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HEMDAT YAMIM

Parashat HaShavua

Vayechi, 14 Tevet 5776

David – Almost Like a Forefather

Harav Yosef Carmel

In *Parashat Vayechi*, we learn about Yaakov's "spiritual will" – prophecies and instructions to his sons. In the *haftara*, we see a similar farewell address of King David to his son Shlomo. We will try to uncover part of this deep connection between the *parasha* and its *haftara*.

A famous *midrash* (Yalkut Shimoni, Bereishit 41) connects *David Hamelech* to Adam. Hashem showed Adam the spiritual greats of each generation. When it came to David's generation, he saw in David a great soul who had three hours allotted to his life. Adam, who was troubled with the world missing out on David, "donated" 70 years of his life so that David could live long enough to contribute significantly.

The *Kedushat Levi* (on our *parasha*) connects David's life to the forefathers in the following manner. Avraham was "supposed to" live 180 years, as Yitzchak did. The five years that he did not live (he died at 175) were donated to David. While Yitzchak lived his full allotment, Yaakov lived only 147, and not the 175 that he should have lived, like his grandfather Avraham. Thus, he gave 28 years. Yosef was allotted 147 years like his father, but lived only 110, and thus he gave 37 years. $5 + 28 + 37$ equals the 70 years that David lived.

We will now look at another connection between David and the forefathers. David asked Hashem why in *davening* we refer to Hashem as the G-d of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov and not "the G-d of David." Hashem answered that the forefathers were tested and David was not tested, to which David responded that he wanted to be tested to deserve the distinction (Sanhedrin 107a). David realized he was in a bind. If he would pass the test, he would have *ka'v'yachol* beaten Hashem. If he would fail the test, he could end losing much more than he reckoned for. At the end, the test had to do with the episode with Bat Sheva, and it ended in failure. While he could have lost his special status, he maintained most of it by employing *teshuva* in a complete manner.

At first glance, David did not merit getting what he wanted – mention in *Shemoneh Esrei* of the "G-d of David." However, further investigation reveals that *Shemoneh Esrei* is introduced with the *pasuk*, "Hashem, open my mouth so that my mouth will speak Your praises" (Tehillim 51:17), which David himself wrote. In fact, he composed the *pasuk* as part of the *mizmor* that deals with his repentance from the sin involving Bat Sheva (ibid.:2). David is also the only other person from *Tanach* whose name is mentioned in *Shemoneh Esrei* ("prepare the throne of David in the midst of Jerusalem" and "the blossoming of your servant David ...").

We see, then, that on many levels there are connections between the characters in the *parasha* (primarily, Yaakov) and those from the *haftara* (David). May we merit having leaders in our generation who can be considered students of the forefathers and David.

Refuah Sheleymah to Orit bat Miriam

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Ask the Rabbi

by Rav Daniel Mann

How to Tell When Your Tefillin Need Adjustment

[Periodically, we re-issue our discussion on the proper position of tefillin shel rosh. Many people motion to their friends to straighten their tefillin, which is rarely a problem, and do not realize that tefillin extending too far forward is a far more severe problem. In Living the Halachic Process, I:G-1, we develop the halacha that the end of the tefillin must not go beyond the roots of the hair of the hairline.

Upon visiting different shuls, from various elements of society, it pains me to see great numbers of fine Jews who are definitely donning their tefillin wrong and many others about whom it is hard to tell, especially when they have receding hairlines. Since even some talmidei chachamim get it wrong, I assume that knowing how to apply the halacha to one's head is a big problem. We will focus here on tricks to figure this out.]

Question: How can one tell when his tefillin shel rosh needs adjustment?

Answer: Firstly, an adult who has not adjusted his tefillin shel rosh's knot in several years almost certainly needs an adjustment. Tefillin straps stretch slowly as we apply pressure to them (some more than others) when fastening the tefillin on our head. If one's hairline has not receded, he can easily check (see above).

Now, a little review of the anatomy of a normal human head. The skull is highest towards the back of the head; it then gradually slopes down. Near the front of the head, the slope increases, and then turns into a "cliff" (i.e., the forehead). The hairline ends at the end of the gradual or the midst of the increased slope. No hair (except eyebrows) is rooted in the forehead.


Based on the above, the following are signs of misplaced tefillin. If the end of the tefillin looks like it is "hanging off a cliff," it is certainly much too far forward, as a line drawn down from the end of the tefillin would hit the forehead or even the nose. Because of the increased slope, there may be a little space between the bottom of the tefillin and the head. However, if there is too much room (i.e., a finger fits in comfortably), it is very likely not in the right place.

Another sign is the tefillin's angle. The angle is determined primarily by where the tefillin are fastened to the head by the straps – at the back of the tefillin. Generally, tefillin in the right place will be upright with a slight downward slant. If the tefillin has a serious downward-facing angle, it is generally (unless one has a rounder head than most) too far forward, so that its rear is where its forward part should be (on the steeper slope). Thus the tefillin's front will be too far forward, unless the tefillin are very small.

A final sign is the kippa. With average size kippot and tefillin, there should be little or no room between the two. One with a particularly large kippa or who wears it on the top of the head (as opposed to part top/part back) will have to move the kippa back.

When I look around many of the shuls I regularly daven in or visit, I see many too many people with apparent (or definite) problems in this regard. Among the older generation, I would estimate that the problems are in well **above 50%** of the people. As I HATE correcting people (and most hate being corrected), I am torn as to when the rectifiable problem is clear enough to halachically/morally require me to do the uncomfortable. The following limud zechut decreases the problem. Most people put the tefillin at a certain position and push it forward in the process of fastening. Thus, some of those who keep the tefillin too far forward had it in the right place for a few moments after the beracha (so that it is not l'vatala) before the fastening was complete, and thereby may have fulfilled the mitzva for that short time.

More people should learn how to shorten the circumference of the head strap, which is necessary for the tefillin to stay in the right place. You are invited to visit me or ask a sofer. It may be easier to Google search: "youtube tefillin head adjust." Then, you can help yourself and your friends.



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Ein Ayah

(from the writings of Harav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook, z.t.l.)

The Right Person to Stay Calm at the Hardest Time

(condensed from Ein Ayah, Shabbat 2:114)

Gemara: Our Rabbis learned: One should always be humble like Hillel and not confrontational like Shammai. There was a case of two people who made a bet, saying: "Whoever will go and anger Hillel will get 400 zuz." One said: "I will go and anger him." That day was Friday, and Hillel was washing his head. He went and passed by Hillel's house. He said: "Who here is Hillel? Who here is Hillel?" Hillel got dressed and came out to him.

Ein Ayah: The factors that calm the mind so that one does not react emotionally and get annoyed at people come in a few forms. One is when one is at complete rest, in which case he is so calm that he does not become irritated. On the other hand, that situation could cause annoyance because the person can be upset the irritating event has taken him away from the calm he enjoyed. Yet, the calm setting does give him the peace of mind that usually allows him to handle the situation well, even though someone is trying to remove him from his good feeling.

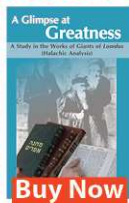
Sometimes one who is in taxing circumstances will actually be trained to be calm and patient, even though he will be lacking full calmness. This is because he can become trained to deal with vexing circumstances and come out of them reasonably.

The worst situation is when something upsetting arises when one is in a period of pressure and is preparing to be extricated from it. After all, he is not yet within a state of calm, but he is looking forward to having the calmness and not bracing himself to deal with additional upsetting matters. Therefore, for these two reasons, he is most susceptible to becoming agitated.

Another thing that prepares one to not get upset is if he is in the mode of being around people, in which case he prepares himself to deal with different types of behaviors from various people. In contrast, when one is concerned with his own needs in such a manner that modesty requires him to separate himself from others, then he is even more susceptible to losing his patience at a difficult person.

Let us consider the situation one is in before Shabbat. One has been involved in troubling things during the course of the week and is now preparing for a tranquility that has not yet arrived. When he is bathing, he is further in a situation of needing and wanting to be away from others. This is the exact circumstance in which the man who was full of chutzpah chose to try to upset Hillel. The supreme humility with which Hillel acted at that time proved that this was a characteristic that was at the depths of his type of sanctity. All the preparations taken to pick the time that was most likely to upset Hillel did not help. We see that true modesty is in the heart and soul of the modest person and does not need to be aided by favorable circumstances. That is why Hillel is described as being the epitome of tolerance and humility.

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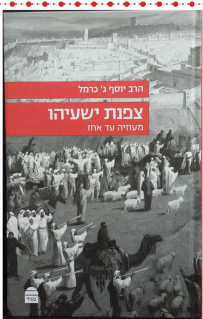
Introduction and Biography of the Noda B'Yehuda

After an extended period of presenting ideas of the Chatam Sofer on monetary disputes, we move on to a shorter series on the works of Rav Yechezkel Segal Landau, often called the Noda B'Yehuda. (Although Rav Landau served as a *dayan* for many years, *poskim* do not usually publicize their rulings on cases in which they served as a *dayan*, but on questions asked by other rabbis. The Noda B'Yehuda did not include many such cases in his reponsa.) Many view the Chatam Sofer and the Noda B'Yehuda as two of a kind. They were in the same basic time period (Rav Landau was around 50 years older), they were important rabbis of important communities at critical times, and the works of each are among the most respected and quoted by *Acharonim*.

Most of my information about Rav Landau comes from the introductions to the second volume of Noda B'Yehuda, by his sons, Rav Shmuel, the editor, and Yaakovka, who encouraged the project and wrote a longer piece. Yechezkel Landau was born in Apta in 1713, to Yehuda, a wealthy, scholarly businessman, and Chaya, the saintly daughter of the chief rabbi of Dubnow. In Rav Yechezkel's own introduction to the first volume, he thanks Rav Yitzchak Isaac Segal, his teacher from age 11 to 13. During his adolescence, he moved to Brody to study there. By the age of 20 or so, the community of Brody appointed him as one of its main *dayanim*. Rav Yechezkel stayed in that position for about a decade, after which he was appointed the rabbi of Yampol. After a decade, in 1755, he was chosen as the chief rabbi of one of the most important Jewish communities and cities in Europe, Prague.

In Prague, the Noda B'Yehuda continued his local rabbinic duties. (His son praised him for not fleeing Prague before the Siege of Prague (1757) but staying and being of major help.) His reputation drew many promising Talmudic students to study with him, the most famous of whom was Rav Avraham Danzig, author of Chayei Adam. He also was a major spokesman on both halachic matters and questions of the time, such as the attitude toward Moses Mendelson and the Haskala movement. (While enjoying a broad base of knowledge that included sciences, the Noda B'Yehuda was a strong opponent.) In one of his most famous rulings, he opposed autopsies except those related to a specific urgent need.

The Noda B'Yehuda's writings are a valuable part of any serious Jewish library. It is interesting that he picked titles to commemorate his parents. His work on several Talmudic tractates is named the Tzlach, abbreviation of "A Memorial for the Spirit of Chaya." His monumental work of responsa, the Noda B'Yehuda (Known in Yehuda), is named for his father. He explained that the reason that he, Yechezkel, is known, is because he is a son of the illustrious Yehuda. He published the first volume in his lifetime. According to his son, it was a most aesthetic (in addition to brilliant) volume which he paid for with his own money and that he made no effort to profit from sales. It took 17 years after his death in 1793 for the second volume to be published. As both brothers wrote, Rav Shmuel was so busy as his father's successor in Prague that he did not get around to editing the manuscripts his father gave him. Yaakovka and others from Brody told him firmly that the Torah world would not accept further delay. This volume includes notes and some responsa of Rav Shmuel. We will present selections from the Choshen Mishpat sections of both volumes.



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