

TEFILLIN
SOURCEBOOK

FOR THE
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Source:

The HowTo Handbook for
Jewish Living

Putting on Tefillin תפליין

The sources:

וְהָיָה לָךְ לְאוֹת עַל-יָדְךָ וּלְזִכְרוֹן 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).

וְקָשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת עַל-יָדְךָ וְהָיוּ לְטוֹטָפֶת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ: וְכַתְּבָתָם עַל-מְזוֹזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבִשְׁעָרֶיךָ:

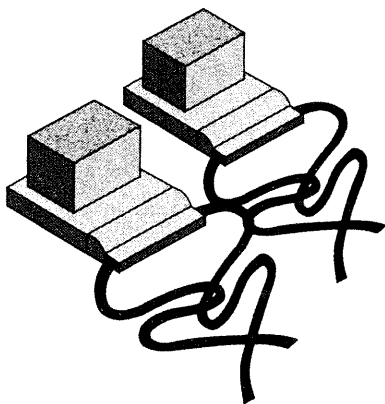
“Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead” (Deut. 6:8).

וּשְׁמַתָּם אֶת-דִּבְרֵי אֵלֹה עַל-לִבְבְּכֶם וְעַל-נַפְשְׁכֶם וְקָשַׁרְתָּם 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 (*kesher*) 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:

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

*Baruch atah Adonai elohaynu melech ha'olam asher kid-
shanu 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 8. Unwind the part of the strap coiled around the middle
שדי 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:

וארשתיה לי לעולם. וארשתיה לי בצדק ובמשפט ובחסד
וברחמים: וארשתיה לי באמונה, וידעת את-יי:

*Ve'ayrastich lee l'olam ve'ayrastich lee betzedek u'umishpat
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 בֵּית. 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 מַעֲבָרְתָּא. Leather piece that protrudes from the back of the *bayit* through which the strap is passed.

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

Retzua רִצּוּעָה. 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).

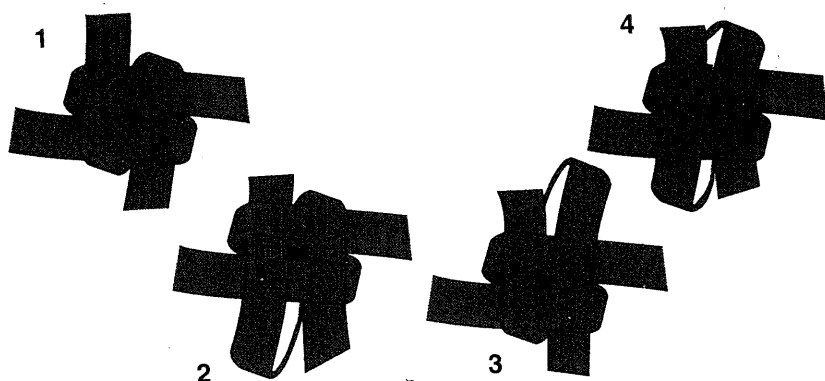
More particulars:

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.

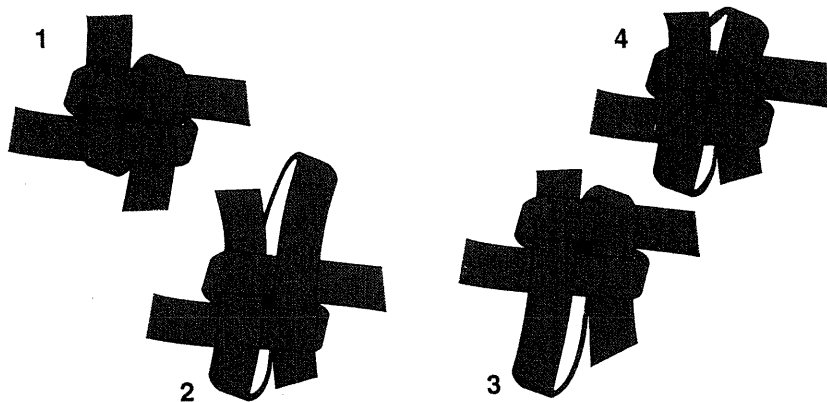
4. Now you have a loop left on top. To make this loop disappear, just pull down on the trailing portion of the right *retzua*.



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

1. Notice that the *kesher* (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 *kesher* 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]

שמן יסוד אכל היה אכלתו היה אכלתו ואכלתו
את היה אכלתו בכל לבבו ובכל זמנו ובכל
מאמרו והיו הדברים אלה אכלתו בכל
היום על לבבו וזאתו חסדו עם כל
בשר וכלבדו בדרך ובשכר ובחומר וכל
לואת על דרך וזהו לואת בן יעקב ובתתו
על מזוהו וזהו ובעל י

[illegible]

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" (סלה), 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* (רמ), 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: *ש*. 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.

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Give

The Jewish Catalog

Tefillin

וְהָיָה לָךְ לְאוֹת עַל-יָדְךָ וּלְזִכְרוֹן
בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת
יְהוָה בְּפִיךָ כִּי בְיָד חֲזָקָה הוֹצֵאתָ
יְהוָה מִמִּצְרַיִם:

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

וְהָיָה לָאוֹת עַל-יָדְךָ וּלְזִכְרוֹן
בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ כִּי בְחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצֵאתָ
יְהוָה מִמִּצְרַיִם:

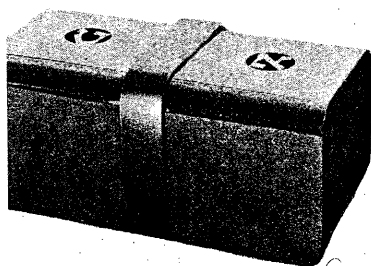
And so it shall be as a sign upon
your hand and as a symbol on your
forehead that with a mighty hand
the Lord freed us from Egypt”
Exodus 13:16).

וְקִשְׂרָתָם לְאוֹת עַל-יָדְךָ וְהָיָה
לְזִכְרוֹן בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ:

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

וְשִׁמְתָם אֶת-דִּבְרֵי אֵלֶּה
עַל-לִבְבְּכֶם וְעַל-נֶפֶשְׁכֶם,
וְקִשְׂרָתָם אִתָּם לְאוֹת עַל-יָדְכֶם וְהָיָה
לְזִכְרוֹן 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” (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. *Titora*—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 titora, 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=ידיעה). 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.

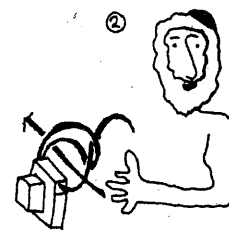
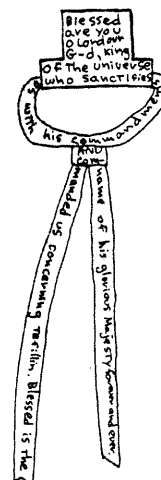
2. Unwrap the straps of the tefillin shel yad. Place the bayit on the muscle of your arm. The maabarta should be on the side closest to your shoulder. Also, the knot should be both next to the bayit and on the side closest to your body. The bayit should be placed on top of your muscle, not on the side 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
במצותיו, 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:

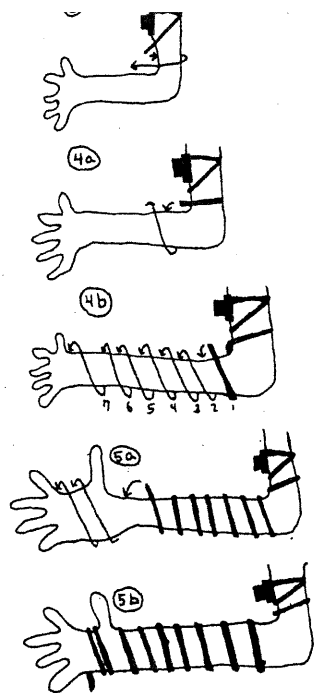
"Blessed be the Name of His glorious majesty forever and ever."

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



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

KAVVANOT

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-posessions-feelings. Some base this trichotomy on the three words used in the Bible to refer to tefillin:

- (a) זִכְרוֹן memorial (mind);
- (b) אוֹת sign (heart);
- (c) טֻפְטֻפוֹת 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.

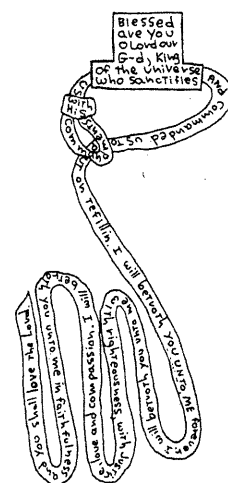
3. The tefillin are a sign of where we have been (Egypt), who we are (the nation which stood at Sinai), and where we are going (the permanent duty of service to God). Thus the tefillin shel rosh, in particular, is seen as a sign to the nations "that the Lord's name is proclaimed over you" (Deuteronomy 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, שְׁדַּי (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

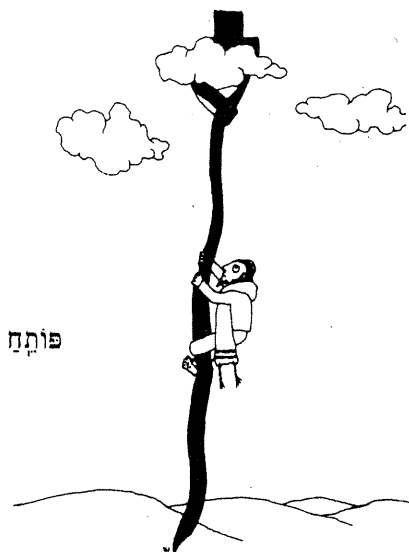
1. You should keep your tefillin in a cloth bag. These can be handmade or bought at a Jewish bookstore. It should be a separate bag from your tallit bag so that the tefillin can be put aside for Shabbat and holidays. Because the tefillin are not worn those days, they are not supposed to be touched.

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.



From Rabbi Altman

Rabbi Heather Altman
Associate Rabbi

WWW – The World Wide Tefillin Wrap: Access to the Ancient, Awesome and Awareness

*How good it is to wrap oneself in
prayer, spinning a deep softness of
gratitude to God around all
thoughts, enveloping oneself in the
silken veil of song!*

Adapted from Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel "Man's Quest for
God," in the siddur Entrances to God are Everywhere (Jewish
Community Center of White Plains, NY)

Wrapping oneself in prayer is literally what we do when we
put on "or lay" tefillin, a ritual observed during Shaharit (the
morning service) every day except Shabbat and major holidays.
The mitzvah is based directly on the Torah, in the well known
paragraph that begins with "Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu

Adonai Ehad". The paragraph continues "You
shall love the Lord your God with all your
heart, with all your soul, and with all your
might" and concludes "you shall bind them
[these words] as a sign upon your hand, they
shall be a reminder above your eyes..." This
paragraph and three others are inside the
boxes which we bind to our arms and heads.

On Sunday February 1, 2004 from 10:00 a.m.
- noon, we dedicate ourselves to learning
about tefillin. Along with Conservative syna-
gogues across the nation, we participate in this
program which is sponsored by the Federation
of Men's Clubs. We will learn about how the
mitzvah developed, how tefillin are crafted,
which texts are enclosed in the baytim (lit
"houses" – boxes) and how to properly put on
tefillin and recite the blessings.

As Abraham Joshua Heschel beautifully explained, prayer is a
sweet experience that leads us to express our life in song and
gratitude. The act of putting on and wearing tefillin (and tallit as
well) create a physical awareness and metaphysical intention of
going inward in prayer and meditation. This leads us to sense
God's presence in our daily lives. The siddur notably includes
a meditation before putting on tefillin that directs our thoughts
toward serving a redeeming God.

The following meditation has been helpful for me to add
personal meaning to this morning ritual:

After placing tefillin on the arm, touch the bayit with your open
hand and say: *As I begin to awake today I am aware of being in my
body, of my ability to move and to do and to act. I am thankful for
the Life that runs through me.*

After placing tefillin on the head, touch the bayit with your open
hand and say: *I place in front of me the vision of my wiser self. I
imagine myself as I want to be and I invoke all of the qualities that
I carry within that allow me to continue on the path that God wills
for me. I will try to keep this image close to my eyes, knowing that
God is the movement towards knowing myself and fulfilling my role
in God's creation.*

After binding tefillin on the arm, touch the bayit again and say:
*May I be able to put into action the vision I keep in my heart. May I
use my intentions and my body for action that invokes honor, dignity
and blessing.*

Take a moment for three deep breaths, during which you allow
these prayers to become your guide for morning prayer and for
the day which is just beginning.

The World Wide Tefillin Wrap will be an exciting event for all to
learn more about this ancient and powerful ritual. I encourage
you to join us in exploring a mitzvah that is a foundation of the
Jewish prayer experience. If you have never worn tefillin or
never considered it, this is a perfect opportunity for learning and
growth in a supportive environment. See you on February 1 at
10:00 a.m.!

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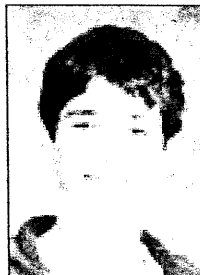
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Mazal Tov to our B'nai Mitzvah



**Benjamin Tyler
Filippo**
January 10, 2004
Son of Donna Filippo
& Ralph Weichselbaum



Nathaniel Hausfater
January 17, 2004
Son of Glenn &
Sandra Hausfater



Molly Kuhlman
January 24, 2004
Daughter of Phyllis &
Donald Kuhlman



Alexandar Gaynor
January 31, 2004
Son of Moses Gaynor
& Hannah Widlus



From Our Ritual Director

Debby Lewis
Ritual Director

Tefillin....those mysterious black boxes and black straps I saw in paintings of old Jewish men--surely I would never have anything to do with them! It was hard enough to start wearing a tallit 8 years ago after a lifetime of thinking that was an article only for men. But 5 years ago I started coming to minyan daily and, after two years of seeing a woman (Hazzan Kaszynski) wearing tefillin every day, I decided I was ready for another level of Jewish observance. I was in good company--according to the Talmud ('Erubin 96a) Michal, the wife of King David, wore tefillin.

I remember feeling self conscious as I took my seat in the chapel that first morning, but found that I was praying with more intent--the feeling of the leather on my arm and hand and the box on my head were a constant reminder of God's presence. Since then, the leather has softened and the newness of the experience has given way to a greater appreciation for the tradition. My favorite part of putting on tefillin is saying that I am becoming betrothed to God (not a bad way to start a day!). Here are other women's experiences with tefillin:

"I started putting on tefillin because it was a requirement at the Seminary. In the beginning, I wasn't thrilled about putting them on and was tentative about using them ... all the leather and bindings, which seemed more masculine than a tallit. Now, it's very much a part of my day and if I look at my arm and don't see the little tefillin marks, I know I have missed something. I particularly love the verse about binding me to God."

Hazzan Shelley Kaszynski

"I started wearing tefillin January 1, 1996. I needed to be closer to God and I saw wearing tefillin as a way to do that. It made me feel like I was finally equal in a minyan and respected in the Jewish religion. I wear the tefillin my late husband wore, which he had used when he became a Bar Mitzvah at Anshe Emet. I feel so close to God when I wear them and my concentration is deeper."

Trudie Acheatel

"I started wearing them because I felt it was a positive obligation required of all Jewish people, men and women and it was time for me to start. I felt empowered in that I was fulfilling God's charge to "bind them as a sign upon your hand and let them be a reminder above your eyes."

Ricky Roth

"Tefillin were something out of antiquity, seen in pictures of men with beards. It was not something I had seen in real life. When I first started thinking about it, I was excited to connect with our roots, with something so powerful. There was a period of feeling awkward but now it's a ritual that I own and is meaningful."

Rabbi Heather Altman

See more in Rabbi Altman's article on the facing page. Let's wrap together at the World Wide Tefillin Wrap on February 1.

Special lecture series:

In God's Image: Understanding Homosexuality in a Jewish Context

Through a series of open lecture programs and smaller sessions, Rabbis and guest speakers from each of the three denominations of Judaism (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform) will offer thoughtful, insightful and enlightening perspectives on the topics of Judaism, homosexuality and Jewish homosexuality.

This series is offered by the Sidney N. Shure Kehilla Program: Anshe Emet Synagogue, Anshe Sholom B'nai Israel, Emanuel Congregation, Congregation Or Chadash, Temple Sholom of Chicago.

Anshe Emet Synagogue speakers include:

Monday, February 23, 7:00 p.m.: Rabbi Joel Roth

Monday, March 1, 7:00 p.m.: Rabbi Benay Lappe

For more information, contact Marne Loveman, Sidney N. Shure Kehilla Program Director at 773-871-6780.

AIPAC Presents: The Israel Summit -- Tools for Action

More than ever, Israel needs informed and well-equipped activists in the US. This one-day program presented in partnership with Anshe Emet Synagogue will offer an introduction to the conflict in the Middle East. The program will also feature a Salute to Congress to which Illinois' entire Congressional delegation is invited. Participants will get practical information from experts on how to take action with the media, lobby their Members of Congress, and have an impact in politics. Sunday, February 29, 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare. The program cost includes a kosher lunch and is \$25 to AIPAC members and \$50 to non-members (price includes 2004 AIPAC membership). To register or for more information please call AIPAC 312-236-8550 ext. 26

The Spiritual Significance of Tefillin

The details of this precept, using powerful symbols of allegiance to divine law and of membership in the Jewish religious community, have been subject to many interpretations.

By Rabbi Louis Jacobs

Reprinted with permission from Louis Jacobs, The Jewish Religion: A Companion, published by Oxford University Press.

The talmudic rabbis wax eloquent on the value of tefillin. The [Babylonian] Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 17a) defines a "sinner in Israel with his body" as "a skull that does not wear tefillin."

Yet, even in the geonic period [after the canonization of the Talmud], there was a certain laxity in the observance of tefillin. Some of the geonim [leading scholars of the period] and they were followed by the Tosafot ([12th-14th century commentators] to the passage)--observed that the talmudic denunciation applies only to those who refuse to wear tefillin out of irreligious reasons, but if a man does not wear tefillin because he believes he has not attained to the purity of body and mind required for them to be worn, he is no sinner at all. It is known that Rabbi Moses of Coucy traveled through Spain and France in the year 1237 on a preaching mission in which he urged the Jews of these lands to wear tefillin, arguing that sinners require all the more this "sign" of allegiance to the divine law.

The result has been that Orthodox Jews, although they no longer wear tefillin all day, since they do not believe they have the degree of purity to do so, do wear them for prayer, and tefillin have become one of the indications of Orthodoxy. The majority of Reform Jews, however, do not wear tefillin, interpreting, as did the Karaites, the references to binding on the arm and head as purely figurative. Conservative Jews do wear tefillin, like the Orthodox.

Over the ages, the tefillin were given various symbolic interpretations. For instance, the head tefillin, the hand tefillin, and the wearing of the latter opposite the heart was all taken to suggest that head, heart, and hand must all be brought into play in the service of God. That there are four sections on the head tefillin and only one in the hand tefillin has been understood to convey the idea that opinions may differ but Jewish practice should be uniform. That the hand tefillin have to be covered with the shirt-sleeve, while the head tefillin are uncovered has been understood as suggesting that a man's religious emotions and his benevolent deeds should be private to him and not paraded in order to demonstrate his piety and generosity. In the Kabbalah, various mystical ideas are read into the tefillin: that, for example, they represent on earth details of the Sefirot on high.

Under the influence of the Kabbalah the following meditation appears in many prayer books for recital before putting on the tefillin:

"I am now intent upon the act of putting on the tefillin, in fulfillment of the command of my Creator, who hath commanded us to lay the tefillin, as it is written in the Torah, 'And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes.' Within these tefillin are placed four sections of the Torah, that declare the absolute unity of God, and remind us of the miracles and wonders which He wrought for us when He brought us forth from Egypt, even He who has power over the highest and the lowest to deal with them according to His will. He hath commanded us to lay the tefillin upon the hand as a memorial of His outstretched arm; opposite the heart, to indicate the duty of subjecting the longings and designs of our heart to His service, blessed be He; and upon the head over against the brain, thereby teaching that the mind, whose seat is in the brain, together with all senses and faculties, is to be subjected to His service, blessed be He. May the effect of the precept thus observed be to extend to me long life with sacred influences and holy thoughts, free from every approach, even in imagination, to sin and iniquity. May the evil inclination not mislead or entice us, but may we be led to serve the Lord as it is in our hearts to do. Amen."

Rabbi Louis Jacobs, one of the United Kingdom's most distinguished and versatile interpreters of Judaism, served as rabbi of the New London Synagogue for several decades and has taught Jewish studies at several British universities. He is the author of The Book of Jewish Belief and The Book of Jewish Practice, and Helping with Inquiries: An Autobiography.

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Tefillin (Phylacteries)

Tefillin are not amulets. They are "attachments" to the body and serve to distinguish Jews as people who keep God's precepts constantly in mind.

By Rabbi Louis Jacobs

*Rabbi Jacobs' exposition of the details of the structure and use of tefillin in this article is supplemented by his article on their significance and interpretation. It should be noted that his claim that the terms tefillin and tefillah are not directly related is a minority opinion, and that his observations about the paucity of women observing this mitzvah has become less accurate in more recent years. Reprinted with permission from Louis Jacobs, *The Jewish Religion: A Companion*, published by Oxford University Press.*

What They Are

Tefillin are the cube-shaped black leather boxes, containing four scriptural passages, attached to the head and arm and worn during the morning prayers. It is purely coincidental that the word tefillin so closely resembles the word for prayer, *tefillah*, since, although eventually the tefillin were only worn for the morning prayer, in Talmudic times they were worn all day and had no special association with prayer.

As Maimonides (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Tefillin, 4.25-6) puts it: "Great is the sanctity of tefillin, for as long as the tefillin are upon man's head and arm, he is humble and God-fearing and is not drawn after frivolity and idle talk, and does not have evil thoughts, but directs his heart to words of truth and righteousness. Therefore a man should try to have them on him all day ... Even though they should be worn all day it is the greater obligation to wear them during prayer." In point of fact, some few extremely pious individuals, even in post-Talmudic times, did wear tefillin all day and this seems to have been Maimonides' own practice. But the vast majority of Jews only wear tefillin during the morning prayer.

Etymology and History

The etymology of [the term] tefillin is uncertain, but possibly is connected either with a Hebrew root meaning "to attach" or with a root meaning "to distinguish." If this is correct, tefillin mean either "attachments" to the body or else the means whereby the Jew is distinguished from Gentiles. "Tefillin" is usually translated in English as "phylacteries." This is based on the New Testament Greek: "But all their works they do to be seen of men; they make broad their phylacteries" (Matthew 23:5). This passage, hostile to the Pharisees, uses the Greek word, from which the English is derived, meaning "things which guard"; in other words, the tefillin are a kind

of amulet to offer protection against the demonic powers; whereas in all the Jewish sources the tefillin serve, like the tzitzit, as a reminder of God's laws.

In four Pentateuchal passages it is stated that certain words should be on the hand and between the eyes. Many commentators, including Rashbam [Samuel ben Meir, 11th century Bible and Talmud commentator from France], hold that the plain meaning of these passages is that the words of the Torah should be constantly in mind, as in the verses: "Set them as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm" (Song of Songs 8: 6) and "Let not kindness and truth forsake thee; bind them about thy neck, write them on the table of thy heart" (Proverbs 3: 3).

The Karaites [a sect of Judaism that rejects the authority of rabbinic interpretation and law] understood the passages in this figurative way and did not wear tefillin. But very early on, as can be seen from the reference in the New Testament, Jews understood the passages in a literal sense and wore these four sections on the head and the arm, the words being those in the sections themselves. These are the tefillin, although, undoubtedly, they have developed over the years to assume the form they now have. The following is a brief description of what tefillin are now and how they are worn.

The Objects and Contents

The tefillin consist of two cube-shaped leather boxes, one worn on the head, the other on the arm, with leather straps fixed to them for attaching them to the head and the arm. Into these boxes, known as *batim*, "houses," the four passages, written by hand, are inserted.

The hand tefillin (in the Rabbinic tradition the "hand" here means the arm) contains all four sections written on a single strip of parchment. In the head tefillin there are four separate compartments, one for each of the four. The four sections are: (a) Exodus 13:1-10; (b) Exodus 13:11-16; (c) Deuteronomy 6:4-9; (d) Deuteronomy 11:12-21. Although the box (*bayit*, "house," singular of *batim*) of the head tefillin has to be in the form of an exact square (in the part into which the sections are inserted; this part rests on a larger base), it is divided into four compartments for the insertion of the sections, care being taken that these should not be separated from one another in such a way as to interfere with the square shape. The box of the hand tefillin consists of a single compartment into which all four sections, written on a single strip, are inserted. The boxes have to be completely black as well as square-shaped.

Black straps are inserted into each of the *batim*. The straps of the head tefillin are made to form a knot that will be at the back of the neck when the tefillin are worn. This knot is in the shape of the letter *dalet*. The strap of the hand tefillin is attached to the *bayit* to form another knot shaped in the form of the letter *yod*. The letter *shin* is worked into the leather of the head tefillin, a three-pronged *shin* on the right side of the wearer and a four-pronged *shin* on the left (this is probably because of uncertainties as to how this letter should be formed). We now have the three letters *shin*, *dalet*, *yod*, in the tefillin, forming the word Shaddai, one of the divine names. (Some have the letter *mem* instead of the *dalet* as the shape of the knot and the three letters then form the

word *shemi*, "My name.")

All these matters are attended to by the manufacturers of the tefillin, who arrange for the writing to be done by a competent scribe and for the sections to be inserted into the batim, which are then sewn up and the straps inserted. Naturally, pious Jews will only buy a set of tefillin from a reliable, trustworthy merchant. Tefillin often come with a guarantee from a rabbi that they have been properly prepared.

How to Put On (Lay) Tefillin

The procedure for putting on the tefillin is as follows. The hand tefillin is taken out of the bag in which the tefillin are reverentially kept, and placed on the upper part of the left arm [but see below], and the benediction recited: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast hallowed us by Thy commandments, and hast commanded us to put on the tefillin." The knot is then tightened and the strap wound seven times around the arm.

The head tefillin is then taken out of the bag, placed loosely on the head, and the further benediction recited: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast hallowed us by Thy commandments and hast given us command concerning the precept of tefillin." The head tefillin are then tightened round the head so that the *bayit* rest in the middle of the head above the forehead and where the hair begins.

The strap of the hand tefillin is then wound thrice around the middle finger while the verses (from Hosea 1:21-2) are recited: "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgement, and in lovingkindness, and in mercy: I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord."

In the rabbinic tradition, the tefillin are to be worn on "the weaker hand" (perhaps the idea here is to symbolize that it is the weaker side of human nature that requires to be strengthened by observing the precept). For this reason a left-handed man wears the tefillin on his right arm.

The tefillin are not worn on the Sabbath and festivals. The reason given is that these are described as a "sign," and so are tefillin. When these "signs" are present there is no need for tefillin to be worn. Tefillin are worn only during the day, not at night. Consequently, tefillin is one of those precepts dependent on time from which women are exempt. There are one or two references to women wearing tefillin even though they are exempt, but this is extremely rare. Even women who nowadays do wear a tallit do not normally wear tefillin. A minor is not obliged to wear tefillin and the usual practice is for a boy to begin to wear them just before his Bar mitzvah.

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Rashi and Rabbenu Tam: Two Sets of Tefillin

Evidence from Qumran shows that the medieval debate about the order of biblical passages in tefillin has ancient roots.

By Rabbi Louis Jacobs

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In the Middle Ages, there was a famous debate on the order in which the sections are to be inserted in the tefillin between Rashi [Rabbi Solomon ben Yitzhak, the 11th-century Bible and Talmud commentator] and his grandson, Rabbenu Tam. According to Rashi the order is, starting from the right of the one facing the wearer, that in which the sections appear in the Torah, namely: (1) Exodus 13:1-10, (2) Exodus 13:11-16, (3) Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and (4) Deuteronomy 11:12-21.

But according to Rabbenu Tam our section (3) is placed after our (4) so that (3) which contains the Shema, is on the outside, namely, the extreme left of the one facing the wearer. Since the tefillin have to be written in the order in which the sections are in the Torah, then according to Rabbenu Tam, the scribe, when writing the hand tefillin, writes (3) first at the end of the script, leaving a space in which he then writes (4). All this is extremely complicated but, according to the Talmud, where the sections are inserted in the wrong order the tefillin are invalid. Thus "Rashi's" tefillin are invalid according to Rabbenu Tam and "Rabbenu Tam's" invalid according to Rashi.

In practice, Rashi's order is followed. (Maimonides' order is the same as Rashi's.) But pious Jews, including all Hasidim, wear two pairs of tefillin, those in accordance with Rashi and those in accordance with Rabbenu Tam. Some wear the sets together, at the same time, but the usual practice among the pious is to wear Rashi's tefillin first and Rabbenu Tam's at the end of the service.

It is of interest that at Qumran [the site in the Judean Desert where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found], tefillin were found which seem to have followed both systems, showing that the debate goes back to ancient times. The whole episode is worthy of mention as an illustration of the principle that, normally, where there is a doubt in matters of Jewish ritual, the actual law follows current practice.

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A Historical Perspective

Reinterpreting Tefillin

Some interpretations of the meaning of *tefillin* have faded, and others have been invented to take their place.

By Abraham E. Millgram

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On one of the tefillin there is a large Hebrew letter, shin. This was probably meant to indicate that the scrolls inside begin with the Shema and not with the Ten Commandments, which at one time were also included in the tefillin. On its opposite side there is a four-pronged shin, to indicate that only four selections are in each of the tefillin and not five, as was the case when the Ten Commandments were also included. But these historic reasons were forgotten and new ones were grafted onto the mysterious letter.

One explanation is intriguing. The letter shin is combined with two other "letters" which were discovered in the *tefillin*, and together they form the word Shaddai-Almighty God. The two letters were found in the peculiar knots in the straps; the one on the head resembles the letter *dalet* and the one on the arm resembles the letter *yod*. The *tefillin* are thus to remind the Jew of his obligation to perform the commandments of Almighty God. This explanation is obviously contrived, but it has been accepted these many centuries as the real reason for the *shin* on the *tefillin*.

With the passage of the centuries the universal high regard for the rite of the *tefillin* increased, and new religious meanings and values were discovered in the ritual. Maimonides found that the *tefillin* serve a singular purpose in the religious life of the Jew. They are a holy institution leading man to humility and the fear of God. The *tefillin*, says Maimonides, are of a high degree of sanctity. As long as the *tefillin* are on a man's head and arm, he is humble and God-fearing; [he] is not drawn into frivolity and idle talk; and does not dwell on evil thoughts, but occupies his mind with thoughts of truth and righteousness. A man should therefore endeavor to wear *tefillin* the whole day.

Rabbi Abraham E. Millgram was served as a congregational rabbi, a Hillel director, and from 1945 to 1961, Educational Director of the Commission on Jewish Education of the United Synagogue of America. During several decades of active retirement in Jerusalem, he published a number of books, including Jerusalem Curiosities (Jewish Publication Society) and A Short History of Jerusalem (Jason Aronson).

Tefillin as a Meditation Tool for Relationships

by Rabbi Goldie Milgram

As a child of maybe seven, while exploring the basement of our suburban home, I found a curious item, a velvet bag containing little boxes with long black leather straps attached to them. Hauling them upstairs I asked my father if I could use the straps for a craft project.

He took the package from my hands and drew the objects out tenderly. "I have not used these since the beginning of the war," is what I recall him to have said. He continued: "I used to keep kosher, say the Shema every night, and pray with these every morning." I regarded this latter statement with surprise. We went to Friday night synagogue together occasionally, lit candles, had a chanukkah menorah and a seder, not much else.

"These are called tefillin," he explained. "They contain hand-written scrolls with verses from the Torah about love. During my term of service in World War II I lost my sense of a loving God. I stopped keeping kosher, praying and using these." He was in the Signal Corps, I later learned. He helped lay communications lines which found him given leave to the nearest town, which was the just liberated site of Auschwitz. He was gravely injured, evacuated and spent six years in the hospital, wounded for life, leg crushed, marrow infected. His continuing survival remains a modern miracle.

My father wandered off with the tefillin. We did not discuss them again.

A year later my yiddish-speaking Grandfather Benjamin came for an extended visit. Every morning he would go to the dining room and mumble for an hour, putting on a similar set of boxes and straps (his boxes are much tinier than my father's) and a tallit prayer shawl. My mother says at first I would watch him intently and after some weeks she found me beside him everyday, with a ribbon wrapped around my arm and a towel over my shoulders.

One day "Pop Pop" turned to me for the first time in the midst of his prayer, took off his tefillin and wound them properly onto me, uttering urgently in to me incomprehensible Yiddish. He went home the next day and enter a "rest home" not long thereafter. Often I've wondered, given my pixie hair cut in those times, did he think I was a little boy? Or sensing his mortality and knowing I was the only family member drawn to Judaism religiously, had he made a strategic decision?

Pop Pop's tefillin became my own. One day they even returned to the Ukraine with me, their and his place of origin. The spiral of spirit continues.

At an Ohalah Conference (Association of rabbis and cantors dedicated to cultivating Jewish spirituality) my friend and roommate, Rabbi Shefa Gold, taught me how to meditate on sacred relationships while putting on tefillin. Here is my version of that remarkable idea:

One of the most powerful of the *tefillin* prayers is from the prophet Hosea and the same prayer often used as a commitment statement at Jewish weddings.

V'eirastikh li l'olam
I betroth you to me forever.
[We are in this together]

V'eirastikh li b'tzedek
I will betroth you to me equitably.
[We will share the challenges]

U'v'mishpat
and with impeccability
[I will stay with you to get it right]

U'v'khessed
and with lovingkindness
[I will care for you]

U'v'rakhamim
and with compassion
[I want to hear your pain, your joy
to strive to understand]

v'eirastikh li b'emunah
I will betroth you to me in faith
[I will be there for you]

v'yahdaht et Adonai.
So that you will know God.
[So that you will experience what is only possible through relationship.]

While putting tefillin on, one does seven windings on the arm. Three of the windings are on the wedding ring finger. And all together the windings on the hand actually shape the Hebrew letter "shin", for Shadai, a name for God as Nurturer (shadaiim are breasts or hills). This tefillin practice turns out to be a powerful ritual of commitment.

With or without the actual tefillin, you might try this:

- 1) Do your tefillin hand windings and address each part of the verse set above to God.
- 2) Do the verse set again, checking each of the statements in regard to your relationship with your committed partner, friend, parent or child.
- 3) Do the verse set again, do it about your relationship to yourself.
- 4) Repeat the verse set and again address each part to your relationship with God.

What do you notice having done this?
What changes for you with each step?

If a friend, partner or relative of yours lays tefillin also, try putting on your tefillin and doing this spiritual experiment together!

