

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 “*osis*,” 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 *bnai 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 Burstztyn. 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 mitzvos 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/Tefillin 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.