



PO Box 1076 Jerusalem 91009 \* Tel. 972-2-628-4101

# Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

## On the Air with Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

Rav Aviner answers questions of Jewish Law and faith on the radio in Israel on Tuesday & Thursday nights (To listen: [www.kimizion.org/shiur/shut.html](http://www.kimizion.org/shiur/shut.html)). On the Air presents a sample each week.

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Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Friedfertig

[RavAviner-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:RavAviner-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

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### Shut Tefillin – Questions about Tefillin

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#### Tefillin of Rabbenu Tam

Q: Should one put on both Rashi Tefillin and Rabbenu Tam Tefillin every day (the four Torah portions which mention the mitzvah of Tefillin and are inside the boxes are placed in different orders according to these opinions)?

A: No, the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 34:2) writes that only one who is known for his great piety should put on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin. If one is not known for his piety and puts them on, it is called "yuhara" – religious arrogance. I have seen many great Rabbis who only put on Rashi Tefillin. The Vilna Gaon also only put on Rashi Tefillin. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin asked his teacher, the Vilna Gaon: "Perhaps I should put on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin?"

I am not asking for Ha-Rav since you wear Tefillin all day long and if you put on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin, it would take away from the mitzvah of wearing Rashi Tefillin which is the main mitzvah. But I do not wear Tefillin all day, so perhaps it would be worthwhile for me to put on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin at a time when I would not be wearing Tefillin anyway." The Vilna Gaon said: "Why are you asking specifically about Rabbenu Tam Tefillin? There are sixty-four different opinions on the proper way to make Tefillin. Are you going to put on sixty-four different pairs?!" Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin said: "But Rabbenu Tam Tefillin is special and perhaps they will ask me in the World to Come: why didn't you put them on?" The Vilna Gaon responded: "We do not fulfill mitzvot for the sake of the World to Come, we fulfill mitzvot for the sake of servicing Hashem." As we said, the Shulchan Aruch says that only those who are known for outstanding piety should put them on. There are communities in which everyone puts them on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin, such as the Chabad community. In such a case, there is no issue of "yuhara," since everyone is wearing them. Most places, however, only put on Rashi Tefillin (In the book "Michtavei Ha-Rav Chafetz Chaim, p. 27, the son of the Chafetz Chaim says that the reason his father put on both Rashi and Rabbenu Tam Tefillin was not because he had lived among Chasidim during the First World War and wished to act as they did, but because of the tractate of the Jerusalem Talmud that had "been discovered" which mentioned Rabbenu Tam's position. When it later became known that this tractate of the Jerusalem Talmud was a forgery, he continued to put on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin since he had already begun to do so. And see Shut Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 4:9, for Rav Moshe Feinstein's response to the Lubavitcher Rebbe as to why he did not put on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin).

[M.F. – When Maran (our revered teacher) Ha-Rav Kook was engaged to the daughter of the Aderet – the Rav of Mir, the Aderet sent a package to Rav Kook at the Volozhin Yeshiva before Purim. It contained three pairs of Tefillin: Rashi Tefillin, Rabbenu Tam Tefillin and a small pair of Rashi Tefillin which Rav Kook could inconspicuously wear all day as was his custom (Le-Sheloshah Be-Elul vol. 1, p. 32 and Tal Ha-Re'iyah, p. 58. Rav Aviner mentions in Shut She'eilat Shlomo 3:33 how Maran Ha-Rav Kook wore the Tefillin under his hat and shirt during the course of the day. Regarding this issue, in the book "Penini Ha-Rav, p.22–23, Rav Hershel Schachter writes that Rav Soloveitchik's brother, Ha-Rav Shmuel, said that Reb Chaim Brisker did not like this custom of Rav Kook, but Rav Kook was closer to the other Rosh Yeshiva, the Netziv, who approved of it).

Q: I once asked Rav Aviner: Did our Rabbi, Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook, put on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin like Maran Ha-Rav Kook?

A: No.

Q: Does Ha-Rav?

A: No.

Q: Why not?

A: "Yehirut" (religious arrogance).]

#### Rabbenu Tam Tefillin by accident

Q: If someone accidentally says the blessing for Tefillin and puts on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin instead of Rashi Tefillin, does he have to say another blessing when putting on the Rashi Tefillin?

A: Yes, he must say the blessing again because there was "Hesech Ha-Da'at" – he took his mind off of the blessing and also because much time has passed. Even if he put on another pair of Rashi Tefillin, he would have to say another blessing. Furthermore, one does not usually say a blessing on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin because it is stricture and he therefore did not plan for the blessing to apply to the second set of Tefillin. Despite all of this, putting on Tefillin without a blessing is still a mitzvah as we say in Halachah: "A lack of blessing does not impede fulfilling a mitzvah."

#### Tefillin factory in the desert

Q: How could the Jews prepare Tefillin for 600,000 men after receiving the Torah?

A: There are two parts of Tefillin. The boxes and the parashiyot (four sections of the Torah which mention the mitzvah of Tefillin and placed in the boxes). People could have prepared the boxes themselves. While preparing Tefillin is a difficult process today which requires all types of machinery and equipment, it is possible that the Tefillin of that time were much more simple. Some authorities explain that their Tefillin was thin, or more precisely, they were elastic. This would also explain how people wore Tefillin to work, to offer sacrifices, to wage war, etc... In general, there are many areas which require great scientific knowledge today which they were able to do in earlier times, and we do not understand how they did them. Regarding the parashiyot, one certainly requires expertise in order to write them. It is possible that part of the people knew how to write them or the Levi'im knew how to write them. There were 22,000 Levi'im and 600,000 men, so each Levi could have written the text for 30 pairs of Tefillin. Perhaps they could write better and faster than us since we write with a pencil or pen and are not use to writing with a quill and ink. It is possible that since they were accustomed to writing in this way, writing Tefillin and mezuzot for them is like writing a letter for us.

#### A skull that did not wear Tefillin

Q: Why is failing to wear Tefillin so severe that the Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 17a) says: "Who are the sinners of Israel? Rav said: a skull that did not wear Tefillin"? And can someone who did not put on Tefillin rectify it?

A: Some explain that "a skull that did not wear Tefillin" refers to someone who did not wear Tefillin even one time during his lifetime (Rabbenu Chananel *ibid.* and Rif *ibid.* 4a in the pages of the Rif). Others explain that the reason he did not put on Tefillin is because the mitzvah is embarrassing to him. He does not want to put straps and boxes around his head and on his arms (Tosafot *ibid.* and Rosh *ibid.* 1:5). And there are still others who explain that this statement does not only apply to Tefillin but to any mitzvah that is done with one's body, since it is forbidden to shame any mitzvah and it is a disgrace not to fulfill it even one time (Ron *ibid.* in pages of the Rif and Korban Netanel *ibid.* #10). The Tosafot there, however, do mention that if someone did not put on Tefillin, he is able to repent. Everything can be repaired. Nothing stands in the way of repentance even in the case of severe transgressions. The Tosafot say that if he repents, the repentance will hang in the balance until he dies and the suffering of death will complete the process of repentance. There are people who stand in the street and try to get Jews to put on Tefillin even if they will not do so again. The last Lubavitcher Rebbe – Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson – explained that a person should put on Tefillin at least once in his life so he does not have "a skull that did not wear Tefillin" according to the first explanation.

#### Removing Tefillin and erasing Hashem's Name

Q: How is it permissible to remove the Tefillin straps on the hand which we wrap in the form of Hashem's Name – "Shin," "dalet" and "hey" (Shaddai)? Isn't this erasing Hashem's Name which is forbidden?

A: Removing the Tefillin straps is not erasing Hashem's Name since this is not the type of writing which the Torah is discussing. The Torah is discussing Hashem's Name written with ink on paper. The letters formed by the Tefillin straps are similar to letters on blocks. It is permissible to line up three blocks with a "shin," "dalet" and "hey" and take them apart. This applies both on Shabbat when writing and erasing is forbidden and regarding the prohibition of erasing Hashem's Name.

#### A non-Jew putting Tefillin on a Jew

Q: Is it permissible for a non-Jew who takes care of a Jew to help him put on his Tefillin?

A: There are two issues: One needs to put on Tefillin and one needs to have Tefillin on him. The essential matter is to have the Tefillin on him. A non-Jew can therefore help put them

on. If there is a choice, a Jew should certainly put them on his fellow Jew, since he is also obligated in the mitzvah.

#### Tefillin straps and tzitzit on the floor

Q: Is it not a problem that people put the tefillin straps on the floor and slowly wrap them around their hand, or drop the tzitzit of the Talit on the floor and then put it on?

A: One must be careful about this. Therefore, when I unroll the straps, I place them on a table, shtrender or a chair. I keep them close to me so that they do not fall on the ground. Regarding a talit as well, there is no reason for it to fall on the floor. I take out my talit, lift it up and open it so that it does not fall on the floor. A person is not evil if the tzitzit fall on the floor for a second, but one should certainly not treat objects used for a mitzvah in a disgraceful way. The solution is a technical one and is not complicated.