
THE WEISS EDITION

ואתחנן

Va'eschanan



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Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



Lightpoints

לזכרון ולעילוי נשמת

הרה"ח הרה"ת הרה"ג ישעיהו זושא

ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה ווילהעלם

נלב"ע ביום ד' שבט התשפ"ב

תנצב"ה



ואתחנן

Va'eschanan

6:5 | ה:ו

וְאַהֲבַתְּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ

*You shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart,
with all your soul and with all your might.*

The Martyr's Shema

Our Sages explain the commandment to “love G-d... with all your soul” to mean, “even if He takes your soul,” i.e., to devote yourself to G-d even at the cost of your life.

The Talmud relates:

When they [the Romans] took Rabbi Akiva out for execution, it was the time for the recitation of Shema. As they combed his flesh with iron combs, he was accepting upon himself the kingship of Heaven [reciting the Shema]. His disciples said to him, “Our teacher, even to this extent?” He replied, “All my days I have been distressed by the verse ‘with all your soul,’ which means ‘even if He takes your soul.’ I said, ‘When

shall I have the opportunity to fulfill this?' Now that I have the opportunity, shall I not fulfill it?"¹

The students of Rabbi Akiva were men of great stature in their own right. Certainly, they were not surprised that the saintly Rabbi Akiva could suppress his physical pain and fulfill the mitzvah of reciting the Shema even during his execution. But the Shema proclaims G-d's Oneness, which means that nothing exists outside of Him: the true identity of all of existence is the will of G-d that is causing it to exist. Rabbi Akiva's students therefore understood that by reciting Shema at that moment, Rabbi Akiva was declaring that he recognized G-d's Oneness even within the torture he was suffering for studying Torah! This caused them to wonder, "Even to this point?" Could Rabbi Akiva identify G-d's singular existence even in this blasphemous attack on G-d and His Torah?

Rabbi Akiva, however, did not view his execution as a challenge to G-d's Oneness. On the contrary, in Rabbi Akiva's eyes, G-d's Oneness in this world meant that even experiences (that were not assisting in his worship of G-d directly) were enhancing his relationship with G-d indirectly—by allowing him to commit to G-d *in spite of them*. In fact, all his life, Rabbi Akiva had yearned to fulfill the mitzvah of dedicating himself to G-d to the point of *ultimate* sacrifice. Now that the Romans were offering him that "opportunity," he found the Oneness of G-d even in their cruelty.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 6, p. 126, fn. 35

1. Berachos 61b.

 6:8 | ח:ו

וְקִשְׁרֹתָם לְאוֹת עַל יָדְךָ וְהָיוּ לְטֶמֶט בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ

You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be a reminder between your eyes.

The Tefillin Line of Attack

Our Sages teach that the mitzvah of *tefillin* frightens away the enemies of the Jewish people. The Talmud declares, “It is written: ‘All the peoples of the earth will see that the name of G-d is called upon you, and they will fear you’²... This refers to the *tefillin* of the head.”³ Even if our enemies do attack, G-d forbid, we are told that the merit of the mitzvah of *tefillin* will give our soldiers remarkable strength in battle: “By fulfilling the mitzvah to wear the *tefillin* [on the arm and on the head], those going to war will see the fulfillment of [Moshe’s blessing to the warriors of Gad,⁴] ‘May he tear off the arm [of his enemy] as well as his head.’”⁵

Interestingly, when saying that the *tefillin* will scare off our enemies before they attack, the Talmud mentions only the *tefillin* of the head.⁶ In contrast, when describing the power of *tefillin* in the event that our enemies *do* attack, the *tefillin* of the arm and head are said to be *individually* effective,

2. Devarim 28:10.

3. Berachos 6a.

4. Devarim 33:20.

5. Rabbeinu Asher, Laws of Tefillin 15.

6. In this context, the function of the *tefillin* of the arm is that it facilitates the donning of the *tefillin* of the head. See Tzafnas Pa’aneach, Hilchos Tefillin 4:4.

helping those at battle “tear off the arm [of the enemy] as well as his head.”

This explains the difference between the way the mitzvah of *tefillin* is related in the Book of Shemos⁷ and in the Book of Devarim.⁸ In Shemos, the Torah describes the *tefillin* of the arm and of the head as two components of one unit: “It shall be to you as a sign upon your hand and a remembrance between your eyes.” In Devarim, however, the Torah states, “You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, *and they shall be* a reminder between your eyes”—distinguishing them as two separate acts and obligations.

The reason for this difference is that in Shemos, the conquest of the Land of Israel was still intended to be led by Moshe, in which case the two *tefillin* together would have had a single effect: the nations would have been afraid to go to war against them. As Bnei Yisrael sang at the Splitting of the Sea, “All the inhabitants of Canaan melted...”⁹ In Devarim, however, Moshe knew that the conquest of the Land would be led by Yehoshua, and would require going to battle. Accordingly, he ascribed to the *tefillin* of the head and the hand two distinct mitzvos and merits.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 9, pp. 55–56

7. Shemos 13:9 and 13:16.

8. Devarim 6:8 and 11:18.

9. Shemos 15:15.

6:8 | ח:ו

וְקִשְׁרֹתֵם לְאוֹת עַל יָדְךָ וְהָיוּ לְטֶמֶת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ

You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be a reminder between your eyes.

Controlling Your Mind and Heart

The Torah commands us to wear *tefillin shel yad* on the arm and *tefillin shel rosh* on the head. The Torah's wording indicates that the mitzvah to wear the *tefillin shel yad* is observed actively—"you shall bind them... upon your arm," whereas the mitzvah to wear *tefillin shel rosh* is observed passively—"they shall be between your eyes" (on your head). This implies that while the observance of the mitzvah of *tefillin shel rosh* is fulfilled continuously, i.e., for as long as the *tefillin* are upon the person's head, the mitzvah of *tefillin shel yad* is defined by, and its fulfillment thus limited to, the singular *act* of binding.

This distinction reflects the two intended effects of *tefillin* on the person wearing them.

The Shulchan Aruch states:

With the donning of *tefillin*, one should contemplate that G-d commanded us... to place the arm *tefillin* near the heart, and the head *tefillin* over the brain... and he shall submit to G-d his soul that is in the brain, and his heart that is the seat of his desires and thoughts.¹⁰

The average person is capable of controlling and determining the ideas that will occupy his mind. In contrast, most

¹⁰. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 25:5.

people are not capable of dictating which desires will occupy their hearts. Granted, they can refrain from *acting* on their impulses, but, with the exception of *tzaddikim*—the perfectly righteous—the average person has limited influence in determining what he or she will desire. As the Tanya explains: “One’s mind is under his control, and with it he can meditate as he pleases, on any subject.... [But] it is not a ‘very near thing’ to change one’s heart from worldly desires to a sincere love of G-d.”¹¹ To constantly feel drawn toward that which is holy, and be repulsed by anything unholy, is not within the average person’s reach.

Accordingly, we can understand why wearing the *tefillin shel yad* close to our hearts is a mitzvah of *action* (we are commanded to *bind* the tefillin upon our arms). Since we cannot determine what our hearts will desire, we have no choice but to *actively* wage war with our negative impulses. The mitzvah of *tefillin shel rosh*, however, is for the tefillin to “be” upon our heads, because its desired effect of the *tefillin shel rosh* is something that we are capable of maintaining. Since we can choose which ideas we will contemplate and which we will not, we can keep our minds consistently and continuously devoted to G-d.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 39, pp. 24–28

¹¹. Chapter 17.

6:9 | ט:ו

וּכְתַבְתֶּם עַל מְזוֹזֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבִשְׁעֶיךָ

You shall inscribe them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates.

Mezuzah: Protecting the Citizens of Israel

Our Sages teach that affixing *mezuzos* to the doorposts of our homes brings security and protection for the house and all its inhabitants.¹² The Zohar¹³ takes this a step further, saying that through the *mezuzah* “G-d will watch your going out and your coming in, from now and to eternity.”¹⁴ The *mezuzah* protects a person not only when he is at home, but even when he is away.¹⁵

Moreover, since all Jews are connected and accountable for one another, one person’s good deeds bring merit to all his fellow Jews as well. As such, one Jew’s observance of the mitzvah of *mezuzah* provides additional safety and security even for others who might not have a *mezuzah* themselves (though they are obviously not exempt from fulfilling this *mitzvah* on their own).

The mitzvah of *mezuzah* and the protection that it provides have particular significance in the Land of Israel, as is evident from the law taught in the Talmud: “One who rents a home outside of Israel is exempt from affixing a *mezuzah*

¹². See Talmud, Avodah Zarah 11a.

¹³. Zohar 3:263b.

¹⁴. Tehillim 121:8.

¹⁵. Zohar 3:263b.

for the first 30 days; from then on, he is obligated. But one who rents a home in the Land of Israel must affix a *mezuzah* immediately, for the sake of *yishuv Eretz Yisrael*, settling the Land of Israel.”¹⁶ (Rashi explains that since it is considered improper for a Jew to remove his *mezuzah* when he leaves his home,¹⁷ the renter will not rush to move out and incur the cost of acquiring new *mezuzos*. Even if he does move out, the home will soon attract another Jewish renter, because it is already equipped with a *mezuzah*.)

This unique law demonstrates that the mitzvah of *mezuzah* is particularly connected to *yishuv Eretz Yisrael*, which in its truest sense means not only dwelling there technically, but also living there in comfort and security.¹⁸

This highlights the importance of ensuring that every Jew has a *mezuzah* on his doorpost. Through this mitzvah, particularly in the Land of Israel, we help create peace and security for ourselves and for the entire Jewish nation.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 13, pp. 212–216

¹⁶. Menachos 44a.

¹⁷. Bava Metzia 102a.

¹⁸. See Vayikra 26:5: “וַיֵּשְׁבֻתֶם לְבִטָּחָה בְּאֶרֶצְכֶם,” you will live securely in your land.”



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