

# DUAL-PURPOSE TEFILLIN

*by Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein*

*Bind them as a sign upon your arm, and as totafos between your eyes.*

Be'er Yosef: Rashi, citing the gemara,<sup>2</sup> understands the word totafos to be an amalgam of two words, each word meaning "two" in a foreign language. While this provides a definition for an unusual word, it leaves us trying to understand what it is about tefillin that the Torah wishes to essentially describe as "two plus two."

It would seem that the Torah wishes to underscore that tefillin incorporate two primary themes, each one finding expression in the different Torah portions they incorporate. The two themes are emunah, and the exodus from Egypt.

These two themes were already identified in the time of the rishonim as prominent in the four parshios of the tefillin. Ramban speaks of remembering the exodus, and remembering the obligation of mitzvos, including the mitzvah of emunah itself, and the consequences of obeying and disobeying the law. Rabbenu Yonah speaks more pithily of recognizing Hashem's Oneness and of the exodus.

Probing a bit further, we can see that the four parshios of tefillin can be equally grouped around the two principal themes. Shema and ve-haya im shamo'a (or what we often refer to as the first two sections of the Shema) both deal with belief in Hashem, and the need to worship Him alone. Effectively, these two parshios concern themselves with the first, quintessential belief of Judaism - the fact of Hashem's existence and Unity.

The other two parshios - kadash and ve-haya ki yeviacha - invoke our belief in the exodus from Egypt.

With this in place, we can clear up a mystery of the siddur. In the prayer recited before putting on tefillin, we mention each of the four parshios. The order we use, however, is highly unusual. This order does not follow the order of their appearance in the Torah. Neither does it follow the way they are positioned in the tefillin - neither according to Rashi, nor Rabbenu Tam, neither when you look at them from left to right, nor from right to left.

According to our analysis, however, the order is eminently sensible. Of the two principles represented in the tefillin, that of emunah must be seen as fundamental and primary. The entire Torah stands on the reality of Hashem's existence. Shema and ve-haya im shamo'a, the two sections that speak of Hashem's existence and Oneness, can be thought of as two strong support documents

for this principle. Once this is established, we can turn to tributary demands, like following all His dictates.

Kadesh and ve-haya ki yeviacha support the principle of obeying His mitzvos. Taken together with the first two parshios - and precisely in the order that they are listed in the siddur - they

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Sources:

1. Based on Be'er Yosef, Devarim 6:8
  2. Sanhedrin 4B
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