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This Guide is published in memory of
Jacob and Esther Safra ז"ל by Moise and Chella Safra

A How-To Guide

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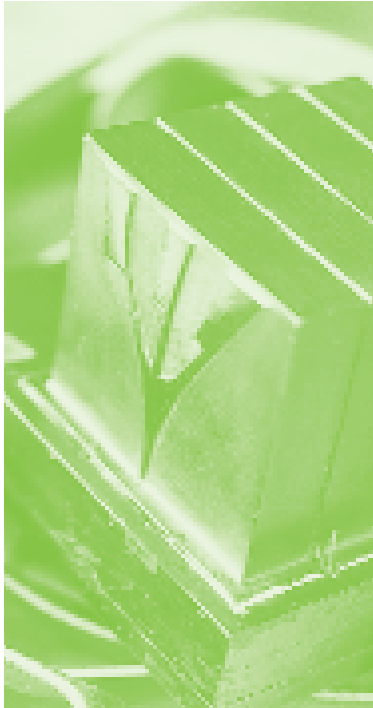


A How-To Guide

By Rabbi DovBer Pinson

www.TefillinBank.com

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basics

What are Tefillin?

“You shall love G-d your G-d, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. These words, which I command you today, shall be upon your heart. Teach them thoroughly to your children, and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as an os — a sign — upon your hand, and they shall be for totafos — a reminder — between your eyes.” (Deuteronomy 6:5–8)

By these words we are commanded not only figuratively but literally to keep the Torah close to our heads and hearts. We take inscriptions of chapters of Torah, and place one on the head as a “reminder between the eyes,” and the other as a “sign on the arm” situated against the heart.

These are the powerful spiritual tools we call *Tefillin*.

Tefillin consist of two cube-shaped leather boxes — the *Tefillin* shel rosh (*Tefillin* of the head) and the *Tefillin* shel yad (*Tefillin* of the hand) — each with straps attached to hold them in their respective places. Each of these boxes contains the four paragraphs of the Torah that mention the command to wear the *Tefillin*: *Exodus 13:1–10 and 13:11–16, and Deuteronomy 6:4–9 and 11:13–21*. These are carefully hand-written on small parchments by a professional sofer (scribe), and inserted in the boxes.

Here, however, there is a basic difference between the two boxes. When the Torah describes the hand *Tefillin*, it uses a singular term, *os* (sign); but for the head *Tefillin*, it uses a plural, *totafos* (remember). Thus, each of the four Torah paragraphs in the head *Tefillin* is written on its own scroll and inserted in one of four small compartments. These four

basics

compartments are carefully pressed together to maintain the cube-like shape of the *Tefillin*. By contrast, in the hand *Tefillin*, all four sections are inscribed on a single scroll which is placed in one compartment.

We place the hand *Tefillin* upon the left arm so that it rests near the heart, and the head *Tefillin* above the forehead, “between (and above) the eyes,” so it rests against the skull near the brain. Thus, one’s mind, heart, and actions are all aligned and unified toward Heaven.

Tefillin Images

1. Tefillin Shel Rosh

Head *Tefillin* (Batim)

2. Tefillin Shel Yad

Hand *Tefillin* (Batim)

3. Titura

The wider base

4. Ma’abarta

The opening through which the straps pass through

5. Retzuos Straps

6. Shin

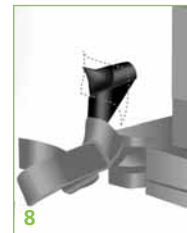
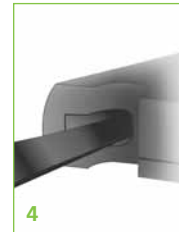
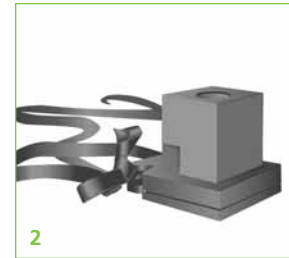
the letter Shin
(On the Head *Tefillin*)

7. Keshet - knot

The head knot as the image of a Dalet

8. Keshet - knot

The hand knot as the image of a Yud



quotes

Quotes from the Talmud, Midrash, and Classic Torah sources

Tefillin are the strength of Israel,¹ and they are called “the glory of Israel.”²

“All of the people of the world shall see that the name of G-d is called upon you, and they shall be afraid of you.”³ This, says R. Eliezer the Great, refers to the *Tefillin* of the head.⁴

When asked in what merit he was worthy to have lived a long life, Rav Adda replied, “I have always worn *Tefillin*.”⁵

Once, the celebrated sage Abbaye was sitting [in study] before his teacher Rabbah, who observed that he seemed very merry. [Rabbah]

said: Is it not written, “Rejoice with trembling”?⁶ Replied Abbaye, “I am wearing *Tefillin*.”⁷

“We deeply desire to toil in Torah day and night, but we simply do not have the time,” say the people of Israel. G-d’s response is: “Keep the mitzvah of *Tefillin*, and I will consider it as if you have studied Torah day and night.”⁸

That which G-d commands, He Himself does as well; [thus, just as He commands that we put on *Tefillin*, so too] G-d puts on *Tefillin*. And what is written in G-d’s *Tefillin*? “Who⁹ is like Your people Israel, a nation unique on earth.”¹⁰

The commentators explain: Just as our donning *Tefillin* displays our continuous desire to cleave to G-d and to come closer to Him, so too the image of G-d putting on *Tefillin*

1. Talmud, Berachos 6a.

2. Sukkah 25a.

3. Deuteronomy 28:10.

4. Talmud, Berachos 6a.

5. Talmud, Taanis 20b.

6. Psalms 2:11.

7. Talmud, Berachos 30b.

8. Midrash Tehillim 1.

9. Chronicles I 17:21.

10. Talmud, Berachos 6a.

quotes

reflects His deep desire to be one with us, in keeping with the verse,¹¹ *"I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine."*¹²

Once a person puts on *Tefillin*, the status of his physical body is forever changed.¹³

Tefillin are strapped to the body as a precious jewel is held near to oneself.¹⁴

Moshe (Moses) was shown the knot of G-d's *Tefillin*.¹⁵ This means that Moshe was shown (as a visual image the procedure and method of) how to put on *Tefillin*.¹⁶

When one has committed negative acts which should (by the spiritual laws of cause and effect) result in negative consequences, the *mitzvah* of *Tefillin* can protect him, and

not allow such forces to attach themselves to him.¹⁷

When our forefather Yaakov (Jacob) was wrestling with the angelic spirit of Esav (Esau), and the angel became aware of Yaakov's *Tefillin*, he became afraid and backed off.¹⁸

One who puts on *Tefillin*, wears *tzitzit*, reads the *Shema*, and prays, is guaranteed a portion in the World to Come; lives a long life; all his untoward actions will be forgiven; and he will be protected from all cleansing punishment in the afterlife.¹⁹

All destructive forces disperse before a person who is crowned with *Tefillin*, and lack the strength to approach him.²⁰

Tefillin, like the *Torah*, is the sword

that protects the Jew from all harm. Just as the *Torah* is divided into written and oral components, so too there are the head *Tefillin*, corresponding to the written dimension of the *Torah*, and the hand *Tefillin*, which are analogous to its oral aspect.²¹

One who leaves home wrapped in a tallis, with *Tefillin* upon his head and on his arm – the Divine presence rests upon his head, and two angels come to accompany him, one to his right and one to his left.²²

If one is careful in putting on *Tefillin* each day, it is as if he has fulfilled all six hundred and thirteen mitzvot.²³

A person who walks about holding something precious in his hands is

11. Song of Songs 6:3.

12. Commentary of Maharsha to Berachos loc. cit.

13. See Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 17a.

14. Commentary of Rashba to Berachos loc. cit.

15. Talmud, Menachos 35b.

16. Commentary of Rav Hai Gaon to

Menachos, loc. cit.

17. Zohar, Tikkunim.

18. Meam Loez, Ekev.

19. Tur, Orach Chaim 37.

20. Reishis Chochmah.

21. Haamek Davar, Bo.

22. Zohar III:301a.

23. Reishis Chochmah.

constantly watchful and afraid of being robbed; however, one who wears *Tefillin* has nothing to fear, as the seal of the King is upon him.²⁴

The holiness of *Tefillin* is magnificent, for a person wearing *Tefillin* is awakened to humility and awe of G-d. He will not be persuaded toward callousness or to idle talk. His mind will not drift to negative thoughts, but rather his heart will be oriented toward words of truth and righteousness.²⁵

When one is garbed in tallis and *Tefillin*, a heavenly voice rings out, *“Give honor to the one who has the image of the King upon his head.”*²⁶

“The entire Torah is likened to *Tefillin*.¹²⁷ “*Tefillin* encompasses both the value of a positive commandment and the value of a negative commandment. The aim of

the positive is to draw down Divine light into our actions, and the purpose of the negative is to allow for an elevation of even the dense levels of the seemingly unholy. When we proactively put on *Tefillin*, doing the positive mitzvah of placing the hand *Tefillin* on the weakest arm (a man’s weakest side, usually the left, symbolizes negativity), and placing the head *Tefillin* openly on the head for all to see, we elevate even the ‘left’ and the ‘outside’ to G-d.”

—The Rebbe²⁸

24. Midrash. Akeidas Yitzchak 90.

25. Rambam, Laws of *Tefillin* 4:25.

26. Meam Loez, Ekev.

27. Talmud, Kedushin 35a.

28. The Rebbe. Likutei Sichos 5.

a story

On a wing and a prayer

Under the heel of the ruthless Roman Empire, the wearing of *Tefillin* was banned on pain of death. Rabbi Elisha, a leader in ancient Israel, ignored the threat, even wearing them in the street as was done in that age.

Turning a corner, he suddenly came face-to-face with a Roman soldier, who cried, “Halt! What do you wear upon your head?” The rabbi spun and fled, whisking the *Tefillin* from his head and concealing them in his hands.

The soldier soon caught him. “What is in your hands?” he barked. “Bird’s wings,” replied the rabbi. “Show me!” Praying silently, the rabbi turned his hands out... to reveal bird’s wings. The soldier stalked off, disappointed, as the rabbi thrust his hands to heaven in grateful prayer.

(Talmud Shabbas 130a)

Tefillin explored

“You shall love G-d, your G-d, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. These words, which I command you today, shall be upon your heart... Bind them as an ‘os’ – a sign – upon your hand, and they shall be for ‘totofos’ – a reminder – between your eyes.”
(Deuteronomy 6:5–8)

TEFILLIN—DERIVATION OF A SACRED WORD

The term “*Tefillin*,” the classical word for the “signs” bound on hand and head, is often mistranslated as “phylacteries,” inferring that they are primitive amulets. To the contrary, *Tefillin* serve to bond and dedicate mind, heart, and deeds to G-d.

Hence, the word *Tefillin* is likely derived from the Hebrew *pelili*, “indication,” for the *Tefillin* indicate a presence of the Divine as they rest upon us. Likewise, *Tefillin* is related to the Hebrew *tofel*, connection, a oneness between the Divine and Man.

Notice, too, that the word *Tefillin* resembles the word *tefillah*, prayer. The shared root reflects their mutual purpose in connecting with G-d. In fact, *Tefillin* may be worn the entire day, but customarily for hundreds of years one dons *Tefillin* primarily during the morning prayers.

CREATION—THE SUPREME ACT OF GOD’S LOVE

Of the ways in which the Torah describes our relationship with the Creator, among the most exalted is the intimacy of bride and groom.

G-d is ultimate, seamless, Oneness – the perfect state of being. He lacks nothing. Yet, from on high, He craves a relationship with an “other,” a being outside His Oneness, a Creation that will appreciate a world of finite perceptions: time and space and matter and bodies.

As G-d brings forth Creation, He has performed the greatest act of love –

Tefillin explored

He is the Groom supreme. Creation is His bride. They are connected through a vast contraction and concealment of His infinite light.

This is the foundation of Creation; G-d's love and His desire to give to the finite creatures who can receive His love. Without the infinite G-d's desire to contract and conceal His light, the material of Creation would never have come to be, for it would have been superfluous.

DIVINE LOVE—STEPPING BACK AND GIVING THE FINITE WORLD ITS SPACE

The greatest act of love is to stand back, allowing an "other" to have space. G-d did and does exactly this, contracting His infinite light to allow for the Creation and existence of a finite world.

We are created beings. When we discover G-d's light and Oneness hidden in Creation, we find our

This is the foundation of Creation; G-d's love and His desire to give to the finite creatures who can receive His love...

own "Creation" of love.

Recognizing this concealment achieves the purpose of Creation. We attain it on our own. It is not merely "shameful bread," that is, a revelation that is offered to us, but a state of consciousness ("bread") that we have earned.

TEFILLIN—A SYMBOL OF GOD'S SUPREME ACT OF LOVE

G-d's love is infinite, unconditional and boundless – no yesterday, today, or tomorrow; nothing grows old, including His love. We, as finite beings, need constantly to be reminded of this love. In our world of time and space, if we do not

work on relationships, continuously renewing them, they become stale, boring, and something of the past. Relationships that begin with great passion will fade if not rekindled.

Thus, we put on *Tefillin*, taking the words, "You shall love your G-d... and bind[ing] them as a sign on [our] hand." In this way, we lovingly bind ourselves anew each day to our Beloved, so that even from our time-bound perspective our relationship is reinvigorated as a living truth in that moment. Indeed, we tie this sign on our "weaker hand" expressing a commitment that permeates our entire being and actions, even those parts of self that seem lacking of spiritual strength and resolve.

TEFILLIN—SACRED SYMBOLISM IN ITS BINDING

When we bind the hand *Tefillin*, we wrap the strap twice around the

Tefillin explored

biceps, and then around the arm seven times. These seven windings are a reminder of the seven times the bride encircles her groom and the seven blessings offered to the bride and groom under the chupah, the marriage canopy.

Finally, the strap of the hand *Tefillin* is wrapped three times around the middle finger, resembling a ring of threefold permanence.

Having bound ourselves symbolically to G-d in love and commitment, we gently place a crown upon our heads – the head *Tefillin*. Situated atop the skull over the brain, the head *Tefillin* represents a “space” beyond mind and before Creation – the loftiest cosmic desire, the most expansive purpose of all Creation. This is the Divine desire to create a world in which G-dliness should become manifest.

TEFILLIN—THE NAME OF G-D IS CALLED UPON YOU

“All the people of the world shall see that the name of G-d is called upon you’ (Deut. 28:10). This refers to the Tefillin of the head.”

– Talmud, *Berachos 6a*.

The name of G-d is called upon us as we wear the *Tefillin*.

One particularly exalted name of G-d is Shaddai, comprised of the three Hebrew letters shin, dalet, and yud. Shaddai is derived from dai, “enough.” The Midrash relates that as G-d created the universe, it expanded toward perfection – until He declared, “Enough! Stop!” God’s intent, thus, was not that He creates perfection but that we who are “imperfect” should perpetually strive toward creating perfection, an endless task always in a state of becoming.

This is the essence of G-d’s love for us: By creating us imperfect, G-d allows finite beings to imitate Him, the ultimate Source of perfection, and create perfection in our own modest way. When we do, we appreciate what we earn. The reward is the pleasure we receive, that of being “creators,” not merely “recipients.”

G-d’s cry of “Dai!” (“Enough!”) at the critical moment of creation, ordaining us as His partners in bringing on the world’s perfection, becomes an expression of love through our *Tefillin*. Our *Tefillin* spell out the holy name Shaddai, shin, dalet, and yud: shin on the bayis (box) of the head *Tefillin*, dalet as the knot of the head *Tefillin*, and yud as the knot of the hand *Tefillin*.

kabbalistic insights

TEFILLIN—A DEEPER SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BOXES

Each of the *Tefillin* is a bayis (pl., batim), a box or house. Within the box resides the parchment, and upon the parchment is/are inscribed four chapters from the Torah.

The head *Tefillin* is comprised of four separate compartments containing four individual scrolls, each inscribed with its chapter. The hand *Tefillin* has one compartment containing all four chapters on one scroll. Straps hang from the boxes, one which encircle the head and the other that is bound to the arm.

The tangible *Tefillin* also infer their spiritual realm. The box houses the parchment. The parchment, in turn, surrounds the black ink of the holy letters.

Hence, the *Tefillin* are three levels “deep.” The outer two levels are *makkifim*, surrounding forces. The

outermost container, the bayis is a *makkif ha-rochok* – a distant surrounding, as a home surrounds the person dwelling therein. The parchment encompassing the letters is also a *makkif*, a surrounding force, albeit a *makkif ha-korov* – an intimate surrounding in close proximity to the letters, like “clothes” that garb the wearer. The actual script is Torah, itself. It is Divine intellect, internal truth, a penimi, an innermost reality.

The Ten Sefiros

The ten sefiros, the emanations through which Divine energy flows into the world, emerge in order: the three levels of intellect and the seven emotional attributes.

Chochmah (wisdom or intuition), *binah* (understanding or cognition), and *daas* (knowledge or awareness) are collectively called *mochin* (mind) or *seichel* (intellect). These generate the seven emotions: *chesed* (kind-

kabbalistic insights

ness), *gevurah* (restraint), *tiferes* (harmony), *netzach* (ambition), *hod* (devotion), *yesod* (connection), and *malchus* (receptiveness).)

TEFILLIN—A SYMBOL OF THE DIVINE EMANATIONS

The bayis (“house”) of the head *Tefillin* symbolizes the most transcendent *makkif* (“surrounding force”) – the loftiest, yet most penetrating desire. It crowns and surrounds the head. It represents the desire and purpose of Creation.

From it, a flow descends into the parchment, and then into the written word, the Divine intelligence of the Torah. It is dyed black, because it represents the “darkest” level, beyond “comprehension,” which is called the space for “the light of darkness.”

This bayis contains chapters of Torah that represent intellect (*chochmah*, *binah*, and *daas*). These

“We put on Tefillin with the intention to draw down our purpose and the revelation of the mochin into our reality...”

instruct and guide us on how to live individual lives and pursue collective purpose.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TWO “SHIN’S”

On each side of the head *Tefillin* is inscribed the letter shin, one with three arms and the other with four. The shin alludes to *seichel*, intellect, and its three arms represent *chochmah*, *binah*, and *daas*: First, a thought comes to mind (*chochmah*). Then, with the faculty of cognition (*binah*), we comprehend and decipher the thought. Finally, we use

our knowledge (*daas*) to implement our understanding.

Daas affords us the ability to make choices. It ensures that whatever we understand does not remain purely intellectual. Rather, it influences our emotions and informs our behavior. Since choice emerges from *daas*, it is divided into a right-sided quality, *chesed* (love and giving), and a left-sided one, *gevurah* (strength and restraint).

Being that choices occur in *daas*, and *daas* itself can be subdivided into a right-side or left-side quality, thus the three levels within mochin are actually four, hence, the head *Tefillin* also bears a four-pronged shin and four divisions within its bayis.

Emotional Universe

The lower seven emotional emanations, symbolized in the seven windings of the arm *Tefillin*, enable

As one reaches the age of thirteen... his powers of intellect are transformed into reality through emotions, until the truth of this higher revealed reality infuses his way of being and acting.

Creation to occur. Indeed, the seven-day cycle of Creation reflects the seven emanations, each day representing another *sefirah*.

So we typically live out our days. Reality is primarily based on emotion, bringing people to live reactively, manifested through their emotional composition.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TEFILLIN AT AGE THIRTEEN

As one reaches the age of thirteen, his mind has presumably developed sufficiently to grasp the sense of his life's purpose. Thus, his powers of intellect are transformed into reality through emotions,

until the truth of this higher revealed reality infuses his way of being and acting.

TEFILLIN—DRAWING THE INTELLECTUAL EMANATIONS INTO OUR REALITY

Rarely does one find a life driven solely by clarity of thought. In Kabbalistic terms, this is because *kesser*, Divine intellect, and *mochin*, the collective intellect of *chochmah*, *binah*, and *daas*, transcend the world. Ones earthly purpose and the means of attaining it, thus, are not apparent; they need to be revealed. The act and intention of putting on *Tefillin* is to

draw down *kesser* and *mochin* into our selves, until the truth of this higher revealed reality infuses our way of being and acting.

From the boxes and the scroll contained within – flow the straps, first surrounding our heads, then tied in a knot the shape of a *dalet* for the word *daas*, and from the reality of *daas* flow the two straps: one to the right and one to the left, representing the general flow of the emotional attributes of *chesed* (love and giving) to the right-side, and *gevurah* (strength and restraint) on the left. Thus the right strap hangs lower than the left, for we wish to draw down more *chesed* than *gevurah*. In truth, *chesed* and *gevurah* emanate from the same “space,” the transcendental knot interweaving both these elements, rooted in the deepest place of *kesser*, the “black,” the level beyond comprehension which is called the space for “the light of

darkness.” Nevertheless, we seek to draw chesed into dominant revelation.

In *daas* is the key to our emotions, so that they open and flow in the general direction of either right or left, giving or restraining, openness or confinement. The straps represent a flow “downward,” and though their “source” (made of leather) is the same as the parchment – the *makif* beyond letters and comprehension – they must be colored with the “darkness” of black dye, reflecting a descent below. They represent the highest level of *kesser* (the “black”) projected into the lowest and densest of vessels.

Before one may draw upon this transcendent level of *kesser* and *mochin*, he needs ensure that his own vessels are prepared to absorb their flow. If he draws down *kesser* and *mochin*, and the vessels are

unfitting, he will shatter the vessels. This is why, before one dons the head *Tefillin*, he wraps the hand *Tefillin*.

HAND TEFILLIN—THE DIVINE EMANATIONS UNITE

While the bayis of the head *Tefillin* represents *kesser* (Divine intellect), the bayis of the hand *Tefillin* signifies *malchus* (kingship; receptiveness). *Malchus* is the recipient of all nine other Divine emanations.

Hence, the nine levels originate “on high” by being housed in separate compartments of the head *Tefillin*. As they arrive at the recipient, symbolized by the hand *Tefillin*, emanations have come to be so united that they all reside together in a single dwelling.

The hand *Tefillin* in itself is testament to all of the Divine emanations: the bayis and two windings on the biceps corresponding to the

three levels of intellect; seven windings on the forearm aligned with the seven emotions; three times around the middle finger, reflecting the world of doing and action.

As the hand *Tefillin* is properly bound, it metaphysically binds ones reality in total dedication. Then, the head *Tefillin* draws a more profound measure of *mochin* from a world of perfect unity, ensuring a wonderful alignment among our deepest levels of soul, mind, emotions, and actions.

how-to put on Tefillin

1 Begin by standing up and rolling up your left sleeve, so that the *Tefillin* can be placed directly on the arm. (If you are left-handed, roll up your right sleeve instead.)

2 Place the *Tefillin* bag on the table, and take out the hand *Tefillin* from the bag with your right hand. (If you wrapped and replaced the *Tefillin* in their bag in the manner explained below, then the hand *Tefillin* will be on the left side of the bag.)



Fig. 3

3 Remove the *Tefillin* from its protective case (3), but leave in place the inner casing that has a round hole in its top. (This inner casing protects the corners of the *Tefillin* from being worn away.)

4 Holding the *Tefillin* with your right hand, with the ma'abarta (the opening through which the strap passes) towards you, place your left hand (or your right hand, if you are left-handed) through the loop (4a), and place the box of the *Tefillin* on the biceps, adjusted so it rests directly against the heart (4b):



Fig. 4a



Fig. 4b

how-to

- 5** Before tightening the strap, recite the blessing:

(Transliteration) *Baruch Atah Ado-nay E-loheinu Melech Ha'olam, Asher Kidshanu Bemitzvosav Vetzivanu Lehaniach Tefillin.*

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

(Translation) Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to put on *Tefillin*.

- 6** While putting on the *Tefillin*, remain focused – don't talk or even gesture. Meditate on binding your mind, heart, and actions to G-d.

- 7** Now tighten the strap, being careful that the knot remains in contact with the box. Continue with two more windings around the biceps, each over the arm (away



Fig. 7

from the body) (7a) and then back underneath. These two windings will go over the *ma'abarta*, the extended base of the hand *Tefillin* (7b):

- 8** Continue wrapping the strap in the same direction, seven more times around your arm, as follows: First a half turn (8a), then two full turns (8b), then another four turns (8c – separated from the previous turns by a wider space), and finally another half turn (8d).

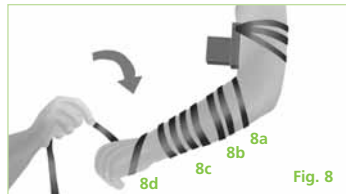


Fig. 8



Fig. 9

- 9** Now wrap the strap one time around your palm, leaving the remainder loose for now (9).

- 10** Take the head *Tefillin* from the bag with your right hand, and remove its protective case (10).



Fig. 10

- 11** Place the head *Tefillin* right above your forehead (11a), centering the box so that it lies at a point that is directly between the

how-to

eyes (11b). Be sure that the lower edge of the box does not fall below the place of the hair roots (12b). (If your hairline is receding, place the lower edge of the box along your former hairline.)



12 While fastening the head *Tefillin*, ensure that the back knot rests at the base of the skull, just above the neck (12a).

If, for any reason, an interruption was made between the blessing on the hand *Tefillin* and putting on the head *Tefillin*, the following blessing should be recited; otherwise continue with step #13.

(Transliteration) *Baruch Atah Ado-nay E-loheinu Melech Ha'olam Asher Kidshanu Bemitzvosav Vetzivanu Al Mitzvas Tefillin.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ
הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו,
וְצִוָּנוּ עַל מִצְוַת הַתְּפִילִין.

(Translation) Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us concerning the mitzvah of *Tefillin*.

13 Now take the remaining strap of the hand *Tefillin* in your right hand, and wrap it three times around your middle finger. Begin with one turn around the lower base (phalanx), then one just above the first joint (the middle phalanx) (13a), then once again around the base (13b). If there is any length left over, wrap it around your palm and tuck in the tail end.



14 Throughout the process of donning the *Tefillin*, make sure that the straps (of both the hand and head *Tefillin*) are black side out.

BASIC INTENTION WHILE PUTTING ON TEFILLIN

When a person puts on Tefillin, he should have in mind that the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded us to write the four portions of Torah, placed within the Tefillin, which speak of the unity of His name and of the exodus out of Egypt. We will thus remember the miracles and wonders He did for us, which display His unity and His ability to rule and to do as He wills above and below. He has commanded us to place the Tefillin on the arm near the heart, and on the head above the brain, so that we submit our soul, which is one with the mind, as well as the desires and thoughts of our heart, to His service. By putting on the Tefillin, we will be mindful of the Creator and thus curb our personal, ego-based pleasures.

a story The Ancient Innkeeper

They asked him how old he was, but he could not answer. His regulars claimed he had been attending to this inn since their fathers were children – and even then he was not a young man.

So the two holy brothers, Zusia and Elimelech, sat at a table to rest. Then, without warning, Zusia's hand came down on the table with full force.

"You know, my brother Elimelech, I should be ashamed of myself. I've gone so many years without ever once checking the scrolls inside my *Tefillin*!"

Elimelech winked. Then he roared, "How could you do such a thing? How do you know that they are kosher at all?"

Reb Zusia hung his head and sobbed while his brother drove on in his tirade. The ancient innkeeper stood by and listened. Eventually, he gathered the fortitude to speak

"Esteemed rabbi, I have also never checked my *Tefillin* – not even once. Perhaps while you are checking your own, please could you check mine as well."

This was what Zusia had been waiting for. He immediately took the innkeeper's *Tefillin*, cut the thread of calf's sinew that held the boxes together and pried them open.

"Empty," he pronounced.

The innkeeper grabbed the opened encasements to see for himself. No scrolls, not even a trace of scrolls. He had spent seventy years on this earth and never once fulfilled the precious mitzvah of *Tefillin*.

Tears rolled down his cheeks. "All these years of sorrow and loneliness," he sobbed, "only so I should not depart this world without this mitzvah."

"Go immerse in the river," Elimelech told his holy brother, "and then write scrolls of such mystic power that they may make up for all the years lost."

The innkeeper wore those *Tefillin* maybe once, maybe twice. Shortly after, he departed this world in peace.

*From Chassidic Tales
by Rabbi S.Y. Zevin*

the shema

the shema

Today, in general, the Tefillin are worn during the morning prayers. Nevertheless, the wearing of Tefillin is a mitzvah all its own, which stands independent of the prayer service. Thus, even if one is unable to recite the entire morning prayers while wearing Tefillin, he should at least try to recite the Shema, the essential prayer declaring G-d's unity, which also includes the command to don the Tefillin.

Order of Saying the Shema

1 Before saying words of Torah for the first time each day, recite the following blessing:

(Transliteration) *Baruch Atah Ado-nay E-loheinu Melech Ha'olam Asher Bachar Banu Mikol Ha'amim Venasan Lanu Es Toraso. Baruch Atah Ado-nay Nosein HaTorah.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בְּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים וְנָתַן
לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ, בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי
נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה:

(Translation) Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has chosen us from among all the nations, and given us His Torah. Blessed are You, L-rd, who gives the Torah.

2 In preparation for prayer, it is customary to make the following declaration:

(Transliteration) *Hareini Mekabel Alai Mitzvas Asei Shel Ve'ahavta Lerei'achah Kamocha.*

הֲרִינִי מִקְבֵּל עָלַי מִצְוַת עֲשֵׂה שֶׁל
וְאַהֲבַת לְרֵעִךָ כְּמוֹךָ:

(Translation) I hereby accept upon myself the positive Mitzvah, "To love your neighbor as yourself."

the shema

3 The Shema should be recited aloud with intention and concentration, without interruption, and in a manner that you understand. Now say the Shema:

Shema Yisroel:

**(Transliteration) Shema Yisroel
Ado-nay E-loheinu Ado-nay
Echad.**

*Boruch Shem Kevod Malchuso
Le'olam Va'ed.*

V'ahavta es Ado-nai E-lohecha, bechol levavcha, uvechol nafshecha, uvechol me'odecha. Vehayu hadevarim ha'eileh, asher anochi metzavcha hayom, al levavecha. Veshinantam levanecha vedibarta bam, beshivtecha beveisecha uvelech'techa vaderech, uveshoch'becha uvkumecha. Ukeshartam le'os al yadecha (when saying these words, gently touch your hand *Tefillin* and kiss your hand), vehayu letotafos bein einecha (when saying these words, gently touch your head *Tefillin* and kiss your hand). Uchsavtam al mezuzos beisecha, uvish'e'arecha.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֶחָד:

בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

וְאַהֲבַתְּ אֶת יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשֶׁךָ

וּבְכָל-מְאֹדֶךָ: וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אִשְׁר

אֲנֹכִי מְצִוֶּה הַיּוֹם עֲלֶי-לְבַבְךָ: וְשָׁנַנְתָּם לְבִנְיָךְ וּדְבַרְתָּ

בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִקְחֶךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ

וּבְקוּמְךָ: וְקִשְׂרָתָם לְאוֹת עַל-יְדֶיךָ וְהָיוּ לְמַטְפֵּת בֵּין

עֵינֶיךָ: וּכְתַבְתָּם עַל-מְזוּזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ:

**(Translation) Hear, O Israel, the
L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is
One.**

*Blessed be the name of the glory of
His kingdom forever and ever.*

You shall love the L-rd, your G-d, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. These words, which I command you today, shall be upon your heart. Teach them thoroughly to

your children, and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign upon your hand (when saying these words, gently touch your hand *Tefillin* and kiss your hand), and they shall be for a reminder between your eyes (when saying these words, gently touch your head *Tefillin* and kiss your hand). Write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates.

the shema: vehaya

וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמַעְתָּ שְׁמִיעוּ אֶל מְצוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוֶּה אֶתְכֶם
הַיּוֹם לֵאמֹר הַבֹּה אֶת יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וּלְעַבְדוֹ בְּכֹל לְבַבְכֶם וּבְכֹל
נַפְשְׁכֶם. וְנָתַתִּי מִטֶּר אֶרְצְכֶם בְּעֵתוֹ יוֹרֵה וּמִלְקוֹשׁ וְאִסְפַּת דִּגְנֶךָ
וּתְיַרְשֶׁךָ וַיִּצְהַרְךָ. וְנָתַתִּי עֵשֶׂב בְּשָׂדֶךָ לְבַהֲמֹתֶךָ וְאִכְלֹתָ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ.
הִשְׁמְרוּ לָכֵם פֶּן יִפְתָּה לְבַבְכֶם וְסָרְתֶם וְעַבַדְתֶּם אֱלֹהִים
אֲחֵרִים וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתֶם לָהֶם. וְחָרָה אַף יְיָ בְּכֶם וְעָצַר
אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מִטֶּר וְהָאֲדָמָה לֹא תִתֵּן אֶת יְבוּלָהּ
וְאֲבַדְתֶּם מְהֵרָה מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ הַטְּבָחָה אֲשֶׁר יְיָ נָתַן לָכֶם: וְשָׂמַתֶּם
אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֱלֹהֵי עַל לְבַבְכֶם וְעַל נַפְשְׁכֶם וּקְשַׁרְתֶּם אֹתָם לְאוֹת
עַל יַדְכֶם וְהָיוּ לְטוֹטְפוֹת בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם: וְלִמְדַתֶּם אֹתָם אֶת
בְּנֵיכֶם לְדַבֵּר בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּכֶם בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִכְתְּךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְךָ
וּבְקוּמְךָ: וּכְתַבְתֶּם עַל מְזוֹזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ: לְמַעַן יִרְבוּ
יְמֵיכֶם וַיְמִי בְנֵיכֶם עַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְיָ לְאַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר
לָהֶם בְּיַמֵּי הַשָּׁמַיִם עַל הָאָרֶץ:

Vehaya:

(Transliteration) Vehaya im shamo'a tishme'u el mitzvotai, asher anochi metzaveh es'chem hayom, le'ahavah es Ado-nai E-lo-heichem ule'ovdo, bechol levavchem uvechol nafshechem. Venasati m'tar artzechem be'ito yoreh umalkosh,

ve'asafta deganecha, vesirosh'cha vyitz'harecha. Venasati eisev besadcha livhemtecha, ve'achalta vesavata. Hishamru lachem pen yifteh l'avchem, vesartem va'avaditem elohim acheirim vehishtachavisem lahem. Vecharah af Ado-nai bachem, ve'atzar es

hashamayim velo yihyeh matar vehadamah lo sitein es yevulah, va'avaditem meheirah me'al ha'aretz hatovah asher Ado-nai nosein lachem. Vesartem es devarai eileh al l'avchem ve'al nafshechem, ukeshartam osam le'os al yed'chem (when saying these words, gently touch your hand Tefillin and kiss your hand), vehayu letotafos bein eineichem (when saying these words, gently touch your head Tefillin and kiss your hand). Velimaditem osam es beneichem ledaber bam, beshivtecha beveisecha uvelechtecha vaderech uveshochbecha uvekumecha. Uchesavtam al mezuzos beisecha uvishe'arecha. Lema'an yirbu yemeichem vimei veneichem al ha'adamah asher nishba Ado-nai la'avoseichem laseis lahem, kimei hashamayim al ha'aretz.

(Translation) This is what will be, if you will diligently obey My commandments which I enjoin upon you this day, to love the L-rd your

the shema: va'yomer

G-d and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul: I will give rain for your land at the proper time, the early rain and the late rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil; I will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be sated. Take care lest your heart be lured away, and you turn astray and worship alien gods and bow down to them; for then the L-rd's wrath will flare up against you, and He will close the heavens so that there will be no rain and the earth will not yield its produce, and you will swiftly perish from the good land which the L-rd gives you. Therefore, place these words of Mine upon your heart and upon your soul; bind them for a sign on your hand (when saying these words, gently touch your hand *Tefillin* and kiss your hand), and they shall be for a reminder between your eyes (when saying these words, gently touch your head *Tefillin* and kiss your hand); teach them

וַיֹּאמֶר יי אֵל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ
אֲלֵהֶם: וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם צִיצִית עַל כַּנְּפֵי בְּגָדֵיהֶם לְדֹרֹתָם וְנָתַנּוּ
עַל צִיצִית הַכֶּנֶף פֶּתִיל תְּכֵלֶת. וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְצִיצִית וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ
וּזְכַרְתֶּם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹת יי וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם וְלֹא תִתּוּרוּ אַחֲרַי
לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרַי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אֲתֶם זֹנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם: לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ
וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתַי וְהֵייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם: אֲנִי יי
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְהִיוֹת לָכֶם
לֵאלֹהִים אֲנִי יי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: אָמֵן

to your children, to speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you rise; and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates – so that your days and the days of your children may be prolonged on the land which the L-rd swore to your fathers to give to them, for as long as the heavens are above the earth.

Va'yomer:

(Transliteration) *Va'yomer Ado-nai el Moshe leimor. Daber el benei Yisroel*

ve'amarta aleihem ve'asu lahem tzitzis al kanfei vigdeihem ledorosam, venasnu al tzitzis hakanaf pesil techeiles. Vehaya lachem letzitzis, ure'isem oso, uzechartem es kol mitzvos Ado-nai va'asisem osam, velo sasuru acharei levavechem ve'acharei eineichem asher atem zonim achareihem. Lema'an tizkeru ve'asisem es kol mitzvosai, viheyisem kedoshim le'loheichem. Ani Ado-nai E'lohechem, asher hotzeisi es'chem mei'eretz mitzrayim lihiyos lachem le'lohim, Ani Ado-nai E-loheichem. Emes.

removing & replacing your Tefillin

(Translation) The L-rd spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the children of Israel and tell them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to attach a thread of blue on the fringe of each corner. They shall be to you as tzitzis. You shall look upon them and remember all the commandments of the L-rd and fulfill them, and not follow after your heart and after your eyes by which you go astray, so that you may remember and fulfill all My commandments, and be holy to your G-d. I am the L-rd your G-d who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your G-d; I, the L-rd, am your G-d. True.

4 Before removing the *Tefillin*, many have the custom to recite the following verse:

(Transliteration) *Ach tzadikim yodu lishemecha yeishvu yesharim es panecha.*

אֵךְ צַדִּיקִים יוֹדוּ לְשִׁמְךָ יְיָ שְׂרִים אֶת־פָּנֶיךָ:

(Translation) Indeed, the righteous will extol Your Name; the upright will dwell in Your presence.

Removing and Replacing the Tefillin:

1 After you have finished the prayers, unwrap the *Tefillin*, reversing the order in which you wrapped them. First, in a standing position, unwind the strap from around the middle finger (1), and rewind it around the palm.



2 Remove the head *Tefillin* with your left hand (if you are left-handed, with your right hand).

3 Put the head *Tefillin* in its protective case, and wrap the straps around the case.

4 It is customary to put the head *Tefillin* in the right side of the *Tefillin* bag (regardless of whether you are left- or right-handed).

5 Unwind the strap from around the arm, starting from the hand and working your way up the arm. Then gently take off the hand *Tefillin*.

Tefillin upkeep

6 Put the hand *Tefillin* in its protective case (2), and wrap the straps around the case.



7 Put the hand *Tefillin* on the left side of the bag.

It is essential that the Tefillin straps remain black. Thus, when wrapping the Tefillin (or when putting them on), be sure not to pull too tightly on the straps, so as not to stretch the leather and chip its paint.

Tefillin Upkeep

1. Storing your Tefillin

When not in use, *Tefillin* should be placed in their properly fitting protective cases, and then placed within a bag reserved only for them.

Tefillin are dedicated for holy purposes, and should be treated with particular honor. Thus it is inappropriate to bring *Tefillin* into a restroom.

In a public place in which you are afraid that the *Tefillin* will be stolen or tampered with if they are left alone (e.g., an airport where there is no safe place to place your *Tefillin* bag), you may enter a modern lavatory facility (in which the waste is flushed away) while carrying *Tefillin*. The *Tefillin* bag should be within another bag, or covered with your jacket, coat, or another garment, so that the *Tefillin* bag itself is covered.

Since *Tefillin* are made of leather, and since they must retain their black color, they should not be exposed to climatic extremes, whether of heat, cold, or moisture.

2. Checking your Tefillin

It is best to have your *Tefillin* checked periodically – at least once every four years, and if possible, once a year. Traditionally, this is done during the month of Elul (September), preceding the High Holidays.

If you begin to notice any rounding on the corners of the boxes of your *Tefillin*, or paint chipping (particularly on the straps), have them checked.

The laws of *Tefillin* are detailed and complex, so it is imperative that *Tefillin* be checked by a qualified professional *sofer* (scribe) to ensure that they are kosher for use.

The Laws of Tefillin

- 1 The obligation to put on *Tefillin* begins at *bar mitzvah*, when a boy reaches thirteen years of age. Customarily, a boy begins putting on *Tefillin* two months before his *bar mitzvah*, initially without the blessing and later, as he gets more familiar with wearing them, with a blessing.
- 2 *Tefillin* are worn every weekday – preferably in the morning, ideally during the morning prayers. However, if for some reason one did not put on *Tefillin* in the morning, he may put them on and recite the blessing until sunset.
- 3 On *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* (the Festivals), and according to most customs, the Intermediate days of *Sukkos* and of *Passover*, *Tefillin* are not worn.
- 4 On *Chanukah* and *Purim*, *Tefillin* are worn.

5 On *Tisha Be'Av* (the ninth day of the month of *Av*, the day when we mourn the destruction of the Holy Temple), *Tefillin* are not worn in the morning. Instead, one should put on his *Tefillin* for the afternoon *Minchah* prayer service.

6 When a *tallis* (prayer shawl) is worn during prayers, one should first wrap himself in the *tallis* and then put on the *Tefillin*. At the conclusion of the prayers, we reverse the order, first removing the *Tefillin* and then taking off the *tallis*.

7 One's body should be clean when wearing *Tefillin*. Before putting them on, be sure that you do not need to use the restroom.

8 If, while wearing *Tefillin*, you need to remove them to use the restroom, when putting them on again, the blessing is recited again. If, however, you removed them for any *other* reason, when putting

them on again the blessing is not recited, unless two to three hours have elapsed.

9 When wearing *Tefillin*, one should not sit down to eat a meal. Though it is technically permissible to have a quick drink or light snack while wearing *Tefillin*, in our times – in which *Tefillin* are worn only for a short period each day – it is best not to unless necessary.

10 When wearing *Tefillin*, one should try to be continuously mindful of them, directing his thoughts to prayer or *Torah* study.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q) On which hand should a left-handed person place the hand *Tefillin*?

A) Just as a right-handed person puts the *Tefillin* on his “weaker” arm, the left, a left-handed person should put them on his “weaker” hand, i.e., the right hand.

Q) If one is ambidextrous, on which hand should he place the *Tefillin*?

A) Because each case is unique, in such situations it is best to ask your local Rabbi. In the event that a competent authority is not immediately available to answer, however, the general rule is that the “stronger” hand (with regards to putting on *Tefillin*) is the hand with which you write. If an ambidextrous person writes with his right hand, he should put the

Tefillin on his left hand, and vice versa.

Q) What if the “weaker” arm (the one on which one would normally put the *Tefillin*) is covered in a cast, Ace bandage, or the like? Similarly, what if one’s head is in a cast or some other covering that cannot be removed?

A) Though generally *Tefillin* are to be worn on the bare arm and head without any intervening substance, in this instance you may tie the box of the *Tefillin* on the upper arm or the head as usual, and wind the straps around the cast or bandage.

Q) If someone is missing his “weak” *Tefillin* arm, can he put on just the head *Tefillin*?

A) Yes, he may don just the head *Tefillin*: the hand *Tefillin* and the head *Tefillin* are two separate *mitzvos*. Before placing them on

frequently asked questions

the head, he should recite two blessings: the usual blessing, “*lehaniach Tefillin*” (to place *Tefillin*), and the blessing “*al mitzvas Tefillin*” (on the mitzvah of *Tefillin*) – see page 20 for the text of these blessings. The same law would apply if, for some reason, you only have the head *Tefillin* and not the hand *Tefillin*: put on the one *Tefillin* that you have.

Q) If, because of an injury, one cannot put on the head Tefillin, should the hand Tefillin be put on anyway?

A) Yes: as above, they are two separate *mitzvos*, and one can put on only one when he is not able to use both. In this case, where you can wear only the hand *Tefillin*, you should recite only the usual blessing, “*Lehaniach Tefillin*” – see page 19 for the text.

Q) What happens if you put on your Tefillin and then remember

that you forgot to make a blessing over them? Can you say the blessing now?

A) Yes. As long as the *Tefillin* are still on you, you may recite the blessing.

Q) The hand Tefillin are meant to be put on before the head Tefillin. What happens if, by mistake, you took out the head Tefillin from their bag first? Should you go ahead and put them on first?

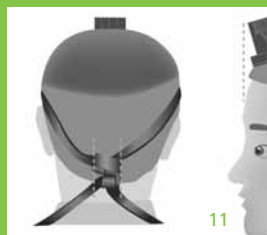
A) They should be put aside. Take the hand *Tefillin* from the bag and put them on; then continue with the head *Tefillin*.

Q) What should I do if my Tefillin accidentally fell to the floor?

A) If the *Tefillin* were not covered in their cases, first make sure that their edges and corners were not damaged. In earlier generations,

many would fast as an atonement for allowing the *Tefillin* to fall to the floor; today the custom is to redeem the fast with extra *tzedakah* (charity). One should offer the extra charity even if the *Tefillin* fell when they were in their case.

Quick Reference Chart





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