

Not Easy to Negotiate With a Yeshiva Bachur!

LAZER RAKSIN



'I left yeshiva and never went back,' he said. 'This is my story.'

I WAS ON MY REGULAR FRIDAY MORNING *miotza tefillin* route. One of my regular clients, I'll call him David, said to me, "I will give you a new customer. My father-in-law has his office right down the hall from me." And he took me

down the hall. We walked into his father-in-law's office, and David saw another Yid in the office. David asked him if he

would like to put on *tefillin*. "No," came the immediate response.

"Why not?" I asked, but David told me not to

push it. Respect his wishes. Okay, I said, and I went to put on *tefillin* with his father-in-law.

As I was leaving, the refuser was still there, and I couldn't just let it go. Why such a harsh response? So, I politely and calmly asked him why he felt such negativity to this important *mitzvah*. He replied, "Where in the Torah does it say you have to put on *tefillin*? It only says in the Torah *ukshartem le'os al yadecha vehayu letotafos bein einecha*. There should be a sign on our hands and between our eyes. Nowhere does it say that it means the *tefillin* you are holding. Only the Rabbis came to a conclusion that this is what it means. I can just use my hands to point out the places mentioned. Who needs leather straps, and boxes with *pesukim* in them?"

To hear such words! *Oy!* He saw my face and tried to reassure me:



19 Tishrei 5739 (1978). Lazer Raksin (in black hat) with the Rebbe in 770.

“Look,” he said, more softly now, “I believe in G-d, and when my friends tell me there is no G-d, I ask them why they think that way. Their response is that they don’t see Him, so He doesn’t exist. I ask them, do you see the air you breathe? No? And yet you know there is air that you breathe...”

And we continued talking. After talking to him for a while, I began to believe that there was more to this than meets the eye.

“Tell me,” I asked him, “did you ever learn in a yeshiva? You know too much for a regular Jew off the street.”

“Of course I learned in a yeshiva. A yeshiva in Yerushalayim. I had a bar mitzvah, too. I know that if a person only has money for half a set of *tefillin*, he should buy *tefillin shel rosh*, because that is the most important. See what a yeshiva background can do for you?”

“Yes, I see! So, what happened that you are in this position today?” I asked gently.

“You want to know?”

“Yes.”

“I will tell you. In 1995, Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated. One Jew murdered another Jew and my *rebbe*, whom I respected very much, began dancing when he heard the news. My *rebbe* said *baruch Hashem* about what had happened. There I was, learning in a yeshiva, learning Torah, and here is a *rebbe* who is so happy that another Jew was killed, that he is dancing. I said, this is where I draw the line. All his learning is worth nothing if my *rebbe* can feel this way about one Jew murdering another. And I left yeshiva and never went back,” he said. “This is my story.”

Now I had to pick up the pieces. I also knew I couldn’t

defend or demonize the *rebbe*. I had to leave that story alone. I silently asked the Rebbe to help me, and this was the conversation:

“You have heard of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.”

“Of course,” he replied. “I have many Lubavitcher friends.”

“A few months before the Six-Day War, the Rebbe came out with *mitzva tefillin*. Nobody could understand why this *mitzvah* was chosen by the Rebbe from all 613 *mitzvos*. It was only after the war broke out that people began to understand. It says when you put on *tefillin shel rosh* it leaves a mark in the air, and when the nations of the world see it, they will fear you, and understand that there is a G-d who watches over the Jewish people. You know the end result—it took only six days.

“Now,” I told him, “we are again in a very bad situation. The Iranians are working on decimating Eretz Yisroel. We need many more *tefillin shel roshes* in the atmosphere. Would you like to put on *tefillin* now, and help save our country?”

He thought a minute, then replied, “Okay, fine. The next time you come here I will do it.”

I saw we were getting closer.

“Why push off a good thing? Let’s do it now.”

He agreed, and we put on *tefillin*.

LAZER RAKSIN was well known as a hardworking and beloved busdriver for *Oholei Torah* for decades before making *aliyah* in 2018. But no matter what Lazer does for a living, he lives for *mitzva tefillin*. This is Lazer’s tenth article on this topic for the *N’shei Chabad Newsletter*. To read the previous nine, please visit nsheichabadnewsletter.com/archives, searchword: Raksin.