

= Tefillin =

Tefillin (Askhenazic : / ʔfʔlʔn / ; Israeli Hebrew : [tʃiʔlin] , ??????) , also called phylacteries (/ fʔʔlæktʃriʔz / from Ancient Greek ?????????? phylacterion , form of phylássein , ????????? meaning " to guard , protect ") , are a set of small black leather boxes containing scrolls of parchment inscribed with verses from the Torah . They are worn by male observant Jews during weekday morning prayers .

Although " tefillin " is technically the plural form (the singular being " tefillah ") , it is loosely used as a singular as well . The arm @-@ tefillin , or shel yad , is placed on the upper arm , and the strap wrapped around the arm / hand , hand and fingers ; while the head @-@ tefillin , or shel rosh , is placed above the forehead . The Torah commands that they should be worn to serve as a " sign " and " remembrance " that God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt .

The scriptural texts for tefillin are obscure in literal meaning . For example , Deuteronomy 11 : 18 is one of the standard texts referenced as supporting the obligation , but does not designate what specifically to " bind upon your arm , " and the definition of totafot between your eyes is not obvious . It is the Talmud , the authoritative oral tradition for Rabbinic Judaism , which explains what are to be bound to the body and the form of tefillin .

= = Biblical source = =

The obligation of tefillin , as expounded by the Oral Law , is mentioned four times in the Torah : twice when recalling The Exodus from Egypt :

And it shall be for a sign for you upon your hand , and for a memorial between your eyes , that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth ; for with a strong hand did the LORD bring you out of Egypt .

And it shall be for a sign upon your hand , and as totafot between your eyes ; for with a mighty hand did the LORD bring us forth out of Egypt .

and twice in the shema passages :

And you shall bind them as a sign upon your arm , and they shall be as totafot between your eyes . You shall put these words of mine on your heart and on your soul ; and you shall tie them for a sign upon your arm , and they shall be as totafot between your eyes .

= = Etymology = =

The ultimate origin of Hebrew " tefillin " is uncertain . The word " tefillin " is not found in the Bible , which calls them ʔoʔafot . The Septuagint renders " ʔoʔafot " ????????? , " something immovable . " Some believe it refers to a charm , similar to the Hebrew neʔifot , " round jewel . " The Talmud (Sanhedrin 4b) explains that the word ʔoʔafot is combination of two foreign words : Tot means " two " in the " Caspi " language and Fot means " two " in the " Afriki " language , hence tot and fot means " two and two " , corresponding to the four compartments of the head @-@ tefillin . Menahem ben Saruq explains that the word is derived from the Hebrew Ve 'hateif and Tatifoo , both expressions meaning " speech " , " for when one sees the tefillin it causes him to remember and speak about The Exodus from Egypt . "

The first texts to use " tefillin " are the Targumim and Peshitta and it is also used in subsequent Talmudic literature , although the word " ʔoʔafah " was still current , being used with the meaning of " frontlet . " " Tefillin " may have derived from the Aramaic palal , " to plead , pray , " a word closely related to the Hebrew tefillah , " prayer . " Jacob ben Asher (14th century) suggests that " tefillin " is derived from the Hebrew pelilah , " justice , evidence , " for tefillin act as a sign and proof of God 's presence among the Jewish people .

The only instance of the name " phylacteries " in ancient times occurs once in the Greek New Testament (Matthew 23 : 5) whence it has passed into the languages of Europe . " Phylacteries " derives from the Greek phulaktʃrion - ????????? , " defences , " and in late Greek , " amulets " or " charms . " Neither Aquila nor Symmachus use the word " phylacteries . "

= = Purpose = =

The tefillin are to serve as a reminder of God 's intervention at the time of the Exodus from Egypt . Maimonides details of the sanctity of tefillin and writes that " as long as the tefillin are on the head and on the arm of a man , he is modest and God @-@ fearing and will not be attracted by hilarity or idle talk ; he will have no evil thoughts , but will devote all his thoughts to truth and righteousness . " The Sefer ha @-@ Chinuch (14th century) adds that the purpose of tefillin is to help subjugate a person 's worldly desires and encourage spiritual development . Joseph Caro (16th century) explains that tefillin are placed on the arm adjacent to the heart and on the head above the brain to demonstrate that these two major organs are willing to perform the service of God .

Many have the custom to have high quality tefillin and beautiful tefillin bags as a Hiddur Mitzvah . This idea comes from the verse " This is my God and I will glorify Him " (Exodus 15 : 2) . The Jewish Sages explain : " Is it possible for a human being to add glory to his Creator ? What this really means is : I shall glorify Him in the way I perform mitzvot . I shall prepare before Him a beautiful lulav , beautiful sukkah , beautiful fringes (Tsitsit) , and beautiful phylacteries (Tefilin) . "

= = Manufacture and contents = =

The manufacturing processes of both the boxes and the parchment scrolls are intricate and governed by hundreds of detailed rules . In earlier Talmudic times , tefillin were either cylindrical or cubical , but later the cylindrical form became obsolete . Nowadays the boxes should be fashioned from a single piece of animal hide and form a base with an upper compartment to contain the parchment scrolls . They are made in varying levels of quality . The most basic form , called peshutim (" simple ") , are made using several pieces of parchment to form the inner walls of the head tefillin . The higher quality tefillin , namely dakkot (" thin ") , made by stretching a thin piece of leather , and the more durable gassot (" thick ") are both fashioned from the single piece of hide . Black leather straps (retsu 'ot) pass through the rear of the base and are used to secure the tefillin onto the body . On both sides of the head @-@ tefillin , the Hebrew letter shin (?) is moulded . The knot of the head @-@ tefillin strap forms the letter dalet (?) or double dalet (?) (known as the square @-@ knot) while the strap that is passed through the arm @-@ tefillin is formed into a knot in the shape of the letter yud (?) . These three letters spell Shaddai (???) , one of the names of God .

= = = Parchment scrolls = = =

Four biblical passages which refer to the tefillin are placed inside the leather boxes . These are : " Sanctify to me ... " (Exodus 13 : 1 @-@ 10) ; " When YHWH brings you ... " (Exodus 13 : 11 @-@ 16) ; " Hear , O Israel ... " (Deuteronomy 6 : 4 @-@ 9) ; and " If you observe My Commandments ... " (Deuteronomy 11 : 13 @-@ 21) . They are written by a scribe with special ink on parchment scrolls (klaf) . The Hebrew Ashuri script must be used and there are three main styles of lettering used : Beis Yosef ? generally used by Ashkenazim ; Arizal ? generally used by Hasidim ; Velish ? used by Sefardim . The passages contain 3 @, @ 188 letters , which take a sofer (scribe) between 10 ? 15 hours to complete . The arm @-@ tefillin has one large compartment , which contains all four biblical passages written upon a single strip of parchment . The head @-@ tefillin has four separate compartments in each of which one scroll of parchment is placed .

There was considerable discussion among the commentators of the Talmud about the order in which the scrolls should be inserted into the four compartments of the head @-@ tefillin . In the Middle Ages , a famous debate on the issue was recorded between Rashi and his grandson Rabbeinu Tam . Rashi held that the passages are placed according to the chronological order as they appear in the Torah : Kadesh Li , Ve @-@ haya Ki Yeviehcha , Shema , Ve @-@ haya Im Shemoa , while according to Rabbeinu Tam , the last two passages are switched around . Of the tefillin dating from the 1st @-@ century CE discovered at Qumran in the Judean Desert , some were

made according to the order understood by Rashi and others in the order of Rabbeinu Tam . The prevailing custom is to arrange the scrolls according to Rashi 's view , but some pious Jews are also accustomed to briefly lay the tefillin of Rabbeinu Tam as well , a custom of the Ari adopted by the Hasidim . The placement of the protrusion of a tuft of the sinew (se 'ar eigel) identifies as to which opinion the tefillin were written . The Vilna Gaon , who wore the tefillin of Rashi , rejected the stringency of also laying Rabbeinu Tam , pointing out that there were sixty @-@ four permutations for the arrangement of the tefillin scrolls .

= = Obligation = =

The duty of laying tefillin rests upon males after the age of thirteen years . Although women are exempt from the obligation , some early codifiers allowed them to do so . Moses Isserles (16th century) , however , strongly discourages it . Historically , the mitzvah of tefillin was not performed by women , but the ritual was apparently kept by some women in medieval France and Germany . Traditions exist of some prominent women laying tefillin and the idea is gaining a following among women affiliated to the Conservative movement . In 2013 SAR High School in Riverdale , New York began allowing girls to wrap tefillin during Shacharit @-@ morning prayer ; it is probably the first Modern Orthodox high school in the U.S. to do so . The wearing of tefillin by members of Women of the Wall at the Western Wall caused consternation from the rabbi in charge of the site until a Jerusalem District Court judge ruled in 2013 that doing so was not a violation of ? local custom . ?

Others who are not obliged to lay tefillin include a mourner during the first day of his mourning period , and a bridegroom on his wedding @-@ day . A sufferer from stomach @-@ trouble or one who is otherwise in pain and can not concentrate his mind is also exempt . One who is engaged in the study of the Law and scribes of and dealers in tefillin and mezuzot while engaged in their work if it can not be postponed , are also free from this obligation .

The codes view the commandment of tefillin as important and call those who neglect to observe it " transgressors . " Maimonides counts the commandment of laying the arm @-@ tefillin and head @-@ tefillin as two separate positive mitzvot . The Talmud cites Rav Sheshet who said that by neglecting the precept , one transgresses eight positive commandments . A report of widespread laxity in its observance is reported by Moses of Coucy in 13th century Spain . It may have arisen from the fear of persecution , similar to what had occurred to the Jews living in the Land of Israel under Roman rule in the 2nd @-@ century .

= = Performance = =

Originally tefillin were worn all day , but not during the night . Nowadays the prevailing custom is to wear them only during the weekday morning service , although some individuals wear them at other times during the day as well .

Tefillin are not donned on Shabbat and the major festivals because these holy days are themselves considered " signs " which render the need of the " sign " of tefillin superfluous . On Chol HaMoed (intermediate days) of Pesach and Sukkot , there is a great debate among the early halachic authorities as to whether tefillin should be worn or not . Those who forbid it consider the " sign " of intermediate days as having the same status as the festival itself , making the ritual of tefillin redundant . Others argue and hold that Chol HaMoed does not constitute a " sign " in which case tefillin must be laid . Three customs evolved resulting from the dispute :

To refrain from wearing tefillin : This ruling of the Shulchan Aruch is based on kabbalah and the Zohar which strongly advocate refraining from laying tefillin on Chol HaMoed . This position is maintained by Sephardic Jews and is also the opinion of the Vilna Gaon whose ruling has been universally accepted in Israel .

To wear tefillin without reciting the blessings : This is the opinion of , among others , Jacob ben Asher , Moses of Coucy and David HaLevi Segal . The advantage of this compromise is that one avoids the transgressions of either not donning tefillin or making a blessing in vain .

To wear tefillin and recite the blessings in an undertone : This opinion , based on Maimonides , is

the ruling of Moses Isserles who writes that this is the universally accepted practice among Ashkenazic Jews . However , he was evidently mistaken , since many Ashkenazim refrain from wearing it or wear it without a blessing during Chol HaMoed .

In light of the conflicting opinions , the Mishna Berura (20th @-@ century) recommends Ashkenazim make the following stipulation before donning tefillin : " If I am obligated to don tefillin I intend to fulfill my obligation and if I am not obligated to don tefillin , my doing so should not be considered as fulfilling any obligation " and that the blessing not be recited .

On the fast day of Tisha B 'Av , tefillin are not worn in the morning , as tefillin are considered an " adornment " , symbols of beauty , which is deemed inappropriate for a day of mourning . They are worn instead at the afternoon Mincha service . There are those however who have a custom (Jews from Aleppo , Syria) on Tisha B 'Av to privately put on tefillin at home and pray privately , say the Amidah and take off the tefillin and go to synagogue to finish the prayers .

= = = How to put on tefillin = = =

Ashkenazim put on and remove the arm tefillin while standing in accordance to the Shulchan Aruch , while most Sephardim do so while sitting in accordance with the Ari . All , however , put on and remove the head tefillin while standing . It is forbidden to speak or be distracted while putting on the tefillin . An Ashkenazi says two blessings when laying tefillin , the first before he ties the arm @-@ tefillin : ... lehani 'ach tefillin (" to bind tefillin ") , and the second after placing the head tefillin : ... al mitzvat tefillin (" as to the commandment of tefillin ") , thereafter he tightens the head straps and says " Baruch Shem Kovod " (" blessed be the holy name ") The Sephardic custom is that no blessing is said for the head @-@ tefillin , the first blessing sufficing for both . Sephardim and many members of the Chabad Orthodox movement only recite the blessing on the head @-@ tefillah if they spoke about something not related to tefillin since reciting the blessing on the arm @-@ tefillah .

Procedure

The arm @-@ tefillin is laid on the inner side of the bare left arm , right arm if one is left handed , two finger breadths above the elbow , so that when the arm is bent the tefillin faces towards the heart . The arm @-@ tefillin is tightened with the thumb , the blessing is said , and the strap is immediately wrapped around the upper arm in the opposite direction it came from in order to keep the knot tight without having to hold it . Some wrap it around the upper arm for less than a full revolution (the bare minimum to keep the knot tight) and then wrap it around the forearm seven times , while others wrap it around the upper arm an addition time before wrapping it around the forearm . Many Ashkenazim wear the knot to be tightened (not to be confused with the knot on the base which is permanently tied and always worn on the inside , facing the heart) on the inside and wrap inward , while Nusach Sephard Ashkenazim and all Sephardim wear it on the outside and wrap outward .

Then the head @-@ tefillin is placed on the middle of the head just above the forehead , so that no parts rests below the hairline . A bald or partially bald person 's original hairline is used . The knot of the head @-@ tefillin sits at the back of the head , upon the part of the occipital bone that protrudes just above the nape , directly opposite the optic chiasm . The two straps of the head @-@ tefillin are brought in front of the shoulders , with their blackened side facing outwards . Now the remainder of the arm @-@ tefillin straps are wound three times around the middle finger and around the hand to form the shape of the Hebrew letter of either a shin (?) according to Ashkenazim , or a dalet (?) according to Sephardim . There are various customs regarding winding the strap on the arm and hand . In fact , the arm strap is looped for counter @-@ clockwise wrapping with Ashkenazi tefillin while it is knotted for clockwise wrapping with Sephardic and Chabad tefillin . On removing the tefillin , the steps are reversed .

= = Biblical passages = =