

What are Tefillin?

Tefillin are a pair of specially made small black leather boxes containing scrolls of parchment inscribed with verses from the Torah. The hand-tefillin (*shel-yad* in Hebrew) is placed on the upper arm, and the strap wrapped around the arm, hand and fingers. The head-tefillin (*shel-rosh*) is placed on the head, slightly above the forehead. The Torah commands that tefillin be worn to serve as a “sign” and “remembrance” that God brought the Jewish people out of Egypt.

The mitzvah of tefillin is mentioned four times in the Torah. It is mentioned in connection with Exodus from Egypt in (Exodus 13:9), “And it shall be a sign for you on your arm, and for a reminder between your eyes, that God’s Torah may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand did the God bring you out of Egypt” and in (ibid. 13:16), “And it shall be for a sign on your arm, and an insignia between your eyes; for with a mighty hand God brought us out of Egypt.

The mitzvah is mentioned another two times in the Shema. “And bind them as a sign on your arm, and they will be an insignia between your eyes” (Deuteronomy 6:8); “Place these words of Mine on your heart and on your soul. Bind them as a sign on your arm, and they will be an insignia between your eyes” (ibid. 11:18).

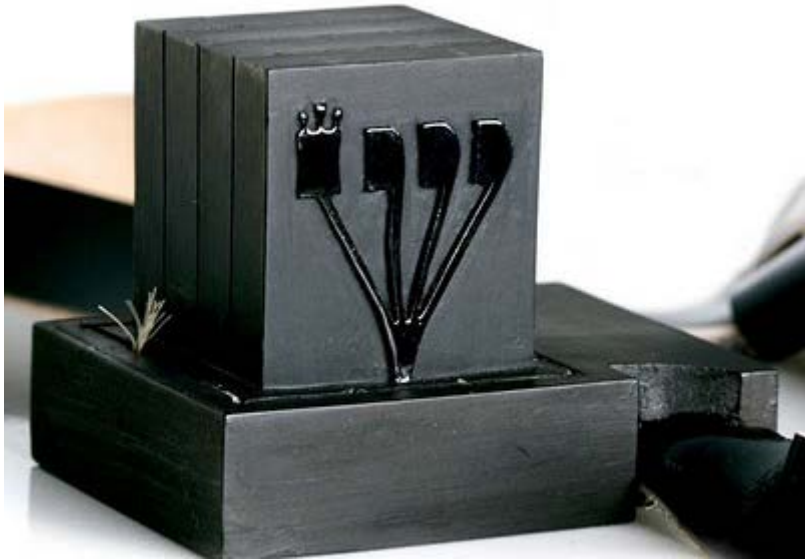
The complete chapters in which these verses appear are written on parchment and placed in the boxes. In the hand-tefillin the four chapters are written as one scroll; in the head-tefillin they are written as four individual scrolls, and placed separately in the four compartments of the head-tefillin. The four chapters are: [1] Exodus 13:1-10; [2] Exodus 13:11-16; [3] Deuteronomy 6:4-9; [4] Deuteronomy 11:13-21. Collectively, these chapters are called *parshiyot*.

The mitzvah of tefillin is an obligation for Jewish males, age 13 and above. They are to be worn every day, excluding Shabbat and the biblical Jewish holidays (Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot). Ideally they are worn all day long. In practice, they are worn while praying Shacharit (the morning prayer). If one was unable to wear them at that time, he may put them on any time before nightfall.

There are many details that make tefillin kosher. For example, the boxes and the parchment must be made from the hide of a kosher animal; the boxes and straps must be black; the parchments are tied with the hair of a kosher animal; the verses must be written with special black ink; the *parshiyot* must be written by an ordained, God-fearing scribe.

The letters of one of God's name, Shaday, are present on the boxes of the tefillin. The first letter, *shin* (ש), is embossed on the outside of the head-tefillin. (The right side has a three-headed *shin* and the left side a four-headed *shin*.) The second letter, *dalet* (ד) is formed by a knot on the strap of the head-tefillin, at the spot where the strap is worn on the back of the neck.

The final letter, *yud* (י), is formed by a knot on the strap of the hand-tefillin, at the spot where the strap is tightened to the bicep. This knot must always stay in contact with the hand-tefillin box.



Likutey Halakhot, Tefillin 2

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[1] Review of *Likutey Moharan* I, #34¹

This *halakhah* is based on *Likutey Moharan* I, Lesson #34.² To better appreciate and understand what's written here, it's good if we review some of that lesson.

The tzaddik has within him a holy *nekudah*.³ He develops it by cultivating an extremely high level of personal-morality, the area of life which relates to the *sefirah* of *Yesod*. When the tzaddik speaks, he shares and shines his *nekudah*'s holiness. This is alluded to by the verse (Psalms 49:4), "My mouth speaks wisdoms." (We will see this verse a lot in this *halakhah*.) When a person receives the light of this *nekudah*, he is infused with love for what is sacred to Judaism.

The ordinary Jew is often broken-hearted and discouraged from pursuing excellence in Judaism. This is a result of his "fallen loves," i.e., focusing his love on things and goals that are forbidden or unnecessary for his Jewish success.⁴ When our love is improperly focused, the objects of our love are spiritually broken; they give no satisfaction to our soul. But when the light of the tzaddik's *nekudah* touches our heart, the broken pieces re-join and are restored to holiness. As a result, our fallen loves begin to recede.

¹ As he almost always does, Reb Noson begins the *halakhah* with a review of the lesson in *Likutey Moharan* upon which the *halakhah* will elaborate.

² This lesson is entitled *V'atem Tihiyu Li Mamleket Kohanim*, You will be to Me a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6).

³ The Hebrew word *nekudah* means point, dot and vowel. Assumedly the last meaning is derived from the fact that the majority of Hebrew vowels are signified by one or more dots. All Hebrew letters are consonants.

⁴ The tendency to fallen loves is a result of a stage in the process God chose to use to create the universe. This stage is known as the *Shevirah* (breaking).

In order to receive the tzaddik's light, a person must accept and develop within himself three different points of goodness. They are:

1. His own personal point. Each person has an innate point of goodness. He must discover and nurture it. We call this "receiving from within oneself."⁵ This is done by speaking privately to God.
2. The points of others, i.e., receiving from friends and acquaintances.⁶ This is necessary because every Jew has some positive virtue that you don't. (Similarly, you have a virtue that no one else in the world has.) Relative to this *nekudah*, the other person is more of a tzaddik than you.
3. Both these *nekudot* must receive from the grand *nekudah* of the leading tzaddik. He has this *nekudah* because he is the root of all Jewish souls.⁷

The Hebrew vowel *m'lupam*⁸ is one form of the *nekudah* of holy light. This *m'lupam* is found not only on paper or when we read a word. It shows up in other guises as well, with different forms of "yod" and "vav."

- The tzaddik (*yod*) and *Klal Yisrael*, the Jewish people (*vav*).
- The Ten Commandments (*yod*) and the entire Torah (*vav*).
- "My *mouth* (*yod*) speaks wisdoms, my *heart* (*vav*) meditates on understandings" (Psalms 49:4).

⁵ *Minei u'vey*, literally, "from himself and within himself."

⁶ *M'kabin dein min dein*, literally, "receive one from the other."

⁷ Note that at this juncture we have been introduced to four *nekudot*: [1] The *nekudah* that shines the light of holy love; [2] one's personal *nekudah*; [3] a friend's *nekudah* and [4] the tzaddik's *nekudah*.

⁸ A fifth *nekudah*. See note 3. A *m'lupam* looks like this, י, a *vav* (ו) with a *yod* (י) in the middle of the letter. According to Kabbalah, *m'lupam* is the vowel related to the *sefirah* of *Yesod*.

Rebbe Nachman tells us that a key to understanding the secret of *m'lupam* is the verse (Psalms 81:11), “Widen your mouth and I [God] will fill it.”

Let's see how all this relates to the mitzvah of tefillin.

[2] Tefillin, Shame and Love

Every time we do the mitzvah of tefillin, we tap into each of these *nekudot* and each of these concepts. As we say in the introductory prayer to the mitzvah, we wear tefillin “next to our heart in order to control our thoughts and our heart's desires, to better serve God.” This means we want our doing the mitzvah of tefillin to do away with all the junk in our heart, the interests and obsessions with things that no Jew should be interested in, and even with things that are OK, but carry us overboard.

You see, tefillin has a certain “light,” which gives us a certain clarity and allows us to better see how we're really interacting with things, other people and even ourselves.⁹ Tefillin's light is the same as the light of personal-morality. We know that these two lights are the same because tefillin and the covenant are both called *brit*, the covenant, which corresponds to *Yesod* (Deuteronomy 6:8; Genesis 17:2).

Now, when we bind the tefillin on our arm, we are also making a real bond of a different kind. We are binding the *nekudah's* light with the left arm, near the heart. In Kabbalah, anything that is left-sided (or “left-handed,” if you will) is related to *Gevurot* (stringencies). Simply put, it is *Gevurot* which give the *Sitra Achra* (a fancy name for the forces of evil) its strength to tempt and challenge us.

⁹ Every mitzvah has its “light” to better our understanding of how we can be better Jews.

Rebbe Nachman calls these temptations “shame” because when we love these things too much, we disgrace ourselves. He also calls them “broken loves,” for two reasons. One is that we have taken our ability to be passionate about a cause or a goal, which should be focused on Torah, prayer or a mitzvah, and misapplied it in order to gratify a physical pleasure or a meaningless pursuit. Two, these loves stay loved. The garbage, the broken pieces of these loves, stay in our heart and continue to plague us.¹⁰

These loves are broken because they contain too much *Gevurot*, which apply too much force or pressure. We can resist, but only for so long—a minute, an hour, a month or a year. But when we bind tefillin’s light to the broken loves, i.e., when we apply tefillin’s lessons to dealing with our challenges, the broken loves become less broken and, sometimes, unbroken.

This is why we use the right hand to bind the tefillin. Just as the left-side is home to *Gevurot*, the right-side (and anything “right-handed”) is home to *Chassadim*. *Chassadim* are those forces and the energy in Creation that motivate us to be kind, helpful, sincerely interested and in love (among other things). Using our right hand to bind the tefillin is using the light of holy love to bind them.¹¹

This is an important point to remember: Although they are worn on the left arm, tefillin are in essence right-handed. Namely, its lessons and effects are kindness and love, the holy kind of love that one develops by improving his personal-morality. Where does tefillin get this ability? From us. We give it to them. Tefillin aren’t only the boxes and straps we see, or even the little scrolls wrapped up inside the boxes. Those are all the body of the tefillin. But

¹⁰ Sometimes, even long afterwards.

¹¹ Putting tefillin on with our right hand makes right-sidedness the more important side (*Berakhot* 62b).

tefillin also have a *neshamah* (soul). The tefillin's *neshamah* is a *nekudah* that rises with the day. It is born from one's nighttime Torah study and prayer.¹²

The hand-tefillin's knot, a *yod*, reminds us that the light of the early morning *nekudah* makes the tefillin's *neshamah*. The *yod* emerges, as it were, from the tefillin, from the glow of one's personal-morality. The part of tefillin that is physically closest to the heart is the *yod* because of all the parts of the tefillin, it is the *yod's* light that has the strongest impact on the heart. At its source, the light—and the lessons and insights—of tefillin is extremely profound and penetrating. As it moves closer to our world, the light becomes more and more compressed, until it emerges contained within this *yod*.

This is why tefillin are black. Since most spiritual damage is a result of too much spiritual light being fed or invested into a thing or person, the way to fix it is to limit the spiritual light it gets to a manageable dose. As we mentioned earlier, tefillin are an *ot*, the foundation of one's Jewishness. This foundation—one's personal-morality—is the light which fixes the brokenness of life.

This is why tefillin first begin to emerge from the forehead, the same door from which the *Shevirah*-fixing light emerges. And because fixing what's broken needs that the light be greatly compacted, this light emerges through the hairs of the head-tefillin. This need for compactness is also the reason that the hairs should be black.

So all these are linked: the hairs, the blackness of tefillin, the light of the *nekudah*¹³ and wise speech—"my mouth will speak wisdoms" (Psalms 49:4).

¹² Nighttime in this context means specifically the second half of the night. When our Sages (*Chagigah* 12b) teach that a "thread of kindness" is drawn on one who studies Torah at night, they are alluding to the light of this *nekudah*.

[3] Animals and Writing Tefillin

We can now understand why tefillin are made from the skins of kosher animals or birds. A fallen love is something an animal (or bird) also possesses because they, too, have these sorts of desires. So we make tefillin out of animals in order to elevate them and sanctify them with the *kedushah* of tefillin.

In order to invest tefillin with holiness, we declare out loud, at the beginning of the production process, that what we are doing is in order for them to have the holiness of tefillin. This declaration shines the holy *nekudah's* light on the fallen loves—the animality and the leather—so that they can return to *kedushah*. And that piece of animal skin is now tefillin, an object of *kedushah*.

This seemingly simple declaration contains so much power that it brings all our misguided, fallen loves back to *kedushah*. But what really makes tefillin sacred is the writing.

The written letters are like the spoken letters because both reveal the *nekudah's* light, à la, “My mouth speaks wisdoms.”¹⁴ However, because tefillin are something made, something tangible, it's not enough that the *nekudah* be spoken into them; it has to be put into them by doing. This is done through the writing.¹⁵

The actual writing on the parchment *is* the *nekudah* that shines to the level behind it, just like the *nekudah* of the rav shines into the heart of his friends and followers—those behind him. This is obvious from what the Rebbe writes elsewhere (*Likutey Moharan I*,

¹³ Also known as *seikhel hatachton* and the black *nekudah* that shines when the mind is thinking clearly.

¹⁴ Always bear in mind that wisdom is often used as a code word for the *sefirah* of *Chokhmah*.

¹⁵ Reb Noson points out the parallel mentioned in *Likutey Moharan I*, #34, to receiving the *nekudah* on the plane of speech by speaking words of Torah, prayer and spiritual encouragement.

#192), that “ink on parchment” is “black fire on white fire,” the master imparting wisdom to the student. The blackness of the ink represents the lowest level of the tzaddik-teacher. The whiteness of the parchment represents the very inception of the student’s understanding.

The writing of tefillin is the same: the blackness of the letters is the blackness of the *nekudah*. This gives it the power to enlighten the parchment which started life as an animal—fallen loves. But now—*now!*—the parchment is linked and locked to the *nekudah*’s light and is holiness itself! Tefillin are a mitzvah object which is actually holy.¹⁶ The writing is the greatest contributor to this holiness.

Overall, the *parshiyot* (tefillin’s written component) are the *mochin*, the conscious awareness of God’s presence.¹⁷ In order that people not be overwhelmed by this consciousness, the *parshiyot* have to be placed in the boxes. But that is not enough. They also have to be rolled up and tied with animal hair. Because in reality about all the light the average person can handle is a hairsbreadth’s worth.

This allowance of just a hairbreadth’s light complements the first hairsbreadth of light that emerges when tefillin make their appearance in the upper worlds. In our world, too, we can only handle a limited amount. And, as we wrote earlier, that’s just what we need for the *Tikkun* (rectification), the right amount of light, not too much and not too little.

[4] Three Types of Tefillin

Now we can begin to understand head-tefillin and hand-tefillin, which are three types of tefillin. Yes, three. The head-tefillin and

¹⁶ As compared to a menorah, *lulav* or *tzitzit*, for example. Although they are used for mitzvahs, they have no intrinsic holiness.

¹⁷ *Mochin* are also the mental ability to focus and be consciously aware of God’s presence.

its *dalet*-knot, which is also a kind of tefillin,¹⁸ are two; the hand-tefillin is the third. They parallel the *nekudot* we have been discussing: the tzaddik's grand *nekudah*, the *nekudah* received from another Jew and the *nekudah* one receives from within himself.

The head-tefillin parallels the tzaddik's *nekudah* because relative to the others he is the head and the mind. Everyone receive from him. He is called **Rosh** (the head of) **Bnei Yisrael**—the rebbe (רבי). What makes him a leader is his wisdom from which everyone receives.

The light of his wisdom shines on the *dalet*-knot. The *dalet*-knot represents God's kingdom, namely, a united Jewish people that share with one another how to be better Jews. This *nekudah* shines as a knot because its light primarily exists only when Jews get along with one another. This is why when the Israelites traveled through the desert, they did so in four¹⁹ camps, to signify and solidify their unity.

What makes a *dalet* a *dalet* is the *yod*-like tip at the back of its head—the *nekudah* again! There's something subtle being hinted to us with this *dalet*. If we take apart a *dalet*, we have a *yod* and two *vavs*. This is the “friendly” *nekudah* where everybody learns from everybody else's uniqueness. The *dalet* shines in two distinct ways. One, it shines as a *yod-vav*, within a person's own heart, so that he receives from himself and comes to be who he truly ought to be. Two, the second *vav* is the “shine and share with a friend” *vav*. So the friendly *nekudah* comes to us as a *dalet* because it is a two-part *nekudah*.

¹⁸ Arizal.

¹⁹ The *gematriya* of *dalet* is four.

On the other hand, the tzaddik's *nekudah* (which also has two parts) shines from the three-headed *shin*²⁰ of the head-tefillin. This is because his *nekudah* is so big that it holds itself and the other two, the friendly *nekudah* and the self-*nekudah*.

Once the tzaddik- and friendly-*nekudot* are in place the self-*nekudah* is ready to be shine. This is the hand-tefillin. The *yod*-knot of the hand-tefillin is the self-*nekudah* that shines into the heart. The self-*nekudah* parallels the heart which is why it faces the heart.

Together, the three *nekudot* spell God's name *ShaDaY*, the name related to the *sefirah* of *Yesod*. This is the *nekudah's* host *sefirah* because, as you remember, the *nekudah's* strength and existence depends on one's personal-morality. Not only do we need to receive from each of the *nekudot*, but the *nekudot* have to give and receive from one another as well. This giving and receiving means that one can begin from any *nekudah*, and the other two will evolve from it.

It's important that you know that each *nekudah* contains all the *nekudot*. A *nekudah* shines to that which is "below" it, that which follows it in the order of Creation. The "following" piece is called in Kabbalah "the *binah* of *Beriah*." We call it the heart. What shines into the heart is the lowest *nekudah* of the higher level. This is how these things work. That lowest *nekudah* is also called *Chokhmah-ta'taab*, Lower Wisdom.

The root which nourishes Lower Wisdom is Upper Wisdom. We know this from, "My mouth will speak wisdom,"—two, Upper and Lower. So this *yod* of the *shel-yad* is really two *yods*, an upper and a lower. These two *yods* are two *nekudot* and for the upper to give to the lower there has to be a middle *nekudah*—and there is.

We know that the overall structure of Creation has a beginning, middle and end. Here, we are calling them *yods*—top and bottom—and a *vav*, which is the conduit from the Upper to the

²⁰ *Shin* (ש) is the 21st letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Lower. We also call them the three *nekudot*. The tzaddik's is the upper, the *rosh*/beginning/mind. The self-*nekudah* is the lower *yod* which is closest to the heart and lightens it. The conduit is Jewish unity, when Jews meld with one another to help each other grow as Jews. When that happens, when a person can give *and* receive from another, then he can receive from the tzaddik's *nekudah*.

On his own, no individual could receive from the tzaddik—the consciousness-gap is just too great! But if Jews join together [such as on Rosh HaShanah], each gets what he can from the tzaddik. This is why a large gathering with a tzaddik is so powerful. There is so much to be received when the tzaddik gives his lesson “in public” because it is as a public that each member can receive and get what he needs from the tzaddik.

Let's go back to the three types of tefillin. The head-tefillin and hand-tefillin are the upper and lower *yods* and *nekudot*, respectively. In the middle we have the head-tefillin strap, the conduit that brings the head-tefillin light to the hand-tefillin. The strap has the *dalet*-knot, Jewish unity, the sharing among ourselves that enables receiving from the tzaddik.

Yet really there are only two tefillin, head-tefillin and hand-tefillin, because the goal is for the former to enlighten the latter. The mid-*nekudah* is only a pipeline. This is why it has no *parshiyot*, no genuine wisdom to give. True wisdom is only in the upper and lower *nekudot*. So one must speak to the tzaddik to gain Upper Wisdom and, for ultimate perfection, speak privately with his Maker. Nonetheless, it is necessary to be part of a community. This happens by speaking with others about how one can be Jewishly better.

There are no *parshiyot* in the “third tefillin” because one gets from others only a glimmer of how to be better. If one were getting more, how could he “receive” from someone less Jewishly

developed? Yet receive from others we must; what we get is a glimmer.

And we get that glimmer even if the other person is not intending to enlighten us! His *nekudah* is shining unconsciously. (That it shines unconsciously means that it has no *mochin*.) All it takes to receive it is the desire to receive it.

Again, however, the main way to gain *mochin* are just two, to learn from the tzaddik and to speak privately with your Maker. But this talking works only to the extent that one is focused, alert and enthusiastic.

[5] Three-Headed and Four-Headed

This explains why the head-tefillin has a three-headed *shin* and a four-headed *shin*. The one *nekudah*, the three-headed *shin*, contains the other two *nekudot*. So, too, the *nekudah* of the tzaddik, which already has all three *nekudot* in it, has a second part, a higher root, an upper-*nekudah*. The tzaddik-*nekudah* that we interact with is the least part of him. Would that it were that we could receive from that! But from his true mind, his highest *nekudah*, it's impossible for us to receive.

That makes it four *nekudot* for the tzaddik: his upper *nekudah* and the three which, together, are his lower *nekudah*, the one which he shines into the Jewish people. This is why the head-tefillin has a three-headed *shin* and a four-headed one.

[6] Where to Wear

Now we can explain why we wear the head-tefillin so it can be seen, but the hand-tefillin so that it is covered. The head-tefillin is "talking with the tzaddik," learning Torah from him. What he says to us is public so that all may hear it. The hand-tefillin, however, is

one's talking with God, which is done out of sight and out of mind of others.

[7] *Shins* and Shabbat

Let's go back to the *shins*. Together they have seven heads, an aspect of *Yesod*, Shabbat, the seventh day. As we mentioned earlier, the vowel *m'lupam* is the residence of the *nekudab* that shines into us. The *m'lupam* is a *vav* with a *yod* in its middle, and the letter *zayin*, whose *gematriya* is seven, is a *vav* capped by a *yod*.

We don't wear tefillin on Shabbat (or the Jewish festivals) because the two are alike in a special way. Each of them is an *ot*, a sign (Exodus 13:9; *ibid.* 31:13). That they are an *ot* connects them to the *ot* of *brit milah* (Genesis 17:2) which, of course, is the basis of the *nekudab's* strength, one's personal morality.

Shabbat (and the Jewish festivals), as well, owe their holiness to that *nekudab* and so, ultimately, to one's personal morality. So there is no need for the *nekudab* to shine via the tefillin. In fact, wearing tefillin on Shabbat is tantamount to saying that Shabbat is inconsequential, God forbid.

Shabbat is quite consequential. At the start of Shabbat, the holy *nekudab* begins to shine, elevating each realm of Creation to a higher plane of existence, and melding each piece of brokenness back to its source, fixing it. This is why Shabbat is such a delight—the *nekudab's* light knocks out the fallen loves and our love is focused on God and all that is holy. And yes, the three meals parallel the three *nekudot*.

[8] Tefillin No-nos

There are certain things we may not do with tefillin. We are not allowed to pass gas, go into the bathroom, or joke around when wearing them. This extra degree of holiness is demanded of us by the *nekudab's* light, which is a bit of Shabbat. The holiness of Shabbat is permanent, immovable and unchanging. Its holiness always stays in the realm of *kedushah* and is never accessible to any negative, outside force.

Tefillin, because they are of a piece with Shabbat, cannot be brought into any unclean place or situation because as we know, “No man may leave his

place on the seventh day” (Exodus 16:29). To do so would be feeding Shabbat holiness to the unclean/negative forces that are attached to such places and situations.

For the same reason, there is no mitzvah of tefillin at night. Although the *nekudah* shines a very powerful light, the light that fixes, it can only do this through speech (*Malkhut*), as we see from the verse quoted earlier, “My mouth *speaks* wisdoms (Psalms 49:4). The holy words we speak end up holding the good God wants to give us. One product of this is the ability to fix the broken pieces of Creation.

But at night *Malkhut* is unable to speak openly about Jewishness. Instead, it uses the night to enhance daytime’s accomplishments. Since *Malkhut* cannot “go out at night”—cannot expose herself to night’s negativity—the light of tefillin, the *nekudah*, cannot shine.

Only by day, when *Malkhut* again rises with all the enhancements she made at night, can the *nekudah* shine. And then we can put on tefillin again.

[9] Three *Nekudot* and Three Prayers

Is there a connection between these three *nekudot* and the three prayers of the day? Yes. “My mouth speaks wisdoms” means “my prayers shine into the *nekudot*.” Just as the *nekudot* are structured with a beginning, middle and end, so are the prayers. Let’s line things up.

Shacharit (Morning Prayers) and Arvit (Evening Prayers) are the beginning and end *nekudot*, respectively, paralleling also day and night, and the head-tefillin and hand-tefillin. Minchah (Afternoon Prayers) is the conduit, opening the door for the light of Above and drawing it down. Since this is its primary function, we don’t say Kriat Shema at Minchah.

Upper	Conduit	Lower
Head-tefillin; <i>parshiyot/mochin</i>	<i>dalet-knot/no parshiyot</i>	Hand-tefillin; <i>parshiyot/mochin</i>
Shacharit: <i>Kriat Shema</i>	Minchah: no <i>Kriat Shema</i>	Arvit: <i>Kriat Shema</i>
Tzaddik's <i>nekudah</i>	Friend's <i>nekudah</i>	Personal <i>nekudah</i>
Avraham	Yitzchak	Yaakov
Kohen	Levi	Yisrael

The two essential *nekudot* are the tzaddik's and one's own which, as we saw earlier, are symbolized by the head-tefillin and hand-tefillin. This is why they contain *parshiyot*. In Shacharit and Arvit, *Kriat Shema* is the equivalent to the *parshiyot*.

Let's look at this a bit more closely. Who established Minchah? Yitzchak. The guiding force of his life was *dinim* (judgments), being strong and disciplined when facing difficulties and hard times. This is alluded to by, "His eyes became too weak to see" (Genesis 27:1). The challenges of afternoon—Minchah time—are Esav's influence because it was given to him as a gift: "He sent Esav a *minchah*."²¹ Because Leah also had this trait—her "eyes were soft" (ibid. v. 29)—everyone thought she would be affianced to Esav. It was only her tears that saved her from that awful fate. Bottom line though, is that Leah is also a conduit-*nekudah*, a "Minchah-nik," a *dalet-knot*.

In which *tefilah* will you find all the elements of the *nekudot* combined? In Shacharit, because it parallels the most important *nekudah*, the one that contains all the others, the Upper one. Avraham, who was a *kohen* of sorts (Psalms 110:4), established

²¹ The word *minchah* also means a gift; see Arizal *Likutey Torah* on Genesis 32:14.

Shacharit and was the personification of *chessed*, the very light of the holy *nekudah*. This is why we wear tefillin during Shacharit and *daven* as long as we do.

[10] The Minyan's *Nekudot*

You might not realize it, but these *nekudot* shine anytime a minyan (quorum) *davens* (prays). A prayer is strongest when it is said with a minyan.²² A minyan consists of at least ten men, and ten is the *gematria* of *yod*, the same *yod* we spoke of before, the one which shines the light of the hand-tefillin.

This is why we are able to recite *Kedushah* only with a minyan. Without ten men, no communal words or service of *kedushah* may be performed (*Megillah* 23b). As the Rebbe teaches in Lesson #34, the *nekudah* is named *Kodesh*, and is a *yod*. So there cannot be any *kedushah* service with fewer than ten men—the *nekudah* won't be there!

This explains, too, why the opening response of *Kedushah* is “*kadosh, kadosh, kadosh* (holy, holy, holy).” They represent the three *nekudot*, each of which is *kodesh*. Which leads us to the reader's repetition. In relation to the congregation, the reader (*shaliach tzibur* in Hebrew) functions as the tzaddik because both “contain” the entire congregation. This is the *nekudah* that feeds each and every other *nekudah*. Rebbe Nachman says also that the *shaliach tzibur* contains the good points of everyone that is part of the minyan (*Likutey Moharan* Lesson #282).

It works like this. First, everyone in the minyan *davens* the quiet *Shemonah Esrei* (Eighteen Benedictions). This way he can receive his own inner-*nekudah*. Simultaneously, since everyone is *davening* together, each person is giving and receiving from all the

²² Reb Noson is talking about Shacharit, Minchah and Arvit.

others, the second, conduit, *nekudah*. (Nobody is speaking with anybody. It's by osmosis.) All of them receive from the comprehensive tzaddik-*nekudah* during the repetition, which is the purpose of its public recital. It is important to remember: the comprehensive tzaddik-*nekudah* needs to shine into all of the individual *nekudot*, and each of the individual *nekudot* needs to receive from it.

So we say *Kedushah*—*kadosh, kadosh, kadosh*—during the repetition to re-enforce the unified comprehensiveness of the three *nekudot*.

[11] The *Nekudah* of *Teshuvah*

If we understand well what we've discussed till now, we begin to appreciate the severity of the seemingly "victimless" crime of masturbation, God forbid. We noted before that the *nekudah's* strength and potential are rooted, and permanently affixed, in one's personal-morality. That means the power of this *nekudah*—and personal-morality—cannot be used for anything negative. Kosher speech, as the representative of *Malkhut*, is the only method for shining the *nekudah's* light to the lower levels that need it.

One's sacred, physical seed, which is produced by his use of the *sefirah* of *Yesod*, may not be sent or spent on an outside force. Only *Malkhut*, in the person of one's wife, may receive it. When that happens, a great *tikkun* is made, namely a *tikkun* for all that is broken.²³ In fact, all such sacred interactions are meant to fix the broken vessels. Since the *nekudah* shines brightest on Shabbat, Shabbat is the preferred time for husband and wife to be together.

On the other hand, if, God forbid, one wastes seed, he is sending *Yesod's* *nekudah's* light out into exile. This is tantamount to destroying the world, because he is feeding the negative forces from this very powerful, positive

²³ In one's personal life, not in the world at large.

potential.²⁴ Instead of using that potential—the *nekudab*—to fix what is broken, he is wasting it, breaking things all the more.

They break because they aren't strong enough to hold the light of the misspent *nekudab*. That's a why a person who makes this mistake is said to have uprooted his *mazal* [destiny or fortune]. The *nekudab* is his primary source of vitality, enabling his whole life to run as smoothly as possible. But by uprooting it, he uproots his connection to himself.

That's why it is said that he cannot do *teshuvah*. *Teshuvah* is not only returning to God. It is also returning to oneself. But he has no more self. He uprooted it! Where is he going to go? Nonetheless, nothing can stop *teshuvah*. If he returns to God, he will certainly be forgiven.

However, his *teshuvah* must be facilitated by the *tzaddik*. Why? Having forfeited his own *nekudab*, the person needs a new one. The only way for him to get a new one is to receive it from the *tzaddik*. The *tzaddik* is the root of all the *nekudot*, and so has the ability to give others a new *nekudab*.²⁵

Strictly speaking, since the person doesn't deserve *teshuvah*—but can do *teshuvah* if he is genuinely remorseful and cries honest tears—what is happening when he is re-accepted is nothing short of a revelation of a new level of Divine compassion, unearned compassion: God has accepted someone who is undeserving. This in itself is his *tikkun*.

What happens by his successful triggering God's compassion is the revelation of a new level of kindness, a level that the world has never before seen. All *teshuvah* and forgiveness are based on *chesed*/kindness. Yet, all the *chesed* that had existed until now didn't suffice for *him*, that *he* should be forgiven and accepted. This is because justice demands justice. It never accepts returns.

Since the *nekudab* itself is *chesed*, losing the *nekudab* is losing the *chesed*. Loss of his *nekudab* thwarts the already existing *teshuvah*-allowing *chesed* to be of help to him. Now that God wants to accept him, more *chesed* is needed. So

²⁴ The *Shevirah* is repeated.

²⁵ See *Likutey Moharan* I, Lesson #5 on this same topic.

God renews His kindness and adds to it, revealing a new measure of *chesed* in order to fix and forgive even this grievous misdeed.

[12] Mashiach

The ultimate instance of this *tikkun* will be performed by Mashiach, may he come swiftly, in our lifetime. Mashiach is coming to fix this sin more than any other. We know this from the verse (Isaiah 11:12), “He will gather the scattered of Judah.” He will gather all who have been scattered to the four corners of the earth. What about him gives him this ability? Mashiach is the new light of kindness which can correct anything, because, God “does kindness for Mashiach” (Psalms 18:51).

A verse we say every day²⁶ in the *U’va L’Tzion* prayer encapsulates the entire process. The prophet says (Isaiah 59:20), “*U’va L’Tzion*, there will come a redeemer, to Zion and to those of Yaakov who return from *pesha*, sin.” The word *pesha* is linked to another verse: “children of *pesha*, false seed” (ibid. 57:4). Mashiach is coming especially for them.

The first part of the verse in Isaiah (59:21) tells us that when Mashiach arrives and provides their *tikkun*, he will shine on them the all-inclusive *nekudab*: “I make this covenant with them ... My spirit which is upon you”—the *nekudab* which depends on personal-morality—“and My words which I have put in your mouth”—which allows one to have *ruach hakodesh*, to speak God’s word, the *nekudab* which is revealed via the mouth.

The final part of the verse brings us full circle. My words “will not leave your mouth, the mouth of your seed, or the mouth of your seed’s seed, says God, from now and forever.” The three generations are the three *nekudot*, the beginning, middle and end. Each is bound to the other and each receives from the previous level.

With Mashiach’s arrival all of the *nekudot* will shine. The verse’s conclusion, “from now and forever” tells us that the final

²⁶ On weekdays, in Shacharit, on Shabbat and Jewish holidays, in Minchah.

redemption will be forever. And for the final time in Shacharit, we repeat the *Kedushah*, alluding to Mashiach's all-inclusive *nekudah*.

May he come swiftly and soon, in our lifetime. Amen.