The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן כ"ז סעיף ו'-ח'

# Overview

**Siman 27 Seif 6:**

**A "lefty" who performs all of his activities with his left hand puts his *shel yad* on his left arm which is everyone else's right arm. If he is ambidextrous he should put it on his left arm. If he writes with his right hand but performs all other activities with his left hand or if he writes with his left hand but everything else he does with his right hand – Some maintain that he should put his *shel yad* on his weaker hand but according to others the hand he uses for writing is the more important hand and his *tefillin* are put on his other arm** (and this is the custom).

- Even if one accustomed himself to be a "lefty" or as a result of illness he lost strength in his right hand he is halachically a "lefty" and puts his *shel yad* on his right arm. (M.B. 22)
- If a "lefty" puts his *shel yad* on his left arm he does not fulfill the *mitzvah*. (M.B. 24)
- He is a "lefty" if it is easier to use one's left hand even though he can also do things with his right hand. (M.B. 25)

**Siman 27 Seif 7:**

**Even if a person has a wound where his *shel yad* is placed he should still put on his *shel yad* because there is room for two *shel yads* because the place for the *shel yad* is from the middle of the bone that extends from the underarm to the elbow.**

- If the wound extends all the way to the elbow one may rely on the opinion who maintains that the *shel yad* may be placed on the part of the bicep that is part of the upper half of the arm. If the wound is very large he is exempt altogether from putting on the *shel yad*. (M.B. 29)

**Siman 27 Seif 8:**

**The length of the *retzua* is sufficient length to tighten around the arm and then extend to be able to wrap around three times around the middle finger. There is a custom to wrap the *retzua* around the forearm six or seven times.** One should not wrap the retzua around the *titura* in order to hold it in place.

- The *retzua* is wrapped twice around the lower part of the middle finger and one time around the middle of that finger. According to others one wraps once around the middle part of the finger and then two times around the lower part of the finger. These wrappings are done after the *shel rosh* is in place. (M.B. 30)
- The custom is to wrap around one's forearm seven times. (M.B. 31)

# Stories to Share

## The Weaker Arm

ש"ע סי' כ"ז, ו': "מניח בשמאלו שהוא ימין של כל אדם..."

It is singular that tefillin is placed on the weaker arm unlike the general rule in mitzvos that one uses specifically his stronger side. The Kli Yakar gives a wondrous explanation of this halachah. "This teaches that one cannot overcome anything with his own strength. Instead, he should recognize that Hashem gives him the strength to accomplish.

"We wear the tefillin shel yad on the weaker hand because we ourselves are weak. It is only when Hashem holds our frail hands and assists that we win through. We place Hashem's Name on the weaker hand as a sign that without Hashem's help we are truly powerless."

כלי יקר, סוף פרשת בא

The halachah of an ambidextrous person is unclear; how do we determine which is his weaker hand?

When a certain person who wrote with his left hand and did other actions easier with his right hand asked Rav Elyashiv, zt"l, on which hand to put tefillin, the rav asked a simple question. "Can you also write with your right hand?"

When the questioner replied that he could, Rav Elyashiv ruled that he should put tefillin on his left arm for the course of davening. "But after davening you should put on your right arm too, to also discharge your obligation according to the Gra."

אור לארבעה עשר, ע' קט"ז

On another occasion, a lefty who had become accustomed to write with his right hand asked which arm to put tefillin on. "Even though now it is much easier for him to write with his right hand, he must still put tefillin on his right," the gaon answered. "This is especially clear since you still can write with your left hand."

חיי משה או"ח, ח"א, ע' קנ"ד

# Halacha Highlight

## Determining whether one is a "righty" or a "lefty"

Shulchan Aruch Siman 27 Seif 6

**ואם כותב בימינו ושאר כל מעשיו עושה בשמאלו**

**If he writes with his right hand but other activities he does with his left hand**

Someone who is a "lefty," meaning he writes and performs all of his tasks with his left hand, puts his *shel yad* on his right hand. There is a major disagreement amongst the Poskim how to define a "lefty" who does some activities with one hand and other activities with the other hand. Shulchan Aruch addresses a person who either writes with his right hand but does other activities with his left hand, or he writes with his left hand but uses his right hand for other activities. Two opinions are cited regarding such people. According to the first opinion he should put his *shel yad* on his weaker hand, meaning the hand that is used for activities is his strong hand (without regard to the hand he uses for writing) and he puts his *shel yad* on the other hand. According to the second opinion the hand he uses for writing is considered the more significant hand and he should put his *shel yad* on his other hand. Rema favors the second opinion and according to the principle that when Shulchan Aruch presents two opinions with the words יש אומרים his position is consistent with the second opinion, Shulchan Aruch also determines a person's status by the hand he uses for writing.

Vilna Gaon (ס"ק י"ז) follows the first opinion that a person's status is determined by what is his stronger and weaker hand. Bach (ד"ה ואיטר יד) writes that someone who does everything with his left hand will put his *shel yad* on his right arm but if someone does some things with his left hand and some things with his right hand he should put his *shel yad* on his left arm. Some Poskim advocate accommodating both opinions and for davening one should wear his *shel yad* on the hand that is not used for writing and some time later he should put his *tefillin* on a second time with the *shel* yad on the other hand. This issue is one that does not have a clear resolution and therefore it is incumbent for anyone in this circumstance to speak with his rov how to properly fulfill the *mitzvah*.