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# Questions & Answers on the Laws of Tefillin



## The Halachos of Tefillin

Questions & Answers on the Laws of Tefillin

*Rabbi Dovid Nissan Bressman*

Tishrei 5782

לעילוי נשמת  
גיטל בת חיים



Dedicated in honor of our beloved grandfather & grandmother, Nat Jacoby (*Nason ben Moshe*) who passed away on Rosh Chodesh Iyar 5769 & Eleanor Jacoby (*Elka bas Yehudah*) who passed away on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Elul 5776. May their *neshamos* have an Aliyah.



## Introduction

This question-and-answer booklet on the laws of tefillin is the first installment towards a new sefer which will G-d willing come out in the near future.

The booklet is arranged according to the sections of the laws of tefillin as they are found in the Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim sections 25-45.

This booklet comes in continuation to my other two books, “Mezuzah: Divine Protection and Blessing” and “Sefer Torah: Divine Protection and Unity”. As a Rabbi and Sofer/Magiah (ordained writer and checker of *STa”M*) I have gained great expertise in this field and see first-hand the various questions that arise on these intricate topics. In addition to all the research required to gather the halachos in a proper way, I have expertise and much personal experience in this specific field, as our Sages tell us, “There is no wise person like one who has experience.”<sup>1</sup>

The questions and answers section in this book provide halachic sources, however it should be noted that as stressed in the sources, the main focus is on Chabad practice.

A special thanks to my son Levy Yitzchak for reviewing this work and adding helpful comments. This work was inspired in honor of his bar mitzvah, which falls on 29<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei 5782. It is my hope that he will continue to help me on other Halachic books. Also, a special thanks to my niece, Chaya Trapedo for her typography help and expertise.

As carefully and thoroughly as this sefer delves into the Halacha, even the smallest differences in any given scenario could change

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<sup>1</sup> See the *Rosh to Bava Kama (4:4)* who explains that the Halacha we follow is Rav by forbidden matters and Shmuel for monetary matters because each one was primarily involved and expert in their specific field; therefore, each one understood the intricacies of their respective discipline the best, which is why the Halacha follows them.

the outcome of the law.<sup>2</sup> And, as Dovid Hamelech reminds us, "Mistakes, who can discern? Cleanse me from unperceived faults" (*Tehillim 19:13*). If the reader finds something that needs to be fixed, please contact me.

Moreover, one should not act or *pasken* on one's own without consulting with a Rabbi who is expert in this field, unless the matter is well understood, transparent, and straightforward. One of the goals of this sefer is to educate the general public in order to know when to ask for a halachic ruling.<sup>3</sup> Finally, all translations in this sefer are a free translation of my own.

For dedications to the upcoming sefer or any corrections, comments or questions on this work, please email: [rabbibressman@gmail.com](mailto:rabbibressman@gmail.com)

We want Moshiach now!

Rabbi Dovid Nissan Bressman

*Tishrei 5782*

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<sup>2</sup> See *Igros Moshe (Yoreh Deah 4:38)* where R. Moshe Feinstein explains that halachic rulings published in his books were written to a specific questioner, and were not intended as a blanket ruling for everyone, since a minute detail changes the entire case and the potential ruling. Additionally, in his writings he provides the reasons for his *psak* so it may be evaluated. Therefore, in writing a book which is a condensed gathering of halachic rulings from the Poskim, and which does not go into the reasoning, one must be cautious.

<sup>3</sup> See *Shulchan Aruch HaRav (Hilchos Shchita Chapter 1, Kuntres Achron 8)* who writes "that in our generation it is best that every *Shochet* (and *Bodek*) should ask their cases of doubt from a *Chacham* that *Paskens* and not to *pasken* for oneself from *Sefarim* that gather up these laws."

## Questions & Answers

### Section 27:

**Does the knot of the tefillin shel yad (arm pair) need to touch against the bayis (box) even when the tefillin are not being worn?**

The Shulchan Aruch states, the yud shaped knot needs to touch against the bayis when one is donning and wearing the tefillin.<sup>4</sup> The Sharei Teshuva<sup>5</sup> adds, the yud knot should also touch against the bayis even when they are not being worn. For this reason, people use a protective tefillin case that is cut out, so the yud knot can constantly touch the bayis.

However, it is noteworthy to mention that the Rebbe Rashab and the Rebbe Rayatz protective tefillin cases were not cut out in a special way, thus the yud shaped knot could not of touched the tefillin when it was not being worn. During their davening, the protective case was removed.<sup>6</sup>

**How does one put on tefillin when they have an arm cast?**

The tefillin need to be placed directly on the skin without any chatzita (intervening substance).<sup>7</sup> For the tefillin is similar to the garments of the Kohen, just like the garments of the Kohen need to be on the flesh of the kohen, so too does the tefillin need to be on the skin of the one who wears them.

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<sup>4</sup> See Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazaken 27:4, "One should be careful that the yud knot [of the arm] should not become separated from the [box of the] tefillin for the reason explained in the Zohar." Our custom is to ensure the yud is touching specifically against the bayis, and not merely the titura (the base of the tefillin).

<sup>5</sup> 27:4.

<sup>6</sup> See Igros Kodesh vol. 12 page 433.

<sup>7</sup> Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 27:4).

A cast is considered a chatzitza to the tefillin placement, however the additional coils of retzua that go around the forearm are not essential to if one recites a blessing over the tefillin.

*Full arm casts* which cover the bicep, constitute a chatzitza (intervention) to the tefillin placement. Tefillin should be placed and wrapped on top of the cast. One should cover the tefillin with the jacket sleeve so no one will see that the tefillin is on top of the cast. In such a case, no blessing is recited. However, when placing the tefillin shel rosh, according to Ashkanaz custom, one recites both blessings על מצות תפילין and להניח תפילין. According to Sefardim and Chabad custom, one recites only the blessing of “ על תפילין מצות.”<sup>8</sup>

*Short arm casts* which do not reach the bicep, tefillin should be placed as regular and the retzuos are wrapped on top of the cast. A blessing is recited as regular.

### **What height should the tefillin shel rosh be on a person's head? Did one still fulfill the mitzvah if the tefillin are placed too low?**

The place of the head tefillin (which is the forwardmost edge of the titura) should be positioned above the original hairline of the forehead and it extends back until the area in which the cranium covering the brain of a baby is soft.<sup>9</sup> If the tefillin descends even a little on the forehead beyond the original hairline, most poskim hold that one did not fulfill the mitzvah.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazaken 26:5, “The minhag in these lands is like the first view [to recite one the blessing of על מצות תפילין].”

<sup>9</sup> Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 27:9); Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazaken 27:14. The Talmud (Menachos 35b) derives that the shel rosh needs to be placed high up on the head where a bald patch could be made, thus it is forbidden to be placed on the forehead.

<sup>10</sup> See Mishna Berurah 27:33. Some individuals error to wear their tefillin descending lower than the original hairline since they think that the Lubavitcher Rebbe was not careful in this matter. The following is a letter the Lubavitcher Rebbe wrote to Mr. Dov Lent dated 28th of Tammuz, 5722 [July 30, 1962]. “The location of the Tefillin on the head is, of course, explicitly given in the Shulchan Aruch. If you have noticed that a certain person seems to have placed the Tefillin



The *Daas Kedoshim* learns merit *bidiaved* (post facto) for those whose titura (tefillin base) of the tefillin droop lower on the forehead than the correct location, provided that the bayis of the tefillin still is by the original hairline.<sup>11</sup>

However, certainly one should be scrupulous in this law that the tefillin are always placed on the correct location of the head.

**How important is it that the shel rosh tefillin should be exactly centered on the head in between the eyes? Can I rely on myself that the tefillin are centered correctly without using a mirror?**

The *Shulchan Aruch*<sup>12</sup> states, we need to adjust the head tefillin to be centered in between our eyes in order to fulfill the biblical verse<sup>13</sup> “and they shall be a “totafos” (tefillin) between your eyes”.

The *Alter Rebbe* in his *Piskei Hasiddur* writes that the head tefillin should be “mamesh” (literally) centered on the head in between the eyes.

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lower than the original hairline, it is undoubtedly because the hair of that person had receded, and from a distance it would have been difficult for you to determine actually where the original hairline was. On the other hand, it is also possible that at that particular time the Shel-Rosh had slipped unknowingly to the person, although he usually frequently checks the position with his hand as required by the Din.”

<sup>11</sup> Daas Kedoshim 27:2. The Daas Kedoshim also attempted to learn merit for those whom part of their tefillin bayis (box) droop lower than the original hairline as long as majority of the tefillin bayis is placed by the original hairline. However, in a later printed work called *Ashel Avraham* (also written by the *Daas Kedoshim*) he retracted from the latter post facto leniency and only was lenient about the titura.

<sup>12</sup> Orach Chyaim 27:10.

<sup>13</sup> Devarim 6:8.

The Alter Rebbe adds the word "mamesh" to this halacha. Indeed, we find that the Alter Rebbe used some type of polished metal plate to act as a mirror to inspect that his head tefillin were centered.<sup>14</sup>

Accordingly, it's much more advisable to use a mirror or to ask a fellow if the head tefillin are centered correctly than to rely on oneself. Indeed, we find that an individual asked the Rebbe<sup>15</sup> that he does not feel that he can center the head tefillin properly, the Rebbe wrote back that he should ask someone nearby to assist him, and one may certainly rely on that person.

However, the *Divrei Chayim* holds that one may rely on oneself to center the shel rosh tefillin and there is no need to use a mirror or ask a fellow for assistance since there is anyways enough space to fit two very small tefillin's on the head. Therefore, even if the tefillin is not perfectly centered, the tefillin will still be in the general area that it is supposed to be.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, one of the reasons of leniency by the above acronym stems because they do not require large tefillin, as we find by the *Mishna Berura*<sup>17</sup> who states that one shouldn't use large tefillin boxes, because it will be hard to adjust it correctly on one's head in between one's eyes.

From here we see that in addition to what the Alter Rebbe says that the head tefillin should be "mamesh" on our head in between our eyes, (and the same applies to someone who wears smaller

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<sup>14</sup> See *Sichos Kodesh* 5720 p. 148. See also *Piskei Teshuvos* (R. Simcha Rabinowitz) 27:18 footnote 169.

<sup>15</sup> *Igros Kodesh* vol. 14 p. 364.

<sup>16</sup> *Divrei Chaim* (*Orach Chayim* 2:6). See however, the *Sefer Ois Chaim* 27:12 (*Munkatch*) who questions the view of the *Divrei Chaim*. The author points out that the *Divrei Chaim* was strictly opposed for men to use mirrors (see *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah* 156:2 & 182:6) and therefore even for the purpose of a mitzvah he did not allow its usage.

<sup>17</sup> *Mishna Berurah* 27:36.

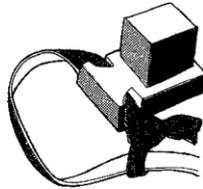
tefillin compartments), those who wear big tefillin which are 4x4 have no room to spare for the tefillin to sway. Therefore, extra precaution should be made to assure that the tefillin are centered on the head in exactly between the eyes.

## Section 28:

### **Should one open the yud knot of the tefillin shel yad (of a Chabad pair) while taking it off?**

One of the tekanos (enactments) of the Alter Rebbe was that the tefillin knot of the arm should be able to open and close like a slip knot.<sup>18</sup>

Some say that the Lubavitcher Rebbe would open the knot after taking off his tefillin, and then reclose it when reciting the bracha. However, others maintain that the Rebbe did not do this, since the Rebbe's father did not have this practice. They add that the Rebbe quoted his father that by closing the open tefillin knot, there's a concern of interrupting between the bracha and the tying.<sup>19</sup>



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<sup>18</sup> See Beis Rebbe (chapter 12) and Ketzos Hashulchan 8:8.

<sup>19</sup> See Shevach Yakar chapter 3 footnote 9.

A note from the author: Halacha mandates that the tefillin retzuah needs to always maintain a minimal width of 1 centimeter. If one were to keep the slip knot closed at all times, it could cause by some retzuos that the width could get crunched to the smaller than minimal requirement. This would be unacceptable to any opinion. It is worthy to mention that the Rebbe's retzuos were exceedingly wide (18 mm.), so that even if indeed the rumor is true that he would not open his shel yad knot after taking it off, it would anyways stay the minimal amount of width at all times. However, for those who have thinner retzuos (15 mm. or 13 mm.), there is a potential concern that if the shel yad knot is consistently pinched closed, it will cause the retzuah to be below the minimal width of 1 centimeter.

**Should a bar mitzvah boy who has a small arm also be purchasing and wearing the large Chabad 4x4 cm. batim (boxes) for his bar mitzvah which might not fit properly in its halachic required location on the arm?**

The widespread custom by *anash* is that even small bar mitzvah boys wear the 4x4 cm. tefillin batim. However, some Chabad Rabbanim are nonetheless opposed to this practice. A potential solution is to have the titura (base of the tefillin) specially customized to be made smaller, however the batim themselves will still be 4x4 cm.<sup>20</sup> In an extreme case, one should consult with a Rav.

### Section 32:

**What does it mean when they say that the tefillin are “prudos legamri” (completely separated compartments)? Is this a stringency or an absolute halachic requirement?**

The tefillin shel rosh needs to be four separate compartments. If there is any glue in between the compartments, according to the Alter Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek, the four compartments are now considered one large connected compartment, and therefore invalid.<sup>21</sup> This means, that despite that the form of the shel rosh needs to be completely squared and uniform together, no glue whatsoever can assist in keeping the four compartments together.

The Mishna Berurah<sup>22</sup> prefers that in order to ensure that the four compartments stay square and uniformed, one should place a

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<sup>20</sup> See Asif Minhagim Vihanhagos (Magal Hachayim) page 266.

<sup>21</sup> Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazaken 32:61 &71; Siddur Admur Hazaken; Shu”t Tzemach Tzedek (Orach Chayim siman 8). According to the Alter Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek, the four tefillin compartments of the shel rosh need to be separated one from the other completely until the very bottom. Therefore, one takes a thread and passes them through the batim until the base of the tefillin, to check that they are completely separated.

<sup>22</sup> Biur Halacha 32:40 “charitz shebein bayis”.

little glue on the bottom of the four compartments, and try to ensure that the glue does not rise. Accordingly, one can rely that one can see the shape of the four compartments and that is enough.

With the help of today's high-pressured presses, many batim makers can ensure perfectly squared tefillin without the usage of any glue in between the compartments.

**The Sofer told me that the tefillin shel yad is high quality, however the parchment is composed of two parchments that are glued together. Is this considered less mehudar (beautification of the mitzvah)?**

It is best that the parsha shel yad be one single intact parchment. Below that but still initially kosher is if the parchment is glued together.<sup>23</sup> The glue for the parchment needs to be made from kosher animal ingredients. However even if the glue was only from kosher synthetic materials this would suffice.<sup>24</sup>

**Is there a halachic preference that the titura (tefillin base) should be hermetically closed or just sewn together?**

The halacha L'Moshe m'Sinai is that the titura should be sewn closed by giddim (sinew) that come from a kosher animal.<sup>25</sup> There is a debate among the poskim if one may add glue after the titura was already closed together.

Some poskim hold that after the titura was sewn closed together, glue may be added to provide a hermetic sealing.<sup>26</sup> Other poskim

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<sup>23</sup> See Keses Hasofer 20:1 and Biur Hasofer (from Mishnas Hasofer) ibid, "vihaminhag Lidavkam".

<sup>24</sup> Mishnas Hasofer 20:3.

<sup>25</sup> Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 32:51). The Biur Halacha ibid writes that he heard that one may not place glue to close the titura before the titura is sewn. It is implied, that the Biur Halacha would approve of adding glue after the titura was properly sewn closed.

<sup>26</sup> So is implied from the Biur Halacha (mentioned in the previous footnote).

are concerned to add glue, since thereby, the closing is not accomplished solely by sewn giddim.<sup>27</sup>

An authority holds that one may initially be lenient to use glue if it is placed on only a minority of the surface of the titura.<sup>28</sup>

The custom today is to be lenient like the first view to allow glue, in particular since this can keep the titura more squared and not lose its squareness with time.<sup>29</sup> However, one who chooses to be stringent has room to do so. It is worth noting, that the Lubavitcher Rebbe's tefillin were never hermetically closed with glue.

### **What is the reason why hairs protrude from the tefillin shel rosh? And how long should they protrude?**

The hairs come from the tail of a calf; they are to remind us of our sin of the golden calf.<sup>30</sup> The protruding hairs are wrapped around the last parchment of "vahaya im shamo".<sup>31</sup>

The protruding hairs should not reach the size of a seora (barley corn).<sup>32</sup> The Zohar explains the reason we do this, is so that the sitra achra (the other negatively spiritual side) does not make accusations against us.

There is a debate as to the size of a seora. Practically the hairs should not protrude more than 9 mm., since according to Rav Avraham Chayim Naeh 9 mm. is the size of a seora.

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<sup>27</sup> Igros Chazon Ish siman 189; see also Chazon Ish 11:10. See also Teshuvos Vehanhagos 4:8.

<sup>28</sup> Shu"t Even Yisrael 8:3.

<sup>29</sup> See Piskei Teshuvos 32:77.

<sup>30</sup> Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 32:44) quoting the Zohar.

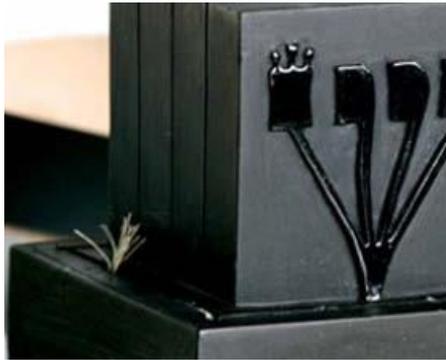
<sup>31</sup> Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazaken 32:69. Mishna Berurah 32:212.

<sup>32</sup> See Shulchan Aruch Admur hazaken 32:69.

## **The hairs that need to protrude from the tefillin shel rosh fell off, is the tefillin still kosher?**

The shel rosh is still kosher even if the hairs do not protrude. However, initially the hairs should protrude. Therefore, one should have the tefillin opened so that the hairs can be replaced and be made visible.<sup>33</sup>

It is noteworthy to mention, that sometimes the hairs did not fall off but rather got pushed inwards. Sometimes with tweezers the hairs can be taken out again.



### **Section 33:**

**I need to blacken certain portions of my tefillin retzuah (strap) and I do not have the special black tefillin marker/paint. May I use a regular black permanent marker to blacken my retzuos?**

Initially one should only blacken their retzuos with special made tefillin marker/paint which is made from kosher ingredients in a special method. These paints are also made lishma (for the sake of the mitzvah).<sup>34</sup> In a pressing need one may blacken the retzuah with a regular black marker, provided that the color is a true black color and that it does not possess non-kosher ingredients. One

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<sup>33</sup> See Shu"t Shavet Halevi 4:1.

<sup>34</sup> See Mishnas Hasofer 3:3, Biur Hasofer "Ein Tzarich Oisa Lishma"; Piskei Teshuvos 32:4.

way to ascertain that the blackness is a true black color is to check it in natural sun light. However, according to the letter of the law, if people call the color 'black' this is enough.<sup>35</sup>



### **Is it a better hiddur (beautification) of the mitzvah that the retzuos be black on both sides?**

According to the letter of the law, only the outer surface of the retzuos need to be black, whereas the inner surface can be any color one prefers except for red.<sup>36</sup>

According to the Keses Hasofer<sup>37</sup> the sides of the straps should also be black since they are also considered the "outer surface" of the retzuos.

Double black retzuos are automatically black on their sides. The Rambam<sup>38</sup> writes that the backs of the retzuos should also be black just like how the battim of the tefillin are black. The Beis Yosef and Darchei Moshe write that the custom does not follow the Rambam in this matter.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Daas Kedoshim & Mikdash Me'at 33:10.

<sup>36</sup> See *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazaken* 33:4, "It is a halacha l'Moshe m'Sinai that the outer surface of the retzuos should be black. However, the inner surface [of the straps] one can have them any color they prefer except for red, for this color is disrespectful, so that people should not say that they were reddened from the blood of the wearer's scabs..."

<sup>37</sup> Keses Hasofer 23:2; Lishkas Hasofer *ibid*:2.

<sup>38</sup> Hilchos Tefillin 3:14.

<sup>39</sup> See Mishna Berurah 33:21.

Nonetheless, the main potential advantage of double black retzuos is that since they are dyed black on all sides, they usually are protected from discoloring and therefore stay kosher color with little to no maintenance necessary.<sup>40</sup>

### **My tefillin knots are not tied according to minhag Chabad, may I switch them to minhag Chabad?**

If one chooses to switch them to Chabad custom and they will stay that way permanently, then this is a proper thing to do.<sup>41</sup> In any event, the knot of both pairs, both the Rashi and Rebeinu Tam pairs need to be done according to the same custom.<sup>42</sup>

### **Section 34:**

### **I think that I might have mixed up my Rashi tefillin with my Rebeinu Tam tefillin. Do I still fulfill the mitzvah if they are mixed up?**

You should immediately ascertain which is the Rashi pair, and which is the Rebeinu Tam pair. The blessing of putting on tefillin is recited only on the Rashi tefillin, just that one intends with the blessing to cover Rebeinu Tam tefillin as well.<sup>43</sup>

It should be easy to ascertain between the shel rosh of the Rashi and Rebeinu Tam pair, since the Rashi tefillin the hairs protrude from the first compartment on the right (for one who is wearing them) and by Rebeinu Tam tefillin the hairs protrude from the middle width of the tefillin. The shel yad there is no external way to ascertain the difference between Rashi and Rebeinu Tam.

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<sup>40</sup> A note from the author: I have noticed that the back side of some of the 'double black retzuos' are not a true black, rather black-blue color. Such a black-blue or black-green color on the back side of the retzuah is not a hiddur mitzvah at all.

<sup>41</sup> Igros Kodesh vol. 18 pg. 539.

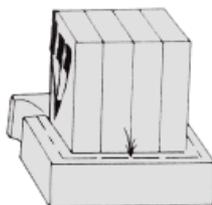
<sup>42</sup> Lekutei Sichos vol. 39 pg. 244.

<sup>43</sup> Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazaken (Orach Chayim 34:5).

It is recommended to make a siman (sign) in the retzuos of Rashi and Rebeinu Tam tefillin. For example, one can have double black retzuos for one pair and regular black and brown retzuos for the other pair. Alternatively, one can cut the end tip of the retzuos in a special way so as not to forget which is each pair.



Tefillin of Rashi  
תפילין של רש"י



Tefillin of Rabbeinu Tam  
תפילין של רבינו תם

### **I mistakenly put on Rebeinu Tam tefillin before putting on Rashi tefillin. What should I do?**

If one realized the mistake before making an interruption, even by saying words of davening, one should take off the Rebeinu Tam tefillin, and place the Rashi pair without the need to recite a new blessing.<sup>44</sup>

If, however, one already made an interruption, one should take off the Rebeinu Tam tefillin and place the Rashi pair and say a new bracha. If possible, one should also try to use the restroom before putting on Rashi tefillin.<sup>45</sup> Alternatively, one should make an

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<sup>44</sup> See Shut Chayim Sheol 1:1; Shut Minchas Elazar 1:25. If both pairs of tefillin were in front of the person when he recited the blessing on the Rebeinu Tam pair and there was no interruption, no new blessing needs to be recited on the Rashi pair.

<sup>45</sup> This is in order to satisfy the more stringent view who holds davening is not considered an interruption. A note from the author: This is the instruction I have received from some Moreh Horah.

effort to hear someone who needs to recite the blessing of the tefillin and answer amen.<sup>46</sup>

Afterwards, one should daven the remaining parts of davening with the Rashi pair. At the least, one should recite the Shema with the Rashi pair. One should then put on Rebeinu Tam tefillin again and recite the customary prayers.

**I heard that there is a growing number of chassidim starting to put on four pairs of tefillin daily. That is, in addition to Rashi and Rebbeinu Tam tefillin, they also put on Shimusha Rabba and Ra'avad as well. Is this something I should consider in doing?**

There are indeed a select few chassidim who don four pairs of tefillin, however the Lubavitcher Rebbe emphasized that this practice (which was also his personal practice) is not an instruction for the general public. The holiness of the latter pairs of tefillin is very great and they require that the body that wears them is very pure, including one is very controlling his inner thoughts that they stay very pure.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, this is not allowed except for a select few outstandingly pious individuals.

### **Section 39:**

**What are the qualifications I should look for in choosing a Sofer (scribe) to write my tefillin parshiyos?**

Firstly, if an individual who writes or sells tefillin is “Muchzak b’kashrus” (has an ascertainable strong kosher reputation), and says that the tefillin are written by a kosher reputable sofer, one may rely upon his word.<sup>48</sup>

A sofer needs to be an expert in his work in the writing and spelling and all the halachos. His writing should be kosher and

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<sup>46</sup> Shut Bitzeil Hachochma 4:81.

<sup>47</sup> See Lekutei Sichos vol. 2 pg. 507.

<sup>48</sup> Magen Avraham 39:13.

mehudar according to halacha. In addition, and no less important is that the sofer should be a great yiras shamayim (G-d fearing individual). Hashem's holy name is mentioned in the tefillin 21 times,<sup>49</sup> therefore one should be particular to purchase tefillin from G-d fearing individuals. The kashrus and holiness of the tefillin are dependent on the yiras shamayim of the individual who wrote and made this pair of tefillin.<sup>50</sup> The Lubavitcher Rebbe instructed a sofer that he should learn chassidus, and especially on the days that he is writing STa" M (Sefer Torah, tefillin and mezuzos).<sup>51</sup>

### **Is it permissible for a sofer to write tefillin parshiyos with anything other than a kolmus shel notzah (feather from a kosher bird)?**

According to the letter of the law, all writing equipment are valid to write tefillin parshiyos. However, metal (in particular iron) is discouraged.<sup>52</sup> Plastic and other materials are therefore not invalid to write with.

However, the long-standing minhag (custom) is to write specifically with a notzah (a feather from a kosher bird), while some Sefardic sofrim specifically have the minhag to write with a reed pen.<sup>53</sup>

It is told over that the Lubavitcher Rebbe instructed the sofer Rabbi Eliezer Zirkind, who had occasionally written with a golden tip kolmos (writing instrument), that a sofer should not change

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<sup>49</sup> See Menachos 36b.

<sup>50</sup> See Igros Kodesh vol. 22 pg. 153.

<sup>51</sup> Igros Kodesh vol. 17 pg. 176.

<sup>52</sup> See Aruch Hashulchan (Yoreh Deah 271:38). See also Rema (Even Haezer 125:4).

There are three main reasons why one should avoid writing with metal, 1) metal is made to make swords, which is intended to shorten the life of man. 2) Metal pens can likely pierce a hole in the parchment. 3) Metal pens can engrave the parchment during the writing.

<sup>53</sup> See Taanis 20a "... the reed merited that a *kolmos* is taken from it to write with it a Torah scroll, the Prophets, and the Writings."

from the minhag Yisroel of writing with a notzah (feather from a kosher bird).

Certainly, one who wants to follow in the directives of the Rebbe should insist that the writing should only be from a kosher feather.<sup>54</sup>

**My tefillin need to be checked, the ksav (script) is Admur Hazaken, can I bring it to any magiah (sta"m checker) to check them?**

The ksav of Admur Hazaken has a very unique style of tzuros haosiyos (letter shapes). Therefore, one should only get the tefillin checked by a magiah who is an expert in this ksav.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, a magiah who is not well versed in ksav Admur Hazaken could possibly make corrections in the parshiyos which could lower their quality.

**Section 40:**

**I dropped my tefillin, what do I need to do as a tikkun (spiritual fixing)?**

If the tefillin fell on the floor directly out of one's hands while in their protective casing, one would not need to fast. However, it is still customary to give some money to tzedakah.<sup>56</sup>

If the tefillin fell on the floor directly from one's hand, without their protective case, one should fast [for a full day].<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Note from the author: A buyer should not assume that the tefillin parshiyos are written with a kosher feather, rather this matter one should ascertain beforehand.

<sup>55</sup> See the letter from Rav Yosef Yitzchak Belinov, which is printed in Ksav Chabad pg. 73.

<sup>56</sup> Mishna Berurah 40:3 quotes in the name of the Eliah Rabbah that when tefillin fell in their protective case on the ground one should give a perutah (small coin) to tzedakah. It is worth mentioning that the Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazaken does not mention a scenario when tefillin fell on the ground in their protective case.

<sup>57</sup> Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazaken (Orach Chayim 44:2).

However, people who are sick or weak, do not need to fast, rather they can redeem the fast with tzedakah.<sup>58</sup>

Additionally, today, since our generation is physically weak in comparison to previous generations, and fasting will cause people to not daven and learn Torah properly, the custom is not to fast a full day but just a half day and redeem the remainder of the fast with tzedakah. The amount should be the value of the meals one would have planned to eat.<sup>59</sup>

One should also check that the tefillin battim to ensure that they did not get damaged. Finally, one should increase in extra study of tefillin, either as discussed in halacha or chassidus.<sup>60</sup>

### **May one eat or drink something while wearing tefillin?**

One may not eat a set meal while wearing tefillin, lest they get drunk and act inappropriately while wearing tefillin. However, it is permissible to eat or drink in a non-set fashion.<sup>61</sup> The definition of non-set eating is bread smaller than the size of an egg, or a drink smaller than the size of an egg. Fruits are also considered non set eating and therefore permissible to eat while wearing tefillin.<sup>62</sup>



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<sup>58</sup> Chaim Sheol 1:12.

<sup>59</sup> Chaim Sheol (ibid) writes in regard to a Torah scholar that they should be careful for fasting a full day since this will detrimentally affect their prayer and study of that day.

<sup>60</sup> See Lekutei Sichos vol. 21 pages 358-359 in regard to one who forgot to put on Rebeinu Tam tefillin.

<sup>61</sup> Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazaken (Orach Chayim 40:11).

<sup>62</sup> Ketzos Hashulchan 8:15.



