

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



CAN I WEAR PASSUL TEFILLIN?

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion discusses the mitzvah of wearing tefillin. Our Sages teach that tefillin are vessels that help us dedicate our mind, our heart and our hands to HaShem's. When we wear kosher tefillin, we draw down a shefa, a "spiritual energy" that helps sanctify our mind, heart and hands to fulfill HaShem's Will. (See Derech Hashem Part 4, Chapter 6, Paragraph 7)

This leads us to the following true story.

Elchonon lived in a small Jewish community. One day he brought his tefillin to the local sofer for them to get checked. The sofer inspected the tefillin and sure enough he discovered that there was a p'sul in the batim which rendered the



TEFILLIN; OUR GPS THROUGH HISTORY

In this week's Parsha, Bo, the ten plagues are completed and Pharaoh relinquished his grip on HaShem's people. HaShem gave us the mitzvah of Korban Pesach and Bris Milah on whose merits we became worthy to leave Egypt. We were ready to begin our anticipated journey to receive His Torah and become His chosen people. However, before the story continues HaShem breaks to give us the mitzvah of wearing tefillin. What is the immediate relevance of tefillin that it warrants to be introduced before our journey begins?

Our Sages teach us that the purpose of creation was for this material world to be filled with the Presence of HaShem. The responsibility of accomplishing this is the mission of our people. In other words, HaShem created a nation for Himself which He placed on the map of history and directed them to travel through every page of history. On every page they travel they are to carry their testimony that HaShem created the world and continues to maintain it on a daily basis. By so doing, the world will eventually come to the ultimate recognition and awareness of HaShem.

How was this multi-millenia plan going to work?

Before launching His people, HaShem revealed His absolute Omnipotence to His people. They experienced it first-hand so that they could then testi-

tefillin unfit to be used. It would require some work to be done to restore its kashrus.

Elchonon did not have a replacement tefillin. The next day he went to shul and brought with him the pasul tefillin that he used every day. He asked his friend who sat next to him if he could borrow his tefillin after he was done with them. The friend of course obliged.

They began to daven and Elchonon was embarrassed to daven with the minyan without tefillin. In order not to stand out he began to put on his passul tefillin. He did not intend to make a bracha on them, because they were pasul, but he wanted to wear them because he was ashamed not to.

As he put them on he had the following thought. He was putting on the pasul tefillin as a show. He was only wearing them to avoid standing out. Was it okay to put on pasul tefillin for show?

On one hand one can say that that if it prevents him from being embarrassed, it should be okay.

But on the other hand, is it okay to pretend to wear tefillin? Is it ok to wear pasul tefillin just for appearances?

See Chashukei Chemed Megilla page 315

MITZVA MEME



Excellence is in the details. Give attention to the details and excellence will come. — Perry Paxton

Sometimes when I consider what tremendous consequences come from little things, I am tempted to think, there are no little things. — Bruce Barton



fy to the world what they saw and experienced. This was accomplished with the Ten Plagues as well as the splitting of the Red Sea.

There was another detail that had to be addressed if the plan was to work. HaShem had to create a mechanism by which this nation would be able to retain that revelation. Although every member of our people experienced His revelation first-hand, how were they to transmit it to their descendants whom they would never see? The natural solution to this concern would be that every member of our people would tell their children and instruct them to tell their children and let the story continue being told until it reaches the last generation. However, given the journey that we were going to travel it would not last.

Even as we think of our most recent history we see how strong winds of change constantly blow across these pages and how hard it is for one generation to hold on to the values and principles of their preceding generation. To resolve this concern HaShem gave us the mitzvah of tefillin. As mentioned in Rabbi Weiner's Mitzvah Dilemma, the tefillin are endowed with a sanctity that when one dons them in the proper manner he draws down an influence from Above which fortifies him and protects him from the prevailing winds of change that threaten him.

Before our journey to Sinai continues, we must have the mitzvah of tefillin. It is through this mitzvah that we will be able to maintain the integrity of our transmission to future generations of the revelations we witnessed in Egypt. The tefillin are the vehicles that take us on our passage through history without losing our mission. They provide our people with **Genuine Passage Security**.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE KOALA

The Koala is a 2-foot-tall, 20 pound adorable marsupial, which some call the Australian "teddy bear." It is native to Australia. Its fur color ranges from silver grey to chocolate brown. The koala can live up to 18 years in the wild. It spends its entire life in the tall eucalyptus trees, eating eucalyptus leaves. It eats almost nothing else besides these leaves. Koalas eat so many of these leaves that they actually take on the distinctive odor of eucalyptus oil, reminiscent of menthol drops.

The word koala comes from the Aboriginal word, meaning "no drink". This is because the leaves of the eucalyptus tree have a high water content (the leaves are 65 percent water) so the koala rarely has to drink water because it gets its water from the leaves it eats.

Because of the koala's apparent resemblance to a bear, it is often mistakenly called a koala bear. However the Koala is not really a bear, it is a marsupial. It is related to the kangaroo.

As with other marsupials, baby koalas are born looking like tiny worms. After coming out of the birth canal the tiny worm makes the trek to crawl into the mother's pouch. It is an amazing journey and it relies on its well-developed senses of smell and touch, its strong forelimbs and claws, and an inborn sense of direction. Once in the pouch, it attaches itself to one of the two nipples which swells in its mouth, preventing it from being dislodged from its source of food. There it only drinks milk. Six months later it emerges and by then it is 8 inches long. At that time it crawls out and onto its mother's back and remains riding on the mother's back for another six months!

All the food and water of this animal comes from eucalyptus leaves. No other animal dares to eat those leaves, for they are poisonous if swallowed. They are extremely tough to chew and digest. But HaShem has given the koala many specialized tools that allow it to eat these poisonous leaves. First it has a special stomach acid called cytochrome P450 which neutralizes the strong chemicals in eucalyptus oil. Next, the koala has a special intestine which is able to digest the leaf cellulose. It has an extremely long digestive organ called a cecum which allows it to break down the leaves unharmed. This intestine measures about six feet long and 4 inches in diameter! It is the largest intestine, proportionally, of any animal. Third, tiny one-celled protozoa provide the needed digestion. Passing into another chamber, strong acids

digest and eat the protozoa.

The koala's curved, sharp claws are perfectly suited for climbing the tall eucalyptus trees.

The koala has specially designed teeth to shred the tough eucalyptus leaves into small pieces. Koalas also store food in their cheek pouches before it is ready to be chewed. Because they spend most of their time in tall trees they occasionally fall off the trees. Koalas usually survive falls from trees and immediately climb back up, but injuries and deaths from falls do occur, particularly in inexperienced young.

Eucalyptus trees grow as much as 200 feet tall. How do koalas survive these long falls? The koala has one of the smallest brains in proportion to body weight of any mammal, being 60% smaller than that of a typical diprotodont. The brain occupies only 61% of the cranial cavity and is pressed against the inside surface by brain fluid. One function of this relatively large amount of fluid is that it acts as a shock absorber, cushioning the brain if the animal falls from a tree.

Koala hands are pretty different from those of other animals. The little koala has an opposable thumb on each foot, and two of them on each hand! This facilitates climbing their beloved eucalyptus trees. They also are one of very few species of animals to sport individual fingerprints (humans, chimpanzees and gorillas are the others). This is said to help them climb the trees.

Koalas sleep 20 hours a day and usually don't move too much in order to conserve energy. But if necessary koalas can break into a gallop, moving at speeds of up to 18 miles per hour. Although clumsy on the ground, the koala is an excellent swimmer, and may cross rivers in order to escape from heavy flooding in one area.

Dingoes (wild Australian dogs) and large pythons can prey on koalas; as can owls and wedge-tailed eagles. Urbanization has also posed a threat to koalas. It is said that every year around 4,000 koalas die because of a collision with a car or from attacks by domestic dogs.

Thank you Hashem for showing us your wisdom!

THE DEBT COLLECTORS

The Machlis family is renowned for their incredible generosity towards guests. Mrs. Sara Yoched Rigler told over the following unbelievable story:

When the Machlises were a young married couple, they never locked their door, as they told Chani Feivelson, "in case someone wants to come in and rest." One day, Chani came to visit and found Henny Machlis upset. Some of her jewelry was missing. "The whole idea that someone they knew had opened their home to take advantage of them distressed Henny very much," Chani remembers. "They even made a police report."

Hearing Chani tell of Henny's distress at the first robbery, I was a bit surprised. My impression was that Henny Machlis eschewed materialism. Chani's response was: "You can't compare the Henny of 21 years old to the Henny of 30 years later." Indeed, relationship to material things was one of the many areas where Henny developed and changed over the years. She had grown up in a middle-class Flatbush home after her parents' years of struggle were largely behind them. While never a rank materialist, Henny shared the prevailing mentality that it's good to have material possessions because you can use them to serve HaShem. Mordechai Machlis's attitude was very different. As Chani remembers: "Mordechai's approach was to make light of the missing jewelry. He said, 'It's just jewelry.' And Henny gradually took her cue from him. She regarded him as her teacher, and learned much from him. Mordechai's attitude that material things don't matter became Henny's attitude as well."

Henny's children revealed that over the years, all of Henny's jewelry, including her diamond ring, as well as their father's silver Kiddush cup and the heirloom brass candlesticks, were stolen by guests throughout the years, and Henny accepted it with equanimity. She wouldn't even let the children use the word "stole," saying instead, "Someone borrowed it."

How much Henny eventually came to eschew materialism is evidenced by an incident that took place decades later. A couple from America who made aliyah wanted to buy an apartment. Rabbi Machlis, who had a regular, if modest, salary as a teacher, signed as a guarantor on their mortgage. A few years later, the couple moved back to America, leaving Rabbi Machlis responsible for their debt of hundreds of thousands of shekels. Of course, the Machlises couldn't pay the debt.

One day two burly, shaven-headed men, who looked like Mafiosos, showed up at the Machlises' door with legal authorization papers to confiscate everything of value, "Where's the television?" they demanded. "We don't have one," Henny answered. "Where are the 'computers?'" "We don't have any." "Where's your silver—Kiddush cups, candlesticks, whatever?" "We have none." "Where is your jewelry?" "It's all costume jewelry." Then she added, "Do you want to take the sifrei kodesh [sacred books]? That's all we own." Henny was unfazed as the men, who looked like thugs, searched the apartment. When their search confirmed the truth of Henny's statements, one of the men wrote in his report: "Ein po ma lakachat. There's nothing here to take. Just tables and plastic chairs." They turned to leave, but Henny was not finished with them. "Did you put on tefillin today?" she asked. Disconcerted, the men stared at her. "Get tefillin," she called to her son Yehoshua. The two men put on tefillin, said the Shema, then left.

Henny had shared with them the family's real valuables.

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THE ANSWER

We are still awaiting the answer from Rav Tzvi Berkowitz about the question of the Tehillim sponsorships. We are sorry to keep all of you waiting on the edge of your seats. :-)

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