**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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**TALMUDIC METHODOLOGY**

**By Rav Moshe Taragin**

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Dedicated by the Wise and Etshalom families

in memory of Rabbi Aaron M. Wise,

whose yahrzeit is 21 Tammuz. Yehi zikhro barukh.

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**Shiur #16: The *Parshiyot* of *Tefillin* of Rabbeinu Tam**

The mitzva of *tefillin* is mentioned in four different sections in the Torah, mandating that *tefillin* boxes should house these four relevant sections: *Kadesh*, *Ve-haya ki yeviacha*, *Shema* and *Ve-haya im shamo’a*. What is less clear is the sequence of these sections in *tefillin*. Since *tefillin* *shel rosh* include separate chambers for each *parasha*, the sequencing of these sections profoundly affects the nature of these *tefillin*. The *gemara* (*Menachot* 34b) discusses the sequence, but the conclusion is ambiguous.

Rashi assumes that the *tefillin* sequence of *parashiyot* mirrors the Torah’s sequence. Thus, *Kadesh* should precede *Ve-haya ki yeviacha*, since it appears earlier in *Parashat Bo* (*Shemot* 13; 1-10 followed by 13:11-16). Subsequently, *Shema*, which appears in *Devarim* 6, is inserted, followed by the section of *Ve-haya im shamo’a*, which appears in *Devarim* 11. These sections are aligned in a right-to-left fashion from the vantage point of someone who is looking at the *tefillin*, not the person actually wearing the *tefillin*. To summarize, the *parashiyot* are sequenced from left-to-right from the vantage point of the person wearing the *tefillin*. This alignment based upon a person looking at someone else’s *tefillin* is somewhat surprising, and the Ra’avad indeed questions this logic. However, the **basic sequence** follows the Torah’s progression and seems intuitive.

Rabbeinu Tam famously disagreed with Rashi and created a novel sequence. As seen from the vantage point of an onlooker, the progression begins from the right with *Kadesh* and *Vehaya ki yeviacha*, but continues with *Ve-haya im shamoa* and finally *Shema*.

There are two different models toward understanding the sequence of Rabbeinu Tam. Perhaps *tefillin* demand a new and distinctive sequencing which differs from the Torah’s listing; the “message” of *tefillin* demands a different narrative, which is rendered through a different order of *parashiyot*. Alternatively, Rabbeinu Tam may maintain the Torah’s sequencing while structuring this sequencing in a creative fashion. Perhaps the Rabenu Tam choreographed the Torah’s sequence in a creative fashion. The first two sections are aligned based on the Torah’s sequence from right to left based upon the perspective of the onlooker. The next two sections (*Shema* and *Ve-haya im shamoa*), in contrast, are ordered based upon the Torah’s sequence from right to left based on the vantage point of the person **wearing** *tefillin*. It only **appears** as if the sections deviate from the Torah’s order, but in reality they retain the original sequencing while implementing this sequencing from different angles. However, a more nuanced understanding of the *tefillin* yields **two series** of two *parashiyot* sequenced according to the Torah’s order.

These two models of understanding Rabbeinu Tam’s novel sequencing yield interesting differences. Chief among them is the issue of whether the *tefillin* narrative is identical to the Torah’s story as told by these four sections. According to the first model, the *tefillin* sequence is **distinct** from the Torah’s sequence, and presumably *tefillin* does not directly **copy** the Torah’s text. *Tefillin* merely lifts several sections of the Torah and reformulates them in a different sequence and with a different narrative. R. Soloveitchik asserted several “other” deviations between the composition of these sections in the Torah and the crafting of *tefillin*. For example, while Torah must be written with *sirtut* (outlining the parchment with engraved boundaries for the text), *tefillin* does not require *sirtut*. This might reinforce the idea of a distinction between composition of a Torah text and creation of *tefillin* texts, which are based upon but not identical to Torah texts. According to the second model of understanding Rabbeinu Tam, *tefillin* however, **does** maintain the Torah’s textual sequence, but positions these sections in a creative alignment. If the Torah’s sequence is maintained, perhaps the *tefillin* texts are not significantly disparate from the Torah and they indeed entail a direct copying from the Torah to *tefillin.*

A second ramification concerns the structuring of *tefillin*. Should they be seen as one unit containing four constituent sections or as a fusion of two units of two sections each? Rashi appears to view the *tefillin* as one unit containing four elements, and the first model of Rabbeinu Tam assumes as much as well. Rashi’s four-element *tefillin* was structured based upon the Torah’s progression, while the Rabbeinu Tam employed a novel *tefillin*-oriented sequence.

The second model toward understanding Rabbeinu Tam casts *tefillin* in a very different light. They are not structured as four connected elements, but rather as two units of two *parshiyot*. The first unit commences with the first two sections organized in a right to left fashion from the vantage point of the onlooker; the next unit contains the sections of *Devarim* sequenced based upon the Torah’s progression but aligned to enable a right to left progression from the vantage point of the person wearing the *tefillin*.

This question of structuring *tefillin* was apparently already addressed by the *Tanna’im* who explored the dynamic of four *parshiyot* (and consequently four housings). R. Yishmael based the number of four *parshiyot* based on the number of iterations of the word *totafot* (a nickname for *tefillin* in the Torah). By contrast, R. Akiva interpreted *totafot* as a conjugation of two foreign words: “*tat*” and “*fot.*” In this foreign language, “*tat*” refers to the number two and “*fot*” also refers to the number two; thus, the conjugation is a verbal reference to the number four. According to R. Akiva, the four-*parasha* “contraption” of *tefillin,* is in reality, a fusion of **two** units of **two**. This may reflect Rabbeinu Tam’s alignment of *tefillin* as two units each containing two *parshiyot*.

The question as to whether Rabbeinu Tam creates a new *tefillin*-based sequence or maintains the Torah’s sequence but merely aligns them uniquely, may impact two additional halakhic issues. Although the *parshiyot* are inserted in this novel fashion, should they be manufactured based upon the Torah’s sequencing? Tosafot (*Menachot* 34b) claim that despite the novel method of housing, the *parshiyot* should be written based upon the Torah’s sequence. Evidently, Rabbeinu Tam also **maintains** that the Torah’s sequence shapes the *tefillin* sequence, and the *parshiyot* must therefore be written in a sequence that reflects the Torah’s progression. However, several *Rishonim* (for example, the Mordechai) claim that Rabbeinu Tam would not necessarily impose the Torah’s progression for the sequence of composition. According to this view, *tefillin* are apparently driven by a completely different order from the Torah; both the positioning as well as the method of composition are discrepant with the Torah’s sequence.

A related question concerns Rabbeinu Tam’s position regarding *tefillin shel* *yad*. Should his novel sequencing apply only to *tefillin shel rosh* or to *tefillin shel* *yad* as well? This question can potentially affect both the composition of *tefillin shel* *yad* as well as the positioning. Even though the *parshiyot* of *tefillin shel yad* are written on one parchment, the question of their positioning upon the parchment is still relevant.

The Rosh assumes that this unique sequence also applies to *tefillin shel yad*, whereas the Semak and the Rambam claim that it does not. If Rabbeinu Tam established a new pattern for *tefillin* and an autonomous sequence, presumably this would apply equally to *tefillin shel yad*. Alternatively, the Rabenu Tam may be maintaining the Torah’s sequence but positioning the *parshiyot* in the housing of *tefillin shel rosh* in a manner that allows right to left Torah-sequenced reading from different angles. This aim of multiple angles may be unique to *tefillin shel rosh,* meant to elicit a response from onlookers. *Tefilin shel yad* is a more personal experience and is not oriented toward possible responses of onlookers. As such, its sequence may strictly follow the Torah’s progression in one continuous array. Perhaps *tefillin shel yad* demands the Torah’s sequence in a continuous string, yielding an order that is single vectored and follows the Torah’s uncomplicated order of *Kadesh, Ve-haya ki yeviacha*, *Shema*, and *Ve-haya im shmoa*.