



Hilkhot Tefilin, Mezuzah and Sefer Torah Laws of Tefilin, Mezuzah and Sefer Torah

Hilkhot Tefilin Chapter 1:1-2

1 The four Pentateuchal sections, beginning respectively, “Sanctify to Me” (Ex. 13:1-10), “And it shall be when the Lord shall bring you” (*ibid.* 11-16)—these two being in the Book of Exodus—“Hear, O Israel” (Deut. 6:4-9) “And it shall come to pass if you shall hearken diligently” (*ibid.* 11:13-21), are written and covered with a skin. These are called *tefillin*, and are placed upon the head and bound on the arm. The omission of the point of a single letter in any one of these sections bars, according to Scriptural enactment, the use of all of them. They must all be written perfectly and in accordance with rule.

2 This is the case also with the two sections of the *mezuzah*, beginning respectively, “Hear, O Israel” (Deut. 6:4-9) and, “And it shall come to pass if you shall hearken diligently” (*ibid.* 11:13-21). If the point of a letter is missing in these two sections, the *mezuzah* may not, according to Scriptural enactment, be used. The two sections must be written perfectly. So too, a scroll of the Law, in which a single letter is missing, is unfit for use.

Chapter 4:25-26

25 The sanctity of phylacteries is a high degree of sanctity. As long as phylacteries are on a man’s head and arm, he is humble and God-fearing, is not drawn into frivolity and idle talk, does not dwell on evil thoughts but occupies his mind with thoughts of truth and righteousness. A man should therefore endeavor to wear phylacteries the whole day, this being the right way of fulfilling the precept. It is said of Rav, the disciple of our sainted teacher (R. Judah the Prince), that throughout his life no one saw him without Torah, *tzitzit* (fringes on his garments), or phylacteries.

26 Although the proper mode of fulfilling the precept is to wear phylacteries the whole day, it is especially a duty to do so during the recital of prayers. The sages say, “Whoever reads the *Shema* without wearing phylacteries is regarded as testifying falsely in his own person.” “Whoever does not wear phylacteries at all violates eight affirmative precept,” since in each of the four sections, the command is set forth to lay phylacteries on the head and on the arm. “Whoever wears phylacteries regularly will be blessed with longevity, as it is said, “The Lord is upon them: they shall live”” (Is. 38:16).

Hilkhot Mezuzah Chapter 5:4

4 It is universal custom to write the word *Shad-dai* (Almighty) on the other side of the *mezuzah*, opposite the blank space between the two sections. As this word is written on the outside, the practice is unobjectionable. They, however, who write names of angels, holy names, a Biblical text, or inscriptions usual on seals within the *mezuzah*, are among those who have no portion in the world to come. For these fools not only fail to fulfill the commandment but they treat an important precept that expresses the Unity of God, the love of Him, and His worship, as if it were an amulet to promote their own personal interests; for, according to their foolish minds, the *mezuzah* is something that will secure for them advantage in the vanities of the world.

Chapter 6:13

13 A person should pay heed to the precept of the *mezuzah*; for it is an obligation perpetually binding upon all. Whenever one enters or leaves a home with the *mezuzah* on the doorpost, he will be confronted with the declaration of God's unity, blessed be His holy name; and will remember the love due to God, and will be aroused from his slumbers and his foolish absorption in temporal vanities. He will realize that nothing endures to all eternity save knowledge of the Ruler of the universe. This thought will immediately restore him to his right senses and he will walk in the paths of righteousness. Our ancient teachers said: He who has phylacteries on his head and arm, fringes on his garment, and a *mezuzah* on his door may be presumed not to sin, for he has many monitors—angels that save him from sinning, as it is said, (Ps. 34:8) “The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him and delivers them.”

Hilkhot Sefer Torah

Chapter 7:1

1 It is an affirmative precept binding upon every individual Israelite to write a scroll of the Law for his own use, as it is said, “Now therefore write you this song for you” (Deut. 31:19). As the Torah is not written in separate sections, this text means, “Write for your selves the Torah in which this song contained.” Even if a person’s ancestors have bequeathed a scroll to him, it is a religious duty to write a scroll at his own expense. If he writes it with his own hand, it is accounted to him as if he had received it from Sinai. If one does not know how to write a scroll, he should get others to write it for him. He who corrects a scroll, even a single letter of it, is regarded as if he had written it completely.

Chapter 8:4

4 As in all the scrolls I have seen, I notice serious incorrectness in these regards; while authorities on the Massorah, who write treatises and compilations with the aim of pointing out the sections that are closed and those that are open, differ according to the variations in the scrolls on which they rely, I deemed it fit to write here a list of the sections which are closed and those which are open, as also the forms in which the songs of the Pentateuch are written so that all the scrolls may be corrected from, and compared with, them. The copy on which I relied is the well-known Egyptian codex which contains the twenty-four books of the Scriptures and which had been in Jerusalem for several years—used as the standard text for the examination of scrolls. Everyone relied upon it because it had been examined by Ben Asher who closely studied it for many years and examined it again whenever it was being copied. This codex was the text on which I relied in the scroll of the Law that I wrote according to the rules.

Chapter 10:10-11

10 It is a duty to assign a fixed place for a scroll of the Law, and to show it extreme honor and courtesy. The words in the tables of the covenant are in every scroll of the Law. One may not expectorate before a scroll of the Law, nor indecently expose oneself before it, nor stretch out one’s feet before it; nor place it upon the head in the way in which a burden is carried; nor turn one’s back to it unless it is at an elevation of ten handbreadths above the person.

11 If one is traveling from place to place and had a scroll of the Law with him, he is not to put the scroll in a sack, place it on the donkey’s back, and ride thereupon. If, however, he is afraid of thieves, he may do so. When there is no such apprehension, he places it in his bosom close to his heart, and continues his journey, riding. Anyone, sitting before a scroll of the Law, should be inspired with a sense of earnestness, awe, and reverence, for it is a faithful witness concerning all who come into the world, as it is said, “It shall be

therefore a witness against you” (Deut. 31:26).* All possible honor should be shown it. The ancient sage said, “Whoever treats the Torah with contumely will be treated by his fellow creature. Whoever honors the Torah, will received honor from his fellow creatures” (Ethics of the Fathers 4:8).