The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
Shabbos, Nov 1, 2025 ■ י'חשון, תשפ"ו
סימן כ"ז סעיף א'

Overview

Siman 27 Seif 1:

The correct place of the *shel yad* is one's left arm on the bicep between the elbow and the armpit. The *shel yad* should lean towards the body so that when one straightens his arm the *shel yad* will face his heart and thereby fulfill the obligation to put one's *tefillin* "on one's heart." The *shel yad* should be placed on the half of the bone towards the elbow rather than the half of the bone towards the armpit. One who does not have a forearm puts on *tefillin* without a *beracha*.

- If one (a "righty") puts *tefillin* on his right hand the mitzvah is not fulfilled. (M.B. 1)
- Shulchan Aruch and Rema agree that the *shel yad* should be on the lower half of the arm towards the elbow but Gra maintains that the *shel yad* may be placed anywhere on the bicep, even on the upper half of the arm towards the elbow. (M.B. 4)
- All opinions agree that the *shel yad* may not be placed below the bicep; therefore one should avoid a large *shel yad* that commonly ends up below the bicep. (M.B. 4)
- As long as some of the forearm remains one may even recite the *beracha* on the *shel yad*. (M.B. 5)
- One who is missing his upper arm or even part of it is exempt from putting on his *shel yad* even on his right arm but there are opinions that are stringent about this issue. (M.B. 6)

Halacha Highlight

The correct location for the *shel yad*

Shulchan Aruch Siman 27 Seif 1

בבשר תפוח שבעצם שבין הקובד"ו ובית השחי

On the bicep above the bone that is between the elbow and the armpit.

Shulchan Aruch writes that the correct location is for the *tefillin* to rest on the bicep that is above the bone between the elbow and the underarm. Rema adds that one's *tefillin* should rest on the lower part of the bicep, meaning towards the elbow rather than the upper part of the bicep towards that shoulder. Shulchan Aruch (ע' לקמן סע' ז') also writes that the *shel yad* should be on the lower part of the arm rather than on the upper part of the arm. Mishnah Berurah (סק"ד) explains that when Rema wrote that the *shel yad* is placed above the ראש העצם (lit. the head or end of the bone) he did not mean literally since the part of the arm directly above the head of the bone is not the correct location for the *shel yad*. The reason is that the *shel yad* must rest on the bicep and approximately two finger widths from the elbow(ע' פסקי תשובות אות א') is too low on the arm for any part of the *shel yad* to rest.

Mishnah Berurah then cites Gra who subscribes to the opinion that anywhere on the bicep is an acceptable location for the *shel rosh* to rest, even if it is on the upper half of the arm towards the shoulder. Mishnah Berurah adds, however, that *l'chatchila* one should not follow the lenient opinion of Gra since Shulchan Aruch and Rema did not accept that leniency. However, if one has only large *tefillin* it is better to rely on Gra and place the *tefillin* on the upper half of the bicep than to put them too close to the elbow which is not a correct place according to any opinion. This is important for bar-mitzvah boys whose arms are small. If the front half of their bicep is too small for their *shel yad,* the *shel yad* should be lifted up towards the shoulder rather than allow even part of it to extend too far down off the bicep.

Stories to Share

The Power of Tefillin

ש"ע כ"ז, א': "ונמצא מקיים 'והיו הדברים האלה על לבבך'..."

On today's amud we find that one should place the hand tefillin "upon one's heart." This teaches that putting on tefilin has the power to change one's heart and encourage him to fulfill the mitzvos.

ע' רמב"ן, בא, ג':ט"ז

Many years ago, Rav Shmuel Hominer zt"l brought a group of respected Rabbonim with him to Eilat to encourage Torah observance. During their stay in the town, Rav Hominer attempted to get as many of the locals as he could to put on tefillin, knowing the power of a single mitzvah. Most men he approached were willing to humor him, but one turned out to be a tough customer.

"I already told you, Rabbi… It's very kind of you to offer, but I happen to be an atheist!"

"Chas v'shalom! You're a yid—you're no atheist! Why not put them on for just a minute?" The man resisted, but Rav Hominer insisted, and after a long struggle the "customer" gave in.

With a broad smile, Rav Hominer said, "Now, repeat after me. 'Boruch'…"

"Wait! I just told you I'm an atheist—I'm not going to say that!"

"Chas v'shalom! You're no atheist! Now, repeat after me…" The two men struggled for another few minutes, but the man was again won over by Rav Hominer's good-natured persistence, and did as he was asked.

The next morning, this man went to the local grocery. He approached the register with a few items, and the storekeeper reached behind the counter and handed him his usual breakfast—a sandwich of treife meat. The man held up his hand and waved the parcel away with an obvious look of disgust.

"What's the matter?" asked the grocer. "You eat this every day!"

"You expect me to eat that? I put on tefillin with a brochah yesterday—I can't eat that today!"

כן שמעתי מדודי, הרב שמחה גולשבסקי, ז"ל