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{ TOPIC }

TEFILLIN AND BAR MITZVAH



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► Each issue reviews a different area of contemporary *halacha* with an emphasis on practical applications of the principles discussed. Significant time is spent ensuring the inclusion of all relevant *shittos* on each topic, as well as the *psak* of *Harav Yisroel Belsky, zt"l* on current issues.

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TEFILLIN AND BAR MITZVAH

When a young boy approaches the age of bar mitzvah, it is time to consider when to put on *tefillin*. Does he start when he becomes thirteen years of age, or perhaps earlier? What are the reasons for these customs? Why do we wait this long at all? When he puts on *tefillin* for the first time, does he recite a *Shehecheyanu*?

Source

The Gemara¹ says that when a child can make sure he watches the *tefillin* properly, his father should buy him *tefillin*.² Rashi³ explains that he understands that he may not enter the bathroom with the *tefillin*. Others say that it means the child will refrain from passing gas while wearing them.⁴

Thirteen or Younger

The opinion of the *Ba'al Ha'itur*⁵ is that the Gemara is referring to a child who is thirteen years old and one day. It is important to note that most *poskim* disagree with this opinion, and maintain that the child is someone who reached the age of *chinuch*, even though he is under thirteen.⁶ The *Shulchan Aruch*⁷ simply applies the rule to a

1. *Sukkah* 42a. See *Maseches Eruchin* 2b.

2. *Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 37:3.

3. *Maseches Sukkah* 42a, "lishmor."

4. *Tur* 37; *Levush* 3; *Eliyahu Zuta* 1; *Shulchan Aruch Harav* 3.

5. *Hilchos Tefillin* 7:page 61.

6. *Yalkut Yosef*, O.C. 37:page 645. See *Bach* 37; *Aruch Hashulchan* 4. Refer to *Birur Halachah* pages 29-31; *Halachah Berurah* 37:pages 200-202. See *Eretz Tzvi* 1:34.

7. O.C. 37:3.

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child who can watch the *tefillin* to make sure it remains pure, but does not give an age.

The Rema⁸ (and others)⁹ agrees with the *Ba'al Ha'itur*, and maintains that a boy begins to wear *tefillin* when he reaches thirteen years old and one day (morning of his birthday).¹⁰ Some explain that since we no longer wear *tefillin* all day, once the child is thirteen he knows to be careful with watching them properly.¹¹

The Magen Avraham¹² mentions that before this time frame of thirteen one does not put on *tefillin*.

Thirteen Years Old¹³

Many have the practice that *tefillin* are not placed on a child before he reaches the age of thirteen.¹⁴ This is especially true today, when even boys at the age of thirteen have a hard time making sure to watch them properly, so one should not do so before thirteen.¹⁵

8. O.C. 37:3.

9. *Pri Megadim Eishel Avraham* 3; *Levush* 3; *Shulchan Hatohar* 4; *Darchei Chaim V'shalom* 79; *Ta'amei Haminhagim* page 12:footnote; *Tzitz Eliezer* 13:10; *Minhag Yisrael Torah* 37. See *Me'asef L'chol Hamachanos* 13; *Toras Yekusiel* 2:66. Refer to *Natei Gavriel Bar Mitzvah* 33:1:footnote 1, also pages 221-223; *Leket Hakemach Hachadash* 37:pages 171-172; *Emes L'Yaakov* 37.

10. See *Biur Halachah*, O.C. 37, "v'yesh omrim."

11. *Biur Halachah*, O.C. 37, "d'hei."

12. 3; *Mishnah Berurah* 10.

13. On the number 13 and bar mitzvah see *Teshuvos HaRosh* 16:1; *Mishnah Berurah* 55:40; *Yalkut Yosef* 37:pages 656-657. Obviously, we go according to the Jewish date for one's bar mitzvah and not according to the non-Jewish calendar (*Yalkut Yosef* 37:page 656:footnote 5). In regard to one who was born during *bein hashmashos*, see *Os Chaim* 37:6.

14. *Darchei Moshe* 2; *Rema* 3; *Levush* 3.

15. *Aruch Hashulchan* 4. Refer to *Tosafos Maseches Brachos* 20a "shelo"; *Rosh Maseches Brachos* 3:13.

כל השנה הלכות בכל יום מובטח להשתדל לו שהוא בן עולם הנא... (נדדה עני)

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The practice of most chassidim is to place the *tefillin* on the day of the bar mitzvah.¹⁶

Another reason not to place them before thirteen is that by the time he turns thirteen he will not be as excited about the mitzvah.¹⁷

Why Wait until Thirteen?

Why is it that we wait until the child is thirteen for *tefillin*, but other mitzvos like *lulav*, *tzitzis* and *sukkah* begin at an earlier stage? Some suggest that there is no *issur* involved in doing other mitzvos, but there could be a problem if the child does not maintain the proper holiness of the *tefillin*. Therefore, we wait until he is older.¹⁸ Although one who says *Krias Shema* without *tefillin* is testifying falsely, since it says to tie the *tefillin* and he is not doing so,¹⁹ there is no concern with a child. Since he is *pasul* from testifying, there is no issue, so we put on *tefillin* when he is thirteen and able to testify.²⁰

Thirteen but Didn't Reach Puberty

Those who have the custom to put on *tefillin* at thirteen years would do so even before the boy shows signs of puberty.²¹

Before Thirteen

Some have the practice to place *tefillin* two or three

16. *Teshuvos V'hanhagos* 2:29; *Divrei Yatziv*, O.C. 41.

17. *Os Chaim* 37:5.

18. *Bar Mitzvah* (Kroizer) pages 102-103; footnote 20.

19. *Maseches Brachos* 14b.

20. *Bar Mitzvah* (Kroizer) page 103.

21. *Pri Megadim Eishel Avraham* 4; *Sha'arei Teshuvah* 4; *Shulchan Aruch Harav* 3; *Mishnah Berurah* 11; see *Biur Halachah*, "v'yeish." See *Rav Akiva Eiger* 37.

כל השנה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא... (מדה עב)

months before the boy's thirteenth birthday.²² Others start even earlier.²³ When placing *tefillin* before thirteen, the child makes a *brachah* as well.²⁴

Some have the custom to start a month before the thirteenth birthday.²⁵

The practice among certain Sephardim is to have a child put on *tefillin* even two or three years before bar mitzvah.²⁶

If a boy is putting on *tefillin* before thirteen, one should make sure he is not counted towards a *minyán*.²⁷

One possible reason for starting early is to get the boy in the habit of putting them on correctly.²⁸

Orphan

Some maintain that an orphan puts on *tefillin* a year (or half year)²⁹ before his thirteenth birthday.³⁰ Others are not sure of the source for this.³¹ The custom is not to do this.³²

22. *Magen Avraham* 4; *Shulchan Aruch Harav* 3; *Chayei Adam* 66:2; *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 10:24; *Biur Halachah*, O.C. 37, "v'chein"; *Me'am Lo'ez Eikev* page 557. This is the custom of Chabad (*Sha'arei Halachah U'minhag* 1:32). See *Sha'arei Halachah U'minhag* 1:pages 80-81.

23. Refer to *Bach* 37; *Eliyahu Zuta* 1; *Birchei Yosef* 5, 7; *Kaf Hachaim* 14; *Biur Halachah*, O.C. 37, "v'chein." See *Natei Gavriel Bar Mitzvah* 33:2.

24. *Natei Gavriel Bar Mitzvah* 34:3; *Halachah Berurah* 37:page 203.

25. *Aruch Hashulchan* 4. This is the custom of those who originate from Litvak countries (*Piskei Teshuvos* 37:footnote 26; *Teshuvos V'hanhagos* 2:29; *Halichos Shlomo Tefillah* 4:footnote 34; *Tzitz Eliezer* 13:10). See *Natei Gavriel Bar Mitzvah* 33:pages 219-221.

26. *Shulchan Gavoah* 5; *Yufei L'lev* 37; *Ohr L'tzion* 2:44:47; *Yabia Omer*, O.C. 6:3.

27. *Piskei Teshuvos* 37:5; *Halachah Berurah* 37:page 199; *Yechaveh Da'as* 2:4.

28. *Os Chaim* 37:5.

29. *Likutei Maharich* 1:page 19b (old).

30. *Nefesh Chaya* 37. See *Yabia Omer*, O.C. 6:3.

31. *Aruch Hashulchan* 4. See *Beis Dovid (Leiter)*, O.C. 41; *Birur Halachah* 37:page 37; *Lehoros Nassan* 2:9.

32. *Da'as Kedoshim* 37:3; *Os Chaim* 5; *Natei Gavriel Bar Mitzvah* 33:7; *Teshuvos V'hanhagos* 1:53; *Halichos Shlomo Tefillah* 4:footnote 34.



Some explain that since he has no father to teach him how to put on *tefillin*, we start training him early.³³

Others contend that it is a merit for the deceased parent that the child place *tefillin* earlier than usual.³⁴

Deaf or Abnormal

A deaf or abnormal child does not put on *tefillin* since he will not know how to watch them properly.³⁵

Rabbeinu Tam Tefillin

Although a bar mitzvah boy puts on *Rashi tefillin*, he does not put on *Rabbeinu Tam tefillin* until he marries.³⁶

Shehecheyanu

There is a discussion in the *poskim* if a bar mitzvah boy recites a *Shehecheyanu* when placing the *tefillin* for the first time. On one hand, he should recite a *Shehecheyanu* since it is an exciting time.³⁷ On the other hand, this *brachah* was only instituted for a recurring mitzvah.³⁸

33. *Likutei Maharich* 1:page 19b (old). Refer to *Sha'arei Halachah U'minhag* 1:pages 79-80. See *Toras Yekusiel* 2:66.

34. *Birur Halachah* 37:page 38. See *Leket Hakemach Hachadash* 37:page 172; *Natei Gavriel Bar Mitzvah* 33:pages 226-227; *Chinuch Yisrael* 1:pages 147-148; *Rivevos Ephraim* 2:29. Refer to *Yesodo Yeshurun* 1:page 116.

35. *Aruch Hashulchan* 4. See *Mishnah Berurah* 12, which differentiates on the kind of deaf mute.

36. *Os Chaim* 37:5; *Mishneh Halachos* 6:12; *Natei Gavriel Bar Mitzvah* 36:7. The custom of Chabad is that bar mitzvah boys put on *Rabbeinu Tam* as well (*Sha'arei Halachah U'minhag* 1:page 78; see *Bar Mitzvah* [Kroizer] page 104:footnote 25).

37. *Rambam Hilchos Brachos* 10:2. Others say it is not a joy since one has to make sure to have a clean body (*Bach, O.C.* 22; *Sha'arei Teshuvah* 22; see *Bar Mitzvah* [Kroizer] pages 116-117). Refer to *Mor U'ketziah* 27; *Chinah D'chaya* 89; *Keren L'Dovid, O.C.* 57; *Chasam Sofer, O.C.* 55.

38. Refer to *Shach, Y.D.* 28:5; *Y.D.* 289:1; *Levush, O.C.* 22:1; *Taz* 1; *Elyah Rabbah* 2; *Aruch Hashulchan* 3; *Machzik Brachah* 2; *Kaf Hachaim* (Palagi) 10:8; *Yifei L'lev* 22:1; *Me'asef L'chol Hamachanos* 19; *Birur Halachah* 22:pages 28-31, 36; *Chanoch L'na'ar* page 37; *Halachah Berurah* 22:5:footnote 12; *Piskei Teshuvos* 22:footnotes 7, 10 in depth; *Yechaveh Da'as* 2:31; *Chayei Moshe* 37:page 182; *Mishneh Halachos* 6:6; *Bar Mitzvah*

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כל השנה הלכות בכל יום מובטח להשתדל בן עולם הזה... (מדע עב)

If he starts before his bar mitzvah, no *brachah* of *Shehecheyanu* is recited.³⁹ Before bar mitzvah he is still a child, so he does not recite *Shehecheyanu*. When he becomes bar mitzvah, it is no longer his first time.⁴⁰

If he starts when he becomes thirteen, there is a debate regarding *Shehecheyanu*. Therefore, he should buy a new garment and make a *Shehecheyanu* on it, and have the *tefillin* in mind.⁴¹

Practice

It seems that most chassidim wait until the boy is thirteen,⁴² while others start a month, or two to three months before.⁴³ Sephardim start much earlier.⁴⁴

Special Occasion

Sometimes, the family might wish for the bar mitzvah boy to put on *tefillin* for the first time in the presence of a tzaddik.⁴⁵ The visit often will not fit with the family's customary schedule of placing *tefillin* for the first time. In this situation, one can put it on early.⁴⁶

[Kroizer] pages 116-120 in depth.

39. *Eishel Avraham Butchatch* 37; *Likutei Maharich* 1:page 19b (old); *Birur Halachah* 22:page 31; *Natei Gavriel Bar Mitzvah* 37:6; *Lehoros Nassan* 2:9.

40. *Eishel Avraham Butchatch* 37. See *Chanoch L'na'ar* 10:footnote 3.

41. *Biur Halachah* 22, "koneh"; *Likutei Maharich* 1:page 19b (old), 22:page 31; *Yechaveh Da'as* 2:31; *Mishneh Halachos* 6:6; *Bar Mitzvah* [Kroizer] pages 123-124; see *Yalkut Yosef* 37:7. In regard to reciting a *Shehecheyanu* on *tefillin* of *Rabbeinu Tam* which one puts on for the first time, see *Bar Mitzvah* [Kroizer] page 124:footnote 18.

42. Refer to *Birur Halachah* 37:pages 34-35; *Chinuch Yisrael* 1:page 146; *Natei Gavriel Bar Mitzvah* 33:3.

43. *Minhag Yisrael Torah* 37.

44. *Yechaveh Da'as* 2:4.

45. Refer to *Mishmeres Shalom* 4:4; *Leket Hakemach Hachadash* 37:page 173.

46. *Natei Gavriel Bar Mitzvah* 33:5.



The same is true for a family from overseas that wishes to go to the Kosel to put on *tefillin*.

Once he starts early for whatever reason, he must continue.⁴⁷

Chol Hamoed

If one becomes bar mitzvah on Chol Hamoed and his custom is not to put on *tefillin* then, he starts after Yom Tov.⁴⁸

Pesach

If the bar mitzvah falls out on Pesach, he should put on the *tefillin* before Pesach so as not to go many days without putting on *tefillin*.⁴⁹

Tishah B'Av

One whose bar mitzvah falls out on Tishah B'Av should put on *tefillin* at Shacharis on Erev Tishah B'Av.⁵⁰

Leap Year

There is a discussion regarding someone who was born in a regular non-leap year, and the bar mitzvah falls out in a leap year. In which Adar is his bar mitzvah? If his custom is to place *tefillin* a few months before his birthday, there is no issue since he will put them on early, but if his custom is to place it on the day of his bar mitzvah, some suggest to start early in this case.⁵¹

47. *Natei Gavriel Bar Mitzvah* 33:9.

48. *Darchei Chaim V'shalom* 79; *Birur Halachah* 37:page 35; *Natei Gavriel Bar Mitzvah* 34:4. Some say to place before Yom Tov (*Sha'arei Halachah U'minhag* 1:page 78).

49. *Natei Gavriel Bar Mitzvah* 34:1.

50. *Birur Halachah* 37:page 35.

51. Refer to *Me'asef L'chol Hamachanos* 15; *Leket Hakemach Hachadash* 37:page 172; *Sha'arei Halachah U'minhag* 1:pages 77-78; *Tzitz Eliezer* 13:10.

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Practicing

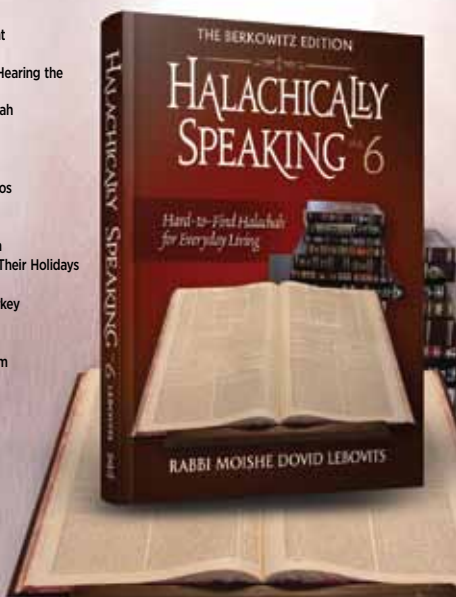
When practicing with *tefillin* before the bar mitzvah, there is no issue with placing the *shel rosh* before the *shel yad*, although this is not the proper order when performing the mitzvah.⁵²

52. *Natei Gavriel Bar Mitzvah* 34:5. There is no concern of an adult giving a child learning to put on *tefillin* his *tefillin* to try on (*Rivevos Ephraim* 1:30, 2:24).

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