

## Jewish Studies

The mitzvah I chose for the JS exhibitions was the mitzvah of Tefillin. To me, the mitzvah of Tefillin is a mitzvah of remembering. When we put on Tefillin we should remember the Exodus and how God brought us out of Egypt. In the Torah, this mitzvah is mentioned multiple times in different forms (those texts are actually in the Tefillin), the mitzvah is first mentioned in Deut. 6:8. הָיָה לָךְ לְאֹזֶת עַל יָדְךָ וּלְזָכָרוֹן בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ. One reason I chose this mitzvah was because I wanted to learn more about it. It also occurred to me that I would be wearing Tefillin in the future and this would help me observe the mitzvah then. How is this mitzvah מִדָּא נָב הוֹצֵמ od tahw ,lla fo tsrif tub מלמקום, that mean? מִדָּא נָב הוֹצֵמ means a mitzvah between a person and the place, but we say and translate it so that it means a mitzvah between a person and God. The mitzvah to wrap Tefillin is מִדָּא נָב הוֹצֵמ because this mitzvah is supposed to remind us of God and some of the great things He did, and as I will mention later this mitzvah actually brings us closer to God in other ways. In the beginning of the unit I was asked to come up with three questions, most of which were answered during my research. Those three questions are why do we wrap the Tefillin around our arm seven times, can Tefillin be different colors and how did we decide what Tefillin look like? The sources I used for my research were Sefer HaKuzari, Rashi, Sefer Hachinuch and Kitzur Shulchan Arukh.

I had to answer the questions, what is the mitzvah and when is it observed using the information from my sources. Sefer HaKuzari said the mitzvah is to wear Tefillin on the head and arm. Rashi stated the mitzvah was to wear the boxes on your head and arm. Sefer Hachinuch added that when you wear Tefillin the words must be written. It also said that you can train even small boys for the mitzvah as long as they are ready. Kitzur Shulchan Arukh did not answer either of the questions. I think that the mitzvah is just to wear the Tefillin shel yad and Tefillin

shel rosh with the certain texts inside the Tefillin. I agree with the Sefer Hachinuch that anyone can observe the mitzvah as long as they are responsible enough to do it.

I also had to answer the questions why is the mitzvah observed and how is it observed? Sefer HaKuzari said we observe this mitzvah to remember God's unity and how he brought us out of Egypt. Rashi thought we observe this mitzvah so it is a sign upon your eyes and on your hand. This answer was particularly confusing to me because I did not know what he meant by this. I think Rashi is saying that having it as a sign upon your eyes and hand is kind of like a reward or a blessing. My third source (Sefer Hachinuch) stated that we observe the mitzvah to help us remember and to keep our hands from wrongdoing so we can focus. We are supposed to focus on God and the Tefillah that we are saying. Kitzur Shulchan Arukh did not answer any of the questions. I think we observe this mitzvah so we remember all the good things that God did for us and so that we can focus when we are praying. I think that we observe the mitzvah by not only wearing Tefillin with that exact specifications that are necessary, but by remembering God and all the good things he did for us.

At the beginning of the unit I had to come up with three questions and see if I could find the answers while I was studying to guide my research. My first question was, why do we wrap Tefillin around our arm seven times? I did not find an answer to this question in any of my sources. My second question was, how did we decide what Tefillin look like? Sefer Hachinuch said that on the leather box should be the letter shin on the right and left side. It also said that Tefillin should be black, they should be square and that the texts inside the Tefillin should be wrapped in the cloth from a kosher domestic animal. My third and final question was can Tefillin be different colors? Sefer Hachinuch also answered this question by saying that Tefillin should be black.

While observing the mitzvah of wearing Tefillin, I felt more connected to the world and my community. I felt like I was part of a bigger community and I felt more connected to God. Like I learned from my sources, you wear the head strap of the Tefillin shel rosh on your side and in front of you so that whenever you look down you are reminded of Tefillin and God. Whenever I looked down I saw my Tefillin and it reminded me of God and reminded me that I was in Tefillah and that I should be saying Tefillah and not anything else. This helped me focus on Tefillah and made me feel more connected to God. This also helped me think about God and the Exodus because whenever I looked at my Tefillin, I remembered the texts inside of them (which is the Exodus, wherever the mitzvah is mentioned in the Torah and the Shema) and knew that in the future I will have to observe this mitzvah because I will be a Bar mitzvah and I will have to start wearing Tefillin then.

In conclusion there are many things that you should always remember about wearing Tefillin. When you are observing or studying this mitzvah, it is really important to know that this is a mitzvah of remembering. It is also important to know that this mitzvah is supposed to bring you closer to God and it should help you focus. In the end my sources helped me a lot with the project, I learned so much more about Tefillin and they even helped me choose how to observe the mitzvah when I put on Tefillin. They also helped me with my journals and any other work about my mitzvah. Hopefully when you put on Tefillin or study the mitzvah, you will remember all the things I said in this essay and you will use them to make observing the mitzvah more holy for yourself.