



*First Thoughts:
A Tefillin
Spiritual
Primer*

*“The first thoughts of the day
are so important.*

*Tefillin give us the opportunity
to focus those thoughts.”*

*Many of the quotations are
excerpted from the FJMC film
“The Ties that Bind”*



When we wear Tefillin we bind ourselves to the highest spiritual level and achieve a closeness to God that even the deepest meditation cannot accomplish.

“The act of winding is very similar to the act of putting on a bandage.”

“I put on Tefillin and daven every day because Tefillin bring me comfort.”

When we speak of “God’s hand”, we are speaking of God’s action in the world.



look at the straps on my hand, and I think that makes me a Mezuzah and I carry the word of God.”

Judaism believes the Mitzvot exist to help us find meaning in our lives.

With every Mitzvah we forge a spiritual bond with God.

In the case of Tefillin, this bond is spiritual as well as physical. We literally bind God's love symbol to our bodies. Our sages teach us that the commandment of Tefillin encompasses all others. We can actually see and feel the bond.

“It's one thing to talk about the mitzvot. It's another thing to feel them on your body”



*lessings for
putting on
Tefillin*

The Arm Tefillin

When we say that God wears Tefillin, we are saying that God's purpose is bound up with the concept of Israel.

This blessing is recited before tightening the tefillin on the bicep of the "weaker" arm:

*בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהִנִּיחַ תְּפִלִּין.*

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe whose mitzvot add holiness to our life and gave us the mitzvah to put on tefillin.

Tighten the arm tefillin and wind the strap seven times around your arm. Wrap the remainder around your hand.

The Head Tefillin

The straps of the head Tefillin hang down the front of the body. This indicates that God guides the forces of history, down to even the lowest level.

This blessing is recited before tightening the tefillin on the head:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל מִצְוֹת תְּפִלִּין.

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe whose mitzvot add holiness to our life and gave us the mitzvah of tefillin.

בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מְלָכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

Praised be God's glorious name throughout all time.

The Hand Tefillin

We wind the strap into the shape of a SHIN, a DALET and a YOD, forming one of the names of God, an attribute of creation.

These blessings are recited as you wind the straps of the tefillin on your hand:

וְאַרְשֵׁתִּיךָ לִי לְעוֹלָם.

“I will betroth you to Me forever.

וְאַרְשֵׁתִּיךָ לִי בְצֶדֶק וּבְמִשְׁפָּט
וּבְחַסֵּד וּבְרַחֲמִים.

I will betroth you with righteousness, with justice, with love, and with compassion.

וְאַרְשֵׁתִּיךָ לִי בְאֱמוּנָה,
וַיִּדְעַתְּ אֶת יי.

I will betroth you to Me with faithfulness, and you shall love the Lord.”

Hosea 2:21-22



*Have you ever truly
loved?*

*Have you ever felt so
close to another
human being that every moment together
was precious?*

*Where every moment apart was one of
longing?*

*Where every letter and memento from this
person was something to be treasured?*

*“It’s almost as if God grasps your arm,
holds on to you and says, ‘You can do
this, I’m with you, I’m supporting you.’”*

“Tefillin for me is breakfast with God.”



The greatest love possible is the love between God and man and Tefillin are a sign of this love. Faith and love are very tenuous things. We can speak of them and think about them. But unless we do something about them, we tend to forget. Tefillin serve to help us, remember to be a “reminder before your eyes”.

“I like to compare Tefillin to a satellite dish. That’s sort of what I feel like. I’m getting hooked up to the spiritual satellite system. I have this super connection, like I get every channel. I put Tefillin on and it takes me to another level. I’m on another level with God. It’s a feeling I don’t get with just a Tallit. It’s more.”



meditation on wearing Tefillin:

Adapted from the Midrash

Breathe deeply with a cleansing breath:

*When you lay Tefillin in the morning, you may want to take a moment and meditate on the presence of the angels, the heavenly messengers, and the **SHECHINAH**. Sit comfortably with your eyes closed and imagine a presence touching your Open Arm. This is the Angel Michael, drawing you closer to God. Your consciousness rises to a higher level, as you become more aware of every heartbeat, every songbird outside your window, and you feel a sense of oneness with the universe.*

Slowly shift your attention to your Bound Arm. Feel the straps pressing tightly around it - you are bound within them. This binding is not restrictive but liberating, like a loving couple bound in mutual love and respect to one

another. Do you remember a wedding where you were bound up within the couples love? Taste that feeling, transfer it to your love of the God of creation. The Angel Gabriel will guide you on this path.

Before you, the Angel Uriel, directs your Vision. Imagine the **BAYIT** on your forehead as your Third Eye. Uriel allows you to visualize the future, perhaps a glimpse of the Messiah. Let yourself believe the world is not an endless cycle, but a continuously evolving organism constantly perfecting itself, becoming not only the image of God, it is God.

Feel the place where the knotted straps at the base of your skull where it joins the spine. Experience the Angel Raphael radiating healing down the back of your neck, across your shoulders, down across your chest, past your internal organs and into the seat of your **NEFESH**, which is the soul's link to the physical world. Feel the healing power of

God radiate throughout your body, your heart, and your soul.

*All around you, the lovely feminine presence of the **SHECHINAH** - God's bride and feminine self - surrounds you in love. This is God's love, expressed in a way we can taste, smell, touch - the love between two people; friends, family, children, our life. God's love radiates the love in our hearts into the world. We can sense ourselves being aligned: the mind, the heart and the **NEFESH** - a straight vertical line reaching toward the heavens.*

Breathe deeply with a cleansing breath.



The Jewish people went to God and said, "We would like to immerse ourselves in Torah day and night, but alas, we do not have the time" God responded to the Jewish people "put on Tefillin and I will count it as if you spent all your time with my Torah".



God and man are worlds apart. On a spiritual level, it would be impossible for the two ever to be brought together.

It is only in the physical world that God and man can interact. In some ways both can bind themselves to the same physical object or action. In this way they are almost physically pushed together.

Mission Statement

The Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs is committed to improving the quality of Jewish life; contributing to the enhancement of Conservative Jewish identity locally and world-wide; strengthening and building local Jewish Men's Clubs; and the increasing of individual and organizational membership for the purpose of providing excellence in education, training, and social and community activity.

Further Information

For further information, please visit our internet website, <http://www.fjmc.org>. We constantly update it with new and exciting programs and information, along with information on joining one of our affiliated men's clubs.

Video Instruction Available

The FJMC has produced an award winning video, "The Ties that Bind", which offers complete instructions on the mitzvah of Tefillin. Copies of the video are available at the website (FJMC Store) and through our International office, 1-800-288-FJMC.



Involving Jewish Men in Jewish Life

©2000 The Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs Inc.
475 Riverside Dr., Suite 450
New York, NY 10115-0022 USA

Tel: 212-749-8100 - Fax: 212-316-4271

Toll Free: 800-288-FJMC

E-mail: International@FJMC.org

FJMC Website

www.fjmc.org

Our Tefillin Website

www.worldwidewrap.org