



# MIVTZA TEFILLIN ISRAELI STYLE PART II

Eliezer (Lazer) Raksin

## THE BUS SHLIACH

Hello everybody! By now you are all familiar with my articles about *tefillin*, so no introduction necessary.

Two years ago, my wife and I made *aliyah* to Eretz Yisroel. In New York I used to work as a bus driver. My first step when I moved to Israel was to apply for a license transfer, to convert my New York State bus driver's license to an Israeli one. I followed all the steps but the process dragged out for months and I was not able to schedule a road test.

Everything that happens is *hashgachah pratis*. I was attending a Yud Tes Kislev *farbrengen* and the mayor of the town was there. After the *farbrengen* i went over to the mayor and asked him if I could meet with him personally. He told me to come to the office and make an appointment with the secretary.

The next day I went to his office and the security guard asked me why I wanted to see the mayor. I told him that I was waiting over two months to transfer my license and hadn't heard a word from the department of motor vehicles. He told me, "You don't have to meet the mayor for this. My wife works in the motor vehicles department. Go there to talk to her and she will help you."

The next day I went there and met his wife. She looked up my file in the computer and told me that my papers were never given in to continue the process. I was told to start the process from scratch, and she would help. *Baruch Hashem*, I filled out the papers again, and "soon" (for Israeli bureaucracies, that



is) the process was moving along nicely.

The day of the road test I tried to get as many people as possible to put on *tefillin*. There was one guy at the bakery who wasn't interested in putting on *tefillin*. When I told him that I was taking a road test that day and needed the extra *zchus*, he put on *tefillin*, blessing me that I would pass. I also got another two people who ordinarily wouldn't put on *tefillin*. *Baruch Hashem*, I passed on the first try. Everybody was very happy, especially the men who had put on *tefillin* for this occasion. Now they tell me not to bother them anymore. (Of course I don't give up.)

With my license in hand (finally!) I started applying for a job. I went to one place; my wife came along with me for the interview. Before the interview, they gave me a private road test to see how comfortable they are with my driving. *Baruch Hashem*, they were very happy with me and I went to the next step in the process, talking to the boss. We started talking about driving hours and they said they wanted me to start at 6:30 in the morning. My wife told them, "My husband will not start working unless he has *davened* with a *minyan* first." They looked at her and said, "He could *daven* after the morning run."

My wife said, "*Parnassah* comes from Hashem. We *daven* with a *minyan* before we work and Hashem will provide *parnassah*." I chimed in that the *brachah* of *parnassah* comes from the wife. So if my wife said it, that is where it stands.

They looked at us in astonishment. They had never heard such words before. Usually it is the wife who pressures the husband to work and work harder and provide for the family. We told the boss firmly that I was not available to work before 8:00 in the morning. The truth is that there was also a *minyan* at 5:40 a.m., but I didn't come to Israel to exhaust and



It was the approach of our Rebbeim not to wait for others to come to them, but ... when we see someone who is 'bare' of *mitzvos* we need to help them right away. Therefore, they created the system of going out and spreading Yiddishkeit, and not convincing themselves that *ahavas Yisroel* does not apply to [those Jews].

(*Sichah of Shabbos Parshas Bereishis, 1968, responding to those who derided Mivtza Tefillin*).

Lazer Raksin as a young man (in hat and glasses) standing right next to the Rebbe in 770.

overwork myself. After all, I worked for a yeshiva in Crown Heights for 41 years and it was time for me to downsize a bit. The coordinator told the boss, "We can't work with these people. We need them in the early morning." The boss got up and told the coordinator, "I want him to work for me. You make it work according to his schedule." We didn't even discuss the contract. Now it happened to be Chof Ches Nissan, the day the Rebbe said, "*Tut altz vos ir kent*," do everything you can to bring Moshiach.

I said to the boss, "If you want me to work for you, then promise me that you will put on *tefillin* every day." He

answered, "I can't commit to every day, but once a week I will promise you."

I signed the contract on the spot.

They took me out to the yard to show me the bus and tell me everything I needed to know. Meanwhile my wife stayed in the office until I came back. She overheard the boss telling some employees in a different room, "I can't believe who we just hired. He didn't even argue with me about the salary. All he wants is to be able to *daven* in the morning before starting work, and put on *tefillin* with us." I don't know what went through their minds, but my wife and I were happy!

The next day the coordinator gave

me a run starting at 6:30. That means that I had to get up at 5, instead of 6:30. I told the coordinator that this was not the deal we made. "Please," he begged me. "I have no one else to do it." I told him, "I will make a deal with you. There are two coordinators preparing the runs for the day. You both promise to put on *tefillin* and I will get up at 5 o'clock in the morning to help you out."

I said, "I am not looking for the extra hours of work. I am working so that you can put on *tefillin* every day. I am working for your sake." They looked at me like I was crazy, but guess what, it is working out. The next day I was trying to get a fellow to put on *tefillin*. In my experience, the bosses usually yell at me if they see me pestering people to put on *tefillin* during work. This is not the place for *tefillin*, they say. But instead of yelling at me, the boss tells that individual, "What makes you Jewish if you don't put on *tefillin*?" The guy answered back, "What about you? Why don't you put on *tefillin*?" The boss answered, "I am committed to once a week. Now you see this guy? He came from New York to work for us and to put on *tefillin* with people. If you don't put on *tefillin* he will go back to New York." I pleaded with the worker, "Please put on *tefillin*, I don't want to go back to New York." He agreed to put on *tefillin*.

A few days later, I had a road test for a truck license. I approached a worker in the bakery we use to put on *tefillin* for me, for my *hatzlachah*. He agreed, and *B"H* I passed. I told him, "What do I have to do to continue to get you to put on *tefillin*?" He answered me, "Take a road test for a tractor trailer."

I have to think about that.

At work I put on *tefillin* with two to four people every day. There is a 76-year-old man at work who refuses to put on *tefillin*. He told me his whole

family was wiped out in the Holocaust, R"l. Where was G-d?

All I could tell him was that we don't understand the ways of Hashem. You are alive today; thank Him for that. He told me that he believes in Hashem but thinks that Hashem abandoned this world because he couldn't handle the overabundance of people. I said, "If I was driving a bus full of kids and they were getting out of hand, would it make sense for me to jump out of the bus and let it run on its own? Hashem doesn't abandon His children." But he was being stubborn and I was in a losing battle or so I thought.

One day the boss asked me if I would drive for Birthright. The problem with Birthright is that you are committed to them for ten days. No wife, no home, just you and a busload of teenagers for ten days. I told him sorry, it's not for me. I talked it over with my wife and she agreed that if that 76-year-old would put on *tefillin*, she would let me drive for Birthright, just to show them how much *tefillin* is worth.

So the next day I approached that individual while the boss was looking on and made my proposal. "No way am I putting on *tefillin*," was his response. "I made a *neder* that as long as I live, I will never put on *tefillin*." I explained to him that a *neder* like that is worth nothing. The boss tried reasoning with

him, to do it for the team. But no was no. In a way I felt relieved, because ten days of Birthright was not something I was looking forward to. But on the other hand, I felt that I had a challenge on my hands.

Every once in a while I would ask him to do this just one time. He would respond, "I put on *tefillin* at my bar mitzvah, but only because it was forced upon me. My *tefillin* sits in my closet all these years, and that's where it will sit." Jokingly he told me that maybe when he's 80 he'll agree to put on *tefillin* one time. At least he didn't close the door completely. It was just a matter of time. I hoped that maybe I'd be able to bargain him down from four years to four weeks or even four days.

With tough cases like these, months can go by and nothing changes in the routine. My wife had the idea to give away our own dollars of the Rebbe to people who had a hard time agreeing to put on *tefillin*. She suggested that I give one to the 76-year-old. Maybe the *zchus* of the Rebbe's dollar sitting in his house would change his mind. So I presented him with a dollar of the Rebbe.

On Friday before Rosh Hashanah, we gave out honey cakes to all my *tefillin* customers and included that guy. I asked him, "How about doing *teshuvah* before Rosh Hashanah and putting on *tefillin*?" He answered me,

"I will put on *tefillin* on one condition: that you will not bother me for four years, until I'm 80." On went the *tefillin*, and I told him, "Any time you want to put on *tefillin*, just ask me." I believe the Rebbe's dollar had to have some effect on him. Otherwise nothing makes sense. For Birthright he wouldn't do it. Now after the Rebbe's dollars he agreed.

The boss and all my coworkers were in shock. How did you get him to put on *tefillin*? "It's beyond me," was my answer.

Now my other boss has his office upstairs, so it is not easy to get to him. I need to ask permission and have to be buzzed in. Every time I ask the secretary if I can talk to him, she calls upstairs and the response is that he's busy.

One day I told the secretary to tell him that I want to give him a honey cake and wish him a *gut yahr*. She called upstairs and I was let in.

I had a nice conversation with him and he ended up putting on *tefillin*. The boss told me that he is happy to have me work for him, especially the *tefillin* part, and what a special *zchus* I have to put on *tefillin* with the workers. ❧

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*If you missed Part 1 of this series, which was in the Tishrei 2019 issue, you may read it at [nsheichabadnewsletter.com/archives/raksin](http://nsheichabadnewsletter.com/archives/raksin).*

**T**here is no need to be ashamed of this work, because we are doing Hashem's work and we are bringing them Moshiach, whose task is to gather in all the dispersed of Israel, including those in the category of *iver* and *pise'ach*, blind and limping. Some ask: "What benefit results from the *tefillin* campaign? You put *tefillin* on a Jew only one time, and you have no idea if it has any lasting effect on him." Every *mitzvah* forges an eternal bond between a Jew and his Creator. In addition, the *Gemara* teaches that a Jew who dons *tefillin* even once becomes worthy of his share in the World to Come; his entire eternal future depends on it. (*Sichah of 10 Nissan, 5743*).