דיני השי"ן של תפילין

קנח. שי"ן של תפילין הלכה למשה מסיני. והיינו שיעשה בעור הבתים של תפילין ראש כמין שי"ן בולטת מקמטי העור, אחת מימינו ואחת משמאלו, של ימין המניח של שלושה ראשים, ושל שמאל המניח של ארבעה ראשים (תמונה פ'). [ש"ע סעיף מב]

וסודות גדולים ורמזים ישנם בשיני"ן אלו. ועל פי חכמת האמת יש לעשות קודם השי"ן של ארבעה ראשים, ואחר כך השי"ן של שלשה ראשים. [ראה ב"י אות מב בשם הגהת הסמ"ג]

ואין חילוק בין איטר לאדם אחר, שאף בתפילין של איטר עושה השי"ן כשאר בני אדם, בימין המניח של שלושה ראשים, ומשמאל המניח של ארבעה ראשים. [משנ"ב ס"ק קצד, קול יעקב ס"ק קצג]

Day 40

The Letter *Shin*

3-headed and 4-headed *shin*

158) According to *halakha leMoshe miSinai*, the letter *shin* must be formed on the right side and left side of the *bayit* of *tefillin shel rosh*. On one side the *shin* has three heads, like a regular letter *shin*, but on the other side it has four heads. The custom is to form the three-headed *shin* on the right side [of the person wearing it] and the four-headed *shin* on the left side, (Illustration № 80) whether the tefillin are worn by a right-handed or left-handed person.[134] According to the Kabbalah, these letters have enormous significance, and the manufacturer should form the four-headed *shin* before the three-headed one.[135]

question on an individual basis, and therefore he instructed everyone to wear each set one at a time.

134. The *Bet Yosef*, citing a gloss to *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol*, explained that the four-headed *shin* represents the writing on the two Tablets received at Mount Sinai. God wrote the Ten Commandments by engraving the words into the stone tablets. The letter *shin*, therefore, consisted of three grooves hewn into the stone. The three grooves, of course, were surrounded by four stone edges, and these four stone edges are represented by the four-headed *shin* on the *tefillin shel rosh*.

Based on this, the *Eliya Rabba* (32:66) explained why the custom is to form the four-headed *shin* on the left side. God always faces the person addressing Him, and so the person's left side is on the right from God's perspective. God's right side represents the Torah, as the verse states (*Devarim* 33:3): "מִימִינוֹ אֵשׁ דָּת לָמוֹ – From His right Hand [He delivered] the fiery Law to them." Therefore, the letter *shin* appearing on God's right side is formed with four heads to represent God's writing on the Tablets.

This is alluded to by the Talmud's statement: "The *shin* of tefillin is a halakha as Moshe received it from Sinai." The Talmud seems to refer to only one letter *shin*, not both of them. It refers specifically to the four-headed *shin*, which is the one that Moshe Rabbenu received on the Tablets from Mount Sinai. For this reason, the *Eliya Rabba* concluded, even a left-handed person uses tefillin with a four-headed *shin* on his left side. The important thing is for the four-headed *shin* to be on God's right side, and it makes no difference whether the person is right-handed or left-handed.

135. God wrote the Ten Commandments on the two Tablets before Moshe Rabbenu wrote the first Torah scroll. Therefore, the *Bet Yosef* added, we form the four-headed *shin* representing God's writing before forming the three-headed *shin* that represents Moshe Rabbenu's writing. For some reason, the *Mishna Berura* and *Kol Yaakov* made no mention of forming one type of *shin* before the other.

The *Bet Yosef* offers two alternative reasons for the appearance of the letter *shin* on the *tefillin shel rosh*. First, the *Orhot Hayim* (#27) explained that the letter *shin* (which has the numerical value of 300) represents the 300 days of the year when there is a mitzvah to wear tefillin. The *Eliya Rabba* explained how we arrive at this figure.

Rabbenu Yosef Askandarani pointed out that the "opposing" letters (*At-bash*) to those of God's Name (*yod*, *he*, *vav*, *he*) are *mem*, *tzadik*, *pe*, *tzadik*, and the numerical

קנט. צורת עשיית השי״ן, באופן שהאומן לוחץ על העור בעזרת כלי מלאכה, ויוצר כפלים בעור הרך, עד שנעשו כל חלקי האות שי״ן. והפוסקים דנו אם אפשר להשתמש בדפוס של שי״ן, שלוקח לוח מתכת שחקוק עליה שי״ן בולטת, ודוחק הדפוס בעור הבית ונעשה מזה תואר שי״ן. וגם דנו אם אפשר להשתמש בלוח מתכת שיש עליו שי״ן שוקעת, שאז יוצר השי״ן ״בחק תוכות״. [ראה משנ״ב ס״ק קצג, קול יעקב ס״ק קצב, הלכה ברורה עמ׳ תמא]

וכיום רבים נוהגים לעשות השי״ן כך: תחילה מוציאים השי״ן על ידי דפוס החקוק בו שי״ן. האומן צובעו בשחור (כדי לסמן מיקומו). ושוב אחר כך חוזרים ומבטלים לגמרי את בליטת השי״ן בדפוס שטוח. ושוב חוזרים ומוציאים השי״ן המסומנת בשחור באופן ידני בעזרת צבת (שכעת הוא יותר נוח לעיבוד), ואחר כך מייפים אותו שוב בדפוס זה (תמונה פ״א). [ראה פסקי תשובות אות סז בשם ס׳ זכרון אליהו]

How a *shin* is formed

159) The *shin* is formed by the technician using a needle-nose pliers to pinch the leather on the side of the *bayit* and pull out the arms and heads of the letter. The *Poskim* discussed the possibility of placing a metal plate with the letter *shin* in relief inside the *bayit* and pressing on it from the outside until the *shin* is formed. They likewise discussed whether it is possible to form it by taking a metal plate that has the letter *shin* inversed and engraved on it, and pressing it onto the outside of the *bayit* so that the letter *shin* is formed. This method is unacceptable, however, since the letter is formed by pushing down the leather around the letter's parts, and that is an act of *hak tokhot*.

The process today

The standard method used today is to begin by pressing a mold, a metal plate with an inverse letter *shin*, onto the *bayit* and to form the letter through *hak tokhot*. After marking the *shin* with a colored marker, the leather is pressed back into its original flat form with a flat metal plate. Now, the technician declares his intention to form the letter *shin* for the sake of the sanctity of tefillin[136] and then uses his pliers to pull out the letter a second time. It is much easier now that the letter had been already formed once before, and the technician knows exactly where to pull out the leather since it is marked in color. Once he has pulled the letter's parts and formed the

value of those four letters (40 + 90 + 80 + 90) is 300, equal to the numerical value of the letter *shin*. This justifies our Sages' teaching that the non-Jews will see God's Name on the Jewish people when they see the *tefillin shel rosh*. It means that they will see the letter *shin*, which represents the Name. After all, the non-Jews do not see God's Name on the scrolls that are hidden inside the tefillin.

The *Barukh She'amar*, cited by the *Eliya Rabba*, explained that the three-headed *shin* represents our three Patriarchs, and the four-headed *shin* represents our four Matriarchs. Furthermore, the week is divided into three days when the Torah is read publicly and four days when it is not. The *Kol Yaakov* (32:194) cited this and other reasons for the significance of the letter *shin* appearing on the *tefillin shel rosh*.

136. Forming the *shin* without specific intentions

The *Zivhe Tzedek*, cited by the *Kol Yaakov* (32:198), ruled that if the technician failed to declare that he is forming the *shin* for the sake of the sanctity of tefillin, the *bayit* is kosher nonetheless. The *Halakha Berura* offered several arguments for leniency in such a case, but concluded that one cannot be comfortable issuing such a ruling. See the *Piske Teshuvot* (*Siman* 32, footnote 487).

וקודם שעושה השי״ן, יוציא מפיו שעושה השי״ן ״לשם קדושת תפילין״. [קול יעקב ס״ק קצח, וכ״ה במשנ״ב סי׳ לג ס״ק כג]

קם. כאמור, האות שי״ן עושה מקמטי הבית עצמו, אבל אם חתך תמונת שי״ן מקלף או עור עב, והדביק בדבק על הבית, פסול. [משנ״ב ס״ק קצב, קול יעקב ס״ק קצא]

קמא. האות שי״ן יעשה בכתב אשורי ממש, וכן המנהג. [ראה משנ״ב ס״ק קצא, וביאוה״ל ד״ה שי״ן]. ולכן יעשה להשיני״ן ראשים למעלה כמו השיני״ן שבכתב, ולא די בקווים ארוכים לחוד. [משנ״ב סוף ס״ק קצח, קול

basic letter *shin*, the metal plate with the inverse *shin* is pressed onto the *bayit* a second time to sharpen the edges of the letter.[137] (Illustration №81)

Attaching a *shin* to the *bayit*

160) The letter *shin* must be formed from the leather of the *battim*. If someone would cut out the form of a letter *shin* from another piece of leather and glue it onto the *bayit*, it would not be kosher.[138]

The shape of a *shin*

161) The accepted custom is to form the letter *shin* in the same shape as it appears in the alphabet of our sacred scrolls, which is called *Ashuri*. Therefore, it is not sufficient to simply form three prongs extending from a common point on the bottom. Each prong must have a "head" on top, in the manner that a scribe writes

Day 41

137. Using a mold to form the *shin*

It would be best if the technician would form the *shin* entirely by pinching the leather with his tools and pulling out the parts of the letter one by one. However, the letter would have only a resemblance to the *shin* that we see in print, and it would be filled with jagged edges. Therefore, the *battim* manufacturers developed a system using a metal mold to form the letter. One way is to use a metal mold with the letter *shin* in relief, placing the mold inside the *bayit* and pressing on it so that the letter *shin* is pushed out from the inside. The *Poskim* consider this to be equal to the act of using a printing press or an old-fashioned typewriter. If that is considered an act of writing, then this method of forming the *shin* is acceptable as well. Now that our *battim* are made using thick cattle leather, however, this is not a practical choice.

Another method is to use a metal mold with the inverse letter *shin* embossed on it, pressing it onto the side of the *bayit* and forming a *shin* on the leather. This is definitely an act of *hak tokhot*, however, and the *Poskim* debated whether it is permissible to form the letter *shin* on tefillin through *hak tokhot*. According to Harav Menahem Azarya of Fano (responsa #38), the halakha does not require an act of writing; it requires a *shin* to be formed on the tefillin, and it is fine to form it through an act of *hak tokhot*. See the comments of the *Mishna Berura* (32:193), the *Kol Yaakov* (32:192), the *Halakha Berura* (page 441), and the *Piske Teshuvot* (32:67, footnote 484).

Forming it by hand and then with a mold

The *Kol Yaakov* (32:192) related that in Baghdad the common practice was to form the letter *shin* by pinching the leather with pliers, but afterward a metal mold was pressed onto it to improve its appearance and straighten the jagged edges of the letter. (Illustration №81) Since the letter was already basically formed, this does not violate the rule of *hak tokhot*. See more about this in the *Mishnat Hasofer* (21:8) and the *Bi'ur Hasofer*.

138. This is the ruling of Harav Akiva Eiger (responsa #11). The *Hazon Ish* (*O.H.* 11:8) challenged this ruling since the *Aharonim* have ruled that when gluing two pieces of leather together they are then considered to be a single piece, as explained above in halakhot 131 and 139. Accordingly, what should be wrong with gluing a leather form of a *shin* onto the *bayit*? Perhaps, he suggested, the halakha requires the *shin* to be formed from the *bayit* rather than added to it.

The responsa *Tzitz Eliezer* (Vol. VII, #23) cited a list of *Poskim* who ruled that if the *shin* is glued onto the *bayit* it is not kosher, and concluded that it is not possible to rule otherwise and contradict them. See the comments of the *Halakha Berura* (page 443).