

have a Nageela Shabbos

A weekly publication of **Nageela West** Joyfully Jewish Experiences

Manufacturer's Guarantee

by Rabbi Dani Locker

MULTIPLE CHOICE

QUESTION 1: What are phylacteries?

- a. A prehistoric bird related to the pteranodon
- b. A medication used for controlling motion sickness
- c. Black leather boxes with straps
- d. A Greek inventor who accidentally created the bagel when someone shot his bread with an arrow

OK, so I have an overactive imagination, but did you know what the word means? Phylacteries is the English word for tefillin, black leather boxes Jewish men strap on our arms and heads each morning, and containing parchment with sentences from the Torah. Yes, that's right, we take the words of the Torah (the Shema is included in the parchment) and actually tie them to our arm (the Torah was written before velcro was invented).

There are two other similar mitzvot: Mezuzah is similar

except that we attach the words of the Torah to our homes, and Tzitzit is another 'wearable mitzvah' attaching strings to our clothes to get stuck on doorknobs, and also to remind us of all the commandments of the Torah.

There's an unusual line in the Talmud which says, "If you have tefillin on your head and arm, tzitzit on your clothing, and a mezuzah on your door, you're guaranteed not to sin." (Menachot 43)

Whoa, hold up. What? Guaranteed not to sin? How is that possible? That's question one.

But I have another question, too: If the purpose of tefillin and co. is to keep us away from sin, that means it has some effect on us. Why would tying something to my body help me become a better person? Imagine your phone is low on battery, so you buy a charger. You then wrap the charger around your arm. Awesome fashion statement, but not very effective unless you plug it in. Why would wrapping words on your arm or attaching them to your door help you get better?

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STUMP THE RABBI



Hi Rabbi,

Why are there so many blessings? Seriously, it feels like there are a billion of them! I was thinking about it, and it makes perfect sense to thank G-d when we eat. But why can't we just say, "Thank you G-d for the yummy food" instead of memorizing different blessings for different types of food. And then my Rabbi tells me that I made the wrong blessing because these Corn Flakes aren't made by Kellogs.

Thanks,

Brandon Lesser

Dear BLesser

You're right! When iPhones first started becoming popular, and cool, useful apps were being made, there was a saying, "There's an app for that." I sometimes feel like for everything that exists, "there's a blessing for that." There's pretty much a blessing for everything. Besides pickle juice. There should be a special blessing for pickle juice. Maybe app is short for appreciation, because that's exactly what blessings are all about, and why they have to be specific.

Let's say someone gives you a dollar as a present (toothfairy, anyone?). You say, "Uh, thanks." continued...

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I remember a story about a guy who lived on a tiny remote village of wooden shacks. Life was simple and pretty good, except every time there was even a small fire, the entire town would burn down. He got tired of having to rebuild every few months, so he visited a distant city to see what they did to prevent wildfires. After a few days in the city, sure enough, a fire broke out. He watched as someone calmly picked up a phone and dialed 9-1-1. Within 2 minutes, a fire brigade drove up and the fire was put out with minimal damage. He hurried back to his village and called a town meeting. "I know how to prevent fires!" he exclaimed. "We need to buy a phone!"

The next time there was a fire in the village, he calmly picked up the phone, dialed 9-1-1, and waited, and waited as the entire village burned down, because they didn't have a fire department. Tefillin, Tzitzit; these are just items. The real 'magic' is if we think about what we're doing. "I am wrapping my body with a reminder of G-d. I'm attaching G-d's name to my brain and heart. I'm proudly displaying on my home that G-d is my protection." it's not easy to keep these things in mind. I might pass by my mezuzah 64 times a day, kiss it each time, and not even think about what I'm doing. If I make the connection and truly wrap myself up in the reality of G-d and the Torah, then it's pretty certain that I won't do anything wrong.

The trick is to remember that it's not about dialing the phone, it's about calling the fire department

...stump continued

Now, somebody gives you a gift of an Alfa Romeo 4C Base featuring a 1.7L I-4 237hp intercooled turbo engine, and 17" aluminum wheels (translation, fancy sports car). You say, "Uh, thanks."

No way! It does NOT work like that. We may be taught as young kids to mechanically say thank you, but that doesn't cut it when the gift is significant.

G-d gives us everything! Food, a body that works, guidance, beautiful mountains and oceans, sweet smelling flowers. We get all of these things and we want to (and need to) say thank you, but what sort of thanks is required? Definitely not a generic, mechanical, "Uh, thanks." We stop, analyze the item we're about to eat and thank G-d specifically for 'bringing forth bread from the ground' or 'creating the fruit of the vine'. In being specific, we're doing a much better job of thanking.

Speaking of apps, there are a few available on the app store which will help you know which specific blessing to

recite (no specific app has been reviewed or endorsed by Nageela). By the way, if you're truly stuck and don't know the proper blessing for a specific food item, the blessing of 'shehakol' will work in a pinch.

I want to thank you specifically for taking the time to ask the question, and for helping our readers understand this critical message, and thank the readers for reading, and... you get the point.

And G-d bless you!

Quick Fix

Who ruined Egypt? Pharaoh!

Moshe delivered warning after warning, and it was only Pharaoh's stubborn refusal that caused all the problems.

The Torah hints that it was because he was haughty, full of himself, a big shot.

It's pretty amazing that because of your ego, you can end up doing something that will destroy you and everything you love. You can't see what's happening, because your ego just won't let you admit defeat.

True story.

Stump the Rabbi is a forum where kids can ask ANY Jewish question.

Have a question? Please send it in to stump@nageelawest.org

The questions are real. The names have been changed.