

**TEFILLIN
SOURCEBOOK**

**FOR THE
WORLD
WIDE
WRAP**

**TEMPLE BETH EL, STAMFORD
CONNECTICUT**

Source:

The HowTo Handbook for
Jewish Living

Putting on Tefillin תפילין

The sources:

וְהָיָה לָךְ לְאוֹת עַל־יָדְךָ וּלְזִכָּרוֹן בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת יְהוָה בְּפִיךָ כִּי בְיָד חֲזָקָה הוֹצֵאָךְ יְהוָה מִמִּצְרָיִם:

“And it shall serve you as a sign on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead—in order that the teachings of Adonai may be in your mouth—that with a mighty hand Adonai freed you from Egypt” (Exod. 13:9).

וְהָיָה לְאוֹת עַל־יָדְכָה וּלְטוֹטָפֶת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ כִּי בְחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ יְהוָה מִמִּצְרָיִם:

“And so it shall be as a sign upon your hand and as a symbol on your forehead that with a mighty hand Adonai freed us from Egypt” (Exod. 13:16).

וְקָשַׁרְתֶּם לְאוֹת עַל־יָדְךָ וְהָיוּ לְטוֹטָפֶת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ: וְכַתְּבָתֶם עַל־מַזְוֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבִשְׁעָרֶיךָ:

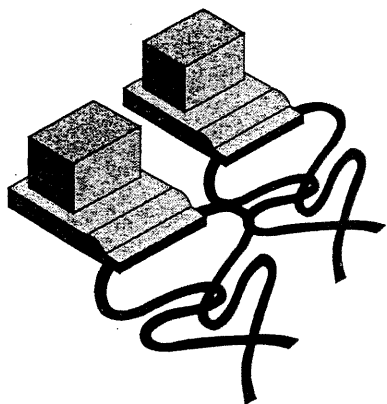
“Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead” (Deut. 6:8).

וּשְׁמַתֶּם אֶת־דִּבְרֵי אֱלֹהִים עַל־לִבְבְּכֶם וְעַל־נֶפֶשְׁכֶם וְקָשַׁרְתֶּם אֹתָם לְאוֹת עַל־יָדְכֶם וְהָיוּ לְטוֹטָפֶת בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם:

“Therefore impress these My words upon your very heart: bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead” (Deut. 11:18).

What you need to know:

1. To begin, roll up the sleeve (if you have one) of your weaker arm (the one you don't write with) to above your biceps muscle. Take off any jewelry (watches, rings) which you can put on your other hand.



2. Unwrap the straps of the hand *tefillin* (*tefillin shel yad*). תפלין של יד
Place the *tefillin* box (*bayit*) on the biceps of your בית
upper arm, with the leather piece (*maabarta*) that מעברתא
sticks out on the side closest to your shoulder. The קשר
knot (*keshet*) should be placed on the top of your
biceps muscle on the side closest to your body. When
everything is in place, say this blessing:

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו
וצונו להניח תפלין:

*Baruch atah Adonai elohaynu melech ha'olam asher kid-
shanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu lehani'ach tefillin.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the
Universe, who has made us holy with mitzvot and
instructed us to wear *tefillin*.

3. Pull on the strap (*retzua*) until the *tefillin* are tightly רצועה
bound to your arm. Practice makes perfect; eventually
you will learn how to keep everything from slipping.
Don't let the knot loosen while you wind the rest of
the strap.
4. You may want to wind the strap once around your בית
upper arm to keep the *bayit* in place.
5. Next, wind the strap seven times around your arm
between your elbow and wrist. Some rabbis say that
the seven times should remind us of the seven Hebrew
words in the verse in Psalms, "You open Your hand
and satisfy all living creatures" (145:16). Ashkenazic
Jews wind the strap counterclockwise (toward their
bodies), while Sephardic Jews wind it clockwise (away
from their bodies). The black side of the strap should
always face outward.
6. After the seventh wind, bring the strap around the
outside of your hand to your palm and wrap the rest
of it around the middle of your palm (i.e., the space
between your thumb and index finger). Tuck the end
of the strap underneath this middle coil.

- תפלין של ראש 7. Unwrap the head *tefillin* (*tefillin shel rosh*). Hold the *bayit* and place it on the top of your head above your forehead, centered between your eyes. The knot should be on the back of your head, near the nape, and the straps should be brought forward to hang down over your chest with the black side outwards. Say this blessing:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
וְצִוָּנוּ עַל מִצְוַת תְּפִלִּין:

Baruch atah Adonai elohaynu melech ha'olam asher kidshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu al mitzvat tefillin.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who has made us holy with mitzvot and instructed us concerning the precept of *tefillin*.

- ד שְׁדִי 8. Unwind the part of the strap coiled around the middle of your palm. According to Ashkenazic custom, wrap the strap three times around your middle finger, once around the lower part of that finger, and once around its middle, and one joining the two strap loops. This forms the Hebrew letter "dalet", the second letter of *Shaddai* (Almighty God). Then quote this verse:

וְאֶרְשָׁתִּיךָ לִי לְעוֹלָם. וְאֶרְשָׁתִּיךָ לִי בְצֶדֶק וּבְמִשְׁפָּט וּבְחֶסֶד
וּבְרַחֲמִים: וְאֶרְשָׁתִּיךָ לִי בְּאֱמוּנָה, וְיָדַעַת אֶת־יְיָ:

*Ve'ayrastich lee l'olam ve'ayrastich lee betzedek u'vmishpat
u'vchesed u'vrachamim ve'ayrastich lee be'emunah
veyada'at et Adonai.*

I will betroth you to Me forever. I will betroth you to Me with righteousness, with justice, with kindness, and with compassion. I will betroth you to Me with faithfulness, and you shall know God (Hosea 2:21).

- ש 9. Bring the remainder of the strap under your ring finger and over the outside of the hand, forming a "V". Then wind the strap once again around the middle of the palm, forming the Hebrew letter "shin" which is the first letter of *Shaddai* (Almighty God).

10. To take the *tefillin* off, reverse the order. First, take off the *dalet* and *shin* on your hand. Next, take off the *shel rosh* and wrap its straps. Unwind the strap of the *shel yad* and wrap the straps. There is no single way of wrapping the *tefillin*. Just try to neatly wrap the straps around the *bayit* of the *shel yad* and *shel rosh*.

Things to remember:

1. *Tefillin* are only worn during the *Shacharit* (morning) service. Traditionally, only boys who reach the age of Bar Mitzvah wear *tefillin*. Some girls who reach the age of Bat Mitzvah also choose to wear *tefillin*.
2. *Tefillin* are not worn on Shabbat or major festivals, since holidays themselves are a sign of a person's relationship with God. *Tefillin* have become a sign of one's connection with God on ordinary days.
3. The *tallit* is always put on before *tefillin*, because it is worn every day of the year while *tefillin* are worn only on ordinary days.
4. Some people follow the custom of touching the *batim* (plural of *bayit*) with their fingers and bringing their fingers to their lips as a kiss when they say, "bind them for a sign" during the *Shema Yisrael* prayer in the morning.

Key words and phrases:

Bayit בַּיִת. The box of the *tefillin* containing the parchment.
Giddin גִּידִין. Thread made from the fibers of the hip muscles of kosher animals; used for sewing closed the *bayit*.

Kesher קֶשֶׁר. *Tefillin* knot.

Maabarta מַעֲבָרָתָא. Leather piece that protrudes from the back of the *bayit* through which the strap is passed.

Phylacteries תְּפִלְיִין. From the Greek word meaning an amulet; the common English name for *tefillin*.

Retzua רִצְעוּזָא. Leather strap.

Shaddai שְׁדַי. Ancient name for God. The *tefillin* straps wound around the arm and fingers form the Hebrew letters *shin* ש and *dalet* ד. The *kesher* (knot) next to the *bayit* of the hand *tefillin* represents the Hebrew letter *yod* י. When, combined, the *shin* ש, *dalet* ד, and *yod* י spell out the word *Shaddai*, שְׁדַי one of God's oldest names.

Shin ש (Hebrew letter). Two letter *shins*, one with three branches () and the other with four () are on the *tefillin shel rosh*. Some say that the three-branched *shin* symbolizes the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The four-branched *shin* is a reminder of the four matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. The mystics say that the meaning of the four-branched *shin* will only be revealed to us when the Messiah comes.

Tefillah תְּפִלָּה. Singular of *tefillin*.

Tefillah shel rosh תְּפִלָּה שֶׁל רֹאשׁ. The *tefillin* placed on the head.

Tefillah shel yad תְּפִלָּה שֶׁל יָד. The *tefillin* placed on the upper arm and wound around the hand.

Titura תִּיתוּרָא. The square base of the *bayit*.

If you want to know more:

Encyclopaedia Judaica (Jerusalem, 1973) 15:898-903.

Aryeh Kaplan, *Tefillin* (New York, 1975).

Richard Siegel, Michael Strassfeld, and Sharon Strassfeld.
The First Jewish Catalogue (Philadelphia, 1973).

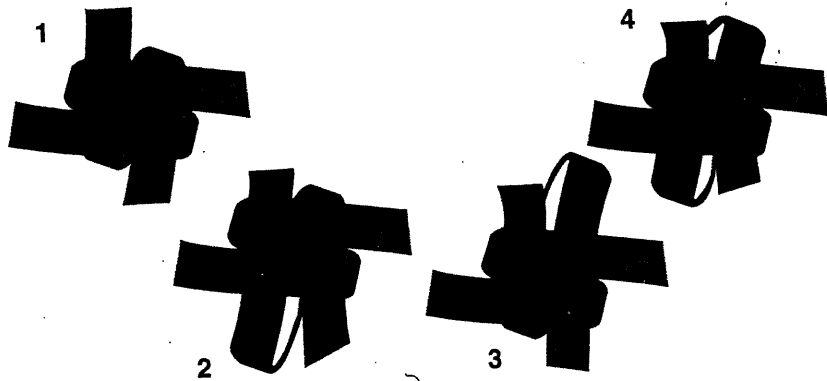
More particulars:

I. *Adjusting the tefillin knot*

If your *tefillin* headband is too large for you, and you want to make it smaller, here is what you do.

1. Notice that the knot has four quarters. Take hold of the lower left quarter and pull it out.
2. Now you have a loop hanging down.
3. Take hold of the upper right quarter and loosen it a little. Pull it from the back, taking in the lower left loop you had before. Keep pulling until the lower loop disappears.

4. Now you have a loop left on top. To make this loop disappear, just pull down on the trailing portion of the right *retzua*.



If your headband is too small and you wish to make it larger, here is what you do:

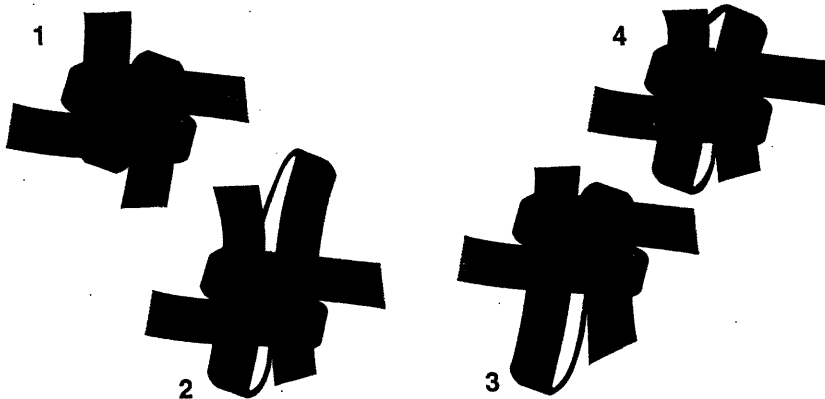
1. Notice that the *keshet* (knot) has four quarters. Each quarter is really a tight loop.

2. Take hold of the upper right quarter and pull it out into a loose loop.

3. Now pull out the lower left quarter of the knot until you get a loop.

4. Now to make the lower loop disappear, simply pull on the portion of the strap which extends upward.

Now your *keshet* is back to normal again, and your headband is enlarged. Readjust the knot so that it is in the center of the loop which goes around your head.



II. *Two Kinds of Tefillin*: Rashi *Tefillin*/Rabbenu Tam *Tefillin*.

There are two kinds of *tefillin*: Rashi *tefillin* and Rabbenu Tam *tefillin*. Most Jews use Rashi *tefillin*. Some put both on at different times of the morning prayers, usually putting on Rabbenu Tam *tefillin* after *Shemoneh Esray* and reciting *Shema* a second time. The two differ only in the order of the passages on the parchment in the *tefillin shel rosh*. Rashi's order follows the order in which the paragraphs appear in the Bible: Exodus 13:1-10, 13:11-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21. Rabbenu Tam (Rashi's grandson), reorders the place of the last two paragraphs, placing Deuteronomy 11:13-21 before Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

היה אם ישנו הישגים על מנתו אשר אלו מחד אומנם היוו להחלף את זה אחרים ומעברו בכל הכנסה
והיחסי מחד אלו הכנסה אחר מכלולו והפחתו וזה אשר על ידיהם יושב יושב במועד
השלישי והשלישי כלם על וזהו אשר יושב יושב אחרים והשלישי כלם והשלישי
את השלישי ואלו אשר מור והשלישי כלם את זה וזהו אשר יושב יושב
כלם השלישי את זה אשר כלם ועל השלישי השלישי את זה אשר כלם
השלישי את זה אשר כלם על השלישי השלישי את זה אשר כלם
השלישי את זה אשר כלם על השלישי השלישי את זה אשר כלם

Somewhere out of time
 In the mystery of time
 Somewhere between memory and
 forgetfulness,
 Dimly though
 I remember how once I stood
 At Your mountain trembling
 Amid the fire and the thunder.
 How I stood there, out of bondage
 In a strange land and afraid.
 And you loved me and You fed me
 And I feasted on Your words.
 And, yes, I can remember
 How the thunder was my heart
 And the fire was my soul.
 O God, I do remember.
 The fire burns in me anew.
 And here I am, once more
 A witness to that timeless moment.
 Present now in the light of Your Torah
 I am reborn.

V'taher Libenu

TEFILLIN

Tefillin are two black leather boxes containing four biblical passages (Exodus 13:1-10; 11-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21), which are bound by black leather straps to the forehead and left arm (or in left-handed people, the right arm). The box worn on the forehead (*shel rosh*) contains four compartments, each with a biblical passage written on parchment; that on the arm (*shel yad*) has one compartment containing a single piece of parchment. *Tefillin* are worn during morning services each day except *Shabbat* and holidays (which are themselves symbols of holiness).

The commandment to wear *tefillin* dates back to the Torah: "It shall be a sign upon your hand and as a symbol on your forehead that with a mighty hand the Lord freed us from Egypt." The

Bible uses three different Hebrew words for *tefillin*:



A close-up of *tefillin*, showing the four-pronged *shin*. Below, *tefillin* worn on head and arm in morning prayers.

zikkaron—memo-
 rial; *ot*—sign; and

totafot—frontlets (possibly derived from the Akkadian word for "ribbon"). The Hebrew word *tefillin* either derives from the word meaning "prayer" (*"tefillah"*) or "to separate" (רָחַק), since wearing *tefillin*, once part of a man's daily attire, originally distinguished Jews from their neighbors. The New Testament uses the Greek word "phylacteries"—amulet—to refer to *tefillin* disparagingly. In modern times, this Greek word, now bereft of its historical associations, is used by both Jews and Gentiles as the translation of "*tefillin*."

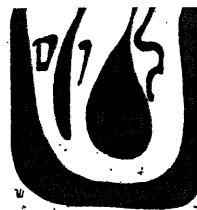
Tefillin are charged with symbolic significance. Their most important function is to remind Jews of the Exodus from Egypt and of the Jewish People's continuing relationship with God through history. Binding one's arm with the straps symbolizes submission to God's will as well as commitment to the commandments. The binding also symbolizes God's marriage to the Jewish People. When putting on *tefillin*, one recites: "I will betroth you to Me forever; I will betroth you to Me with righteousness, justice, kindness, and mercy." Placing the *tefillin* on the head and on the arm, close to the heart, symbolizes the dedication of mind, body, and feelings to God's service. The leather straps around the arm and head also suggest harnessing one's will, thoughts, and actions to God.

Kabbalists added the practice of representing the word *Shaddai* (שׁדַּי), Almighty, on the *tefillin*. The first letter, *shin*, is inscribed on the head *tefillin* as well as woven with the arm straps through the fingers of the hand; the second letter, *dalet*, is represented by the knot at the back of the head strap as well as woven on the hand; the third letter, *yud*, is represented by the end of the head strap as well as the knot near the arm *tefillin*.

The *shin* on the head *tefillin* is written on two sides of the cube. One of these is written the usual way: שׁ. The other, however, has four prongs. It has been suggested that this peculiar form symbolizes the three Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and the four Matriarchs (Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah); or that the sum of the prongs equals seven, equivalent to the number of windings of the arm strap (or other symbolic "sevens").

One begins wearing *tefillin* at the age of *Bar Mitzvah*. Traditionally, *tefillin* have been worn only by men (although there is evidence that they were worn by some women in the talmudic period, as well as by the daughters of the great medieval scholar Rashi). In modern times, some women have begun to wear traditional *tefillin* or design their own.

Kabbalists believe that God, too, wears *tefillin*, composed of the prayers (*tefillot*) of the Jewish People.



Swire.

The Jewish Catalog

zfillin

וְהָיָה לָךְ לְאוֹת עַל־יָדְךָ וּלְזִכָּרוֹן
בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת
יְהוָה בְּפִיךָ כִּי בְּיָד חֲזָקָה הוֹצֵאתָ
יְהוָה מִמִּצְרָיִם:

and this shall serve you as a sign upon
your hand and as a reminder on
your forehead—in order that the
things of the Lord may be in
your mouth—that with a mighty hand
the Lord freed you from Egypt”
(Exodus 13:9).

וְהָיָה לְאוֹת עַל־יָדְךָ וּלְזִכָּרוֹן
בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ כִּי בְּחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצֵאתָ
יְהוָה מִמִּצְרָיִם:

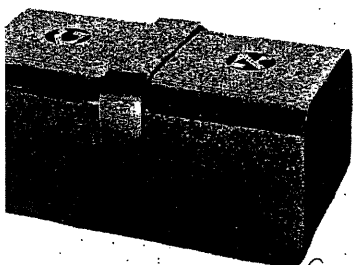
and so it shall be as a sign upon
your hand and as a symbol on your
forehead that with a mighty hand
the Lord freed us from Egypt”
(Exodus 13:16).

וְקָשַׁרְתֶּם לְאוֹת עַל־יָדְךָ וְהָיָה
לְזִכָּרוֹן בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ:

and bind them as a sign on your hand
and let them serve as a symbol on
your forehead” (Deuteronomy 6:8).

וְשָׂמַתָּם אֶת־דְּבָרֵי אֵלֶּה
עַל־לִבְבְּכֶם וְעַל־יָדְכֶם וְהָיָה
לְזִכָּרוֹן בֵּין עֵינֶיכֶם:

Therefore impress these my
words upon your very heart: bind
them as a sign on your hand and let
them serve as a symbol on your
forehead” (Deuteronomy 11:18).



INTRODUCTION

These passages are the sources for the mitzvah of tefillin, phylacteries. The tefillin are worn on the arm and head every weekday morning, during Shaharit—the Morning Service.

PARTS OF TEFILLIN

Tefillin are composed of two main parts:

1. tefillin shel yad—the tefillin that are wound around your arm and hand; and
 2. tefillin shel rosh—the tefillin that are placed on your head.
- Tefillin have the following components:

1. *Bayit (pl. batim)*—box. Each part has a bayit. There are, however, basic differences between the bayit shel yad and the bayit shel rosh.

Shel yad: has one compartment

Shel rosh: has four separate compartments, though placed tightly together. Also the shel rosh has the Hebrew letter shin ש on two of its sides. One is a three-pronged ש; the other is a four-pronged ש. Some see these letters as an allusion to the three patriarchs and four matriarchs. Others say that since the gematria (see Gematria) of ש is 300, the letters serve us as a reminder that 300 out of 354 days of the year tefillin are worn. The unusual four-pronged ש, tradition says, was used on the Ten Commandments. The commandments were engraved all the way through the tablets so they could be read from either side. For a shin to be read both ways it has to be four-pronged so there are three spaces in between. To understand this, hold up four fingers and see how the spaces in between the fingers form a shin.

The bayit is made from the skin of a kosher animal and is in the shape of a perfect square. The corners should form sharp points. With “superduper” tefillin, each bayit is made from a single piece of leather.

2. *Parshiyot—portions from the Torah.* There is one set of four portions, i.e., Exodus 13:1–10; 13:11–16; Deuteronomy 6:4–9; 11:13–21, enclosed in each bayit. These portions deal with the mitzvah of tefillin.

The portions are written on parchment by a scribe (see Scribal Arts). The parshiyot are tightly rolled and tied with the hairs of an animal. They are then enclosed in another piece of parchment and again bound with hairs. For the shel yad, the parshiyot are written on one long piece of parchment. For the shel rosh, each parshah is written on a different piece of parchment and each parchment is put in a different compartment. The binding hairs are drawn through the bayit of the shel rosh and should be visible on the outside. This is one sign that the pair of tefillin is a good one.

3. *Titara*—the square base (length and width, not height). It should be larger than two fingers by two fingers (width, not height) and smaller than 4 x 4 fingers.

4. *Maabarta*—a leather protrusion from the back of the bayit. It is a hollow extension through which the strap is passed.

5. *Giddin*—threads made from the fibers of the hip muscle tissue of kosher animals. These are used for sewing closed the bayit. Twelve holes are made in a square around the sides of the bayit and the titara, which are then sewn together with the giddin.

6. *Retzuah*—strap. One long retzuah is attached (through the maabarta) to the shel yad. It is knotted in the shape of the letter yod and should always be close to the bayit. It is also shaped in the form of a noose so it can be tightened on the arm. One long retzuah is attached to the shel rosh. It forms a circlet which is adjusted to fit the head. The knot which forms the circlet is made in the shape of the letter dalet. The ends of the straps should be long enough to hang down slightly below the waist.

TO PUT ON TEFILLIN

The best and easiest way is to have someone show you, but if no one is available, the general order is to:

1. put on the shel yad;
2. put on the shel rosh;
3. finish tying the strap around your hand and fingers. Reverse this order when taking off the tefillin. Tefillin are put on and taken off while standing.

The tefillin shel yad is put on your "weak" hand—that is, your left hand if you are right-handed. This is done because of Exodus 13:16, which says: "And so it shall be as a sign upon your hand." The Hebrew word for "your hand" has an extra Hebrew letter heh attached to it. The rabbis felt that the extra letter alludes to one's weak hand *יד כהה* (יד כהה=ידכה). The left hand is closer to your heart and this fits the symbolism of the biblical statement: "And you shall place these words upon your heart." Nonetheless, if you are a lefty, wear the tefillin on your weak hand, i.e., your right.

To begin:

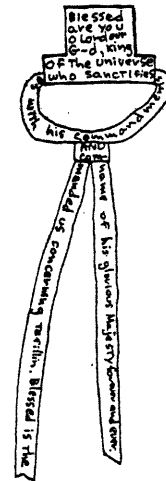
1. Roll up your sleeve (if you have one) to above your muscle. This is done because there can be nothing between the tefillin and your skin. For this reason, watches should be taken off or put on your other hand.
2. Unwrap the straps of the tefillin shel yad. Place the bayit on the muscle of your arm. The maabarta should be on the side closest to your shoulder. Also, the knot should be both next to the bayit and on the side closest to your body. The bayit should be placed on top of your muscle, not on the side or the bottom. If you put your arm down to your side, the tefillin will be both facing toward and on the same level with your heart.

When everything is in place, say the blessing:

"Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to wear tefillin."

ברוך אתה, יי אלהינו, מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו
במצוותיו, וצונו להניח תפילין:

Pull on the strap until the tefillin are tightly bound to your arm. With practice you will learn how tightly you have to pull to keep it from slipping. At



first it is better to pull very tightly, for it has a tendency to slip off. However, tefillin are not supposed to cut off your circulation. Do not let the knot loosen while you wind the rest of the strap.

3. Many people wind the strap at least once around the upper arm to help keep the bayit in place.

4. Wind the strap seven times around your arm between your elbow and your wrist. Ashkenazic Jews wind the strap counterclockwise. Sephardic Jews wind it clockwise. The black side of the strap should always face outward.

5. After the seventh time, bring the strap around the outside of your hand to your palm and then wrap the rest around the middle of your palm, i.e., the space between your thumb and index finger. Tuck the end of the strap underneath this middle coil to prevent the strap from unwinding.

6. Unwrap the tefillin shel rosh. Hold the bayit and place the bayit on the top of your head above the forehead. The maabarta should be on the side away from your face and thus toward the middle of your head. The opposite end of the bayit should rest at the beginning of your hairline. The bayit should not hang over your forehead. It should be centered between your eyes, as it says: "And they shall be a sign between your eyes."

7. Place the knot on the back of your head, i.e., on the nape of your neck. Check to see that the strap is not twisted. The strap ends should be brought forward to hang down over your chest. Make sure the black side is facing out.

8. Before you have the whole thing in place say the berakhah:

"Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us concerning the precept of tefillin."

ברוך אתה, יי אלהינו, מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו
במצותיו, וצונו על מצות תפלין:

This should be followed by:

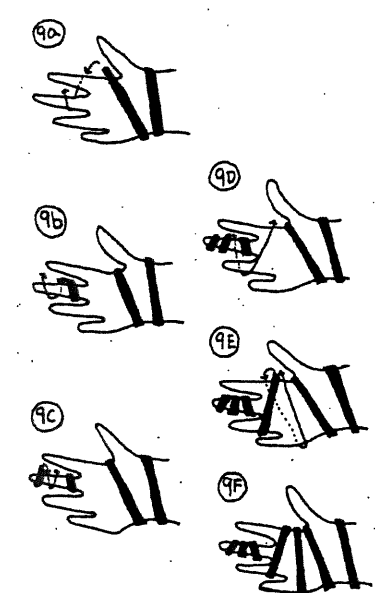
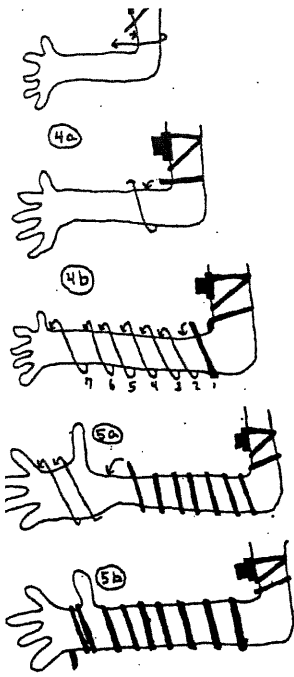
"Blessed be the Name of His glorious majesty forever and ever."

ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד:

This is said because of an involved halakhic question. Very briefly, there is doubt whether the second blessing is superfluous because you have already said the first blessing. Saying unnecessary blessings is frowned upon; so in case the second blessing is unnecessary, you say, "Blessed be the Name . . ." which "neutralizes" the second blessing.

9. Finally you unwind the part of the strap wrapped about the middle of your palm (leaving in place the coil from your wrist to your palm). According to Ashkenazic custom, you then wrap it three times around your middle finger, twice around the lower part of that finger (i.e., the part closest to the knuckle), and once around the middle part of the finger. While this is done, Hoséa 2:21-22 is said: "And I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness and in justice, and in lovingkindness, and in compassion. And I will betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord." The remainder of the strap is brought under the ring finger and over the outside of the hand, forming a V. Then the strap is once again wound around the middle of the palm, forming a shin. Any extra strap is wound around this middle coil and again the end of the strap is tucked under this coil. The winding around the finger forms the Hebrew letter dalet.

10. To take the tefillin off, reverse the order—take apart the dalet and shin on your hand, wrapping the strap around the middle of the palm. Then take off the shel rosh and wrap up the straps. Loosen and unwind the strap on the hand; take off the shel yad and wrap up the straps. There is no prescribed way



wrapping the tefillin. Many people wrap the straps around the batim. Try various ways and see which one you like.

RAVVANOT

There is a multilevel symbolism involved in this mitzvah, often working in sets of three.

1. The central theme of the tefillin is the act of binding. The tefillin bind you not only physically, but spiritually. The shel yad binds your arm—that is, your body. The shel yad also binds your heart, as it says: "... impress these My words upon your very heart: bind them ..." (Deuteronomy 11:18).

The shel rosh binds your mind.

Thus, mind-heart-body, your total self, is bound together to worship God. The tefillin also reminds us to use mind-heart-body for good and not for evil.

Mind-body-heart — thoughts-actions-will — thoughts-possession-feelings. Some base this trichotomy on the three words used in the Bible to refer to tefillin:

- (a) זָכָרֹן memorial (mind);
- (b) אוֹת sign (heart);
- (c) טֻטְפוֹת frontlets (body).

2. The tefillin are a memorial, a remembrance (mind) of the most important event of our collective past—the exodus from Egypt. As it says: "... and as a reminder on your forehead ... that with a mighty hand the Lord freed you from Egypt" (Exodus 13:9). Thus we are reminded of leaving the binding to the slavery of Pharaoh for the binding to the service of God—the leaving of the leather thongs of the lash for the leather straps of the tefillin.

They are also to remind us of the mitzvot, as it says: "... that the teachings of the Lord may be in your mouth" (Exodus 13:9). We received at Sinai the mitzvot which bind us to the service of God.

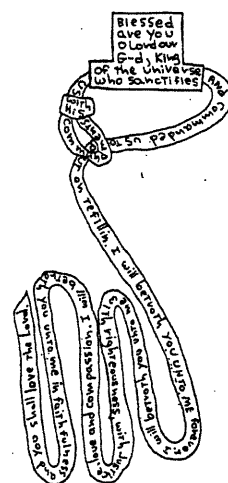
3. The tefillin are a sign of where we have been (Egypt), who we are (the nation which stood at Sinai), and where we are going (the permanent duty of service to God). Thus the tefillin shel rosh, in particular, is seen as a sign to the nations "that the Lord's name is proclaimed over you" (Deuteronomy 28:10). Therefore, it is not covered when it is worn.

4. The tefillin are especially a sign of our recognition of God. This is symbolized in the very construction of the tefillin, for one of God's names, שְׁדִי (Shaddai), is formed by the tefillin. That is, the ש (shin) on the hand or on the bayit of the shel rosh, the ד (dalet) on the fingers or the knot on the back of the head, the י (yod) is the knot next to the bayit of the shel yad or the end of the strap of the shel rosh.

Thus the tefillin help us in our feeling and awareness of the presence of Shaddai—Almighty God. The tefillin are a sign of our desire and will to worship God.

5. The frontlets, that is, the physical tefillin themselves—the physical act of binding—the touch of leather on skin—the parshiyot and their contents—"Hear O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is One. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul [mind], and with all your might"—these, too, are part of the mitzvah of tefillin.

6. The binding theme is finally carried through in the verses from Hosea (mentioned above) which are said while winding the strap around your finger. "And I will betroth thee unto Me for ever ... and thou shalt know the Lord ..." Daat in the Bible means "to know" in an experiential rather than an academic sense. For example, it is also used to mean sexual intercourse,



the deepest kind of human knowing. It is this kind of profound experiential knowing that Hosea meant. These verses consummate the binding in a betrothal between man and God.

7. Finally, the importance of the tefillin is further emphasized by a discussion in the Talmud. R. Abin . . . says, How do you know that the Holy One . . . puts on *tefillin*? For it is said: *The Lord hath sworn by His right hand, and by the arm of His strength. . . "And by the arm of His strength": this is the tefillin. . .* R. Nahman b. Isaac said to R. Hiyya b. Abin: What is written in the *tefillin* of the Lord of the Universe?—He replied to Him: *And who is like Thy people Israel, a nation one in the earth. . .* The Holy One . . . said to Israel: You have made me a unique entity in the world . . . as it is said: *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.* 'And I shall make you a unique entity in the world,' as it is said: *And who is like Thy people Israel, a nation one in the earth"* (Berakhot 6a).

Surrounded by the tallit and bound by the tefillin, man is ready to worship with God.

SOME LAWS AND CUSTOMS

1. Tefillin are usually worn during Shaharait, though one can fulfill the *mitzvah* by putting them on any time during the day. If put on at times other than Shaharit, it is customary to say the three paragraphs of the Shema.

2. Tefillin are worn when one reaches physical maturity, for men age thirteen, for women age twelve. Traditionally only men wore tefillin, though there were cases of women wearing them (e.g., Rashi's daughters). They can be worn before these ages for the purpose of learning how to put them on correctly.

3. Tefillin are not worn on Shabbat or holidays (i.e., Rosh ha-Shanah, Yom Kippur, the first and last days of Sukkot, Passover, and Shavuot). These days are also considered an *אוֹת*, a sign, and so the wearing of tefillin, which are also a sign, is considered superfluous.

4. Tefillin are considered an adornment and so are not worn the morning of Tisha b'Av (they are worn during Minhah), by the bereaved before the funeral, or the bridegroom on his wedding day (see Weddings).

5. There are three opinions concerning the wearing of tefillin during Hol ha-Moed (intermediate festival days). The doubt exists because of the ambiguous status of the intermediate days as partial holidays.

- a. The first opinion is not to wear tefillin.
- b. The second opinion is to wear them but not to say the berakhot.
- c. The third opinion is to wear them and say the berakhot quietly. One follows the custom of his family or, especially, his synagogue.

6. For Shaharit, the tallit is put on before the tefillin. This is because the tallit is worn every day of the year while tefillin are worn only on weekdays (as explained above). A *mitzvah* done consistently is performed before one that is performed less frequently. The tallit is removed after you take off your tefillin.

7. There are two kinds of tefillin: tefillin according to Rashi's opinion and tefillin according to Rabbenu Tam's opinion. Nearly all Jews wear Rashi tefillin. Some people wear Rashi tefillin for Shaharit and then take them off and put on R. Tam's tefillin and say the three paragraphs of the Shema. Others wear both at once. The only difference between the two kinds of tefillin is in the order of the parshiyot in the shel rosh. Rashi's order is Exodus 13:1-10; 13:11-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21, following the order they appear in the Bible. R. Tam's order is Exodus 13:1-10; 13:11-16; Deuteronomy 11:13-21; and 6:4-9, switching the place of the last two parshiyot. This

disagreement precedes Rashi and R. Tam, who lived in the Middle Ages and goes back at least to the first century C. E. This has been shown by pairs of tefillin dating from that period found at Qumran in Israel.

8. There is a custom to touch the batim with the fingers and then bring the fingers to the lips as a kiss when you say, "... bind them for a sign ..." during the Shema.

9. Some people take off the shel rosh with their left hands to show their reluctance in removing the tefillin. It is also a custom to turn to one side so as not to face the ark directly. Both reflect the desire not to leave the level of kedushah, sanctity, attained while wearing the tefillin.

10. On Rosh Hodesh (New Month) tefillin are taken off before the Musaf Service. If worn on Hol ha-Moed, they are removed after the Shaharit Amidah.

11. When wrapping the strap around the arm seven times, some people say:

"You open Your hand and satisfy every living thing with favor."

פותח את ידך, ומשביע לכל חי רצון:

Caring for your tefillin

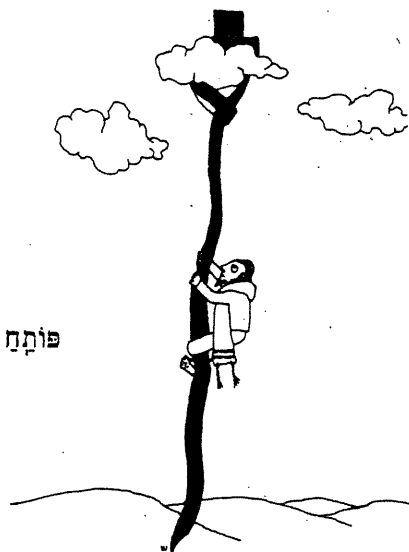
1. You should keep your tefillin in a cloth bag. These can be handmade or bought at a Jewish bookstore. It should be a separate bag from your tallit bag so that the tefillin can be put aside for Shabbat and holidays. Because the tefillin are not worn those days, they are not supposed to be touched.

2. You can buy cases that are made to fit around your batim and help to protect them. These can be obtained from the same place you buy your tefillin. With more expensive tefillin, these cases are usually included in the price.

3. Your tefillin should be taken to a sofer, scribe, twice in seven years. They should be checked for the squareness of the batim, the blackness of the straps and batim, and especially the correctness of the parshiyot. The latter are checked to see if the writing has faded, etc. If the sofer will check them while you are around, you can get a chance to see the inside of the batim and get a good idea of how the tefillin are made. If you want, you can buy the special black ink used for dying the tefillin. This can be bought from a sofer or a Jewish bookstore. In this way, you can see to it that your straps and batim are always black.

To buy tefillin

The purchase of tefillin should be done with great care. The best thing is to take someone along who knows about tefillin. It is especially important to purchase tefillin from a reliable Hebrew bookstore. You must rely on the dealer for the kashrut of the parchments. For this reason some people have a scribe check their tefillin right after they buy them. The best place to buy tefillin is in Israel. Most tefillin are made in Israel anyway and are somewhat cheaper there than elsewhere. However, tefillin can be bought from any Hebrew bookstore. The price can range anywhere from \$18 to \$150.



Finally, for more information about the practical aspects of tefillin, you should obtain *The Tefillin Manual* by S. Rubenstein, edited by R. Posner and published by:

S. Rubenstein
2260 Olinville Ave.
Bronx, N.Y., 10467

This pamphlet is very highly recommended. It describes in great detail how tefillin are made. It also gives directions for (a) making the shel rosh headband larger or smaller; (b) making the knot of the shel rosh; (c) making the knot of the shel yad both for lefties and righties. All the above is accompanied by diagrams.

