Preface Switching *Tefillin Shel Yad* and *Shel Rosh*

Day 93

The Talmud teaches (*Menahot* 34b): "If someone has no *tefillin shel yad* but he has two *tefillin shel rosh*, he should wrap a sheet of leather over one of them, and then he may wear it [as *tefillin shel yad*]." By covering the *tefillin shel rosh* and hiding the fact that it has four separate compartments, it can be then used as *tefillin shel yad*.

The Talmud then challenges this teaching, since Ribbi Yohanan issued a ruling that it is permissible to change *tefillin shel yad* to *tefillin shel rosh*, but it is not permissible to change *tefillin shel rosh* to *tefillin shel yad*, since by doing so one lowers the level of its sanctity. The Talmud resolves the contradiction by explaining that Ribbi Yohanan was referring to *tefillin shel rosh* that had been used for the mitzvah already. Since it has been fully inaugurated with the higher sanctity of *tefillin shel rosh*, it may not be used afterward for the mitzvah of *tefillin shel yad*, which has less sanctity. The first teaching refers to a prepared *tefillin shel rosh* that has never yet been used, and therefore has not been fully charged with the sanctity of the mitzvah. Therefore, it is still permissible to change it into *tefillin shel yad*.

Based on this passage, the *Shulhan Arukh* ruled (42:1): "It is forbidden to change *tefillin shel rosh* into *tefillin shel yad* since the *shel rosh* has a higher level of sanctity. It is permissible to change *tefillin shel yad* into *tefillin shel rosh*. If the tefillin have never yet been used for the mitzvah, it is permissible even to change the *tefillin shel rosh* to *tefillin shel yad*."

Why is *tefillin shel rosh* more sacred?

Rashi explained that this is based on the fact that tefillin represent one of God's Names – Shaddai. The *tefillin shel rosh* is more sacred than *tefillin shel yad* since two letters of that Name appear on the *tefillin shel rosh* (*shin* on the *bayit* and *dalet* on the strap) whereas only one letter (*yod*) appears on the (strap of the) *tefillin shel yad*. Furthermore, *tefillin shel rosh* is more exalted since it advertises to the world that God placed His Name on the Jewish people. Ribbi Eliezer [ben Hurkanos] taught that this is the meaning of the verse (*Devarim* 28:10): "וְרָאוּ כָל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ כִּי שֵׁם ה' נִקְרָא עָלֶיךָ – all the nations of the world will see that God's Name is called upon you."

The *Magen Avraham* (28:4) added that since *tefillin shel rosh* is more sacred, it is forbidden to place *tefillin shel yad* on top of *tefillin shel rosh*. See the *Mishna Berura* (28:7).



סימן מב

דין לשנות תפילין של יד לשל ראש, ולהיפך

א. אסור לשנות תפילין של ראש (הבית או הפרשיות, ראה קול יעקב ס"ק ב) לעשותן של יד, אפילו ליקח רצועה מתפילין של ראש וליתן בתפילין של יד, אסור. מפני שאין מורידין מקדושה חמורה לקדושה קלה, ושל ראש קדושתו חמורה, מפני שרובו של שדי בשל ראש. [ש"ע סי' מב ס"א]. והוא הדין נרתיק המיוחד לתפילין של ראש, אסור לשנותו עבור תפילין של יד. [משנ"ב ס"ק ב, ולעיל סי' כח ס"ק ז]

ואפילו מי שאין לו תפילין של יד, ויש לו שני תפילין של ראש, אין לו לשנות תפילין של ראש לשל **יד.** [משנ"ב וקול יעקב ס"ק א]

Siman 42

Switching *Tefillin Shel Yad* and *Shel Rosh*

Changing *tefillin shel rosh* to *tefillin shel yad*

1) It is forbidden to take any part of *tefillin shel rosh* and use it as part of *tefillin shel yad*. This applies to the *bayit* housing, the parchments, and even to the strap. *Tefillin shel rosh* possesses a higher level of sanctity than *tefillin shel yad* since two of the three letters that spell the Name Shaddai are represented on the *tefillin shel rosh*. It is forbidden to use an item of high sanctity for a purpose that is less sacred.[354] Likewise, it is forbidden to take a [plastic or cardboard] cover that has been used for *tefillin shel rosh* and use it for *tefillin shel yad*.[355]

Based on this, if someone has no *tefillin shel yad* but he has two *tefillin shel rosh*, he may not change one of them into *tefillin shel yad*.[356]

354. See the preface to this *Siman* for an expanded explanation of this concept.

355. The *Aharonim* ruled that it is forbidden to take a pouch designated for *tefillin shel rosh* and use it for *tefillin shel yad*, and this applies equally to the covers placed on the tefillin before wrapping up the straps. Nowadays, the plastic covers used for tefillin are made in such a manner that it would not be possible to use the cover of *tefillin shel rosh* for *tefillin shel yad* since the latter needs to have a portion cut off to allow for the knot to fit into it. Furthermore, the space inside the cover made for *tefillin shel yad* is slightly larger than the space in the cover of the *tefillin shel rosh*, so that the *tefillin shel rosh* would not fit snugly into the cover of the *tefillin shel yad*.

The *Piske Teshuvot* (42:1) noted that it is common for the bottom parts of these covers to break off. There is no way to distinguish between the bottoms of the covers. If someone wishes to salvage used bottoms to repair the covers of his tefillin, he may do so for his *tefillin shel rosh*, but he must not take a used cover bottom for his *tefillin shel yad* unless he can verify that it had not been used for *tefillin shel rosh*.

356. This ruling is based on the *Magen Avraham*. Maran the Rishon Letziyon (responsa *Yabia Omer* Vol. VIII, footnote to #19:3) pointed out that the Torah prohibition forbidding one from lowering an item's sanctity applies only to the leather housings of the tefillin, since they contain the parchments upon which passages of the Torah are written. The tefillin straps, however, have the status of *tashmishe kedusha*, accessories of a sacred item. It is not forbidden by the Torah to lower the level of the sanctity of *tashmishe kedusha*; it is forbidden only by our Sages' institution. Therefore, it is possible that if

ב. מותר לשנות תפילין של יד לעשותן תפילין של ראש. [ש"ע סי' מב ס"א]. והיינו באופן שיעשה לו ארבעה בתים, ויכניס כל פרשה בבית שלה. [משנ"ב ס"ק ה, קול יעקב ס"ק ג]. והוא הדין שמותר ליקח פרשיות ורצועות מתפילין של יד לתפילין של ראש. [משנ"ב שם]

ג. אם היו התפילין חדשים שעדיין לא הניחם, מותר לשנות אפילו משל ראש לשל יד. ובאופן שתולה עליהם מכסה עור אחד, ונראים כבית אחד. [ש"ע שם]. ואף שכבר זימן והכין התפילין לצורך של ראש, אין כאן אלא הזמנה, והזמנה לאו מילתא היא. [משנ"ב ס"ק ו, קול יעקב ס"ק ד]
וכן הרצועות אפילו קשרן בשל ראש ועשאן בקשרי של שם שדי, כל זמן שלא לבשן עליו למצוה לא מקרי אלא הזמנה, ומותר לשנותן לתפילין של יד. [קול יעקב שם]

Day 94

Changing *tefillin shel yad* to *tefillin shel rosh*

2) It is permissible to change *tefillin shel yad* into *tefillin shel rosh*. That is, he can fashion the *bayit* into four separate compartments and then place each of the four passages written on the parchment into its designated compartment.[357] Likewise, it is permissible to take a tefillin parchment that had been used in *tefillin shel yad*[358] and use it for *tefillin shel rosh*, and to take a strap that had been used for *tefillin shel yad* and use it for *tefillin shel rosh*.

Changing a brand-new *tefillin shel rosh*

3) If someone has a brand-new *tefillin shel rosh* that has not been used yet for the mitzvah, it is permissible to change it into *tefillin shel yad*. This is done by wrapping a sheet of leather over the *bayit* so that it appears to have only one compartment.[359] Even though it was originally designated specifically to be *tefillin shel rosh*, the act of designating the item does not determine its status until it is actually used.

Likewise, even though the strap has been knotted in the form of the letter *dalet* for use as *tefillin shel rosh*, as long as it has not yet been used for the mitzvah it is considered only to have been designated. Therefore, it still may be changed and used for *tefillin shel yad*.

someone is missing a strap for *tefillin shel yad* and he has an extra strap that had been used for *tefillin shel rosh*, it would be permissible for him to use that strap for his *tefillin shel yad*. It should be permissible to override the prohibition of lowering the strap's sanctity so that it will be possible to fulfill the Torah mitzvah of *tefillin shel yad*.

Nevertheless, it appears that Harav Zalman forbids this. The *Yalkut Yosef* cited both opinions without issuing a definite ruling.

357. The *bayit* of *tefillin shel rosh* must be separated into four compartments; otherwise it is not kosher at all. See the *Kol Yaakov* (42:3), the *Shulhan Arukh* (32:38), and the *Mishna Berura* (32:172).

358. The single parchment placed in *tefillin shel yad* has all four passages written on it. To use it for *tefillin shel rosh*, one must cut the parchment into four parts and place each part into the appropriate compartment.

359. The *Mishna Berura* (42:7) explained that although there are still four separate compartments inside with four separate parchments, it is still kosher as *tefillin shel yad* since it appears to be a single compartment from the outside.