

Tefillin: Supplemental Issues

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In a previous article I addressed directly the most important questions raised by some Messianic teachers regarding the teaching of the tefillin. Now it has become necessary to publish a supplemental presentation on that subject, to reexamine the issue and address other issues which have also been introduced by those adhering to that doctrine. Some of those questions revolve around the importance of the supposed “mitzvah” (command), and did Messiah Yahushua command and/or endorse the wearing of them? What are the true meanings and origins of certain related Hebrew words? Is there evidence to support a literal interpretation of the four major texts? Other questions to deal with are regarding the timeframe in which the Tefillin were first introduced (can they be traced back to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his 12 sons?), did the lost 10 tribes influence other cultures to wear them, the obvious Rabbinic origins of this tradition, the “mark of the beast” connection, and the danger found in following the “Oral Torah” and Rabbinic Judaism.

There are those within the Hebrew Roots Movement who are teaching that we should be wearing (or “laying”) the *tefillin*. Among those of us within that movement there are those who are now teaching that the restoration of truth not only means returning to Torah observance, but also returning to Judaism (or some other mixture of Judaism and Christianity). If you have not yet read the 44 page article entitled [“Are Believers Commanded to Wear Tefillin as Taught by Rabbinic Judaism?”](#), by W. Glenn Moore, please go to the website link as given here and read it carefully. Then you can return to this article which addresses some of the same issues and more specific issues as related to the history and practice of wearing *tefillin*.

As a reminder of our past and current spiritual condition, please consider this word from Yahweh before we continue with this presentation:

“Hear the word of Yahweh, ye children of Israel: for Yahweh hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of Elohim in the land. . . . My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to Me: seeing thou hast forgotten the Torah of thy Elohim, I will also forget thy children.” (Hosea 4:1-6)

At the time this text was written, the 10 northern tribes of Israel were only a few decades away from being cast out of their homes and taken away forever from the land of Israel. Even before they were forced to leave, Yahweh declares that they were “destroyed for lack of knowledge.” And remember, this was 800 years BEFORE Messiah Yahushua came. Those who seek to exalt the oral traditions of Judaism (or the “oral torah”)

consistently fail to consider this one important fact: the people had lost their connection (and knowledge) of Yahweh long before the Messiah even came! Those who exalt the “oral torah” do not realize that in doing so they place themselves in opposition to the Messiah, for the Messiah spoke out AGAINST the false traditions and “commandments of men” as introduced by the Hasidim (forerunners of the sect of the Pharisees). And the Pharisees are the forerunners of modern day Orthodox Judaism, which includes the mystical teachings of Kabala. Among its most “mysterious” and “exalted” teachings is the teaching that true believers in Yahweh must wear the *tefillin* in obedience to an alleged “mitzvah” of Torah. To them it is one of the most important mitzvahs of Judaism.

The Importance of Following the Supposed ‘Mitzvah’ of Tefillin

When addressing the issue of the wearing of *tefillin*, I am often confronted with a mindset which is very contradictory in its approach to this issue. On the one hand those who teach this say with the utmost confidence that this is truly a command of Scripture. They will then speak of how they started wearing the *tefillin* and how they did this without understanding it. Then they describe how after this they had a mystical “pentecostal” type of experience. When they are confronted by the fact that they are teaching it as an absolute command which would obviously be binding on all other believers in Scripture, they will say such things as “well, it is a minor mitzvah”, or we “don’t condemn anybody”, or “we are all at different levels in our walk.” It is my understanding that we tend to call this type of thinking “double-talk”, or “baking your cake and eating it too.” It is hypocrisy! Either we are commanded to wear literal *tefillin* or we are not. There is really no “gray area” on this or any other issue. Why pretend that it is not important, when the obvious implication is that (to them) it is of supreme importance?

Their first approach is to saturate the listener with their belief, stating it as if it were a fact—an actual commandment. From beginning to end they will present this “belief” as if it were “fact.” This is similar to the approach that those who believe in evolution will use. The evolutionist will speak of his doctrine as if it were “scientific fact”, and repeat this “fact” over and over again when in reality it is merely an unproven “theory” which has little if any real scientific support. Likewise, the one who has embraced the wearing of *tefillin* will not only speak of it as a true Scriptural command, but will also tend to exalt it to a very high if not the highest level of importance for the believer. Here are two examples:

“Among the positive commandments there is no mitzvah greater than the mitzvah of *tefillin*, and every Jewish male should be very careful to keep this mitzvah properly.”¹

“*Tefillin* is a commandment of the Torah, which insists upon the believer in four separate instances that we should wear them. In spite of this

¹A Brief Summary of the Practical Laws of Tefillin. <http://www.sichosinenglish.org/books/bar-mitzvah/05.htm#t3> Shulchan Aruch HaRav, 37:1. See Igros Kodesh, Vol. XX, p. 270.

repeated demand, *tefillin* has remained for the most part untouched in the Messianic community. . . . There are many reasons for this lack of observance, but the most prominent stems from the aura of mystery that surrounds the little black boxes. Torah tells us to don them for certain, but it does not reveal in plain words why we should.”²

Once the supposed “fact” of the wearing of *tefillin* is impressed upon the listener, and they accept it, then they are “hooked”—irreversibly impressed by an unexplained desire to wear them. And why do they do this? It is because (as might typically be mentioned in a court of law) “they assume evidence not established.” It is *all* founded upon an assumption that has not yet been proven.

How can we be certain what the result of such a practice will be? By observing what it did for others who hold this doctrine. Now we don’t want to judge the individual since each person is different and they have different reasons for why they practice this doctrine. However, we already have a very good idea of what the result *is* based upon the history of Orthodox Judaism. How important is the wearing of *tefillin* to the Orthodox Jew? The statements below illustrate just how far they will go to give authority to such a practice:

“...They were revered as highly as the Scripture...It was said that Moses had received the law of their observance from God on Mount Sinai...that the 'tephillin' were more sacred than the golden plate on the forehead of the high-priest, since its inscription embodied only once the sacred name...How far the profanity of the Rabbis in this respect would go, appears from the circumstance, that they supposed God Himself as wearing phylacteries (Ber. 6a)...”³

Stories of those who begin to wear *tefillin* are very similar. First, they begin by studying modern day Orthodox Judaism, or a Messianic faith which is strongly influenced by the same. Second, they begin to identify with many of their teachings, even teachings which appear to be based solely upon Jewish traditions. Finally, they end up having a strong desire to wear the *tefillin*. Once they start wearing the *tefillin* they begin to “feel” some overpowering desire in their heart. They decide it is the right thing to do without any solid scriptural evidence that it is right, and without any solid understanding of it. Once they are “hooked” then everything they study in Scripture is clouded by their false interpretation—and they will slowly but surely begin to appeal to Rabbinic authority for their practices. In the final stage of the process (which may take months or years) they end up believing that they are teachers of righteousness and may even begin to feel superior to others because of the “knowledge” that they have been privileged to have received. As a result, they make statements like the following in which they suggest that those who reject their new “doctrine” are “not diligent enough in their study of the Word concerning this topic.” Here are some of their personal testimonies:

²*The Sign of the Servant, Revealing the Meaning Behind a Mysterious Mitzvah*, by Jeremy Chance Springfield, Preface, page ix.

³Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, p. 201-3.

“I had a desire in my heart to observe this *mitzvah tefillin*, **even though I did not understand it**, but there was this deep desire to do this.”⁴

“As one who accepted this yoke upon himself **before the onset of understanding**, I can honestly say that it is not a difficult thing to do. *Tefillin* can be worn, and much spiritual significance can be derived from them, **even without a knowledge of why we should wear them**. . . This book deals with identifying those rich reasons and profound purposes, with the hope that by it a fire will be ignited in the heart of the reader to **personally accept this decree** along with all the other wonderful commands of Torah. . .”⁵

I have to agree that there are commands in Scripture where the reason for the commandments are not given. And there are those who go to the other extreme of teaching in opposition to Torah obedience. However, in the case of the *tefillin* these are really not the issues with most of us.⁶ The real underlying issue is simply the question of **whether it is even a literal command at all!**

Do the Four Major Texts Support a Literal Interpretation of Tefillin?

Is the *tefillin* a command to be understood literally, or is it a metaphorical expression intended to illustrate and teach a profound lesson?

One of the authors we mentioned earlier believes that those who espouse a metaphorical meaning to these four texts do so out of ignorance of the true language of Yahweh’s Word. Note what he says, and please see if you can see through the obvious fallacy:

“There does exist a sect of Judaism today, known as the Karaites, who regard the mitzvah of *tefillin* as a symbolic one, and therefore do not wear them at all. Although the Karaites have a noble mindset in their approach to the Torah, they have regrettably missed it in regards to their understanding of *tefillin*. Some believers today unfortunately also take this same attitude when it comes to wearing them, for they do not perceive the profound meaning behind this mitzvah.”⁷

“As touched on earlier, there exist many who do not see *tefillin* as being an actual mitzvah, and apply it only to the spiritual realms. Those who, perhaps, are not diligent enough in their study of the Word concerning this

⁴*BINDING to PURPOSE*, Part 1, p. 1, by Rabbi Edward ‘Levi’ Nydle, http://www.bnaiavraham.net/teaching_articles/english_teachings/RabbiEd/BINDING_OF_PURPOSER.pdf

⁵*The Sign of the Servant, Revealing the Meaning Behind a Mysterious Mitzvah*, by Jeremy Chance Springfield, Preface, *Ibid*.

⁶Now the author has truly succeeded in his purpose to see to it that “a fire will be ignited in the heart of the reader”, and for this reason I have published this rebuttal.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 3.

topic will quickly assume this stance, for without a thorough understanding of the language used concerning the mitzvah of *tefillin*, one could indeed admittingly [*sic*] come to this erroneous conclusion.”⁸

Some, like the author here quoted, are persuaded that the teachings of Torah actually “demand a literal interpretation of the text” with regard to the *tefillin*. This is very puzzling to me. Does Scripture “demand” that we interpret “that the Torah of Yahweh shall be in your mouth,” as recorded in Exodus 13:9, as literal? Just how do we put the Torah literally in our mouth? How about Proverbs 1:8-9? Does Scripture “demand” that this text should be interpreted literally?

“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law [Torah/Teaching] of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.”

Is the teaching of our parents to be literal chains around our necks, or a literal ornament on our head? Does Proverbs 3:3 “demand” that truth and righteousness **must** be literally written upon our hearts? Does Proverbs 6:20-21 “demand” that the teachings of our mother and father **must** be hung around our necks, or that they **must** be surgically implanted around our hearts (or minds, however you wish to translate it)? What about Proverbs 7:2-3?

“Keep my commandments, and live; and my law [Torah] as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart.”

Does this “demand” that we put the Torah in the center of our eye, to tie Yahweh’s commandments to our fingers and have a surgical operation to write them upon our hearts? And how do we interpret Jeremiah 31:33?

“But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith Yahweh, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their Elohim, and they shall be my people.” (Jeremiah 31:33)

Does the reading of this text “demand” that this application be literal, to put Yahweh’s law in our intestines and write it inside our hearts (or minds)? If not, why does it have to be literal in the four texts we are discussing today?

Are There Commands in Those Four Texts?

I do not deny that there are commands in the four texts used to supposedly support the wearing of *tefillin*. The question we need to address is “exactly which one of these statements is a true and valid command, and which one is merely a metaphorical expression intended to expand upon the command already given?”

⁸Ibid., p. 17.

Let us start with Exodus 13, because this is really the text which is the clearest in regards to what is or is not a commandment of Yahweh:

“And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand Yahweh brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten. This day came ye out in the month Abib. And it shall be when Yahweh shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to Yahweh. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters. And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which Yahweh did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that Yahweh’s law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath Yahweh brought thee out of Egypt. Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.” (Exodus 13:3-10)

This text in Exodus 13 helps us understand more precisely what this "sign" upon our hand and "memorial" between our eyes was intended to be. And yes, there is a command involved—but what is the command?

First, we need to ask what "it" is? Obviously, "it" is referring to everything involved in the keeping of Passover. If the keeping of Passover is to be "a sign to you upon your hand, and for a memorial between your eyes" it is obvious that the only "command" that is referred to here is the command to keep Passover! For those who seek to keep this supposed command regarding the *wearing* of *tefillin*, I have to ask the question: are you keeping Passover in accordance with Scripture?

In each of the 4 texts in question the Hebrew character "lamed" is found modifying the words "sign" and "memorial" and the "frontlets" of Deuteronomy 6 and 11. The *lamed*, when used as a modifier, can be translated "at" or "for" or "as" or even in some cases "like." The text could be translated "And it shall be *like* a sign to you upon your hand, and *like* a memorial between your eyes, that Yahweh's Torah may be in your mouth." If this is the case, then obviously the intended meaning of this text is to be a "metaphorical expression" of how the keeping of Passover is to be "like" a precious jewel upon our forehead and "like" a precious bracelet upon our hand. This would, therefore, show that not only is this a metaphorical (or symbolic) expression BUT it is not to be understood as a command—except, by inference, as an extension of the command already mentioned to keep the Passover!

Therefore, whatever is to be done on the forehead or the hand it is not to be understood literally—any more than having "Yahweh's Torah...in your mouth." He is merely

speaking of how obedience will be "like" having a fine jewel in the forehead or "like" a precious bracelet on the hand, and how the result of this will be that they will naturally have the Torah in their mouth. What is the conclusion of the matter? "You shall therefore keep this law in its season from year to year." What law? The law of *tefillin*? **No! The law of Passover!!**

Now let's go to Deuteronomy 6 using what we have learned so far.

"Hear, O Israel: Yahweh our Elohim is one Yahweh: And thou shalt love Yahweh thy Elohim with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And **these words**, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind **them** for a sign upon thine hand, and **they** shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write **them** upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

What was commanded? "these words"! Well, we could make a case that "these words" refers to the whole of Yahweh's commands found in the Torah. But at the very least we have to conclude that he is referring to the prior statement where he says "Yahweh our Elohim is one Yahweh" and "thou shalt love Yahweh thy Elohim with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." That is the commandment, and Messiah says that it is the first and greatest of all commandments!! Now, this is the heart of the matter. It is the *whole cake*—everything else is simply the *icing on the cake*.

Before we continue on we need to address the fact that Messiah has established exactly **what** the command is and **how many** commandments are represented in this text: Please notice what He says:

"And Yahushua answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; Yahweh our Elohim is one Yahweh: And thou shalt love Yahweh thy Elohim with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: **this is the first commandment.**" (Mark 12:29-30)

Now let's stop right here. For those who are not aware of it, Judaism teaches that this text in Deuteronomy 6:4 is **divided into three commandments**, not one! Many of those who follow Judaism believe that "Hear, O Israel, Yahweh our Elohim is one Yahweh" is one commandment and then "And thou shalt love Yahweh thy Elohim with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" is another commandment. In addition, they will usually add the command from verse 13 to "fear Yahweh" as part of this verse as well, making it a total of three commandments

in that verse.⁹ But Messiah has clearly established that the entire statement in verse 6 is to be taken as one commandment. Whose testimony will we accept on this matter?

Here are commandments 2-4 of the 613 commandments as generally listed by Judaism (including the relevant Scriptures) and this can be found in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*:

“2. To acknowledge His unity. Deut. vi. 4. 3-4. To love and fear Him. Deut. vi. 5, 13.”¹⁰

The Jews themselves are not united on this issue, for it is often stated that the giving of an exact number of commandments in Scripture (613) is not really possible. The statements below suggest not only that we cannot be certain of the exact number of commandments, but also that there are even questions regarding which statements are really commandments. Here are some of the reasons for this given under the heading of “Other”:

“However, some held that this count was not an authentic tradition, or that it was not logically possible to come up with a systematic count. This is possibly why no early work of Jewish law or Biblical commentary depended on this system, and no early systems of Jewish principles of faith made acceptance of this Aggadah (non-legal Talmudic statement) normative. The classical Biblical commentator and grammarian Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra denied that this was an authentic rabbinic tradition. Ibn Ezra writes “Some sages enumerate 613 mitzvot in many diverse ways [...] but in truth there is no end to the number of mitzvot [...] and if we were to count only the root principles [...] the number of mitzvot would not reach 613” (Yesod Mora, Chapter 2). . . .

“Rabbi Simeon ben Tzemah Duran states that “perhaps the agreement that the number of mitzvot is 613... is just Rabbi Simlai’s opinion, following his own explication of the mitzvot. And we need not rely on his explication when we come to determine the law, but rather on the talmudic discussions” (Zohar Harakia, Lviv, 1858, p.99).

“Rabbis who attempted to compile a list of the 613 commandments faced a number of difficulties, being:

*“*Which statements were to be counted as commandments? Every command by God to any individual? Only commandments to the entire people of Israel?*

*“*Would an order from God be counted as a commandment, for the purposes of such a list, if it could only be complied with in one place and*

⁹Some lists of the 613 *mitzvah*’s do not include this verse, so in their list this command is only divided into two commands.

¹⁰*The Jewish Encyclopedia*, The 613 Commandments, by Kaufmann Kohler and Isaac Broydé.
<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=689&letter=C>

time? Or, would such an order only count as a commandment if it could - at least in theory - be followed at all times? (The latter is the view of Maimonides.)

“*How does one count commandments in a single verse which offers multiple prohibitions? Should each prohibition count as a single commandment, or does the entire set count as one commandment?

“In Torah Min Hashamayim (‘Heavenly Torah’), Conservative Judaism’s Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel writes:

“Judah ibn Bal’am denigrates those who number the mitzvot, and who attempt “to force their count to equal 613.’ In his opinion, this is impossible, for if we were to count all of the mitzvot, including those that were temporary commandments and those that were intended to endure, the number would be far greater than 613. ‘And if we confined ourselves only to those that endure, we would find fewer than this number.’ (Behinat Hamitzvot Rabbi Yehiel Mikhel Gutmann, Breslau, 1928, p.26)

“Despite these misgivings, the idea that there are 613 commandments became accepted as normative in the Jewish community. Today, even among those who do not literally accept this count as accurate, it is still a common practice to refer to the total system of commandments within the Torah as the ‘613 commandments’.”¹¹

If the Jews are wrong about how many commandments are actually in Scripture, could they be wrong about the wearing of *tefillin* as being one of those commandments? Of course! And we have already found one place where the Messiah does not agree with their opinion as to what constitutes a commandment. This is found in the very same text which only a few verses later mentions the binding of a sign upon their forehead and hand. If (according to the recorded statement of Yahushua) the Jews have added one or two additional commandments into Deuteronomy 4:6, could they have also added two more *supposed* commandments into verse 8? Yes they could have.

So the text says they "shalt bind them for a sign."..what is "them"? "them" is referring back to "these words." And what are "these words"? The words Yahweh had just finished commanding them. And what is that? It is the command to "love Yahweh thy Elohim with all thine heart. . ." Honestly, is this something which can truly be fulfilled by writing it down and putting it into a box on your forehead or hand?

And let’s consider the true meaning of this statement. What will happen if they keep this one command? Those who choose to keep this command will **naturally** have them ("these words") in their heart. They will **naturally** want to teach them to their children. They will **naturally** talk of them when they sit in their houses, when they walk by the way, when they lie down and when they rise up. And they will **naturally** bind them "like"

¹¹ 613 mitzvot: Encyclopedia. http://experts.about.com/e/0/613_mitzvot.htm

a sign upon their hands, and they will **naturally** be "like" jewels between their eyes. And they will **naturally** place them upon their doors and gates.¹²

Now let's quickly go over Deuteronomy 11:

“And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, **to love Yahweh your Elohim, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul**, That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. . . .Therefore shall ye lay up **these my words** in your heart and in your soul, and bind **them** for a sign upon your hand, that **they** may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach **them** your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write **them** upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates.”
(Deuteronomy 11:13-14,18-20)

What are “these my words” that we are to lay up in our heart? It is the command to love Yahweh with all your heart. And how exactly do we do that? By keeping ALL of his commandments as given in Torah. So what do we bind upon our hand and between our eyes? We bind the command of verse 13. What do we teach our children? To love Yahweh. What do we write upon the door posts of our house? To love Yahweh. What do we enact in legislation in the gates of our city (at the courtyard, where legal decisions are made)? To love Yahweh.

In Exodus 13 it was Passover that was to be bound "like" a sign upon their forehead and hand. And here in this text of Deuteronomy 6 it is the command to love Yahweh with all our heart, soul and might which is to serve as the "command." And the context of Deuteronomy 11 shows that the command to love Yahweh is also to be placed "like" a sign upon their forehead and hands. Included with that commandment is the concept which they must keep **“ALL THESE COMMANDMENTS”** which Yahweh had given to them (the whole Torah, according to verses 1, 8, 13 and 22). And each of these 3 distinct commands were to be "like" a sign upon their foreheads and hands.

Based on what we have found here, it would appear that in each of these 3 distinct texts there is one singular command involved for each. Exodus 13 speaks of the commandment to keep Passover. Deuteronomy 6 and 11 speak of the *shema*, to love Yahweh with all our heart (which is at the foundation of all the other commands of Scripture). However, unlike these clear-cut commands, the reference to "frontlets" and "signs" is a metaphorical expression intended to expand upon the command that had

¹²By the way, while this last section could be understood literally it might also have a more figurative intent. A *mezuzah* alone could not fulfill the full requirements of this text because "gates" are a reference to the place of judgment in the city, where people assemble to hear righteous judgment (the *courtyard* or *plaza*). How are the Jews (or anyone else) fulfilling this mitzvah when they are not even able to render righteous judgment "in their gates" now? And our legal system today is not fulfilling this command because it does not follow the legislation of Torah, so who is?

already been given in the verses in question. Therefore, there is no "command" in Scripture to wear frontlets, whether "literal" or "symbolic."

Can Tefillin be Found in the Ancient Pictographic Hebrew?

This is a good question, and the answer is actually quite simple. Many of those who are returning to their Hebrew roots believe that Hebrew is the original language. Others may disagree with this view, however, most linguists will at least agree that the most ancient language was Semitic, of which Hebrew was certainly a major part of. The original Hebrew language was a pictographic language, similar to the Egyptian language. Even today we still have languages which are "pictographic" in nature, like Japanese and Chinese. Even modern Hebrew retains some of the "pictographic" nature that it originally had. And yet, the Hebrew of today is very different from the original Hebrew—while still retaining much of the basic underlying "rules" of understanding. Like all languages, it went through various changes and additions—just like English has had great changes over the centuries and has been strongly influenced by many other languages and introduced new and/or compound words into it.

Here are some examples of how the pictographic Hebrew and the use of the 2 letter root system strongly influenced the basic fundamental meanings of many words:

In Hebrew, the word for "Father" is AB (אב) and from this we get the word ABBA. The Aleph (א) in the original pictographic Hebrew¹³ is the picture of a Head (א) and can even be seen when the letter "A" is turned upside down, like this: א It looks like the head of an animal, with "two horns like a lamb." What does it mean? It means "Head" or "chief." The next letter in the word for Father is "Bet" (ב) and it means "House." It looks like the actual floorplan of a basic house. (ב) So, put the two meanings together and you have "Head of the house." That is what a "Father" is to be, according to the ancient pictographic Hebrew. Is the study of Scripture using the ancient pictographic Hebrew valid? *Absolutely!*

So, can the word 'tefillin' also be understood based upon the ancient pictographic Hebrew? **No it cannot!!** First, the word *tefillin* is not even Hebrew! It is Aramaic in origin and came to us at the earliest about 400 BCE. Now the actual word in Scripture that the Jews substitute *tefillin* for is the word Totafot. So, ok great, we can find the answer in this word (totafot)—right? Wrong!! The word Totafot is **also not a Hebrew word**, at least not originally. It is a compound word (a foreign loan word) which comes from the Egyptian language. While it would be good to examine this ancient word from the viewpoint of the Ancient Pictographic Hebrew, we cannot fully do so because it is a borrowed word which is itself a compound word which originated from the Egyptian language.

The word *totaphot* is a Hebrew word that has been borrowed from some other language and its original source is unknown to most scholars. Some have tried to use the

¹³The illustrations here of the pictographic Hebrew font are close approximations only, since I do not have the actual fonts available to me.

uncertain etymology of this word to find evidence of specific details of the command to wear the *tefillin*, such as suggesting it comes from two “different” languages [*African ‘tot’; (meaning “two”)* and *Coptic ‘fot’; (which also means “two”)*] to suggest four compartments in the *tefillin* (ha!).¹⁴ *Clearly, such a view as this is completely ridiculous.* The most likely answer is that it was borrowed from Egyptian words during the time of the bondage of Israel in Egypt. Please take note of this explanation from a 1993 article on *The Etymology of Totaphot*:

“The T word is a coined word which had no prior existence before it appeared in Exodus. It is a dual-formed word known to grammarians as a reduplication—where the sound of the first syllable is duplicated in the corresponding syllable of the added word. An example in English would be ‘hocus-pocus.’ The T word is Hebrew but the background is Egyptian. It would have been recognized at, or about, the time of the Exodus by anyone familiar with both languages and with the religion and gods of Lower Egypt. The two elements of the T word are Thoth and Ptah, the names of the primary gods in the Memphis cosmogony. Thoth was sounded without change, whether written in Hebrew or in Egyptian.

“In the last line and elsewhere in the Hieroglyphic section of the Rosetta Stone (in the British Museum), one can observe a square, a semi-circle, and a twisted rope—a combination which expresses the name of a god whose name appears in Greek letters having the sound of Phot, in the Greek section of the text.”¹⁵

First, there is no uniform agreement as to the actual etymology of the word. Some authorities believe it points to an actual amulet that is worn on the head. Some suggest it is from the Akkadian language. Still others even suggest (as the quote above shows) that it is a composite reference to the two gods of the Egyptians (Thoth and Phot).¹⁶ Why the Hebrew Scriptures would use a word derived from such a source is difficult to understand. However, it could be that the use of this word was with the purpose (as stated earlier) of giving a comparison or example. In other words, “‘like’ the Egyptians who wore these amulets with the names of their deities on them, you are to meditate on and place in your mind the teachings I am giving to you.” Obviously, since Scripture condemns the use of divination, He would not have commanded them to wear anything like an amulet or magic charm.

Do the Tefillin Found in Qumran Caves Prove Tefillin Are Scriptural?

The “Dead Sea Scrolls” have periodically occupied the attention of the world for over the past 50 years, since their discovery in the caves near *Qumran*. The numerous complete scrolls and fragments of Scripture have provided much insight into the life of

¹⁴(Rashi on Ex. 13:16).

¹⁵*The Etymology of Totafote*, by Herbert Rand. .

¹⁶*Ibid.*

the “Second Temple era.” “They are the **oldest** examples we have of any biblical works.”¹⁷ Because of this discovery, it has opened up many new insights into first century Judean life as contrasted by the inhabitants of Qumran—the Essenes.¹⁸

Amid the scrolls and fragments of scripture, targums, commentary, and daily accounts of *Qumran* life, they also found *tefillin*. The *tefillin* found in the caves of *Qumran* are also of great importance to the Biblical Archeological community. They, along with the other fragments of Scripture, validate to a certain degree the accuracy and importance of Scripture to the ancient post temple era of Israel. Here is what we know of the *tefillin* found in *Qumran*:

All together archeologists have found a total of 30 *tefillin* in the caves of *Qumran*.¹⁹ Of course, this number is subject to change as more discoveries are made.

Cave 1 =	1 <i>tefillin</i>
Cave 4 =	21 <i>tefillin</i>
Cave 5 =	3 <i>tefillin</i>
Cave 8 =	1 <i>tefillin</i>
Unknown cave or caves =	4 <i>tefillin</i>
<hr/>	
Total Tefillin Found =	30 tefillin

What is amazing in all of this is that the passages of Scripture, the style of the *tefillin*, and the number Scripture texts in these *tefillin* vary from one to the other. Some of the texts follow the traditional Masoretic Hebrew, while at other times they are variant readings of those texts. Sometimes these variants even agree with the readings from other ancient versions of Scripture.²⁰ So what exactly are we to make of this?

The only logical answer to this dilemma is that the wearing of phylacteries did not begin as a command at the time of the Exodus. It began some 1300 years later at about the time of the existence of the various *Qumran* communities. It was a loosely followed tradition which was largely limited in practice to the Hasidim of Israel (precursors to the Pharisees) and varied in the way it was to be kept. In addition to the caves of *Qumran*, we also have the *tefillin* found in the Murabba'at caves “which were occupied by refuges at the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt (135 CE).”²¹

¹⁷ *QUMRAM and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, <http://www.geocities.com/rabbishlomo/qumran.htm>

¹⁸ *Qumran: Identity & Ideology*, Ronald L. Troxel. <http://hum.lss.wisc.edu/~rltroxel/JHL/Ident&Ideol.htm>

¹⁹ James C. Vanderkam, "The Dead Sea Scrolls Today", p. 33.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Phylacteries: "A Sign Upon Your Hand and as Frontlets Between Your Eyes.", by Hakham Meir Yosef Rekhavi. <http://www.karaites.org.uk/phylacteries.shtml>

“Another stage in the development of phylacteries was revealed when it was discovered that the Qumran phylacteries contained the Decalogue. . . . Since those phylacteries found at Qumran contain the Decalogue while those at Murabba'at do not, it is clear that the Mishnaic reform mentioned above had taken effect by 135 CE. Thus we see that while the physical elements of the phylacteries, i.e., the case, the parchment, the ties, etc., were already fixed by the 2nd century CE, the final uniformity of the text was not established until later, and even then, two traditions remained as to the ordering of the four passages.”²²

So, in that period of about 250 years there were changes in the way the *tefillin* were made, so that the Decalogue was at first included as part of the *tefillin* and then (by Rabbinic command) the use of the Decalogue was forbidden to be used in the texts of the *tefillin*. Now if that were the only differences, this would be enough for us to question how *tefillin* could truly be a command of Scripture. But there is more. In addition to the later removal of the Decalogue, there is also the issue of the inconsistency of the texts that were used within the *tefillin*.

“One of the most remarkable finds to result from these explorations was that of phylacteries (Hebrew, *tefillin*) discovered in several caves. To the present day, strictly observant Jews attach leather thongs to small capsules, containing the text of Exodus 13.1-16, Deuteronomy 6.4-9 and 11.13-21, and bind these capsules to forehead and arm in literal fulfillment of the Deuteronomic injunction to ‘bind [these words that I command you this day] as a sign upon your hand and as frontlets between your eyes’ (Deut. 6.8). The following words, ‘And you shall inscribe them upon the doorposts [mezuzot] of your house’ (6.9), are likewise carried out literally by posting capsules (or mezuzot) containing Deuteronomy 6.4-9 and 11.13-21 on the doorway.

“Both Josephus and the author of the Letter of Aristeas refer to the custom among the Jews of wearing phylacteries. What remains uncertain to this day, however, is whether all ancient parties and/or sects among the Jews literally and uniformly applied the injunction to bind the words commanded by the Lord ‘as a sign upon your hand . . . and as frontlets between your eyes.’ The author of the Letter of Aristeas states that the Lord ‘has put the [divine] oracles upon our gates and doors . . . and upon our hands, too, he expressly orders the symbol to be fastened . . .’—but he says nothing about the fastening of phylacteries to the forehead. Josephus in his own description of the laws of Moses describes the latter practice as well, but does not tell us what specific verses were embedded in the boxes. The Samaritans for their part did not have the custom of wearing phylacteries at all. The New Testament refers once to the wearing of phylacteries by Jews, but without indicating whether they were worn on the arm, hand, or both (Matt. 23.5).

²²Ibid.

“Now a considerable number of phylacteries were found in Caves 1, 4, 8, and perhaps elsewhere—approximately thirty in all. The authors of the *Manual of Discipline*, insofar as they evince the very opposite tendency to interpret the literal injunctions of the Pentateuch as metaphors, were not good candidates for carrying out such an injunction literally. But whether the members of the Unity, or Yahad, group did or did not actually wear phylacteries, it was already obvious by 1970 that those phylacteries discovered in the caves could not have belonged to the individuals of any single Jewish group, whether encamped upon the desert plateau of Qumran or living elsewhere. For the texts of most of the phylacteries found in the caves—published by several scholars in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s—showed no textual consistency with one another.

“This unusual feature of the Qumran phylacteries would be quite accurately described by Josef Milik in his 1977 edition of many of those from Cave 4. Some texts are much lengthier than others, taking in relatively long passages of the Pentateuch, including Exodus 12.43-13.16 and Deuteronomy 5.1-6.9 and 10.12-11.21; and to these lengthy sections the Song of Moses (Deut. 23)²³ was also once added. Four additional texts are much shorter, approximately equaling the passages used eventually by the rabbinical Jews. In four cases the admonition contained in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy beginning with the familiar words ‘Hear O Israel, the Lord is your God’—universally considered to be at the very core of the content of phylacteries—is itself excluded. The distribution of the various passages is, in Milik’s words, ‘most capricious.’”²⁴

If we had doubts about the consistency of those wearing *tefillin* in the post second temple era, the information given below should be enough to put the issue to rest—at least in regards to the *tefillin* that were discovered at *Qumran*.

“It has been suggested because of the find of *tefillin* at Qumran, that the “Qumran Sect” believed in the literal interpretation of Exod. 13:9,16 and Deut. 6:8 & 11:18, if this was so then how come only a few pairs of *tefillin* were found? For surely there would be more remains than the pitiful few artefacts found, due to the size of the Qumran community. Also there is no mention of *tefillin* what so ever in any of the Qumranic literature, whether halakhic or other wise. If these *tefillin* did not belong to the Qumranic community, then where did they come from? Various biblical scholars i.e Allegro, Driver, Roth, Vermes, Yadin, de Vaux and others claim evidence that during the first revolt against Rome (66-73 CE) there was the presence of a contingent of Zealot Sicarii (who were ardent Pharisees) at Qumran. Is it not then plausible that these phylacteries belonged to the Zealots rather than to the “Qumran Sect”!

²³This is an obvious error by the publisher. The “Song of Moses” is found in Deuteronomy 32, not 23.

²⁴*The Origins of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, by Norman Golb. <http://fathom.lib.uchicago.edu/1/777777190227/>

“If the so called oral law is so pedantic about the materials used for the parchments and in the making of the *tefillin*, and also the manner in which *tefillin* are to be worn, then surely such a major issue as the order of arranging the four scriptural passages in the head compartments would also be standardized by the so called oral law? This issue as seen from above, was not finalized until the 12th-century, thus showing that the commandment to wear *tefillin* is not derived from the Tora, but has been developed over the centuries and is therefore due to rabbinic misinterpretation of Exod. 13:9, 16 and Deut. 6:8 & 11:18. The Mishna (m. Sanh 11.3) expressly forbids the use of five rather than four passages in the phylacteries. This Mishnaic reform is not a warning against the inclusion of an extra passage in the phylacteries but is informing the reader that a passage that had already been included should be now excluded from the phylacteries. The reason for this reform is verified by y. Ber. 3c; b. Ber. 12a. Now let us suppose that there is such a thing as the oral law and if there was, by suspending the use of the Decalogue as the fifth passage from the phylacteries, as mentioned above, then the Rabbis are surely going against the oral law and are therefore in their own eyes breaking a divine commandment, and if the Rabbis say that they are not breaking a divine commandment then they are surely negating their whole belief in a divinely transmitted oral law.

“The custom of wearing phylacteries was not as widespread in the first two centuries of the Common Era, as the Rabbis would have us believe. For the wearing of phylacteries was seen as one of the criteria distinguishing a haver (member of the rabbinic "society") from an 'am ha'ares (one not observing rabbinic customs). According to Josephus, himself a Pharisee, there were only about 6,000 of them in Israel during the late Second Temple period (Ant. 7:2:4), out of a possible Jewish population in Israel of some 2,000,000. Thus the 'am ha'ares formed the overwhelming majority of the population, and the wearing of phylacteries was limited to a small group.²⁵

The *tefillin* found at *Qumran* do not prove that the wearing of *tefillin* is a command of Scripture. They *in fact prove just the opposite!* They prove that the wearing of *tefillin* was a loosely followed tradition with a variety of modes of expression introduced by the Hasidim and (at first) used almost exclusively by the sect of the Pharisees. There is no conclusive evidence to support the idea that the Essenes of the *Qumran* communities wore the *tefillin*.

²⁵Phylacteries: "A Sign Upon Your Hand and as Frontlets Between Your Eyes.", by Hakham Meir Yosef Rekhavi. <http://www.karaites.org.uk/phylacteries.shtml>

Where Did the Newark, Ohio, Tefillin Come From and How Old Are They?

Over the past few decades there have been tremendous amounts of speculation regarding a discovery of artifacts in pre-colonial America (near Newark, Ohio). These artifacts (clearly Jewish *tefillin*) have been claimed by some to pre-date even the *tefillin* found in the caves of Qumran. Please notice what the author we have often quoted from says regarding this:

“The *tefillin* found at Qumran are the oldest verifiable remains in existence today. However, there is a little-known fact that ancient *tefillin* were actually found in North America! . . . A lithograph, shown above, was published in France of the head *tefillin*. . . . It shows significant signs of influence from the time of the early second Temple era, which would place it well before the birth of Moshiach, and thus would most likely, if true, make it the oldest known *tefillin* remains in the world. The other opinion is that it could date, as held by a few, from the 6th to 11th century. The truth is, we simply do not know. Its precise age is at this point unverifiable. But we can speak of the uniqueness of its construction, which is confounding, for no other version exist that are remotely comparable—and even more can be said of the unique place of its discovery. What was a set of Hebrew *tefillin* doing in America so long ago, well before Columbus (who was in fact a Hebrew) and the Spanish ever arrived? How did it come to be in the burial mound found in Ohio? The mystery seems to be unsolvable. The importance, though, is not to solve the mystery, but in the fact that history itself proves out the truth of the ancient performance of this mitzvah.”²⁶

Please notice how the author seems to be confused regarding which *tefillin* are the oldest. First, he says that the *tefillin* found at Qumran are the “oldest verifiable remains.” I agree with this. Then he says that the *tefillin* found in Newark, Ohio, would “most likely, if true, make it the oldest known *tefillin* remains in the world”! This I do not agree with. Then he gives another contradiction when he admits “its precise age is at this point unverifiable.” He contradicts himself again by saying on the one hand “The mystery seems to be unsolvable”, followed by his suggestion that it is not important for us to “solve the mystery” but just accept his belief that this set of *tefillin* “proves out the truth of the ancient performance of this mitzvah.” *Whew!* Where do we start?

Well, first we need to make a decision to ignore the author’s suggestion and realize that it is indeed important for us “to solve the mystery”! Since we are not knowledgeable enough to determine what these artifacts are on our own, nor their true age, it would seem that we need to find someone else who has done the research. That researcher is Dr. Rochelle Altman, a specialist in ancient phonetic-based writing systems.

²⁶*The Sign of the Servant, Revealing the Meaning Behind a Mysterious Mitzvah*, by Jeremy Chance Springfield, p. 92-94.

*First, recognize that it's a penny: Report on the
"Newark" Ritual Artifacts*

The Newark Ritual artifacts date to the Late Medieval period

Rochelle I. Altman. January 2004

"If you found a US penny in a trench at a dig that was assumed to contain only ancient items, you wouldn't claim the penny to be a forgery when you saw it. First, however, you would have to recognize that it's a penny." Anon.

"INTRODUCTION The photograph of an unfamiliar inscribed artifact appeared in the mail one day. The sender had only one question: what was the date of the artifact? The object itself was shaped like an ancient arch-topped tablet of "The" Law. In the center nested a bas-relief sculpture, with clear late-medieval attributes, enclosed in yet another Hammurabi-Jerusalemite arch-topped shape of "The" Law. Running down the sides of the object, between the inset sculpture and the outer edge, was an inscription expertly executed in a consolidated, sans-serif script design based on a Late-Medieval Hebrew font. Incorporated into the consolidated font were Sinaitic, Hebraeo-Phoenician, and Nabatean graphs. The object bore unmistakable evidence that it had been produced during the Late-Medieval period and was a product of probably France or Spain. A short summary report as to date and probable place of manufacture was duly supplied along with the very obvious markers as to both time and place. Upon reading this summary, the correspondent supplied more data.

"Combined amazement and dismay are not the usual response to reading about an artifact. It was amazing that the clear evidence of medieval manufacture was not recognized and that this artifact and its companion pieces had been branded a 19th-century forgery -- simply because it was assumed that the items had to be 1300 years old and, quite obviously, they were not that old. It was dismaying to learn that, because the objects had been found in the United States, this artifact, along with the rest of the set, had been annexed to support the dubious claims of an ancient Israelite presence in pre-Columbian America. This connection was murky enough; worse was to come.

"It was disturbing to learn later that the artifact with the shape of "The" Law had been correctly identified as medieval and European in 1861 by Dr. Arnold Fischel.¹ It was disgraceful to learn that the Report, issued in 1863 by the committee appointed by the Ethnological Society which stated that they accepted Dr. Fischel's assessment and could not label the items as "fakes,"² was ignored. Investigation into why the correct identification had been literally swept under the rug only made matters worse.

“Why was the identification ignored? Because neither the committee's report nor Fischel's identification fit the two models erected with regard to these artifacts. On one side, we had a group who maintained that the artifacts were evidence of the presence of the ten lost tribes of Israel in "Ancient America." On the other side, we had a school who declared the artifacts were "modern forgeries." David Wyrick, who found two of the artifacts in 1860, including the one in the shape of the "Law" (now called "the decalog"), was 'convicted' by rumor-consensus of forgery. Both Wyrick's reputation and finances were ruined; he committed suicide in 1864. In 1872, Charles Whittlesey published his *Archaeological Frauds: Inscriptions Attributed to the Mound Builders. Three Remarkable Forgeries*.³ These authentic artifacts were featured as one of the three forgeries. And there matters rested until 1980.”²⁷

Sadly, the Newark Ritual artifacts (as they are identified by many researchers) were at first thought to be complete forgeries. At the same time, there were those who were attempting to use these artifacts as evidence of the discovery of the 10 lost tribes of Israel. It went from one extreme to another, so the real evidence concerning this set of *tefillin* was conveniently swept out of sight for decades. Result: People took either one of two extreme positions. 1) The Newark artifacts were forgeries of the 19th century. 2) The Newark artifacts were ancient *tefillin* that predated the *Qumran* community (prior to c. 200 BCE) and that shows evidence in support of the lost tribes of Israel (living in pre-colonial America). As with so many myths, the truth was found to be something in between these two extremes—as Rochelle Altman explains to us:

“The Newark Ritual artifacts date to the Late Medieval period, as is made clear from stylistic features on the bas-relief sculpture on one of the artifacts and the Late Medieval Hebrew base-script used for the consolidated grid font that appears in the inscriptions on two of the artifacts. The artifacts are authentic, if not what they were thought to be in the 19th century, and, unfortunately, even today.”⁶⁰

“Claims of modern forgery based on the "peculiar" script, or "spelling" errors (of which there is precisely one after 1500 years or more of copying the text),⁶¹ or the pose of the figure on the bas-relief are equally erroneous and have no basis in actuality. The fact that black limestone with crinoid stems can be found in Ohio also has been claimed as evidence that the artifacts are forgeries. Black limestone containing crinoid stems, however, is available throughout the world. The material may be found, for example, in Belgium, England, France, Hungary and Spain. It may also be found in Idaho and the Dakotas as well as in Mercer and Muskingum Counties Ohio.⁶² The artifacts pass all visual forensic analysis tests. They also pass the materials examination as far as the availability of the material at the

²⁷First, ...recognize that it's a penny”: *Report on the "Newark" Ritual Artifacts*. The Newark Ritual artifacts date to the Late Medieval period, by Rochelle I. Altman, January 2004. http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/Altman_Newark.htm Dr. Rochelle Altman is a specialist in ancient phonetic-based writing systems. www.otgateway.com/contributors/altman.htm

probable site(s) of manufacture. That black limestone can also be found in Ohio is irrelevant.

“Archaeology as a soundly based field only came into being in the 1880's. That in the 1860's claims that the artifacts were forgeries, although the evidence at the site and expert opinion was against this, can be excused. Claims today that these artifacts are forgeries and not "old" enough for where they were found are unacceptable; such claims ignore both basic archaeological standards and the evidence. We can never know whether the artifacts were deposited during the "pirate treasure hunt" phase or sometime shortly after 1832 when the workmen removed 144,000 cartloads of stones from all the stacks at the site. There is, though, little doubt: this set of ritual artifacts was deposited at the two sites during the early part of the nineteenth century. As Dr. Fischel pointed out in 1861, these artifacts are medieval and European and had been stolen from a European settler.

“The ‘Newark’ Ritual artifacts are neither forgeries nor relics of ‘Ancient America’. They are, however, very important concrete evidence of Ancient and Medieval Israelite practices. The ancient graphs included in the consolidated script on these phylacteries are also our first small pieces of concrete evidence that a factual basis underlies Exodus 32:15. The shape of the tablet held by Moses as well as the condensed "decatalogue" inscribed on the hand phylactery is concrete evidence of the types of authoritative and theological disputes that divided the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. In addition, these artifacts also give us some hints as to the continuation of Jewish traditions among the peoples displaced after the Northern Kingdom was destroyed. This particular penny is far too important to leave in the obscurity of a wrangle between two extremist sides, ***both of whom ignore the evidence.***

“If an American penny finds its way onto the Acropolis in Athens or the Colosseum in Rome, we dismiss the question of how it got there as too obvious to be worth asking. This set of late-medieval ritual artifacts found their way to these sites in the United States because they were brought there, as so many family heirlooms were, by a settler from Europe searching for a new home in the new world.”²⁸

The claim that the Newark, Ohio, *tefillin* are more ancient than the ones found in Qumran has clearly been proven to be false. These Ohio *tefillin* are actually about 900 years old, they are of European origin (probably Spain), and (because of their unique style) could not have been made prior to the 11th century CE. Obviously, these *tefillin* were brought over to here by early American settlers, not originating *from* America, nor from an ancient date. Therefore, they cannot be used to substantiate a doctrine for the literal wearing of tefillin (not based on Scripture).

²⁸Ibid., Altman. http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/Altman_Newark5.htm

Did Abraham Know About Tefillin?

First, *tefillin* is an Aramaic word meaning “prayer-fillet” and therefore is always connected with prayer. The Hebrews did not start using Aramaic until *AFTER* the Babylonian captivity. Therefore, the word *tefillin* itself cannot be older than 2400 years (about 450 BCE).²⁹

Second, the actual Hebrew given in the original text of Scripture is *totaphot* (טוטפת) The best translation (really, *interpretation*) that we can offer for this word is ‘headbands’ (KJV—‘Frontlets’). Its etymological origin is uncertain, but recent studies have shown that it is probably an “Egyptian Loan Word” brought into the Hebrew language.³⁰ Whatever the exact origin of this word, it could not have been introduced until the time of the captivity of Israel in Egypt (not prior to about 2000 BCE, i.e. 4000 years ago). Whether it was intended to be used as a literal prayer object, an amulet, or simply as a metaphor, is not clearly presented in the word itself. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would not have known of them in their lifetimes—since the name itself is an Egyptian loan word (not of Hebrew origin) which had developed sometime during the time of Hebrew slavery.

Did Judah Give Tefillin to a Harlot as a Pledge?

Are you familiar with the story of Judah and Tamar? Judah gave Tamar in marriage to one of his sons, but because his son practiced evil Yahweh killed him. Then he gave Tamar to another of his sons, but because he refused to allow his seed to impregnate her Yahweh killed him also. Finally, he promised Tamar to his third and last son (when he comes of age). However, that day came and Judah did not fulfill his promises so Tamar decided to take the matter into her own hands. Here we take up the narrative as it is recorded in Genesis 38.

“When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered her face. And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee; (for he knew not that she was his daughter in law.) And she said, What wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me? And he said, I will send thee a kid from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give me a pledge, till thou send it? And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thine hand. And he gave it her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him.” (Genesis 38:15-18)

Notice that he gave his “signet”, his “bracelets” and his “staff” as a pledge to (what he thought to be) a harlot? Now please take note of the assertion of one person who is teaching that the wearing of *tefillin* is indeed a commandment of Scripture:

²⁹Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, p. 202-203.

³⁰*The Etymology of Totafote*, by Herbert Rand. .

http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0411/is_n2_v42/ai_13977174

“In the Torah, we also find a quick mention of *tefillin*, worn by one of the sons of Yisra’El, and it is found in a place having to do with love, to an extent. We stumble upon it rather unexpectedly in the emotional story of Yisra’El’s son Yehudah (Judah), and Tamar, who was his daughter-in-law.

.....

“The seal⁴⁶ and the cord⁴⁷ that is mentioned here are none other than Yehudah’s own personal *tefillin*! She asked him for something, a token of some sort, that would distinguish him from anyone else, in order that she could receive payment for her deed, or at least so she lead him to believe—for other righteous motives moved in her heart—and obviously his pair of *tefillin* would have been made personally, since at this time there existed no set regulations on how they were to be made⁴⁸. . . .”³¹

Now let’s pause for a moment to relieve ourselves of the initial **shock** of this statement!

I don’t doubt for a moment that Tamar had a righteous motive for what she did, and we will not here address the issue of whether or not the sin of “fornication” was committed here (by either Judah or Tamar). However, it is very clear that Judah’s motives were less than pure, for he says later (when confronted with his own sin) “And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. . . .”(Genesis 38:26).

The above author states that the Hebrew word *chatham* is a direct reference to *tefillin*. Is that true? Notice what he says in his footnote for the word “seal”: “The word used here is again the previously met *Chatham*, thus a direct reference to his *tefillin*!”³² Friends, the word used for “sign” in the four texts in our discussion **is not even the same word!!** It is the Hebrew word *oth* and although it is a related word in that it has the form *oth* within it, it has a completely different meaning than *chatham*. *Chatham* is a *signet ring*, not a *sign* as the word *oth* is translated. While they are both used to refer to literal items,³³ that is where the similarity stops. Where is the connection? There is none! Notice what *Strong’s Concordance* says:

³¹ *The Sign of the Servant, Revealing the Meaning Behind a Mysterious Mitzvah*, by Jeremy Chance
Springfield, p. 49-50.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

³³ *Oth* is a reference to a literal sign (as it has been used consistently throughout Scripture, examples are Genesis 1:14, 4:15, 9:12, 17:11, Exodus 4:8, etc...). However, the lamed preposition *la* indicates that it is to be “like a sign”, the lamed being translated “like” or “as”. *Chatham* is not a reference to *tefillin* any more than *Oth* would be. Those who make such a connection do so based upon preconceived notions.

H2368

חַתָּם חַתָּם

chotham chotham

kho-thawm', kho-thawm'

From H2856; a *signature* ring: - seal, signet.³⁴

H226

אֹת

'oth

oth

Probably from H225 (in the sense of *appearing*); a *signal* (literally or figuratively), as a *flag, beacon, monument, omen, prodigy, evidence*, etc.: - mark, miracle, (en-) sign, token.³⁵

Now there is a reference that is sometimes used to support the wearing of *tefillin* (including the author quoted earlier), and yes in this text it uses the word *Chatham* (seal). Here is what it says:

“Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.” (Song of Solomon 8:6)

It is assumed (by a few) that this text is an allusion to the wearing of *tefillin*. However, the word for “seal” used here is not the same word as used in the 4 key texts used to support the wearing of *tefillin*. This statement is a reference to the wearing of ornaments, and they are used as analogies. The “seal upon thine heart” would be a metaphor which refers to a neck ornament or necklace. The “seal upon thine arm” would be a metaphor which refers to a bracelet. It was common then (as it is now) for people to wear all sorts of ornaments on their bodies. So just how can someone declare that this statement could **ONLY** be a reference to the *tefillin*? Obviously, this can easily be a figurative reference to a necklace or a bracelet and therefore is a very weak argument in support of wearing *tefillin*.

Let us assume that somehow there might be some connection between this word *Chatham* and the *Oth* of Exodus and Deuteronomy. We just read Judah’s admission that his motives in taking Tamar were less than righteous. So let’s put that into it’s proper perspective as we explore the possibility that Judah gave Tamar his *tefillin*:

Let’s assume (for sake of argument) that Judah wore the *tefillin* all day long (as some are teaching). Just “imagine”, if you will, Judah is engaged in deep meditation and prayer. And he is still wearing his prayer ornaments as he goes to the city to **seek out**

³⁴*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, by James Strong, page 38 of the Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary.

³⁵*Ibid.*, page 10 of the Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary.

a harlot! [I know it sounds crazy, but let's follow this through ...] When he finds the (supposed) harlot and she asks him for a pledge, the first thing she thinks of is to ask him for his own prayer ornaments that he essentially needs everyday to aid him in his prayers to the Almighty. (*sigh!*) If the *tefillin* are so important to the children of Israel, what is Judah doing carrying them around as he seeks out a harlot? And why not just give her something else instead of something used for prayer? Today he might give his check, or ID or possibly even a credit card.³⁶ And why would Judah wear prayer ornaments (*tefillin*) in his normal everyday life and then (without reservation) give those prayer ornaments to what he thought to be a harlot?

Yes, his “prayers” did not “go up” very high that time—they hit the ceiling and bounced back! But this is only part of the problem. Such a scenario as we have presented here is so contrary to rational thinking that I am almost embarrassed to be refuting this insane view! Judah gave Tamar his signet ring, his arm bracelet, and his staff. These were items that were commonly used in ancient Israel. And the text in Song of Solomon gives us no connection either, since it could very easily (as in many other places) be a metaphorical analogy to a literal necklace and bracelet. In addition, there is no direct tie between these texts and the 4 texts of Exodus and Deuteronomy. ***It absolutely has nothing to do with tefillin!!***

Did King Saul and his Daughter Wear Tefillin?

It has been argued that the daughter of King Saul (Mikal) wore *tefillin*. However, this view comes strictly from the Talmud (*Eruvin* 96a) and Rabbinic tradition and it is lacking in historical confirmation. In addition, there is simply no Scriptural reference to this possibility at all.

It has also been argued that king Saul wore *tefillin*, as suggested by his crown and and bracelets. Please notice what the *Jewish Encyclopedia* says about this:

“In regard to their origin, however, the custom of wearing protecting coverings on the head and hands must be borne in mind. Saul's way of appearing in battle, with a crown on his head and wearing bracelets, is connected with this idea. The Proverbs reflect popular conceptions, for they originated in great part with the people, or were addressed to them. Prov. i. 9, iii. 3, vi. 21, and vii. 3 (comp. Jer. xvii. 1, xxxi. 32-33) clearly indicate the custom of wearing some object, with or without inscription, around the neck or near the heart; the actual custom appears in the figure of speech.”³⁷

While it is true that this wearing of a crown and bracelets (and other such ornaments) “reflect popular conceptions”, this in itself is not proof of ancient *tefillin*. Likewise, it is

³⁶Ah, but that is what he did! He gave her his signet ring [which is like an ID and a credit card], his staff and his bracelet [which are like ID's also].

³⁷*The Jewish Encyclopedia*, PHYLACTERIES, by Executive Committee of the Editorial Board. Julius H. Greenstone Joseph Jacobs Ludwig Blau Emil G. Hirsch.
<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=290&letter=P#1109>

argued that King Saul himself wore the *tefillin* (as implicated in his wearing of a crown and bracelets). However, while there is a Scripture text which speaks of his wearing a crown and bracelets—it does not specifically identify these as any sort of “prayer ornaments.” The fact that people (even kings) wore such items does not prove anything regarding *tefillin*, because people (then as now) wore all sorts of ornaments. And the texts which are listed in the quotation above **ALL** speak of the wearing of such ornaments in a metaphorical sense to teach a figurative lesson.

So here is the text which is used to supposedly prove that king Saul wore *tefillin*:

“So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord.” (2 Samuel 1:10)

This text simply says that King Saul possessed a crown and a bracelet. How can this prove the Israelites wore *tefillin*?

Notice how far people will sometimes go to justify a traditional belief in spite of the fact that the Scriptural support is lacking. An author we quoted earlier has stated something similar to that of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, in his footnote on page 29. However, he goes a little further as he asks us to “imagine” that Saul wore the *tefillin* in battle:

“In the book of Shemu’EL ב (2nd Samuel) 1:10, we are presented with two articles of the deceased King Sha’ul (Saul) — his crown and his bracelet. The bracelet is what I want to focus on for a moment. The Hebrew word is אֶצְדָּה *Etsadah*, and literally refers to a bracelet that is a band going around the arm and/or hand. From the fact that the word denotes something winding around the arm, we can speculate that even by this time perhaps the straps that are wound down the arm in the familiar Rabbinic version of today were already so early being implemented. Although simple assumption, it would, however, seem to bear up under the evidence provided with the verse in Shir HaShirim (The Song of Songs) that is dealt with later in Chapter ג, which in the time of King Sha’ul was an event that took place only a handful of years later in the life of Dawid’s (David) son, Shlomo (Solomon). So here we have an instance of the practice of wearing *tefillin*, and this occurred even during the heat of battle! Can you imagine going out to war wrapped in the mitzvah of *tefillin*?”³⁸

I believe the key word here is “imagine.” Those who believe ancient Israelites wore *tefillin* have to “imagine” that Saul wore them in battle—because there really is no solid evidence to support such a view! Please notice, if you will, that the above author first admits that it is a “simple assumption” on his part that this Hebrew word *Etsadah* is

³⁸*The Sign of the Servant, Revealing the Meaning Behind a Mysterious Mitzvah*, by Jeremy Chance Springfield, p. 29.

referring to *tefillin*. Then, only a couple of sentences later he proceeds to state with confidence that King Saul did indeed wear *tefillin*, even in the “heat of battle”! Of course, we have already dealt with the supposed connection between *tefillin* and the text from Song of Solomon—**there is none!** What amazes me the most is that people will read this kind of psuedo research and actually take it seriously!! To take this text concerning Saul’s bracelet and crown and make this into evidence to supposedly support the wearing of *tefillin* by ancient Israel is mere speculation. Such an explanation as what we have just read proves nothing.

In addition, we should consider the fact that other kings (even who were not Israelites) also wore crowns:

“And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it. And he took **their king's crown** from off his head, the weight whereof was a talent of gold with the precious stones: and it was set on David's head. And he brought forth the spoil of the city in great abundance.” (2 Samuel 12:29-30)

Now we can see that the taking of the king’s crown is repeated with those who are the enemies of Israel. Did the ancient enemies of Israel suddenly start wearing the same *tefillin* that the children of Israel were (supposedly) to also wear? Obviously not. In times of war it is a typical practice to take spoils, including and especially the personal items of a leader. When the Amalekite killed King Saul after he was fatally wounded, he committed a grave injustice (which later cost him his life!). Yet, his taking of Saul’s crown and bracelet to return to King David was an honorable thing—since it prevented them from falling into the enemy’s hands. Since the enemies of Israel are not likely to be obedient to the Torah of Israel, this would seem to rule out the possibility that the crown and bracelets worn by King Saul showed any evidence of ancient *tefillin*.

Did the High Priest Wear Tefillin?

“And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, *like the engravings of a signet*, HOLINESS TO YAHWEH. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before Yahweh.” (Exodus 28:36-38)

First of all, the word for “signet” is *Chatham* and it means basically a signature ring. It is not the same word used in Exodus 13, Deuteronomy 6 and 11, in connection with the four texts in question.

H2368

חֹתָם חֹתָם

chotham chotham

kho-thawm', kho-thawm'

From H2856; a *signature* ring: - seal, signet.³⁹

Second, the word for “plate” is *tzeets* which indicates a shiny object like a flower:

H6731

צֵיץ צֵיץ

tsiyts tsits

tseets, tseets

From H6692; properly *glistening*, that is, a burnished *plate*; also a *flower* (as *bright* colored); a *wing* (as *gleaming* in the air): - blossom, flower, plate, wing.⁴⁰

It may have been shaped like a flower or had a flower-type ornament on it. And it certainly had a “glistening” appearance to it, since it was indeed made of shiny gold. However, while the meaning of this word may suggest to us the general appearance and shape of the crown on the head of the high priest, it in no way links this “crown” with the prayer ornaments to (supposedly) be worn by all Israelites.

Third, this text does not say that the crown IS a signet, but that it was to have engraving on it “*like* the engravings of a signet.” Here we not only see that the crown is not a signet, but here it defines what a signet is to be—the primary characteristic of a signet is that it is to have engraved writing on it. In other words, *like* a signature ring.

Fourth, if there really is a law saying that we should wear *tefillin*, then why is this not repeated here in this text so as to include the high priest? The high priest is given much information regarding what he is to wear, and yet not a single mention of *tefillin*. How can this be, if the *tefillin* is to be worn by all? Shouldn't the high priest himself (of all people) be required to wear *tefillin*, if it is a command of Scripture?

The high priest is commanded to wear several different items of clothing, including bells on the hem of his garment. Yet strangely, there is not the slightest hint of a requirement to wear *tefillin*. The only place one could possibly find a reference to such a command mentions a crown only, using the words *Chatham* and *Tseets*—and these are very weak references. There is no link here or anywhere else between this command for the High Priest to wear a crown and the supposed command for all of Israel to wear *tefillin*.

³⁹*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, by James Strong, page 38 of the Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary.

⁴⁰*Ibid*, page 99 of the Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary.

Did Tefillin Come to the Ancient Nations of Afghanistan, Africa, India, and Japan Through the Lost Tribes of Israel?

There are those who have presented the supposition that the practice of wearing *tefillin* is ancient and (supposedly) because of this it also offers confirmation that the practice is Biblical. And yet the most ancient reference to *tefillin* in any historical record goes back to about 100 to 200 BCE. The most ancient known *tefillin* ever found also date to about this same period. Therefore, in order to give this practice more validity it has become necessary for them to seek out examples of practices from other cultures which appear to be very old and in some way correspond to or mimic the wearing of *tefillin*. While it is rare, such examples of a similar practice can be found in places like Africa, India, Afghanistan, and Japan.

On one internet forum an author who is listed as “Burning One” has stated this in rebuttal to someone who rejected his belief in literal *tefillin*:

“i understand your conviction that there is "no such command" [to wear *tefillin*] in Scripture, but a thorough study of the *texts* and the *history* of the Hebrew people at large seems to show that this was indeed a literal command. i know someone who insists as well that it is only "Rabbinic" in its literal creation, but they cannot answer the instances in Scripture where frontlets appear actually being worn by people, or the fact that Hebrew people the world over ("lost" tribes included) have been found to be performing frontlets literally and without the help of the rabbi's interpretation, and no two literal applications in these instances are ever the same. to me, this shows that most of Yah's people in antiquity understood it to be literal in application (i would be much more ready to believe antiquity's performance of the commandments -- as they were far more closer to the actual giving of the Torah, and therefore most assuredly had a "purer" view on it — than the modern "scholarly" interpretation), and it calls for answers if they are not truly intended to be taken literally. a mountain of evidence sits that speaks *against* a symbolic interpretation of the command, and in all fairness needs to be dealt with if we are to take that symbolic route”⁴¹

To address some of the more immediate questions raised in this response we need to point out that there really are no ancient “examples” of actual Israelites wearing *tefillin*. **None!** The only historical events this author is able to rely on are the examples of Judah giving ornaments to what he thought to be a harlot, and the crown and bracelet King Saul died in battle with. And we have already addressed these issues earlier in this article, and successfully showed how they could not be referring to prayer ornaments (*tefillin*). Even the apocryphal writings, as well as other writings from that era, do not so much as hint at the possibility of Israelites wearing *tefillin*. The “mountain of evidence” is merely a mirage!!

⁴¹“frontlets: literal vs figurative”, <http://www.elijah.com/forum2/Forum10/HTML/003026-4.html>

I also “would be much more ready to believe antiquity's performance of the commandments” since they “had a ‘purer’ view on it .” The question remains, just what exactly was “antiquity's performance” regarding this supposed commandment?

In regard to the statement regarding the practices of the “Hebrew people the world over (“lost” tribes included)” I would like to point out that I have no doubt that the lost tribes of Israel (being scattered to many different parts of the world) have influenced people from many other cultures. That is a given. In fact, **all** societies (when they disperse to other locations) tend to influence that society in which they migrate to. The two questions we need to be asking are “did the wearing of frontlets in other societies come about because of the influence of Judaism or any of the 12 tribes of Israel?” and (if so) “When?” The first question is important but the answer is not as crucial as the second question, which is **VERY IMPORTANT**—because, as we have already stated, the wearing of *tefillin* was indeed a practice of Judaism by the time of the second temple period! However, this practice was (I believe) limited largely to the Hasidim and most likely began about the first or second century BCE, not the time of the patriarchs of Israel. Therefore, even if we discover evidence of other cultures who began to wear items similar to the *tefillin*—the answer to the question of **WHEN** they acquired this practice may indeed determine the outcome of our research.

In response to a question posed to him (concerning when ‘Hebrews the world over’ began wearing frontlets), “Burning one” said this:

“**my response:** obviously, i believe they were wearing them before this, but the only time that “Hebrews the world over” could have been wearing the frontlets was *after* the Assyrian dispersion.

“i am not sure how much you know of ancient Japan, but the Shindai have extremely similar customs and ceremonies of the ancient Hebrews, like depictions of an ark-like box with winged figures resting atop being carried by poles attached to either side, an Avraham/Yitschaq sacrifice reenactment [sic], among many other very intriguing correlations (if you are not aware of these people, i would strongly suggest a study of them regardless of what you believe about frontlets, it truly is astonishing). one of the many customs are frontlets worn at the top of the forehead by a certain class of priests, called yamabushi. sort of humorously, they call their frontlet a “tokin”, which of course sounds like the aramaic title given to frontlets, being “*tefillin*.” they are buddhists priests nowadays, but Japanese history tells us that these particular priests were around there before Buddhism ever even arrived, and is supported by the fact that no other buddhist sects wear these things. also interesting, is that the shape of their frontlets is a round flower, and the golden plate carrying the Name YHWH which the high priest in Torah is commanded to wear (directly linked to frontlets, by the way) is called in Hebrew the “Tzitz”, which literally means “flower.” of course, Rabbinic Judaism tells us that it was a gold band, but the literal definition of the word seems to entail something

perhaps shaped differently, as i don't know any flowers that look like "bands."

"then we have the "lost" Hebrews of Afghan, who call themselves "Benai Yisra'El", and who as well wear frontlets. and then the Bukaharan (i think i spelled that right, it is late and i'm trying to go off of memory) Hebrews, who also wear *tefillin*."⁴²

First of all, let's talk about the crown worn by the High Priest. This author states that this crown is "directly linked to frontlets." Based on what evidence? He is implying that there is a connection between what the High Priest wore on his forehead and the *tefillin* (an issue we have already refuted here in this article). The author is comparing "apples" to "oranges." Can anyone please reveal the true "link" between what is worn by the High Priest and *tefillin*? Even the words are different!

Next, we need to address the question of why we need to go to an ancient Japanese sect of Buddhism to find answers to a strictly Hebrew question? Not that it is wrong to compare one culture to another to see how they may have "borrowed" ideas, but being so far "removed" from that culture and that history makes us a very weak authority on the question of "who borrowed what from whom"!! As I have stated earlier, there can be no doubt that Israelite influence can be found in many different cultures around the world. It would not be surprising to find such influences strongly evident even in places like Japan. However, the problem comes when we attempt to separate historical "relics" of one culture from another.

The problem with attempting to use the Yamabushi as "proof" that these particular Japanese adopted the practice of wearing "token" from the Jews is that it pre-supposes several things which cannot be firmly established. Did the wearing of head ornaments by certain Japanese sects (as well as the others mentioned here) come from Moses or from their own occultist traditions? And how can you separate the two?

Wikipedia seems to imply that it may have come from the later, since the Yamabushi were known for their "occult knowledge." It talks about the Yamabushi and says that the

"Yamabushi began as *yamahoshi*, isolated clusters (or individuals) of mountain hermits, ascetics, and 'holy men,' who followed the path of *shugendo*, a search for spiritual, mystical, or supernatural powers gained through asceticism. . . . These mountain mystics came to be renowned for their magical abilities and occult knowledge, and were sought out as healers or mediums, known as miko."⁴³

Regardless of whether or not this particular Japanese sect of Buddhism obtained some of their traditions from the Hebrews, the point is that they are known to have made use of the occult. To draw from the Yamabushi practice of wearing "token" as "evidence" that the wearing of *tefillin* is "ancient" and therefore "scriptural" is speculative at best—for

⁴²"frontlets: literal vs figurative", <http://www.elijah.com/forum2/Forum10/HTML/003035.html>

⁴³Wikipedia, "Yamabushi", <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yamabushi>

Buddhism also involves idol worship. And even the Jews religion itself became perverted soon after they made their covenant with Yahweh on Mt. Sinai, so appealing to how the Jews did things before and during the time of Messiah even is also without foundation (unless it can be backed up with Scripture—for example, the 7th day Sabbath was clearly being kept by Yahshua and His disciples at that time, and it is *plainly* taught in Scripture). Remember, the leadership of the Jews had already (by His day) apostatized from the true faith of Israel.

One of the practices which all societies (including the Jews) have become involved with is the wearing of magical amulets. As such, it would not be unusual at all to find that the Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Phoenicians, the Assyrians, the Jews (and maybe we can add to that the Japanese) wore similar types of amulets:

Rabbi Geoffrey W. Dennis writes in his article entitled "Amulet" that:

"The use of amulets and charms is virtually universal across human cultures and across time, and Jews are no exception. Jewish amulets have been used to ward off a variety of ills: disease, mishap, sorcery, and/or malevolent spirits. . . .

The use of amulets to ward off evil spirits and/or disease was pervasive in the cultures that surrounded ancient Israel, and numerous examples of Canaanite, Phoenician, Assyrian, and Egyptian origin have been recovered. The use of amulets by Biblical Israelites is specifically criticized in Is. 3:18-20. . . ."⁴⁴

If we accept the fact that the Messiah spoke out against the way the Pharisees were wearing their "sign" (*oth* or *token*) on their head (Matthew 23)—the fact that He calls them "Phylacteries" (a Greek term which indicates "magical amulets") would seem to indicate that wearing such items is not consistent with a life of true faith and obedience to Torah. It suggests that their "tradition" was founded upon the occult. Evidently, the history of the Yamabushi priests of the Shindai (which "Burning one" suggests we should study, at least in regard to the amulets they wore on their forehead) might possibly have a connection with the occult.

The question is: "did the wearing of frontlets in other societies come about because of the influence of Judaism or any of the 12 tribes of Israel?" In regards to the possibility of Jewish influence in Japan, it is obvious that there has been some, possibly even much influence. But does this prove that the wearing of the "token" by a certain sect of the Japanese prove that the influence comes from Judaism? No, it does not. It could just as easily have come from the occultist use of amulets—something quite common in the world then as it is now.

But let us suppose that the Yamabushi "token" (as they are called) did indeed come from the Jews. Would this prove that the *tefillin* are indeed ancient? The answer is: it

⁴⁴*Amulet*, by Rabbi Geoffrey W. Dennis. <http://www.pantheon.org/articles/a/amulet.html>

depends. It depends on **when** this tradition came into being. And it also depends upon **what** Jewish practice it is derived from.

As proof of “when” the Japanese “tokin” came into being, please take note of this open letter from a “Japanese Christian writer” who lives in Japan and has found what he believes to be a connection between certain Japanese traditions and Jewish traditions. And please understand that I personally believe that what he has found is “real” and that there is indeed a connection. Accepting the fact that Israelites have indeed influenced many cultures from Persia to Japan, the questions we are now seeking to address are “what” and “when”:

“Dear friends in the world,

”I am a Japanese Christian writer living in Japan. As I study the Bible, I began to realize that many traditional customs and ceremonies in Japan are very similar to the ones of ancient Israel. I considered that perhaps these rituals came from the religion and customs of the Jews and the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel who might have come to ancient Japan.

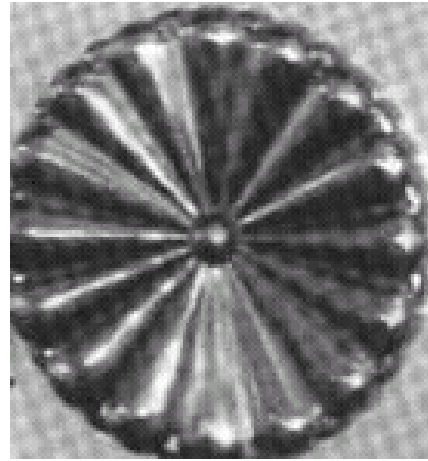
“The following sections are concerned with those Japanese traditions which possibly originated from the ancient Israelites.

“The reason why I exhibit these on the internet is to enable anyone interested in this subject, especially Jewish friends to become more interested, research it for yourself, and share your findings.

“The Crest of the Imperial House of Japan Is the Same As That Found On the Gate of Jerusalem.

“The crest of the Imperial House of Japan is a round mark in the shape of a flower with 16 petals. The current shape appears as a chrysanthemum (mum), but scholars say that in ancient times, it appeared similar to a sunflower. The sunflower appearance is the same as the mark at Herod's gate in Jerusalem. The crest at Herod's gate also has 16 petals. This crest of the Imperial House of Japan has existed since very ancient times. The same mark as the one at Herod's gate is found on the relics of Jerusalem **from the times of the Second Temple**, and also on Assyrian relics from the times of B.C.E..

“The mark on Herod's gate at Jerusalem (left) and the crest of the Imperial House of Japan (right)



“Japanese Religious Priests "Yamabushi" Put A Black Box on their Foreheads Just As Jews Put A Phylactery on their Foreheads. "Yamabushi" is a religious man in training unique to Japan. Today, they are thought to belong to Japanese Buddhism. However, Buddhism in China, Korea and India have no such custom. The custom of "yamabushi" existed in Japan before Buddhism was imported into Japan ***in the seventh century.***

“On the forehead of "Yamabushi," he puts a black small box called a "tokin", which is tied to his head with a black cord. He greatly resembles a Jew putting on a phylactery (black box) on his forehead with a black cord. The size of this black box "tokin" is almost the same as the Jewish phylactery, but its shape is round and flower-like.

“A "yamabushi" with a "tokin" blowing a horn

“Originally the Jewish phylactery placed on the forehead seems to have come from the forehead "plate" put on the high priest Aaron with a cord (Exodus 28:36-38). It was about 4 centimeters (1.6 inches) in size according to folklore, and some scholars maintain that it was flower-shaped. If so, it was very similar to the shape of the Japanese "tokin" worn by the "yamabushi.”

“A Jew with a phylactery blowing a shofar

“Israel and Japan are the only two countries that in the world I know of that use of the black forehead box for religious purpose.” [bold emphasis mine]⁴⁵

Let it be stated at the outset that the evidence for Israelite influence in Japanese culture is real. But, as I stated also before presenting this quotation, the question we are addressing is both “what” and “when.” We have already addressed the problem of how this tradition may have been borrowed from ancient pagan practices, which puts a question mark on the issue of “what” from the very beginning.⁴⁶ Now we need to know when did the influence from Israelites come to Japan? This reference shows that the wearing of “token” had to have come to Japan before the 7th century CE, but it does not reveal to us how far back the tradition goes. The “token” was made in the shape of a “flower.” Likewise, Herod’s gate was made in the shape of a flower, just like the crest of the Imperial House of Japan. If this tradition originated from Israelites (and we are still not certain that it did), the question we now need to address is “when.” Waves of influence from Israel have been coming to Japan throughout history, including the second temple era (which is about the time which we believe the wearing of *tefillin* had its origin in Israel). How do we know this? The reference we have just quoted told us that it did! And the two illustrations which we have reproduced here show that the Japanese may have been influenced by the Jewish artwork on Herod’s Gate. Why is this significant? It is significant because the art of Herod’s Gate came into being at sometime between the 1st century BCE and the 16th century CE!

“Herod’s Gate: Built in 1538-40 by Sulieman the Magnificent’s architects. Became a direct entry during the British Mandate, losing its L shape interior for traffic purposes. Called in Arabic Bab ez-Zahra or Flowers Gate, and is called Herod’s Gate because pilgrims of the C16 and C17 thought that a house built in the Mameluke Period (1250-1517 C.E.) was the former palace of Herod Antipas from the Passion story. They were wrong, but the name stuck. At noon on 15 July 1099, the Crusaders breached the wall at this gate to take the city of Jerusalem and proclaim the Latin Kingdom.

“Wall line between Herod’s and Damascus Gate has irregular channels that show parts of the walls are built upon the walls of Aelia Capitolina (135 C.E.)”⁴⁷

“Herod’s Temple in Jerusalem was a massive expansion of the Second Temple along with renovations of the entire Temple Mount. Herod the Great’s expansion project began around 19 BCE. The renovation by Herod began with the building of giant underground vaults upon which the

⁴⁵*Israelites Came To Ancient Japan*, by Arimasa Kubo. <http://www.culdee.org/japan/samurai.html>
Mirrored site: <http://www5.ocn.ne.jp/~magi9/isracame.htm>

⁴⁶For example, before the 10 tribes of Israel were scattered throughout the world they had gone into apostasy and began to go into idol worship again. Therefore, when they were dispersed to the other nations, they obviously brought with them a mixture of truth and error.

⁴⁷http://www.ctsp.co.il/LBS%20pages/LBS_Jcity_gates.htm

temple would be built so it could be larger than the small flat area on top of Mount Moriah. Ground level at the time was at least 20 ft. (6m) below the current level, as can be seen by walking the Western Wall tunnels. The edge of this platform remains everywhere; part of it forms the Western Wall.”⁴⁸

There can be no doubt that the Israelites scattered throughout the world. Were the cultures of the world influenced by Semitic thought, even including the Jewish practices being incorporated into their own local religious practices? Of course they were! But it does not prove that *tefillin* are a practice based upon Scripture. In fact they do not prove *tefillin* to be an ancient practice at all! The reason that this is not sufficient proof is because there have been many different “waves” of Hebrew influence throughout history—who is to say which of those “waves” possibly brought the teaching of *tefillin* (assuming that is what really happened)?

While it is difficult to answer this question of “time”, I believe the answer is before us in the issue of Herod’s gate. The flower used to adorn Herod’s gate is the same as that in the crest of the Imperial House of Japan (16 pedals). The Japanese “token” is made in the shape of a “flower.” And the word for “plate” in Hebrew (as “Burning one” has pointed out) has within it the meaning of “flower.” Is there a connection? Possibly. But, even if the “Herod’s gate” built in the middle ages was based upon and a recreation of the original “Herod’s gate” the simple fact remains that it is “Herod’s gate”! Herod was instrumental in the remodeling and building of the temple in Jerusalem. And yet, the crusaders really got it wrong—it was actually built centuries later over the ancient location of Herod’s palace. That places the construction of such a gate (and therefore the flower associated with it) in the 16th century CE. But let’s assume that it truly is “Herod’s gate”, the time of its creation would be the time of king Herod’s rule. If that is the case, based upon what we know of the history of the 16 pedal flower—it’s date of origin would be about 100 BCE. Neither one of these dates takes us back to the time of Moses!

But let us suppose that our information is limited and the tradition goes back even centuries before the building of Herod’s gate. We have no evidence of this, but it is possible, and it might even be a tradition which traces back to Scripture (Exodus 28:36-38). Could this confirm the wearing of *tefillin* as being an ancient practice? No it does not. It does not because the “flower” which is referenced may be more directly connected with the “flower” (or “plate”) that was made of gold and worn by the high priest of Israel! If there is a connection between this Yamabushi practice and that of ancient Israel, it would clearly tie in with the crown on the head of the high priest and not with a supposed command for all of Israel to wear *tefillin*. Only the text in Exodus 28 makes reference to a crown that has a “plate” suggesting a “flower.” The 4 texts used to support the wearing of *tefillin* **do not** make reference to this word, nor make any suggestions related to a flower. Can anyone show otherwise?

One more important point needs to be made. When the 10 tribes of Israel were taken into captivity, they were steeped in false religious worship (idol worship). Does this

⁴⁸http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod's_Temple

aspect of comparison between the Japanese and Israelite culture come across in our study of Jewish influence? Yes it does.

“There is a difference that Shinto religion believes in many gods, while the Israeli (Jewish) religion believes in only one true God.

“However, different from the modern Judaism, ancient religion of Israel, especially of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, inclined to idol worship and polytheistic belief (belief in many gods). They believed in not only true God Yahweh, but also Baal, Asytaroth, Molech, and other pagan gods. Practically the religion of ancient Israel was not monotheistic. Shinto's polytheistic belief seems to have come from the polytheistic inclination of ancient Israel. Shinto scholars say that a Shinto god "Susanoh" resembles Baal in several aspects, and a female Shinto god "Amaterasu" resembles Asytaroth.”⁴⁹

If the lost tribes of Israel carried with them into their captivity their false idol worship (even as far as Japan) did they carry other forms of false worship with them? Or did later “waves” of Israelites (including Judah and Benjamin) bring with them other forms of false worship? We may never know for certain. But we do know that whatever inferences we can obtain from the study of the Japanese religious culture, it is difficult if not impossible to differentiate between that which is original Israelite practice and that which came through their own idolatrous traditions. And even if it originated from a Scriptural basis, who is to say if it may have been based upon the tradition of the high priest wearing a crown that was like a “flower”, with an engraving *like* a “signet ring.”

Everything we have said so far regarding the history of Israelite influence on Japan also applies to such cultures as found in Afghanistan, Africa and India. Notice what one account says regarding the “Pathans” of Afghanistan:

“Pathans have custom of Kosher, dietary laws same as Jews. . . . Some still wear a small box which Jews call *Tefillin* (phylactery) containing a verse of the Bible. This box resemble Japanese Tokin of Yamabushi's forehead, too, which I will mention later. . . .”⁵⁰

Does this prove the Pathans received the wearing of *tefillin* from ancient Judaism? No, because we do not know “what” the practice actually was derived from (did it come from later Rabbinic influence, did it come from the pagan practice of wearing amulets, or was it altered from the practice of the high priest wearing a gold crown?), nor “when” the practice came to them (time of Assyrian invasion or time of Messiah?). And since only “some” of them practiced this, it is obvious that it was not being practiced as a “commandment” that would be binding upon the whole of that society. Therefore, even if the Pathans are descendants of ancient Israelites (and we are not totally certain of

⁴⁹ *Bible Mysteries*, LOST TRIBES – Japan. ISRAELITES CAME TO JAPAN , by Arimasa Kubo.

<http://www.biblemysteries.com/library/tribesjapan.htm>

⁵⁰ *Israelites Came To Ancient Japan* , by Arimasa Kubo. <http://www5.ocn.ne.jp/~magi9/isracame.htm>

that)—the practice among “some” of their people of wearing a “small box” on their heads provides only inconclusive evidence.

We could ask many of the same basic questions regarding the Bene Ephraim of southern India, the Bnei Menashe of northeastern India, the Beta Israel (or Falashas) of Ethiopia, the Bukharan Jews (of Pershia), the Lemba tribe of South Africa, and the House of Israel (of Ghana, Africa). All of these claim (to a greater or lesser extent) to be descendants of the lost tribes of Israel.⁵¹ While the evidence for each of their claims varies greatly between each group, one overriding factor abides: the tradition of something even remotely “like” the wearing of *tefillin* is **limited** to only a small number of these groups! Therefore, in no way does the evidence of Israelite migration throughout the world furnish proof of the wearing of *tefillin* by ancient Israel.

Did Messiah Yahushua Wear Tefillin?

Some have made the claim that Messiah Yahushua wore tefillin? But, there is no Scriptural evidence to support such a view. At the time of the Messiah, the Pharisees were the ones who were primarily wearing the *tefillin* and probably only the headpiece. If the Messiah had felt that the people should also be wearing the *tefillin*, why did He not condemn them also as He had boldly done to the Pharisees (in Matthew 23:5) regarding how they were wearing them, and their pompous attitude. The Messiah would typically rebuke sin that was open, so if the people were sinning by **not** wearing the *tefillin* (as the evidence clearly reveals they were not)—should He not have rebuked them also for not wearing them? We have clear evidence that the typical Jew living at the time of the Messiah (unlike the Pharisees) were not even wearing the *tefillin* **at all**. The *Illustrated Bible Dictionary* offers this commentary regarding the wearing of *tefillin* by the people:

“Both the somewhat later Talmudic acknowledgment that they were not worn by the common people (am ha'aretz) and the failure of pagan writers to mention them indicate that in the time of Christ they were still worn only by a minority of the people. We may be sure that all Pharisees wore them, not merely during morning prayer but throughout the hours of daylight. Their later restriction to the time of prayer was due to their providing an all too easy mark of recognition of the Jew in times of persecution.”⁵²

While we have evidence that the disciples and/or the Messiah Himself wore such things as the *Tallit* (Matthew 6:6, Luke 12:3, and Acts 18:3) and the *Tzitzit* (Mark 6:56 and Luke 8:44), we have no evidence at all that they ever wore the *tefillin*. If the Messiah did indeed wear them, we should see some evidence of this, since wearing *tefillin* is the mark of a Pharisee. The Messiah was never accused of being a Pharisee.

Yes, Yahushua would have been considered a “rabbi” by the people. And people today may assume that the “rabbis” would have been more likely to have been Pharisees and would look like Pharisees in their dress. However, there were many other sects of

⁵¹Wikipedia, *The Ten Lost Tribes of Israel*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost_Ten_Tribes

⁵²Douglas, *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Part 3, p. 1228.

Judaism coexisting at that time—the Pharisees were not the only ones. So being a “rabbi” does not mean that they would have been wearing *tefillin* (like the Pharisees obviously wore, and as Messiah has confirmed in Matthew 23:5).

The Messiah is mainly concerned here in this text with the “attitudes” of those who claim to be the spiritual leaders of Israel. He is concerned with how they are doing works “to be seen.” He does not condemn the wearing of tassels, only the enlarging of the same for show. Likewise, He does not appear (in this translation) to condemn the wearing of phylacteries (only the enlargement of the same for show). Regardless, there is plenty of evidence in the Messianic Writings that tassels were both known of and worn. 5 times the greek word for tassels is used, and 4 out of the 5 are mentioned in a positive light (Matthew 9:20-22, Matthew 14:36, Matthew 23:5, Mark 6:56, and Luke 8:44). Other places in the gospels and the letters strongly imply that *tallits* were being made and used by the apostles (Matthew 6:6—*closet* implies a *tallit* with tassels on the 4 corners; Acts 18:3—*tent* implies a “tabernacle”, and may be a reference to the *tallit* also).

However, not so with the *tefillin*. The only passage in the whole of the Bible which mentions *tefillin* (Matthew 23:5) speaks of them in a negative light (where Messiah condemns the Pharisees because they have broadened theirs to appear more righteous than their neighbors). Also, please take note that it is in Matthew 23:1-3 that the issue of the authority of the rabbis (the Pharisees) is called into question. What He really meant in that text **was not** that the Pharisees do not practice what they preach, for they were simply deluded. He was telling them that the Pharisees sit in the seat of Moses, and all that Moses says (through them) we must do—but we are not to follow the practices or teachings of the Pharisees when they are in such obvious conflict with Moses. The rest of chapter 23 contains some of the most bitter and biting rebukes ever recorded in the gospels. When the Pharisees speak the words of Moses, we must do what Moses says (not the false interpretations and practices of the Pharisees). Do these false teachings and practices include the wearing of *tefillin*? Based upon the evidence I have found, I believe it does.

If the Messiah had indeed been wearing *tefillin*, He would have appeared to everyone around Him to be a Pharisee—for this practice was indeed limited largely to the Pharisees. They would not, as shown in these passages (Matthew 7:29; 13:54; 21:23), have ever questioned His authority—for they would have recognized Him (because of His *tefillin*) as a Pharisee. Finally, we need to address the fact that the Pharisees once even made an accusation against Him that has a bearing on this matter. Remember, the Pharisees wore the *tephillin* and the Samaritans clearly did not wear them:

“And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of Elohim heareth Elohim’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of Elohim. Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?” (John 8:45-48)

Of course, the accusation against Yahushua that He had a devil and was a Samaritan was a lie. But would the Pharisees (who were at least cunning and intelligent) bring an accusation against the Messiah which was contradicted by His general appearance? If He wore the *tefillin*, He would have appeared more like a Pharisee (who generally wore them all day). But if He did not wear the *tefillin*, He could have passed as a Samaritan (or an average Jew who also did not wear *tefillin*). Did the Messiah's appearance suggest that He was more likely a Pharisee or a Samaritan? If He did not (as we believe) wear the *tefillin*, then He would have looked more like a Samaritan—isn't that correct? Remember, the Pharisees themselves accused Him of being a Samaritan. Therefore, based upon this inference, He would not have been wearing the *tefillin*.

Nowhere in the Gospels do we read of the Messiah taking off or putting on His *tefillin* for prayer, though it does tell us of several occasions in which He had a special prayer session (Matthew 14:23; Mark. 4:26; Luke 6:12; 9:28, and others). Nowhere does it say that they drew lots over his *tefillin* at the foot of the cross (John 19:23). Yet the Messiah had just finished praying when the chief priests and Pharisees had come to take Him (Matthew 26:36, Mark. 14:32, Luke 22:39). If He had indeed been wearing the *tefillin* it should have been listed among the items taken from Him. And yet it is simply not there. Moreover, if the Pharisees had even themselves regarded it as a grievous sin to **not** wear the *tefillin*, they would have condemned the Messiah, the priests and the people, which would have been recorded in the gospels. And yet, that issue is also strangely silent. Please notice the statement quoted earlier which confirms conclusively that only a small minority of people (mostly Pharisees) were wearing *tefillin*:

“Both the somewhat later Talmudic acknowledgment that they were not worn by the common people (am ha'aretz) and the failure of pagan writers to mention them indicate that in the time of Christ they were still worn only by a minority of the people.”⁵³

In spite of such plain testimony coming from the Talmud that the common people did not wear the *tefillin*, we still have those who will make such dogmatic statements in support of their belief in *tefillin*. We have already explained both the source and approximate date of the *tefillin* found in Newark, Ohio. And yet, right after making the bold statement that these *tefillin* were probably “the oldest known *tefillin* remains in the world”, the author we have quoted from so often in this presentation has said:

“As for those who are reading this and who may still choose to believe that Moshiah and His followers did not observe the mitzvah, these facts alone should be enough to change their minds. If not, then perhaps something less than the desire for truth is guiding their beliefs on this subject.”⁵⁴

Of course, we can easily point to the fallacy of this last argument. He is not using “facts” but he is using his unproven theory (that the *tefillin* are ancient) as the basis of making another unproven claim—that the Messiah Yahushua wore *tefillin*! Since we

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *The Sign of the Servant, Revealing the Meaning Behind a Mysterious Mitzvah*, by Jeremy Chance Springfield, p. 95.

know from the evidence that Judeans did not generally wear them until a couple of centuries later, it only makes sense that they did not consider it a command at that time. And if the Messiah thought it was a true command, he would certainly have spoken out about it. Bottom line: there is no evidence that Yahushua or His disciples ever wore *tefillin*. Since Yahushua fulfilled all of Yahweh's commandments as given in the Torah, and since it cannot be proven that he wore the *tefillin*, the wearing of literal *tefillin* could not possibly have been one of those commandments.

Do Tefillin Have a Connection with the Mark of the Beast?

One teaching that is also beginning to be presented in connection with this subject is that the wearing of *tefillin* have something to do with the "mark of the beast." Here is one presentation entitled "The Mark of the Beast" which makes this claim:

"Satan tries to imitate Christ in every way but he cannot win. The placement of the "mark of the beast" is another attempt to imitate what God has decreed. The Scriptures state: the sign or mark shall be upon the soul, heart and mouth, on the forehead and on the hand.

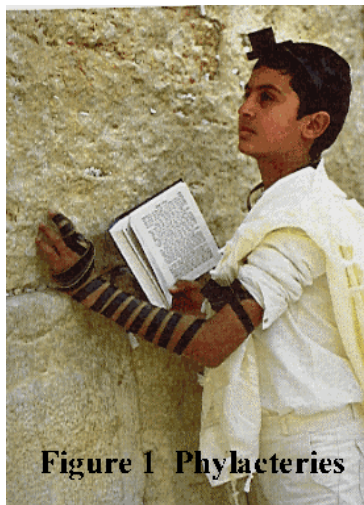


Figure 1 Phylacteries

"And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes." Deuteronomy 6:8 [KJV]

"And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt." Exodus 13:9 [KJV]

"Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes." Deuteronomy 11:18 [KJV]

"These verses have resulted in the use of phylacteries (Hebrew - tephillin) by the Orthodox Jews. **Phylacteries** (Heb. tephillin), are pairs of small black boxes containing passages from Scripture written on parchment. According to ancient Jewish tradition, the tephillin are fastened by black straps to the upper left arm and above the forehead, **Figure 1**. . . .

"There is no evidence as to when the practice of wearing phylacteries originated. The verses from which the practice is derived appear to carry a metaphorical meaning, namely, that the acceptance of God's laws and the recognition of his power be on one's mind and body. **Exodus 13:9** in particular is suited to such an interpretation, as it is speaking within the context of the annual observance of the Passover service without reference to a daily practice. A nonliteral understanding of these verses is

further strengthened in light of the widespread metaphorical use of ornaments to indicate something carefully remembered and held dear. .
”⁵⁵

So far, what he is saying makes sense. But, right after saying this the author affirms his belief that the other texts found in Deuteronomy 6 and 11 **do indeed** lend credence to a literal interpretation—that is, that they are actual commands to wear *tefillin* on the forehead and the arm. “Nevertheless, Deuteronomy 6:8 and 11:18 may intend the practice to be followed literally (there it is words that are to be bound to the body, and the context also refers to the literal writing of these words on doorposts and gates).”⁵⁶

I have to state for the record that I do not agree with this last statement from the author above. I say this because I simply do not believe that there is a literal command in Scripture to wear *tefillin*—and my reasons have been given here in this article as well as my first more comprehensive article on that subject (please see the link to that article at the end of this presentation). So, is there a connection between the verses he speaks of here and the prophecy of the “mark of the beast” in Revelation 13? Of course there is. The language of Revelation 13 is definitely a parallel to that found in Exodus 13, Deuteronomy 6 and Deuteronomy 11. But, since there really is no literal command to wear *tefillin* there is likewise no literal “mark of the beast”—they are both *symbolic* in nature. You may choose to disagree with this view, however if we had time to discuss it more fully here I could present much information which lends support to that view.

The author of the *Open Companion Bible*, Tony Garland, has expressed similar ideas in his commentary of Revelation 13:16. Please notice:

“The placement of the mark on the *hand* or *forehead* brings to mind the command God gave through Moses that the children of Israel would faithfully teach His commands to their children.

“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. **You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.** You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (De 6:6-9 cf. Ex. 13:9, 16) [emphasis added]

“In response to these instructions, the Jews developed phylacteries, small scrolls which contained God's law and which were bound to the hand or head. The phylacteries differ from the mark of the Beast in that they were attached to the *left* hand. “*Tefillin* (phylacteries) are small tightly rolled scrolls that contain passages from Exodus and Deuteronomy. They were placed in boxes that were tied to the head or left arm. The *mezuzot* were placed in ornamental cases that were attached to the doorpost of a

⁵⁵*The Mark of the Beast*, by James P. Dawson <http://www.jp dawson.com/REVELATI/markbeas.html>

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

house."¹³ Although the mark of the Beast is on the right hand rather than the left, the similarity to the instructions given by God to Israel in remembrance of the law is striking."⁵⁷

Yes, there are similarities. There is a connection. However, they are not the same. In addition, there are those who have implied such things as that the “mark” is really “false *tefillin*” or even “anti-*tefillin*.” These kinds of statements only “muddy the water” and do not help us discover the true meaning of Revelation 13, since they all are based on the false premise that the “*tefillin*” are an actual command of Yahweh. Of course, we need to study these passages out as they do indeed reveal clues that can help us understand the true meaning of the “mark of the beast” as well as the “seal of Yahweh.” But we must be careful not to arrive at the wrong conclusions based on our *assumptions*.

I and other researchers have found that there is a very clear and definite connection between the mark of the beast and the four passages used to supposedly support the wearing of *tefillin*. However, since I do not believe the *tefillin* are literal therefore my understanding of the mark of the beast is that it is a **symbolic mark**—just as the sign on the forehead and the hand is to be understood as symbolic!! Just what exactly that mark is we will not attempt to address here, since it’s understanding requires an extensive discussion of not only Revelation, but of so many other parts of Scripture.

Did the “Minim” Wear Tefillin, and Just Who Are They?

Please notice that in addition to the sect of the Pharisees, there were those who were called “Minuth” (or “Minim”). One argument used in support of wearing *tefillin* is that the “Minuth” also wore *tefillin* (although a different size and style from the Pharisees) and that since they were identified with the early believers in Messiah (the *Netzarim*, or Nazarine) therefore the early believers wore *tefillin*. Please notice the quotation from the Talmud which this belief is based on:

“And he that makes his *tefillin* round, it is danger, there is no commandment in it. . .this is the way of Minuth.”⁵⁸

Obviously, the Talmud identifies the “Minuth” as being “heretics” because “heretics” will tend to wear their *tefillin* round. Of course, it all seems so silly to us that people should fight over the size and shape of a prayer ornament—but to them it was quite a serious matter. So, who are these “Minuth”? Well, the author we have so extensively quoted from here has stated (for the record) what his beliefs are concerning this:

“The *Minuth* spoken of here is a plural word that means “heretics” (frequently rendered also in the plural as *Minim*, and in the singular, *Min*), and is used in ancient Hebrew writings in reference to the followers of Yehoshua. They originally were spoken of in those writings as the *Netzarim*, but as time passed, they began to be called instead the *Minuth*.

⁵⁷ *Open Companion Bible*, Tony Garland, 3.13.16 - Revelation 13:16

http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book_of_Revelation/commentary/htm/031316.htm

⁵⁸ Mishnah Megillah 4.8.9

“As mentioned above, we have as well from history, recovered along with the Dead Sea scrolls found at Qumran, the actual ancient remains of many pairs of *tefillin*. The precise identity of the inhabitants of Qumran is not verifiable, but what knowledge of them that has been uncovered is extremely revealing. They too, like the early believers, were identified in ancient writings with the title of *Minim*. Numerous aspects of their beliefs coincide in astounding ways with passages of the accounts of the words of Yehoshua, and also with the letters of Sha’ul, leading a number of people to the conclusion that the community living at Qumran embraced the Person of Yehoshua as their long-awaited Moshiach. However, despite the many similarities, this remains mere speculation unless further evidence is revealed.”⁵⁹

The problem with the above conclusions is that (as the author himself states toward the end) it is “mere speculation” that the *Qumran* community were also disciples of Messiah Yahushua. If, as this author himself has clearly stated, the *Qumran* community were **not** followers of the Messiah and yet also identified with the term *Minim*, then that makes at least two groups that could fall under the Rabbinic classification of “Minim.” Are there more?

The number of different “sects” within Judaism of the first century CE are more numerous than people once believed. There were the Herodians, the Hassideans, the Hasmoneans, the Essenes, the Zealots, the Sadducees and the Pharisees, as well as the Netzarim (or believers in Messiah Yahushua). There were probably others, but this is enough information to show conclusively that the so-called “minim” was a general classification of “heretics” which were in opposition to the ruling sect of the Pharisees. The fact that some of the “Minim” wore *tefillin* (and that these were smaller and rounder than the ones worn by the Pharisees) should not alarm us at all—since the “Minim” was a classification of various sects who differed from the Pharisees. Please note the following regarding this classification:

“Under this canopy of Judaism at Jerusalem there were a number of splinter groups, Hassideans, Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, Herodians, Essenes, and **this was added to (c.30 CE) by the Nazarene sect**. This sect proclaimed Jesus of Nazareth as the long awaited Jewish Messiah.”⁶⁰

The previous author uses the logical fallacy of comparing “apples” to “oranges.” We can use a simple illustration to show the proof of this assertion. An “apple” is an example of a classification of food called “fruit.” However, not all “fruits” are “apples.” Some of them are “oranges”, which leads us to that common logical fallacy of “*comparing apples to oranges*.” Yes, apples are fruits and oranges are fruits but not all fruits are apples, nor are they oranges. It is a fallacy of logic to say that they are.

⁵⁹*The Sign of the Servant, Revealing the Meaning Behind a Mysterious Mitzvah*, by Jeremy Chance Springfield, p. 91.

⁶⁰*Judaism to Christianity*, Judaism and its Relationship to Christianity in the Formative Years.
<http://www.lightpathsupport.com/Bible-Translations/Judaism-to-Christianity-print.html>

The followers of Messiah (Netzarim) were called “Minim”, but the Herodians, the Essenes, the Zealots and various other sects within Judaism were also called by the same name. If the wearing of round *tefillin* is the “way of the Minim” (the way of the “heretics”) does that automatically mean that **all** of the “Minim” wear *tefillin*? No, it does not. We could have attempted to argue against the use of the Talmud as an unreliable record which we should not depend fully on for all of our information—that is, without another witness for confirmation. However, this was not necessary since (based on simple logic) the statement from the Talmud does not in any way prove that the early believers in Messiah wore the *tefillin*.

Does the Wearing of Tefillin Lend Support to the “Oral Torah”?

Well, instead of me giving the answer to this question myself, why not just “Ask The Rabbi”? Rabbi Simmons, at his website, gives the answer to this question. The Jews themselves recognize that Scripture **does not** give detailed instructions on how, or when, or even why they should wear the *tefillin*. So, here is their question and the answer as given by Rabbi Simmons:

Ask Rabbi Simmons

Tefillin

Question

“I have not been able to find out where and when the actual structure of the boxes of the Tephilin, and who decided which Torah quotations were to be inserted in the Tephilin Rosh and Yad. Nobody that I have asked seems to know who decided that Tephilin had to be made of leather, and who decided how the knots were to be tied, how the actual boxes were to be formed, and who decided that we must have the word ‘Shaddai’ wrapped around arm and hand. I know of the rationale about the 4 quotations from Torah, each one mentioning , ‘Ukshartem...’, and ‘...totafot...’, but not who decided about that. Can you help? It won't change anything. I am just very curious about the origins of this ritual I observe! Thank you.

“Answer

“Good question!

“Many of the mitzvahs which form the foundation of Jewish life are scarcely mentioned in the Written Torah - and with no explanation of their details. What's more, violating one of the precepts may even carry a penalty of death! Were it not for the Oral Torah, we would be left clueless as to how to observe these mitzvahs.

“Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan writes:

“There is no description of *Tefillin* (in the Torah), nor any hints as to how they must be made. The Torah merely outlines their contents and tells us nothing more. It is most important to realize that God gave us the Torah in two parts. There is the Written Torah, which we keep in the ark. However, there is also the Unwritten or Oral Torah, consisting of the oral tradition handed down from Sinai. The Torah was not meant to be a mere book, lying on the shelf. It was meant to be part of the everyday life of the entire people. As such, it could only be transmitted by word of mouth. The Oral Torah was handed down from teacher to disciple for almost 1500 years, until the harsh Roman persecutions finally threatened to extinguish it completely. Finally, some 1700 years ago, it was written down to form the Talmud. The Talmud itself cites *Tefillin* as a prime example of a case where the full description of the commandment is found only in the Oral Torah. If you think about it, you will realize that it was not necessary to write a description of *Tefillin* in the Torah. One need simply look at an older pair. *Tefillin* were worn by virtually every adult male throughout Jewish history, and they themselves provided as permanent a record as any book.’

“So you see, the Oral Torah is as important as the written. Every mitzvah given to Moses on Mount Sinai was given together with an explanation. God thus told Moses (Exodus 24:12), ‘[Come up to Me to the mountain...] and I will give you the tablets of stone, the Torah and instruction.’ ‘Torah’ refers to the Written Torah, while ‘instruction’ is its interpretation. We are thus commanded to keep the Torah according to its interpretation. This interpretation is what we call the Oral Torah.

“With blessings from Jerusalem,

“Rabbi Shraga Simmons”⁶¹

Is Tefillin Scriptural or Is It of Rabbinic Origin?

Those who say that *tefillin* should be literally fulfilled do not realize the source from which they have received this teaching. It comes from rabbinic Judaism and every detail of how to wear the *tefillin* comes directly from the traditions of the rabbis. They are looking at this subject through the lenses of the rabbis. If you doubt this, then just “Ask The Rabbi.” For that matter, ask **ANY** Rabbi—they will very likely tell you right to your face that it is based on Rabbinic tradition as found in founded upon the so-called “oral torah.”

Those who believe they should be wearing literal *tefillin* have placed themselves under another “master.” They are wearing *rabbinic glasses* when they study and teach this doctrine, so if you take away all the rabbinical teachings on this subject and go simply to

⁶¹“Ask the Rabbi”, http://judaism.about.com/library/3_askrabbi_o/bl_simmons_tefillin.htm

the Scriptures you will find that there is nothing left but an allegorical statement that has been changed by men into a literal commandment. Without the knowledge of the Talmud and the knowledge given to them through rabbinic Judaism, they could never have come to the point of seeing in Scripture a teaching regarding literal signs on the hand and forehead, and certainly would not have adopted similar methods of wearing them. Those who believe in wearing the *tefillin* start with the **presumption** that the *tefillin* are literal, then adopt the rabbinic methods of wearing those *tefillin* (possibly with modifications, but nevertheless similar methods), *all of which have no foundation in Scripture whatsoever*.

This article entitled [Tefillin: Supplemental Issues](#), by W. Glenn Moore, is available on the internet at this link.

Please also read the more comprehensive article entitled [“Are Believers Commanded to Wear Tefillin as Taught by Rabbinic Judaism?”](#), by W. Glenn Moore.