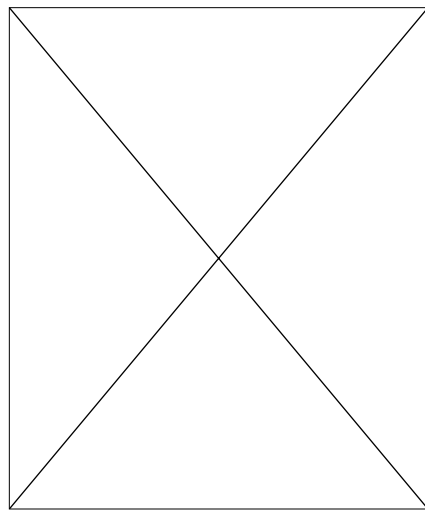


MENACHEM MENDEL & SCHNEUR ZALMAN

*A Guide to a
Chassidic Bar Mitzvah*



*Bar Mitzvah Celebration
of
Menachem Mendel
&
Schneur Zalman
Canterman
25 Elul, 5770*

BAR MITZVAH OF

Dear Family and Friends,

Thank you so much for joining us in our Simcha – the Bar Mitzvah of our dear sons Menachem Mendel and Schneur Zalman. Your presence enhances our celebration.

In Judaism, the Bar Mitzvah marks a most significant moment. Menachem Mendel and Schneur Zalman have reached a milestone in their lives. They are no longer mere boys, tonight they become men! As Barei Mitzvah, they make an eternal commitment to follow the beautiful tradition of our ancestors, to serve the One Above.

In honor of Menachem Mendel and Schneur Zalman's Bar Mitzvah, we are presenting you with a Bar Mitzvah handbook containing information and commentary associated with the celebration. Included are various short stories and helpful insights about the Mitzvah of Tefillin. We hope that you find it interesting and inspiring.

On this momentous occasion, we pray for the imminent redemption through Moshiach. May this take place speedily in our days!

We look forward to sharing many Simchos together.

Rabbi Eliyahu and Chanale Canterman

LETTER FROM THE REBBE

We have included a copy of the letter that the Rebbe would usually send to a Bar Mitzvah boy. In addition, we have included a short talk delivered by the Rebbe explaining the significance of the joy that takes place when a boy becomes Bar Mitzvah.

B"H,
Peace & Blessing!

In response to the notification concerning his entering into the age of Mitzvos, May it be G-d's will that from the age of 13 when he is dutifully responsible in the observance of the Mitzvohs, he should go on to the age of 15 (which is the age of the study of Talmud) etc. according to the ruling of the Mishnah (Avos chapter 5).

May he add diligence and devotion in his study of Torah, both in the study of the Talmud as well as the study of Chassidus, and he should be scrupulous in the fulfillment of Mitzvohs. And G-d should grant him success to be a Chosid, a G-d fearing Jew and a Torah Scholar.

With blessing,

The Rebbe's holy signature

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הרה"ק
ברוקלין, נ.י.

שלום וברכה!

בשעה של הודעתו ע"ך הכבוד בקרב לביל מצות,
הנה יה"ר מהשי"ת אשר נתן שלש עשרה לטובה
יגדל לבן חמש עשרה וכו'. כשעל המצוה (אבות טו"ח)
ויוסיף המצוה ושקדנה בלימודו בתורה בתורת הנבילה
וכן בתורה המסיקתה ויחדו בקיים המצוה, והשי"ת
יגליחהו למצוה הביר ירא טיים ולסדרו.

בברכה
(Handwritten signature)

what is a bar mitzvah?

Bar-Mitzvah literally means “Son of Mitzvah,” which describes the boy now responsible to do all Mitzvot (commandments).

The G-dly soul enters man in its entirety at the age of 13. The boy then attains his religious maturity and becomes responsible to fulfill all Torah commandments.

This occasion is cause for great celebration and gratitude to G-d, and hence the Bar-Mitzvah ceremony. One becomes Bar-Mitzvah automatically on one’s thirteenth birthday, with or without a party!

Among his many new responsibilities, beginning from his Bar-Mitzvah day and onward, he must wrap Tefillin every day of the week besides Shabbat and certain holidays.

The number 13 has the same numerical value as the word Echad — one. This demonstrates that at the age of Bar Mitzvah the boy becomes one with his people, united in their task of making the world an abode for the Divine. This unity is further demonstrated in that the boy may now be counted for a Minyan (quorum).

The number 13 also shares the same numerical value as the word Ahavah — love. It is therefore appropriate that the Bar Mitzvah boy dedicate his first actions toward happily helping another Jew in the spirit of Ahavat Yisrael. This applies to material assistance, such as Tzedakah, as well as helping in a spiritual sense by positively influencing a friend in the performance of good deeds.

Traditionally boys are called up to the Torah on the day of their Bar-Mitzvah (or the Shabbat afterward), reflecting their new status as adult participants in the prayers. In some communities, the boy reads from the Torah and/or chants the Haftorah on the Shabbat after he becomes Bar-Mitzvah.

The Torah reading is not an obligation and does not replace the much more important Mitzvot ushered in on the Bar-Mitzvah day. In fact, some consider the time needed to train a 12 year-old too precious and opt to use the preparation time to teach the young man about many of his upcoming responsibilities and their meaning.



what is a mitzvah?

The idea of 'Mitzvot' is fundamental to the Jewish experience and identity. We all know that Jews perform Mitzvot. But what is a Mitzvah?

Good Deed: In popular usage, to 'do a Mitzvah' is to do a good deed. The operative word is 'deed'. To be a Jew is to be actively involved in doing good things. Good ideas and speech are important, but good deeds must result from our thoughts and words; the action is what counts.

Commandment: Linguistically, 'good deed' is an inaccurate translation of the word 'Mitzvah'. The Hebrew word 'Mitzvah' actually means 'commandment'.

Mitzvot aren't just acts that we deem to be important. They are G-d's instructions for life. So fulfilling a

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Mitzvah is obeying a command. It is an act of obedience to a higher authority: G-d.

Bond: In its deepest sense, Mitzvah means 'connection' or 'bond'. The human spirit has a transcendent dynamic; the soul wants to escape the shallowness of physical life. We want to connect with G-d.

But how? How can a finite creature bond with an infinite G-d?

The answer is 'Do a Mitzvah'.

Each Mitzvah is another bridge to the creator, another connection with the divine. In this sense, Mitzvot are seen as opportunities not just obligations.

As a Bar-Mitzvah, the boy officially enters the 'Mitzvah-system'. As a child, he wasn't a full participant in this system.

He was certainly able to perform good deeds, but he was still missing a crucial part of the Mitzvah concept. He didn't have a true experience of the latter two Mitzvah definitions.

Why?

G-d doesn't expect more than we can deliver.

A child is not yet mature and lacks proper self-control, so it is not surprising when he acts out of line. We want him to perform, but we also understand that he can't be fully expected to behave like an adult. G-ds' commands are real obligations, and a child doesn't have any religious obligations per se. It is only post- Bar Mitzvah that a young man becomes obligated in the Mitzvot. At a Bar Mitzvah, we celebrate the fact that the commandment/bond elements of Mitzvot begin to apply.



the maamar

Mendel and Schneur will celebrate their milestone by reciting a Chassidic discourse – *Ma'amer*, which they memorized word for word. The *ma'amer* traditionally recited at Bar Mitzvah celebrations was written by Rabbi Shmuel Schneerson (1834 – 1882), the fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe. The custom of reciting this *ma'amer* at a Bar Mitzvah celebration was begun by his son, Rabbi Sholom Ber Schneerson, (1860 – 1920), at the occasion of his own Bar Mitzvah celebration, and continued by his son, the “Previous Rebbe”, Rabbi Joseph I. Schneerson (1880 – 1950).

A Maamar is a Chassidic discourse regarding the deep mystical theme of Tefillin. The maamar that Mendel and Schneur will deliver tonight was first delivered by the Rebbe Rashab, the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe at his Bar Mitzvah, and repeated by his son, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, the Previous Rebbe, at his Bar Mitzvah.

In preparation for the maamar, the assembled sing a moving melody, called the Nigun Hachanah. The maamar focuses on the unique spiritual influences aroused by tefillin, explaining that the natural order of the world reveals the supernal middos, G-d's emotional qualities. Emotion has a limit. A person's intellect, by contrast, enables him to expand and reach new horizons. So too, tefillin, which draw down G-d's intellectual faculties, elevate the person and the creation as a whole, to new heights.

a BRIEF synopsis of “ISSA B' MIDRASH TEHILLIM”

Rabbi Elazar says in Midrash Tehillim: The Jewish people said before G-d, “Master of the universe! We would like



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to study Torah by day and by night, but we don't have any time." Hashem replied, "Fulfill the mitzvah of Tefillin and I will consider it as if you have labored in Torah study by day and by night."

It is self-understood that if one thing can substitute another thing, there must obviously be a common denominator which connects both of them. In our case, there must be a connection between the diligent study of the Torah by day and night, and the donning of Tefillin, so that wearing Tefillin can free the Jewish people from the study of Torah.

This can be understood through the following introduction. It is written in Psalms (chap. 147): *Maggid devarav leYaakov chukav umishpatav leYisrael*, which means, that G-d "tells His word to Jacob, His statutes and ordinances to Yisrael." Our sages comment on this verse: There are those who command others to fulfill their wishes, but they don't do so themselves, however that which G-d Himself fulfills, He commands others to fulfill. This is why the verse says "*His* words to Jacob, *His* statutes and *His* ordinances...." The word "His" implies that these are commandments which G-d also fulfills Himself.

We can therefore conclude that since the Jewish people are commanded by G-d to wear Tefillin, G-d Almighty Himself also wears Tefillin. So, each time a Jew dons Tefillin, he causes that G-d dons His Tefillin.

The concept of G-d wearing Tefillin can obviously not be taken literally. We cannot portray G-d who is infinite and indescribable, the same way we would refer to a human being, with a head, arm, feet, limbs, etc. G-d does not possess an arm or head on which to

wrap Tefillin. So, when it is said that G-d wears Tefillin, we are alluding to the *effect* that the wearing of Tefillin by humans achieves.

When a human being puts on his tefillin, he puts them on his arm, close to his heart, and on his head, close to his brain. This forges a union between his intellectual capabilities (represented by the Tefillin on his head) and his emotional attributes (represented by the Tefillin on his arm, near the heart). Similarly, when G-d “puts on” Tefillin, there is a connection made between the G-dly intellectual attributes — so to speak — with His emotional attributes — so to speak.

The difference between “emotional” and “intellectual” capabilities in reference to G-d is similar to the difference between them in human beings. An emotional characteristic is an external display. For example, the performance of an act of kindness — a characteristic — can only be achieved with someone or something else, which is external of oneself. [Just like our father, Abraham, (the epitome of kindness) who was distressed when he didn’t find a passerby with whom to perform acts of kindness]

Intellect, on the other hand, the faculty of the mind, is internal. The intellectual capabilities of a person’s mind are connected to the essence of the person. One may sit and think all day, and not be effected by external surroundings. So, when we refer to a G-dly emotional characteristic, we are referring to an external level of G-dliness. When we refer to a G-dly intellectual characteristic, we are referring to the internal, “essence” of G-d.



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The world in which we exist was created for us by G-d in a physical and limited manner. Everything in our world has its boundary and space. The world was formed this way since it was created through a manifestation of the Divine emotional attributes. As it says in Psalms (chap. 89) *Olam chessed yibaneh*, the world was created with kindness, an emotional characteristic. Should G-d have revealed His intellectual characteristic, i.e. His essence, during creation, the world could not exist in its current physical, finite state.

The Torah, however, is the intellectual manifestation of G-d. Since intellect is the essence of a person, as mentioned above, this means that the Torah would be connected with the essence of G-d. Therefore, when a person existing in this finite world studies and fulfills the Torah, he is able to connect G-d's essence, the Torah, with the world.

Due to lack of time, though, the Jewish people do not have the opportunity to study Torah by day and by night, and cannot achieve this great synthesis and bond between the finite and infinite. Therefore, G-d tells the Jewish people, "fulfill the Mitzvah of Tefillin and I will consider it as if you had labored in Torah study by day and by night." When a Jew puts on Tefillin, G-d is also wearing Tefillin, which also achieves the fusion of G-d's intellectual characteristic (through the "head" Tefillin) and His emotional external characteristic (through the "hand" Tefillin). [This explains why only boys ages 13 and up wear Tefillin, not a "Koton", a young boy. Since Tefillin essentially affect the intellect, the commandment is to wait until the child

has achieved a degree of maturity in his intellect, which occurs at the thirteenth birthday].

It should be understood, though, that the donning of Tefillin doesn't fully achieve the same outcome as the study of Torah. When the Midrash presents the Mitzvah of wearing Tefillin as the G-dly substitute for studying Torah day and night, it employs the word "*keilu*" or it is "as if" you studied Torah. The reason for this is that when a person studies Torah diligently, the effects are felt in this world. The wearing of Tefillin, however, only affects the spiritual source of creation of the world and the person wearing the Tefillin. We must rely upon G-d almighty Himself to cause the lower world, this world, to be effected through the Mitzvah of Tefillin.



*The Significance of the Joy of a Bar Mitzvah Celebration
to all of the Jewish People*

**קטע משיחת כ"ק אדמו"ר בנוגע לבר מצוה
ש"פ ויק"פ, פ' החודש, ה'תשט"ו**

הנחה בלתי מוגה

אויפן פסוק והי' אור הלבנה כאור כחמה ואור החמה יהי' שבעתים
כאור שבעת הימים (בהמאמר נתבאר אודות ענין זה) שטייט אין זוהר אויפן
פסוק צאינה וראינה . . במלך שלמה בעטרה שעטרה לו אמו ביום חתונתו
וביום שמחת לבו, זאגט דער זוהר אַז דאָס איז ביומא דאיכשר למיעבד
מצות, ד.ה. דעם טאָג פון בר מצוה, אַז אין דעם טאָג דאַרף זיין די שמחה
וחדותא אַזוי ווי צו אַ חתונה.

איך ווייס ניט פאַרוואָס דאָס בריינגט זיך ניט אַראָפּ אין שו"ע, אויך
דער שער הכולל וואָס בריינגט אַראָפּ אַ זוהר וועגן בר מצוה, בריינגט ער אַ
אַנדער זוהר וואָס ס'איז פריער מיט אַ פאַר בלעטלאַך, אַז ר"ש בן יוחאי
האָט געמאַכט אַ גרויסע שמחה צום טאָג פון זיין זון'ס בר מצוה, ס'איז

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אָבער פאַראַן נאָך אַ זוהר מיט אַ פאַר בלעטלאַך שפּעטער, וואָס דאַרטן רעדט ער וועגן אַלע אידן, אַז באַ אַלע אידן איז אין דעם טאַג פון בר מצוה דאַרף זיין אַ שמחה אַזוי ווי באַ אַ חתונה.

באַ אַ חתונה דאַרפן דאַך אַלע משמח זיין דעם חתן און זיין שמה, איז אויך באַ אַ בר מצוה, איז דאַך דער חתן אַליין טרוד וועגן דער דרשה מסתמא, אָבער דער גאַנצער עולם דאַרף דאַך זיין שמה, אַז עס קומט צו נאָך אַ איד אויף דער וועלט, וואָס וועט מקיים זיין תומ"צ.

ישראל זיינען דאַך ערבים זה בזה, און בשעת עס קומט צו נאָך אַ עובד, ווערט דאַך גרינגער די אַרבעט אויף די איבעריקע, איז דאַך דאָס אַ חשבון אפי' אין גשמיות מען זאָל זיין בשמחה, מצד דעם וואָס עס קומט צו נאָך אַ עובד וואָס וועט אַרויסהעלפן אין דער אַרבעט.

(להתוועדות היי אחד בר מצוה, וניגנו אַ פריילעכן ניגון).

Free Translation

*(Farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel-Pikudei, 5715
March 19, 1955)*

On the verse (Song of Songs 3:11) "Go forth and gaze ... at King Solomon, at the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, and on the day of the joy of his heart," the *Zohar* (central work of the Kabbalah) explains it to refer to "the day when one becomes qualified to practice the commandments of the Torah, which are the joy of the righteous ... at the age of thirteen. On that day," says the *Zohar*, "it is the duty of the righteous to celebrate with joy of heart just like the day when one enters the wedding canopy." In other words, on the day that one becomes *bar-mitzva*, he should rejoice just as at his wedding.

I don't know why this passage is not quoted in the *Shulchan Aruch* (code of Torah law). The *Shaar Hakolel* (commentary on the prayer book by Rabbi Avraham David Lavut) quotes another passage in the *Zohar*, a few pages further back, that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai

(the Sage of the Talmud whose teachings comprise the *Zohar*), made a great celebration on the day of his son's *bar-mitzva*. The *Zohar* passage quoted above, however, has the advantage of referring not only to Rabbi Shimon's son but to every Jew, that on the day of his *bar-mitzva* he should rejoice just as at his wedding.

At a wedding, **everyone** has a duty to make the bridegroom happy, and to be happy oneself. The same applies to a *bar-mitzva*. Probably, the *bar-mitzva* boy himself is concerned about his speech. But everyone else present should be happy for the additional Jew who has joined the worldwide Jewish community to observe the Torah and its commandments.

Our Sages tell us that all Jews are responsible for each other. Therefore, when another "worker" joins in, the task gets easier for everyone else. This is a reason even on the mundane level for rejoicing at a *bar-mitzva*, because another "worker" has joined us, who will help everyone else in accomplishing our G-d-given task.



BAR MITZVAH – ENTERING ADULTHOOD

By Aron Moss

“**T**his won't be just another party,” we tell ourselves. We spend time and money to make sure the Bar Mitzvah we are hosting will be an event



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that stands apart from the other 40 Simchas being celebrated that week.

But perhaps the greatest challenge is to make the day unforgettable not for the guests but for the real center of attention – the Bar Mitzvah boy. For many, the Bar Mitzvah experience determines their attitude to Judaism. If the event is shallow and pretentious, they will see Judaism as shallow and pretentious. But if it is meaningful and inspiring, their Jewish identity will be reinforced and they will be proud of their heritage. What can we do to ensure that our children will be positively affected and transformed by the experience?

As for everything else, children look to their parents for guidance on how to view the Bar Mitzvah. They take their cues from us, and our attitude will define theirs. By the parents taking time to understand what a Bar Mitzvah really is, they can develop an approach that will highlight the uniqueness and power of their child's special day.

How can a 13 year old be considered an adult?

Some Bar Mitzvah boys expect to wake up feeling different on the morning of their Bar Mitzvah. They run to the mirror to see if any sign of a whisker has appeared on their chin, or start talking to themselves to check if their voice cracks. But the change that happens on the Bar Mitzvah day is much more subtle than that. The maturity reached at age 13 is not one that allows you to buy alcohol or decide your own bedtime – it is a spiritual maturity.

What do you mean by spiritual maturity?

The definition of spiritual maturity is the ability to experience the depth and complexity of life. Let's explore what that means.

A child can only see the world in one way. If his parent forbids him to eat a chocolate, he says, "I hate you!" with venom. At that moment, he means it. You can't rationalize with him by pointing out that you always buy him sweets and he will be able to have it after dinner and it is for his own good and you are his parent... These are meaningless words. There is only one reality for him: you didn't let him have the chocolate so you are BAD. Of course, if you give in and allow him to have the chocolate, you are "the best parent in the world" and all is forgotten. For the child there are only extremes. In his yet under-developed mind, every situation is simple and one-sided, black or white. There are no shades of gray.

This is a reflection of the purity of childhood. Children experience pure and unadulterated happiness, all-consuming sadness, extreme anger and uninhibited excitement. This is a necessary stage for them to develop as wholesome beings. Each of these emotions must find its independent place in the child's identity before they can start to work together.

With maturity comes the ability to sense subtlety and nuance. Our minds expand to be able to appreciate that even though something seems painful, there is a deeper good. And the things that feel good are not always good for us. An adult can say, "Although I am upset at you, I still love you." Or, "Although I want it, I know it's wrong." We can see beyond the surface.



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Life is no longer one-dimensional; it has a depth and a complexity of which children are blissfully unaware.

What suddenly happens at age 13?

The Kabbalah teaches that until age 13, we are primarily conscious of our body and its needs. Our reality begins and ends with what we see in front of us, and we are preoccupied with the demands and appetites of our physical nature. Suddenly at Bar Mitzvah another voice is heard – the voice of our soul. The needs, yearnings and feelings of our spiritual inner self are allowed to emerge. We begin to seek meaning, fulfillment, connection, inspiration. We meet a side to our personality that we never knew existed – a deeper side.

This is what makes us an adult in spiritual terms. We now have the tools to appreciate a multi-layered world because we ourselves are now multi-layered – we have an active body and an expressive soul. Until now our character was one-sided and shallow; only the body had a say. From now on we can also see things through the eyes of our deeper self – our soul. Then the choice is ours – to continue to live superficially or to develop our spiritual awareness.

So if the child is now spiritually mature, what is the parents' job?

Once we reach spiritual maturity we begin to make choices as to how we want to live our lives. The factor that most defines the type of life we will lead is our value system. It will influence who we marry, our career choices, and our attitude to every aspect of life. Much of this system is developed in the years following Bar Mitzvah. The questions that accompany the

onset of adolescence demand answers, and if we don't provide them, popular society will.

Here's where parents play a vital role. These newly matured souls seek nourishment from their elders. The Bar Mitzvah experience must be presented not as an end to a long process of Hebrew lessons, but an initiation into a lifetime of spiritual discovery. Once it is over, start giving your child opportunities to express his or her soul. Suggest ways they can give of their time to help others, to volunteer for worthy causes – to use their fresh young energy positively. Discuss questions of morality with your child; bring up real issues such as G-d and the soul, the challenges of growing up, the pain and beauty of true love. Welcome your child into the world of living thoughtfully.

You don't need to know all the answers. Share your own experiences. Find a book on Jewish values or Jewish wisdom, and set aside a time every week to read a short section and discuss it together with your child. Ask them how they think the ideals you read about can be applied practically. This can become a family custom and be seen as a post-Bar Mitzvah privilege. I can think of no more powerful way to guide your child into adulthood.

When planning the Bar Mitzvah, remember that the really important stuff begins after the fanfare has died down. People will forget who the caterer was a week after the event, and the table decorations will mostly be destroyed by the time the main course is served. But the values you pass down to your children are eternal. That is a gift that they will cherish

every day of their lives – the gift of spiritual maturity.



tefillin and its significance

By Alexander Cowen

Tefillin is one of the most important Mitzvot (precepts) of the Torah. It has been observed and treasured for thousands of years, right down to the present day. The Torah mentions it more than once, but most explicitly in Deut. 6:8 “You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they should be for a reminder between your eyes.”

Tefillin consists of two small leather boxes attached to leather straps. The two boxes each contain four sections of the Torah inscribed on parchment. These passages cite:

(a) The Shema (Deut. 6:4-9) — pronouncing the Unity of The One G-d.

(b) Vehayah (Deut. 11:13-21) — expressing G-d’s assurance to us of reward that will follow our observance of the Torah’s precepts, and warning of retribution for disobedience to them.

(c) Kadesh (Ex. 13:1-10) — the duty of the Jewish people to always remember the redemption from Egyptian bondage.

(d) Vehayah (Ex. 13:11-16) — the obligation of every Jew to inform his children on these matters.

One of the boxes (the “hand Tefillin”) is placed upon the left arm so as to rest against the heart - the seat of the emotions, and the suspended leather strap is wound around the left hand, and around the middle finger of that hand. The other box (the “Head Tefillin”) is placed upon the head, above the forehead, so as to rest upon the cerebrum. In this manner our attention is directed to the head, heart and hand. It teaches us to dedicate ourselves to the service of G-d in all that we think, feel and do. It is also to teach us not to be governed solely by the impulse of the heart, lest that lead us into error and transgression. Nor are we to be governed by reason alone, for that may lead to harsh materialism.

Placed on the arm opposite the heart, and on the head, the Tefillin signify the submission of one’s mind, heart and actions to the Almighty, as well as the rule of intellect over emotion.

A fundamental principle of Chabad Chassidic philosophy is that the intellect must control the emotions. Unfortunately, there exists a schism between the mind and the heart. Moreover, often the emotions control the mind, and the intellect is utilized merely to provide justification, rationalization, and excuses for this “instinct-emotion centered” existence. The Mitzvah of Tefillin and its practice facilitates the attainment by the individual of unity of mind and heart, intellect and emotion.

Most of life’s regrets, sorrows and pain could be avoided if we would but learn this important lesson - the application of head and heart to our every day prob-

lems. Besides, such wholesome balance constitutes the very first step on the road to self-assurance, courage, hopefulness and inner peace; those eternally precious soul values the Jew must develop, the better to serve G-d and mankind. Tefillin will cultivate these blessed characteristics, if observed in a spirit of true reverence.

Tefillin and the Exodus from Egypt

It has been pointed out that the four Torah excerpts to be found in Tefillin comprise the Shema and the Vehaya, while the other two have almost exclusive reference to the Exodus from Egypt. Some may wonder why the Exodus should be assigned such signal honor as to accompany the verses that pronounce our very concept of G-d. Hence the following explanation:

There can be no question that for the Jewish people the Exodus was to be an everlasting, unforgettable "Remembrance." Our sages even went so far as to incorporate the words "In remembrance of the departure from Egypt" in the Kiddush that ushers in every Sabbath and Festival. Careful deliberation, moreover, will clearly show why they ascribed to it such singular significance.

The Exodus, it must be recalled, is the story of a people enslaved for hundreds of years by a mighty nation. Although they were unarmed and overwhelmingly outnumbered, this enslaved people finally marched out to their freedom without having to resort to violence. Not only were they freed, but their departure was hastened by their erstwhile overlords, now terrified lest more plagues be meted out to them by the retributive justice of the G-d of Israel.

All available historical records disclose nothing to equal this unique event. The case of a miraculous redemption of an entire people numbering over two million souls, each of them an eyewitness to the protecting benevolence of Divine Providence. It was this event that convinced all the Jewish people, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that their faith in the G-d of their ancestors was well founded. It was the miracle of the Exodus that gave emphatic meaning to the words of the Shema: "Hear, O Israel, The L-rd is Our G-d, The L-rd is One." Note carefully how the very first commandment connects the two. "I am the L-rd your G-d Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."



BINDINGS

By Zalman Posner

Tefillin is a distinctively Jewish way of worship; it is the central mitzvah with which boys are initiated into Jewish manhood. It represents an act rather than a sentiment or a word. But what, you may ask, is the message of tefillin for our own day?

The threat confronting civilization today is not rhetorical. Acts of violence are real and increasing in both frequency and intensity. Not too long ago, the university, that exemplar of rationality, turned out to be a hotbed of terror. Professors of philosophy, graduate students, some of the finest minds America has



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cultivated, engaged in indiscriminate violence, using guns and bombs. Violence as such is nothing new, but that people of learning should engage in it is something new — and deeply disturbing.

It is worthy of note that the first direct quotation from Moses in the Torah is his protest against a Jew who had raised his arm to strike another. “Why do you strike your fellow?” Moses is introduced to us as a protester against an act of violence.

What do the tefillin symbolize? The straps are wrapped around the arms. As a result, the arm loses its freedom of movement; it can only move as the straps permit. Man is not free to do as he wishes. He can move his arm — that is, he can use his ability to act — only in ways that are in consonance with the spirit of the tefillin, of the Sh'ma. Some acts, such as taking that which belongs to another, or harming a fellow man or an animal, or even willfully damaging inanimate objects, are evil. Arms and hands have the power to heal and help, to create and build, and they must be used only for these purposes. This is what the tefillin tell us each morning, and the Bar Mitzvah youth enters life, just as we ourselves enter it anew each day, with the reminder that all our actions must be in character with these principles.

One box of our tefillin is placed upon the left arm, near the heart, symbolically the seat of our emotions. There are certain emotions which the Torah prohibits. “Do not hate your brother in your heart,” for hatred is a sin. “Do not harbor a grudge,” even when you have been wronged. “You shall love the stranger” with all

his alien-ness, and certainly, “you shall love your fellow as yourself.” Our emotions are not beyond our control. We are responsible for our emotions. We are to be their master, not their pawn. This is another message that our tefillin hold for us today.

The tefillin give us a glimpse of the magnificent potential inherent in every one of us, not only to do what is right, but also to remain in control of our emotions. That common but feeble excuse, “I couldn’t help myself,” is not acceptable to anyone sensitive to the message of the tefillin. A heart touched by the tefillin and fired with the command to “love your G-d with all your heart” will reject such pettiness.

The other box of the tefillin is placed upon the head, the seat of the mind. Man’s mind is his finest gift and at the same time the most ominous threat to the world in which he lives. If he uses his mind properly, he can create a paradise; if he does not, he can bring utter destruction to the planet. He must use his mind in accordance with the teachings of the Torah, his thoughts must be pure, he must not plot and scheme against others, and he must not utilize his brain for self-aggrandizement at the expense of others.

Almost everyone in the Western world today is able to read and write, but when it comes to moral literacy we are still scarcely beyond the caveman stage. The educated but immoral are not governed by their intellect; their minds are enslaved by their base instincts. The tefillin declare to us that the mind must have direction; lacking such direction, it can lead man to his ruin.



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The Torah tells us to place our tefillin “between the eyes.” How we use our eyes shows what sort of people we are. When the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (1880-1950), was still a little boy, he asked his father why G-d gave man two eyes. Would not one eye have been quite sufficient? “G-d gave us two eyes, a right eye and a left eye,” his father replied. “The right eye is for seeing the good, and the left eye is for seeing faults. Use your right eye to look at others, and your left eye to look at yourself.”

Tefillin are a bond and a “sign” binding the American Jew, the Russian Jew and the Israeli Jew together into one inseparable whole, and at the same time tying the hand, the mind and the heart of the Jew to G-d and Torah, to ideal and principle. The tefillin strap spans oceans and continents, binding a scattered people into one strong unit.

An awesome picture: a barracks in Auschwitz, and inside it a line of Jews, hurriedly putting on a single secret pair of tefillin, then taking them off again at once without a chance to recite the Sh'ma, because the Germans could come in at any moment. While some of the inmates put on the tefillin, others stationed themselves at the barracks door to watch out for the Nazis. A member of my congregation was in that group.

And then another picture appears before my mind: a line of thousands of Jewish students stretching for blocks around a Chabad House at a large American university, waiting for an opportunity to put on tefillin,

unhurried, and without fear . . . Is it fantasy? Is there a better way of demonstrating that the Jew who is free cares about his brothers — wherever they may be?



spiritual security

By Yossy Goldman

It was May 1967. Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser had mobilized his troops and was threatening to “drive the Jews into the sea.” The United Nations Peace-Keeping Force was dismissed and sheepishly left the region, prompting Abba Eban, Israel’s eloquent Foreign Minister, to question the purpose of an umbrella if as soon as it started raining one closed the umbrella. Syria and Jordan, too, were preparing to join the war and Israel was once again threatened with annihilation by its neighbors.

I was in New York. Lag B’Omer that year fell on a Sunday, the 28th of May. Thousands of Jewish school children assembled on Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn for the Lag B’Omer Parade. The highlight of the event was the address to be delivered by the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The Rebbe spoke passionately about the mortal threat to Israel and her people. But his talk was filled with a fiery faith and unambiguous optimism about the outcome. He assured us that Israel would prevail. Previously, he had instructed American Yeshiva students in Israel to remain there and not return



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home although their parents were extremely — and understandably — anxious. At the same time, he urged Jews the world over to do something practical to help Israel overcome this dire threat to her very existence.

What could we do? Besides material support for the war effort, and in addition to tanks and fighter jets, Israel also needed spiritual support. There is a spiritual defense system, too, said the Rebbe. It was then that he launched the International Tefillin Campaign. By as many Jews as possible observing this hallowed Mitzvah, it would contribute in a tangible way to Israel's security. He called upon Jews around the world to encourage their brethren to begin putting on Tefillin, even if they were not religious or hadn't done it since their Bar Mitzvah, or ever in their lives. People responded instantly and Jews, in unprecedented numbers, embraced the campaign.

Nine days later, the battles began. Israel made military history when it decimated the Egyptian Air Force and defeated the armed forces of Egypt, Syria and Jordan in lightning speed. Jerusalem was reunited under Jewish sovereignty and the Six Day War would be recorded for posterity as Israel's finest hour.

Without in any way minimizing the heroic efforts of our brave soldiers or the brilliant military strategies of our High Command, this amazing, miraculous victory surely pointed to a higher force. I firmly believe that the protective cover of G-d was inspired by the many thousands of new mitzvahs performed by our people.

But why tefillin? Of all mitzvahs, why should the Rebbe have chosen tefillin specifically to ensure Israel's security?

The answer is in the Parshah (weekly Torah reading) of Ki Tavo: And all the nations of the world will see that the Name of G-d is upon you and they will fear you (Deuteronomy 28:10). What does it mean that "the Name of G-d is upon you"? The Talmud (Brachot 6a) quotes Rabbi Eliezer the Great who explained that the verse refers to the tefillin worn on the head, which bear the letter Shin symbolizing G-d's name. These are visible to the eye and have the spiritual power to inspire fear in the hearts of our enemies. Indeed, one of the most powerful images of the Six Day War, still vivid in my mind, is of the Egyptian soldiers fleeing the Sinai in total disarray.

They may not be massing armies on our borders today. But no one can deny that Israel's security is still at very high risk. Thank G-d, since its launch the Tefillin Campaign has touched the lives of hundreds of thousands of our brothers. If tefillin are not yet part of your daily routine, may this story inspire you to begin observing it now. If you are already a regular, then share the mitzvah with a friend. Besides all the wonderful traditional reasons for wearing tefillin, contributing to the spiritual security of Israel adds one more important motivation. In its merit, may Israel be safe and secure until the ultimate era of peace on earth with the coming of our righteous Moshiach speedily in our day. Amen.



pushka – charity BOX

Each table has a pushka, charity box, prominently placed. Jewish law and custom teaches us that our celebrations should never be self-centered. Even in our most joyous moments, we must remember those less fortunate than ourselves; and that remembrance must not be just a thought, but an action.

Our sages teach us that the act of giving charity is far-reaching and so meritorious that it will ultimately lead to our redemption. By placing a coin in the pushka, we complement the holy words of Torah with an act of loving kindness.



tefillin myth and facts

Myth: Wearing Tefillin is a custom of Orthodox Jews.

Fact: Tefillin is something Jews have done since the time of Moses, far predating any division of Jews into “denominations”. Tefillin that have been found in archeological digs are identical to those of today, even though they are about two thousand years old.

Under the influence of 18th-century European Rationalism, some Jews made a point of rejecting this practice. Today, as the social sciences have brought us an appreciation of the value of ritual in human development, Tefillin are making a strong comeback.

Myth: Tefillin only need to be worn on the day of Bar Mitzvah.

Fact: Tefillin are to be worn every day, excluding Shabbat and Yom Tov.

Myth: You have to go to synagogue to wear Tefillin.

Fact: It's best to make yourself part of the community's prayers. But if this isn't possible, Tefillin can be worn in the convenience of your home, office — or even a phone booth — as long as it's daytime.

Myth: A person shouldn't put on Tefillin until he understands what it is all about.

Fact: The best way to understand what Tefillin are all about is by putting them on.

Myth: How the scrolls are written doesn't really count.

Fact: While it is true that Tefillin are worn as a Mitzvah and not as amulets, it is an accepted belief, explained in the Kabbalah, that the Tefillin a person wears has an effect on his life and his family's. Finely-written scrolls inside Tefillin made with care are channels for blessing and all good things.

Myth: Tefillin are the same no matter what the price.

Fact: Many Tefillin sold in gift shops are often no more than fair simulations. Tefillin must be purchased from a reliable source who can assure you that they have been checked by someone G-d fearing and competent in halacha.

Myth: Tefillin last many generations as long as they don't rot.

Fact: The scrolls inside the Tefillin often decay with age, especially when stored without use for an extended period. They should be checked at least twice every seven years by a competent scribe.

For your enjoyment, we have included various stories connected with one of the central Mitzvos that Mendel and Schneur will now be performing – Tefillin

a pair of tefillin for sandy koufax

By Dovid Zaklikowski

October 6, 1965, the first game of the '65 World Series, the Los Angeles Dodgers versus the Minnesota Twins. It's Yom Kippur night at Metropolitan Stadium, 47,797 in attendance. Sandy Koufax, lead pitcher of the LA Dodgers, refuses to play.

Koufax's refusal to pitch on Yom Kippur gained him the respect and admiration of many Jews. His courage gave many Jews the strength to not be ashamed of their Judaism.

The day after Yom Kippur, Koufax received a visit in his S. Paul hotel room from Rabbi Moshe Feller, regional director of the Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch — the educational arm of the Lubavitcher Hasidic movement. Feller congratulated Koufax for not playing on Yom Kippur and for "the great assist he gave Rabbis and Jewish educators the world over."

Rabbi Feller also brought Sandy a pair of tefillin. "Since you bat right and throw left," he told the pitcher, "I wasn't sure what type to get you." (Tefillin are worn on the weaker arm — right-handed people wrap them around their left arm, and lefties on their right arm.) "But considering what your left arm has accomplished, I decided to get you the type you put on your right arm."

Koufax accepted the gift and thanked Rabbi Feller for visiting. “The Talmud says that tefillin is representative of all the Mitzvot of the Torah,” Feller later explained. “So I could not think of a better way to honor a person for enhancing Jewish values, than by presenting him with a pair of tefillin.”

Two weeks later, at a Simchat Torah gathering, the Lubavitcher Rebbe spoke about the Jewish pitcher who refused to play on Yom Kippur (the following is a free translation from the Yiddish). “The first condition in influencing a child,” said the Rebbe, “is that the child must see a living example by his parents. If the child sees the parent studying Torah at a time when the parent would otherwise be involved in business dealings, thereby surrendering a few dollars of profit, and perhaps causing that he won’t be written up as one of the top dealers — this is an example of self-sacrifice for the child.

“Or when the parent gives up a half hour of watching television, reading the newspaper and discussing politics... even though he thinks that knows what [President] Johnson ought to do, and if Johnson would ask him, he would tell him to do it this way.... When he renounces all of this, and he doesn’t even know what the World Series is, that’s an example for your child... (Those who don’t know what ‘World Series’ is — good for them. I wish that I didn’t know...)

“There was a young man, and in fact he had a beard, he went to see the pitcher who wouldn’t pitch on Yom Kippur and he told him that he does not play baseball on Rosh Hashanah either. The young man

told the pitcher that he would like to give him a present. He gave him a pair of tefillin. The pitcher told him that he still remembers tefillin, however, he did not want to put them at that time. The young man left, and that day the pitcher lost the game... But at the end it turned out that he won the World Series, and on his table there were the tefillin. In the end, even 'a distant individual will not be distanced' and he will merit to put them on, and another Jew will be added to those who have donned tefillin..."



heart to heart

The bearded Chassidic Jew contemplated the passenger sitting beside him on the airplane. A middle-aged man, balding slightly, and obviously Jewish. "I must try to get him to put on Tefillin," thought the Chassid. He turned to his neighbor, smiled, and tried to strike up a conversation but the attempt failed, for the Chassid, a recent immigrant to the new world, knew very few words of English. He tried Yiddish-the man looked at him blankly; he switched to German-the same result. In desperation he tried Russian-his fellow passenger just stared and shook his head.

The elderly Chassid furrowed his brow and stroked his beard in concentrated thought. Then, he reached into his suitcase and took out a small velvet bag. Under the watchful eye of his neighbor he withdrew the black leather boxes of the Tefillin. The Chassid took a

deep breath, turned to his neighbor, and mustering all his meager English vocabulary pointed his finger first at himself and then at the passenger. "I Jew, you Jew" he said. Then, pointing to the Tefillin he said, "I Tefillin, you Tefillin." It was a call from one Jewish heart to another and a heart has no language barrier.

A few moments later the middle-aged businessman was allowing the bearded Chassid to wind the straps of the Tefillin around his arm in the middle of the crowded airplane and he was fighting back tears as he realized that he had long forgotten how to do the Mitzvah himself.

The businessman later discovered that his experience had been shared by millions of other people all over the globe as a result of the Tefillin Campaign launched by the Lubavitcher Rebbe at the time of the Six Day War in the Holy Land. A Tefillin booth has been set up by the Lubavitcher Chassidim at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, and more than a million Jews from all walks of life, have performed the Mitzvah of Tefillin at that booth alone. To say nothing of the daily efforts by Chassidim all over the world to re-educate their fellow Jews in the fulfillment of this vital precept of the Torah.



hi-tech connectivity

By Tzvi Freeman

This was back in the early sixties, when the first mainframe computers were being introduced into business. Professor Abraham Polichenco, a pioneer in computer technology, visited the Lubavitcher Rebbe and posed a question to him:

“I know that everything that exists in the world, even something that we discover later in history, has its source somewhere in the Torah. So, where are there computers in the Torah?”

Without hesitation, the Rebbe answered, “Tefillin.” The professor was perplexed.

“What’s new about a computer?” the Rebbe continued. “You walk into a room and you see many familiar machines: A typewriter, a large tape recorder, a television set, a hole puncher, a calculator. What is new?”

“But under the floor, cables connect all these machines so they work as one.”

The professor nodded enthusiastically. He hadn’t realized it before, but yes, this is all that a computer is: A synthesis of media and processing devices.

“Now look at your own self. You have a brain. It is in one world. Your heart is in another. And your hands often end up involved in something completely foreign to both of them. Three diverse machines.

“So you put on tefillin. First thing in the day, you connect your head, your heart and your hand with these leather cables — all to work as one with one intent. And then when you go out to meet the world, all your actions find harmony in a single coordinated purpose.”



a telling tale

A lively young school boy went with his grandfather to see the Lubavitcher Rebbe one day in 1954. The purpose of the visit was to receive a blessing before his upcoming Bar Mitzvah.

He was surprised when the Rebbe asked him, in English, “which sports do you like best?”

“Baseball” the boy replied.

“Do you ever play baseball with your friends?” the Rebbe asked him.

“Yes” the boy answered.

“And do you ever see professional games?”

“Sure I do.” replied the boy.

“What’s the difference between your games and the professionals?” asked the Rebbe.

“Rabbi, when we play, it’s just ‘kids stuff,’ but the professional games are for real” answered the young boy.

The Rebbe addressed the boy with a broad smile and said “In your heart you have a big playing field. The two teams are the yetzer tov, the good inclination, and the yetzer hara, the negative drive. Until now they played ‘kids stuff,’ but from now on the game is for real!

Remember, just as in baseball, the side that plays the best will win. If you only want to, you can always overcome your yetzer hara.”



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חן חן על השתתפותכם בשמחתנו
בברכת כתיבה וחתימה טובה
לשנה טובה ומתוקה

*Thank you for joining us in our Simcha
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and Sweet New Year*

The Canterman Family