

Q: If I am at an affair, is it permissible to take a cookie in my pocket to eat later?

A: There is a dispute whether the host gives the food to the guest or whether he gives the guest permission to eat it. In practice, if the food is on the communal plate, you cannot take it home, but if it is on your personal plate, you may. Be'er Heitiv, Even Ha-Ezer 28:32.

Placing Items in a Tefillin Bag

Q: Is it permissible to put items, such as a mirror and money for Tzedakah, in a Tefillin bag?

A: It is forbidden to place items in a Tefillin bag unless they are connected to performing the Mitzvah of Tefillin. Therefore, it is permissible to put a mirror in a Tefillin bag but it is forbidden to put in money for Tzedkah. Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach in Halichot Shlomo Chapter 4 #34 (A father who suspected that his son was not putting on Tefillin once asked Ha-Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein whether he could put a chocolate bar in his son's Tefillin bag in order to discover the truth. Is it permissible to place something in the Tefillin bag for the great need of educating his son? Rav Zilberstein answers that it is permissible to place a mirror in one's Tefillin bag since it serves to insure that the Tefillin are resting in their proper place and is therefore essential to the Mitzvah. This is not the case however with a chocolate bar, since it is not part and parcel of the Mitzvah and it is therefore forbidden to place it in there. In the book "Ve-Ha-Arev Na Volume 2 pp. 439-441. And when Ha-Rav Ovadiah Yosef went to serve as a Rabbi in Egypt, there was a so-called "Chief Rabbi". Rav Ovadiah complained to him regarding all sorts of halachic violations which needed to be fixed, such as serving Treif food in the Jewish hospital, to which he responded: "There is no problem". There was a Torah scholar who served in the Rabbinate there, Chacham

Yosef Chason, who told Rav Ovadiah that this "Chief Rabbi" doesn't even put on Tefillin! And how did he know? Every morning the "Chief Rabbi" would close himself in a room with his Talit and Tefillin bag, and come out after a half an hour. Chacham Yosef claimed that all he does in that room is smoke cigarettes and nothing else! Rav Ovadiah took out the Tefillin of the "Chief Rabbi" and replaced them with onions as a test. If he actually put on Tefillin and found onions in his bag, he would scream: "Where are my Tefillin"? No such scream ever occurred... In the book "Sinai Ve-Oker Harim" pp. 97-99. But how did Rav Ovadiah do such a thing, as it is forbidden to put onions in a Tefillin bag? This was an extenuating circumstance of a spiritual life-threatening situation and a desecration of Hashem's Name).

Preparation for Tzahal

Q: What spiritual preparation should I do in anticipation of my army service?

A: Learn Mesilat Yesharim many times. And do so as well when you are in the army.

Waking Up in the Morning

Q: I have a difficult time waking up in the morning. What should I do?

A: Set a radio alarm at a high volume.

Rachel and Lavan's Idols

Q: Why did Rachel save the Terafim instead of destroying them or immediately burying them?

A: She feared that because of Lavan's deep connection to them, he would murder everyone because of them. She therefore left open the opportunity to return them to him in the case of real danger. Gur Aryeh of the Maharal.