דיני איטר יד

לה. מי שהוא איטר יד ימין, וכותב ועושה כל מלאכתו ביד שמאל, מניח תפילין ביד ימין. ואין צריך לחוש להחמיר ולחזור ולהניח תפילין אחר התפלה גם ביד שמאל. [הליכו"ע ח"א עמ' כח] ואיטר יד שאין לו אלא תפילין של אדם המניח תפילין ביד שמאל, נתבאר דינו לעיל הלכה י"ח.

Left-Handed People

Only on the right arm

35) A left-handed person must wear his tefillin on his right arm. It is unnecessary for him to arrange to also wear tefillin on his left arm every day after the prayers to make sure that he fulfills the mitzvah properly.[159] See above in halakha 18 for the rule regarding a left-handed person who needs to borrow tefillin but who can find only righthanded tefillin to borrow.

159. The *Shulḥan Arukh* (27:6) ruled unequivocably that a lefthanded person must wear his tefillin on his right arm.

The *Nagid Umtzave* and *Ben Ish Ḥai*

The *Ben Ish Ḥai* (*parashat Ḥaye Sara* halakha 7) cited the *Zer Zahav*, authored by the kabbalist Harav Yaakov Tzemaḥ (most famous for his *Nagid Umtzave*), ruling that a lefthanded person must not wear tefillin differently than righthanded people, and everyone must wear tefillin on their left arms. In deference to this ruling, the *Ben Ish Ḥai* ruled that lefthanded people should first wear their tefillin on their right arms, following the ruling of the *Shulḥan Arukh*, but after the prayers they should put tefillin on their left arms in deference to the opinion of Harav Tzemaḥ. They must not recite the blessing at this time, but they are to think the words of the blessing, and then they are to recite the *Shema* without its blessings before taking off the tefillin.

The *Ben Ish Ḥai* added that the lefthanded person cannot simply take his tefillin off his right arm and put it on his left arm. If he does, he will either have to wear it upside down or wear it with the knot on the side away from his chest. He must acquire two *battim* of *tefillin shel yad*, one constructed for righthanded people and the other constructed for lefthanded people.

The *Ben Ish Ḥai* insisted that this is the proper procedure for any lefthanded person who possesses fear for Heaven and cares to fulfill the exalted mitzvah of tefillin properly. This is in spite of the fact that he was aware that the rabbis in Yerushalayim did not practice this stringency.

Maran the Rishon Letziyon

In responsa *Yabia Omer* (Vol. VI, #2:3) in *Halikhot Olam* (Vol. I, page 28), Maran the Rishon Letziyon ruled that lefthanded people need not be concerned about the opinion forwarded by Harav Yaakov Tzemaḥ, although Rabbenu Menaḥem Hame'iri concurred with it. After all, even the *Ben Ish Ḥai* had to admit that the rabbis of Yerushalayim ignored his opinion, especially since it runs against the Talmud and the major *Poskim*.

Although the *Kaf Haḥayim* Sofer asserted that if Maran had known of the teachings of the Arizal he would have followed the Arizal's rulings (regarding how to determine whether someone is righthanded or lefthanded), this is simply not true. Maran came to his rulings through his research and deep understanding of the Talmud and *Rishonim*, and he would not have been swayed by the esoteric teachings of the Kabbalah. The responsa *Sho'el Venish'al* (Vol. I, #3) likewise refuted the argument of the *Kaf Haḥayim*. Therefore, regarding the halakhot of tefillin for lefthanded people, we follow the rulings of Maran confidently.

If a lefthanded person wore tefillin on his left arm

The *Halakha Berura* (page 108) ruled that a lefthanded person cannot fulfill the mitzvah of tefillin by wearing it on his left arm. If he recited the blessing and put it on his left arm, he must recite the blessing again when putting it on his right arm since he has not yet fulfilled this mitzvah at all. Although there are *Poskim* who ruled that he can fulfill the mitzvah by wearing it on his left arm, and it is only preferable to wear it on his right arm, this opinion is not taken into account. See more about this in responsa *Yabia Omer* (Vol. XI, #3).

לו. מי שכותב בימין, ושאר מלאכתו עושה בשמאל, או כותב בשמאל ושאר כל מעשיו עושה בימין, יש אומרים שיניח תפילין ביד שתש כח, דבעינן יד כהה. ויש אומרים שהיד שכותב בה היא חשובה ימין לענין זה ומניח תפילין ביד שכנגדה, משום דסמך הכתוב (דברים ו, ח-ט) "וקשרתם" ל"וכתבתם", מה כתיבה בימין אף קשירה בימין, שבאותו היד שכותב בה צריך לקשור התפילין על היד שכנגדה. [ראה ש"ע סי' כז ס"ו ובמשנ"ב ס"ק כז ובבא"ח חיי שרה ה"ז]

והעיקר להלכה, שהיד שכותב בה נחשבת ל"ימין", ומניח תפילין ביד האחרת. וכן דעת מרן השלחן ערוך (סי' כז ס"ו) שקיבלנו הוראותיו. ולכן מי שכותב בימין ושאר מלאכתו עושה בשמאל, יניח בשמאל. ומי שכותב בשמאל ושאר מלאכתו עושה בימין, יניח בימין.

ומכל מקום כיון שיש פוסקים שחולקים על זה, וסוברים שיש ללכת אחר היד שעושה בה רוב מעשיו, והשניה היא יד כהה, לכן טוב שאחר התפלה יחזור ויניח תפילין בלי ברכה ביד שכותב בה, ויקרא בהן קריאת שמע, ויצא ידי חובה לכל הדעות. [ראה יבי"א ח"ו סו"ס ב, וביבי"א חלק יא סי' ג. הליכו"ע ח"א עמ' כח, ילקו"י מהדו"ק עמ' לו]

Definition of righthanded and lefthanded

36) The *Poskim* debated the status of someone who uses his right hand to write but performs all other skilled tasks with his left hand, or someone who uses his left hand to write but performs all other skilled tasks with his right hand. Some ruled that his status is determined by the hand with which he performs skilled tasks, since the less-skilled hand is considered the weaker one. Others ruled that his status is determined by the hand with which he writes, since the two verses – "You shall tie them on your hand" and "You shall write them" appear next to one other in the Torah. This teaches us that the hand someone uses to write is the hand he must use to tie his tefillin on the opposite arm.

In practice, we follow the second opinion since this is the decision of the *Shulhan Arukh*. The hand with which the person writes is considered his "right" hand and he must wear his tefillin on the opposite arm. The fact that he performs many skilled tasks with his other hand does not matter.

Many *Poskim* disagreed with this ruling, however, and determined that the stronger hand is always considered the "right" hand even if the person writes with the other hand. Therefore, it is recommended that, after praying with the tefillin on his weaker arm, he should put tefillin on the arm with which he writes, but without repeating the blessing. He should recite the *Shema* again while wearing the tefillin on the other arm, and then he will have fulfilled the mitzvah according to all the *Poskim*.[160]

---

160. Rabbenu Asher ruled that the hand with which the person performs skilled tasks is considered his "right" hand and he must put his tefillin on the opposite arm. The *Sefer Mitzvot Katan* cited Rabbenu Yehi'el ruling that the hand with which he writes is considered the "right" hand. Maran cited both opinions in the *Bet Yosef* without comment, but in the *Shulhan Arukh* he stated that there are two opinions, listing Rabbenu Asher's opinion first and that of the *Sefer Mitzvot Katan* second. According to the rules of interpreting the *Shulhan Arukh*,

לז. בדין האמור, אין הבדל בין כתב עברית שלנו לשאר שפות ולשונות, ואם כותב באיזו שפה שהיא ביד שמאל, וכל מעשיו בימין, הדרינן למה שפסקנו שהכל הולך אחר כתיבה, ומניח ביד ימין. [יביע"א ח"ו סי' ב אות ד]

Writing in different languages

37) The above halakha is the same regardless of the language or script that the person writes. It could be Hebrew or any other language. Whatever type of script he writes, if he writes with his left hand and performs other skilled tasks with his right hand, his status is determined by the hand with which he writes, and therefore he must wear his tefillin on his other arm.[161]

this means that in practice we are to follow the second opinion. The Rama commented in his gloss that the common custom likewise follows the second opinion.

The *Bayit Hadash* and the *Artzot Hahayim* disagreed with the *Shulhan Arukh*. Rabbenu Asher does not stand alone; the *Sefer Ha'eshkol* also ruled that the skilled hand is considered the "right" hand, claiming that this is the opinion of Rabbenu Yitzhak Alfasi. The *Ture Zahav*, however, showed that Rabbenu Yitzhak Alfasi's words can be understood either way. Most *Aharonim* concurred with the ruling of the *Shulhan Arukh*, but Harav Eliyahu of Vilna (cited in the *Bi'ur Halakha*) agreed emphatically with the opinion of Rabbenu Asher.

The *Hesed La'alafim's* recommendations

Since both opinions are well-founded, the *Hesed La'alafim* suggested that such a person fulfill the mitzvah according to both, in one of two ways. One way is to first put the tefillin on the arm opposite the one with which he fulfills skilled tasks, and after the prayers put tefillin on the other arm. The other way is to put tefillin on both arms at once, while stipulating that one intends to fulfill the mitzvah with only the one on the correct arm and that the other one should be considered an ordinary strap.

Maran the Rishon Letziyon (responsa *Yabia Omer* Vol. VI, #2:6) complained that the first suggestion of the *Hesed La'alafim* runs counter to Maran's ruling in the *Shulhan Arukh*. Anyone who follows this suggestion, and recites the blessing when he puts on his tefillin before the prayers, will be guilty of reciting the blessing in vain.

Regarding the second suggestion, Maran the Rishon Letziyon cited the responsa *Rav Pe'alim* (Vol. II, #9) claiming that if someone would wear tefillin on both arms people would suspect him of transgressing the prohibition of *bal tosif*. Besides, he actually will transgress this prohibition despite his stipulation. Although he stipulates that he wishes to fulfill the mitzvah with only one of the tefillin, the fact is that he is wearing kosher tefillin on both arms while the Torah states specifically that the mitzvah is to wear it on one arm only. When people wear tefillin "of Rashi" and tefillin "of Rabbenu Tam" at the same time with a stipulation, they are wearing only one set of kosher tefillin. According to the kabbalists who claim that both sets are kosher, both sets are necessary in order to fulfill the mitzvah. There is no such thing, however, as wearing kosher tefillin on both arms.

Maran the Rishon Letziyon defended the *Hesed La'alafim*, explaining that according to the *Poskim*, the halakha follows either Rashi or Rabbenu Tam, but not both. Even so, it is permissible to wear both sets at the same time with a stipulation that the nonkosher set is considered simply a strap. In the same way, a person can wear tefillin on both arms at the same time, stipulating that the one placed on the wrong arm is considered an ordinary strap. Although both arms are wearing kosher tefillin in this case, the one on the wrong arm is not involved in the act of any mitzvah. The tefillin tied to the wrong arm is the same as tefillin held in someone's hand or sitting in the *kuracha*.

Maran the Rishon Letziyon did not attempt to defend the *Hesed La'alafim* from the first complaint of the *Rav Pe'alim*. Indeed, Harav Shelomo Zalman Auerbach (*Halikhot Shelomo Tefilla* page 43) likewise asserted that if someone wears tefillin on both arms at the same time as the *Hesed La'alafim* suggested, people will suspect him of transgressing the prohibition of *bal tosif*.

161. Maran the Rishon Letziyon issued this ruling in responsa *Yabia Omer* (Vol. VI, #2:4).

Someone who writes different languages with different hands

Maran the Rishon Letziyon added that if someone writes one language with his right hand and another language with his left hand, his status is determined by the hand with which he performs most skilled tasks. Apparently, this is different than the rule for someone who is ambidextrous and uses both hands equally, who is given the status of a righthanded person, as explained below in halakha 39. Maran the Rishon Letziyon did not explain why this case is different.