. Additionally, many people have older pairs of tefillin sitting in their home that they no longer need. The Tefillin Shadchan will gladly accept donations of such tefillin and will check and repair them as necessary, to be used daily by a recipient.



# Tefillin Shadchan:

**Give Another Yid a Lifetime of Mitzvos**

*Trailblazing organization marks one year and over 100 pairs distributed.*

By: Shimmy Blum

Imagine that you can singlehandedly give another Yid the ability to do one of the most precious Mitzvos of the Torah – every day, for the rest of his life?

Yes, you can do that by donating a pair of Tefillin that you inherited from a deceased father, grandfather or other relative. Or by sponsoring a new pair with a modest donation.

The Torah calls Tefillin an “*ois*,” the symbol of our relationship with Hashem. It is the Mitzvah that a boy begins the day he turns Bar Mitzvah and continues doing day after day, as long as he is on this world. For those on the journey from nonobservance to Torah, donning Tefillin is likewise one of the most powerful undertakings that bring him closer to Hashem.

The Tefillin of a *niftar* is personal and precious. It is tempting for *yorshim* to want to hold onto them for sentimental value. However, precisely because they are so personal and precious, the opportunity to perpetuate them is priceless. Can there be a greater *zechus*, a greater sentimentality, for the owner’s *neshama* than enabling his Tefillin to be continuously used for a Mitzvah?

Even an “old,” worn pair of Tefillin is typically still kosher, or at the very least can be made kosher by a Sofer. There are so many Yidden out there who are yearning to wear Tefillin each day but do not have the means to purchase one. You can get him to do this Mitzvah!

Within the past year, the Lakewood based “Tefillin Shadchan” program - matching donated/unused pairs with new users – has distributed over 100 pairs of Tefillin to eager Yidden, each pair meticulously reviewed and perfected by a Sofer. Those who do not have unused Tefillin can simply donate a beautiful new pair for the modest price of \$1,500.

Each pair donated to Tefillin Shadchan is now being used on a daily basis. The recipients are diverse: Aspiring Baalei Teshuva. Lakewood *bnei Torah* whose Tefillin were R”l stolen or destroyed. Jewish prisoners yearning for a spiritual rehabilitation behind bars. And many others.

This project was founded Rabbi Yaakov Wenger, Publisher of the Lakewood Shopper and a close friend and *askan*, Rabbi Yisroel Burstztn. It is dedicated *l’iluy nishmas* Rabbi Wenger’s father, Rav Yitzchok Wenger *zt”l*, who was tragically *niftar* on 18 Taamuz last year and greatly encouraged this project during his final days.

As Rav Yitzchok Wenger’s first *yartzeit* approaches, Tefillin Shadchan is running a special campaign to enable it to Shadchan countless additional pairs in the year ahead *be”H*.

May the “*shefa miztvos Tefillin*” bestow upon us long life and all the *berachos* we desire.

*For more information or to make a donation, please call 732-901-0482. Sponsorship can be sent to: Racheim Na/Teffilin Shadchan, 3 Flannery Avenue, Lakewood NJ 08701. All donations are tax deductible.*

## The Greatest Bar Mitzvah Gift

A beaming Bar Mitzvah *bachur* donned in Tefillin for the first time remains one of the most poignant, iconic moments of his life.

On the day that Hashem *bentched* you to witness this *nachas*, consider donating a pair to the Tefillin Shadchan in honor of the *simcha*. As your beloved son or *einikel* undertakes this Mitzvah, know that another, less fortunate Yid will now be doing the same.

Is there a greater Bar Mitzvah gift out there?

# LAKEWOOD INTERVIEW

Chaya Baumwolspiner

## A Different Type of *Shadchan*

They were his most precious possession and now they're gone! What if someone's *tefillin* are lost, stolen or destroyed, *R"l*, and he can't afford to buy another pair? What does he do now?

With a record of stepping in when help is needed, Lakewood's Chesed of Lakewood (COL) has once again done just that. Only a few months in service, the COL "Tefillin Shadchan" reports that it has made several "matches" and that it's looking forward to making many more.



### We Need *Tefillin*!

Rabbi Bursztyn and Rabbi Wenger, the two indefatigable founders of COL, never say "no" to a request for a *chesed*. So when a New Jersey organization asked them to finance the cost of *tefillin* for several clients at a meeting in Trenton this past summer, their answer was in the affirmative.

It was only after the two men had left the meeting that they were able to discuss the practicalities of their decision. A few calls to leading *sofrim* confirmed that buying new *tefillin* would be very expensive. How would they raise the funds for such a project?

And then it dawned on them: For many years the COL Sukkah Exchange has been pairing families with a spare *sukkah* with families in need of one. So why not do the same with *tefillin*? There are probably quite a few people out there who own *tefillin* they aren't using. Why not channel these *tefillin* to people who could put them to use?

### A Busy Day: Enter the Tefillin Shadchan!

That day — the day of the meeting — had been a busy one for Rabbi Bursztyn and Rabbi Wenger, so they decided to stop off for a snack at Bagel King in Jackson on their way home. While chatting with its owner, Mr. Tzvi (Harrison) Pfeffer, who is a personal friend, they mentioned the new project that was on their minds. Mr. Pfeffer was quick to take advantage of the new initiative. His father, the eminent Lakewood lawyer and community advocate, Mr. Steven Pfeffer, *z"l*, had been *niftar* in June 2018. He had owned an excellent pair of *tefillin* that were currently not being used.

Moments later, the Tefillin Shadchan had received its first donation.

But the day was not over yet. Texts went out and messages were sent. Once word got out that COL was collecting "extra" *tefillin*, the response was prompt and plentiful. By the end of the day, they had received nine offers and 14 requests. The Tefillin Shadchan was off to an encouraging start.

### A Constant Flow

Three months later, the Tefillin Shadchan continues to flourish. Rabbi Bursztyn says that far more people than he anticipated have come forward to offer *tefillin*. Some have inherited an extra pair from relatives; others have chosen to upgrade their own *tefillin* and now have their "old" *tefillin* to donate. A woman sent a pair of *tefillin*, explaining that her husband has simply bought an extra pair and wasn't using them. On one occasion, COL received six pairs from a person in Denver!

After a *ger tzedek* was *niftar* in New York at a young age, leaving no offspring, his friends offered his

*tefillin* to COL. They wanted someone else to use them in his merit. A person is now wearing these *tefillin* every day.

There has also been a constant flow of requests for *tefillin*. A local *kollel yungerman* revealed that his son had lost his pair shortly after his bar mitzvah, and he couldn't afford to replace them. (Father and son were sharing the father's *tefillin* at the time, with the father going to an early *minyán* and the son *davening* later.)

The family of a senior with memory loss was in a quandary: Their father had mislaid his *tefillin* and no one could find them.

A man in Manalapan, N.J., admitted that he had wanted to don *tefillin* for a long time but he didn't have the means to buy them.

A person whose house burned down in Lakewood, costing him the loss of all his possessions, received a "new" pair of *tefillin* from COL on the day they were contacted.

And the list goes on! Each request has been met, often immediately, with the donors as happy to give their *tefillin* as the recipients are to receive them.

### Long-Distance 'Shidduchim'

News travels fast these days, and there have been some out-of-town "shidduchim" too. Let's cite an example in Madison, Wisconsin, where the *kiruv* director, Rabbi Gershon Vogel, happened to hear about the Tefillin Shadchan a couple of months ago. Although he had no use for it then, he put the COL contact number aside for another time because when it comes to *kiruv* ... well, you never know!

Only a few weeks later, he found out why he had kept their number. A student at the University of Madison who is becoming a *baal teshuvah* told Rabbi Vogel that he wanted to start wearing *tefillin* and was willing to pay part of their cost. Naturally, his mentor called COL on his behalf and was very gratified when he heard that they would be able to send his *talmid* a pair of *tefillin* at no cost at all. (Even so, the young man and Rabbi Vogel both made a generous donation to the project.)

No one is able to say for sure where these *tefillin* came from, but it

could even be that they came from an out-of-town location too!

The *tefillin* have now been sent to Wisconsin and a second pair that has since been requested by another student will soon be on its way.

### Pristine Condition

Rabbi Bursztyn explains that the transfer of *tefillin* often has to be slightly delayed because all *tefillin* received by COL are checked by an expert *sofer* and necessary repairs are made. *Retzuos* are also changed so that the *tefillin* that are sent to their new owners are in pristine condition.

The *tefillin* that COL sends to its recipients have to be *kosher l'mehadrin*; nothing else will do. Donated *tefillin* that do not meet this criterion are not matched to a recipient, because every recipient deserves the best.

The *mitzvah* of *tefillin* — as in all *mitzvos* — should be performed in the most perfect way. For many people, the Tefillin Shadchan is making this possible!

### A Postscript

Should an article on the Tefillin Shadchan also make mention of *tefillin gemachs*? While writing this article, I toyed with the idea and decided it should. After all, the two initiatives could work hand in hand.

But the only *gemach* that I was able to make contact with informed me that their *gemach* is no longer functional; the first time the *gemach* lent out their two sets of *tefillin*, neither was returned.

Remarkably, the *gemach* owner bears no resentment against the borrowers but feels sympathetic toward them. She is absolutely sure that they are being used and that their non-return is simply a reflection of the wearer's inability to acquire *tefillin* of his own. She is probably right.

Clearly, the borrowers are not among those who have heard of the Tefillin Shadchan, but it is hoped that they soon will.

To donate or to request *tefillin*, please call COL at 732-901-0482. The Tefillin Shadchan also welcomes sponsorship (or partial sponsorship) of new *tefillin* for distribution to those who need them.