



פרשת בא
שבט תשפ"ג
שנת הקהל



HAKHEL IN THE PARSHA

The purpose of leaving Mitzrayim was in order to serve Hashem by receiving the Torah at Har Sinai.

After the Plague of locusts, Pharaoh relented to let some of the Jewish people go. He asked Moshe who would be leaving.

Moshe responded **בנערינו ובזקנינו** "we will go with our young and our old, with our sons and our daughters."

Pharaoh responded that he would only allow the (adult) men to go, saying that for worshipping Hashem in the desert, children were not usually required.

At Matan Torah, it was essential that every Jew be present; males and females, young and old.

The Rambam alludes to the fact that the Hakhel gathering was like recreating Maamad Har Sinai, with the king serving as Hashem's Shaliach to read the words of the Torah.

This is why Hakhel, like Yetzias Mitzrayim and the Giving of the Torah, had to be a gathering of the entire Jewish people; men, women and young children—sons and daughters.

So too in the final redemption, we will go out **בנערינו ובזקנינו** **לך בבנינו ובבנותנו**



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Come with Me into the darkness

Based on the Maamar Basi Legani 5743

The Zohar teaches us how Hashem led Moshe through the chambers of unholiness, taking him deeper and deeper, chamber within chamber within the realms of evil.

As he approached the Kelipah of Pharaoh, the great serpent, Moshe was frightened and could not advance further. Seeing Moshe's fear, Hashem said "Behold I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great serpent that crouches in his streams..." for only Hashem alone could wage war with this evil.

With this, the Zohar explains why Hashem said to Moshe **בא אל פרעה** - come to Pharaoh. As Hashem was sending Moshe to Pharaoh, He should have said **לך אל פרעה** - go to Pharaoh.

Hashem was not sending Moshe alone to face the great evil embodied within Pharaoh. Rather, He Himself was going to wage war against Pharaoh and was calling Moshe to "come" with Him.

The Neshama comes into this world as a Shaliach of Hashem to make the world into a dwelling place for the Divine presence. We do this through transforming and refining the physicality of the world, to become a vessel for G-dliness.

We do this through two modes of Divine service; Iskafya and Is'hapcha - suppression and transformation. Iskafya refers to pushing away negativity and evil, suppressing materialism and evil and our desire for it. The service of Iskafya is necessary when we are challenged by temptation and struggle with desire. We must push these away and distance ourselves from them

Whilst necessary, this is not the ultimate service. Hashem desires a dwelling place in the most spiritually distant space; that even the darkness becomes a vessel for G-dly light. We cannot achieve this through running away from physicality and negativity. The ultimate is to engage with physicality and negativity and transform it; from dark to light and from bitter to sweet.

In Tehillim we read **סור מרע ועשה טוב**, "turn away from evil and do good." The Baal Shem Tov explains the inner meaning of this verse, which encapsulates

the totality of our Avodah in this world. The word **עשה** meaning "do", also means "to make". At the start of our Avodah we must "turn away from evil". But the ultimate is when we take that evil and "make it good".

But how can we be asked to engage with negativity and ? Every morning we pray that Hashem not bring us to spiritual challenges and one who knowingly places themselves in the face of a spiritual challenge, is liable for their failure.

If even Moshe Rabbeinu was afraid to face the great evil of Kelipah, how can we be expected to not only face the Kelipah but transform it?

In the Gemara, Rav Yitzchak taught that Rachav was so beautiful, that one who merely mentioned her name would be overcome by desire and temptation. On hearing this teaching, Rav Nachman responded that he has mentioned her name and is unaffected. Rav Yitzchak qualified his teaching that it only applies to "one who knew her **ידועה** and has recognised her".

This story can be understood as a metaphor for the desires, allure and temptation of physicality and materialism. The word **ידע** also means to create a deep, intimate attachment.

When do we have to fear? When we are attached down below to a material existence. But when instead of "knowing" the world of physicality, we are deeply attached to Hashem, as reflected in the verse **ידע את אלקי אביך**, we have nothing to fear.

This deep bond of "knowing" Hashem is achieved through the study of Torah, with the deep awareness and feeling that the words of Torah are the wisdom and words of Hashem.

When we enter and engage with the world but connected Above, we are not "going to Pharaoh" - alone. Instead, we are "coming" with Hashem and with His power. Just as Hashem certainly fears nothing because everything is like nothing before Him, when we are connected, we can face any snake and transform even the darkest place into a reflector of the greatest light.

The weekly Halacha analysis

How Many Brachos are Recited Over Tefillin

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

In Parshas Bo, we read two of the four Parshios in the Torah which contain the commandment for the Mitzvah of Tefillin.

Accepted Halacha follows the opinion that Tefillin Shel Yad and Tefillin Shel Rosh are considered as two separate Mitzvos¹. Technically they could be worn one without the other². Nonetheless they should be worn together, with the Tefillin Shel Yad being placed before the Tefillin Shel Rosh. The two Tefillin should be donned without any interruption or delay in between - certainly by speaking³ but even without speaking.

When putting on both Tefillin, there is a dispute found in the Rishonim on whether the Tefillin Shel Rosh requires a separate Bracha, or whether it is covered by the Bracha recited over the Tefillin Shel Yad. The dispute is based on how to interpret the ruling of the Talmud³ "if a person does not speak he makes one blessing. If he does speak, he is required to make two blessings".

Rabbeinu Tam and the Rosh understand the entire statement as referring to placing the Tefillin Shel Rosh, after one has already recited the blessing over and put on the Tefillin Shel Yad. Even though both Tefillin are technically covered by the one blessing of תפילין להניח recited over the Tefillin Shel Yad, out of respect of their higher level of Kedusha, the additional Bracha על מצות תפילין was instituted to always be recited on the Tefillin Shel Rosh⁴.

Speaking in between creates an interruption and the Bracha on the Tefillin Shel Yad would not be able to cover the Tefillin Shel Rosh. Therefore, if one spoke, they are required to recite two blessings over the Tefillin Shel Rosh; to repeat the primary blessing of להניח the תפילין and then make the standard Bracha על מצות תפילין

However, Rashi, Rif and Rambam interpret the Talmud differently. The Talmud is speaking about the total number of Brachos recited over both Tefillin. If a person does not speak in between, the Bracha of להניח תפילין is sufficient to cover the Tefillin Shel Rosh as well. In their understanding, the Bracha על מצות תפילין was only instituted to be said (in addition to the original Bracha) in a case

where a person spoke or interrupted between putting on the Tefillin Shel Yad and Shel Rosh.

In Shulchan Aruch, the Mechaber rules like the Rif and the Rambam that no Bracha is recited over the Tefillin Shel Rosh. Only if one spoke or there was an interruption would he also have to make the Bracha על מצות תפילין. This is the practise of Sefardim.

The Ram"o records that the custom in Ashkenaz is to recite two separate blessings, following Rabbeinu Tam and the Rosh and there is no concern of a ברכה לבטלה (blessing said in vain). Indeed, if there were a concern, we would not be able to make the blessing out of doubt. Nonetheless it is still preferable to say ברוך שם כבוד ועד after the Bracha over the Tefillin Shel Rosh as is said after making a ברכה לבטלה. This is also the ruling of the Mishna Berura⁵.

According to all opinions, if the interrupting speech was pertaining to the Tefillin themselves, it is not considered an interruption and no extra Brachos would be required.

If the minyan is reciting Kaddish, Kedusha or Borchu while someone is between putting on the Tefillin Shel Yad and Shel Rosh, are they allowed to interrupt to answer?

Most of the Rishonim rule that one may not interrupt at all even for these responses. According to both opinions above, interrupting will necessitate making a Bracha, which would otherwise not have been required⁶ - according to Rabbeinu Tam, and על מצות תפילין according to the Rif. Instead one should listen silently to Chazran. This is not considered a Hefsek and he is still considered as though he had actually answered.

The Alter Rebbe in his Shulchan Aruch rules like the Ram"o as per the prevalent custom in Ashkenaz. Were a person to interrupt, two blessings would now be required on Tefillin Shel Rosh. Therefore, one should not interrupt to respond to Kaddish and the like. Should he do so, it would be considered and treated like any other form of interruption⁷.

However, in the Siddur⁸, the Alter Rebbe changes his ruling and rules like the Rif and Rambam - that no Bracha is recited over the Tefillin Shel Rosh unless one interrupted, in which case only the Bracha על מצות תפילין would be recited.

The Alter Rebbe also reverses his ruling and says that one may interrupt to respond to Kedusha, Borchu or the first part of Kaddish. Even though this would now necessitate the 'unnecessary' recital of the Bracha על מצות תפילין, the Alter Rebbe permits it based on the following rationale;

Even though the halacha is like the Rif that the Bracha על מצות תפילין is only said in case of an interruption, according to Rabbeinu Tam, the Bracha על מצות תפילין is always recited over Tefillin Shel Rosh even where no interruption is made. Whilst normally we do not say the Bracha על מצות תפילין and we avoid interruptions that would require the extra blessing, here we can rely on Rabbeinu Tam's opinion so as not to miss out on responding to a דבר שבקדושה

In a letter, the Rebbe understands this is not just an allowance that one may respond, but rather a requirement that one is actually required to stop to respond – and then put on the Tefillin Shel Rosh with the extra blessing.

For Chabad Chassidim, the general rule is that when the Alter Rebbe rules differently in the Siddur than in the Shulchan Aruch, we follow the latter ruling of the Siddur.

1. Rambam Sefer Hamitzvos, Sefer HaChinuch, Rav Saadiah Gaon, Sefer Mitzvos Gadol. In contrast to Baal Halachos Gedolos, Sefer Mitzvos Katan and Yereim who count both Tefillin as a single Mitzvah
2. Mishna Menachos 38a
3. See Talmud Sotah that this speaking would be considered a sin to the extent that one who did so would not be able to participate in battle.
4. See Aruch Hashulchan in the name of the Mahara"l who questions this opinion since we do not find any Mitzvah which requires 2 blessings. Aruch Hashulchan suggests that the blessing על מצות תפילין is not a ברכת המצות but rather הודאה
5. To be able to make the Bracha על מצות תפילין according to all opinions, Rabbi Akiva Eiger suggests that when reciting the Bracha להניח תפילין on the Shel Yad he should have in mind that if the halacha follows Rashi, then he should not be yotzai with this Bracha on the Tefillin
6. See Beis Yosef and Darkei Moshe OC 25:6. Rashi however (as understood by Tosfos) suggests that one should respond, so long as they then make the necessary Bracha over the Tefillin Shel Rosh.
7. In a case where no blessings are recited over the Tefillin at all, such as on Chol Hamoed or over the Tefillin of Rabbeinu Tam, there is no concern and one may interrupt between Tefillin Shel Yad and Shel Rosh to respond to Kaddish etc (Magen Avraham OC 25:17). However one would not be able to interrupt with other forms of speech. Even responding Baruch Hu uVaruch Shemo would not be permitted. Similarly Amein could only be answered on the first part of Kaddish, since from Tiskabel onwards is only a minhag.
8. Piskei Hasidur Hilchos Tefillin ודאם תפילין