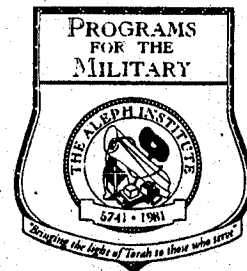




THE MENORAH



• THE ALEPH INSTITUTE MILITARY PROGRAM NEWSLETTER •

YUD SHEVAT

A Message from Rabbi Sholom D. Lipskar

On the tenth day of this month of Shevat we commemorated the passing of the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe and the start of our Rebbe's (Menachem M. Schneerson o.b.m.) leadership 46 years ago.

The Rebbe's effervescent and overwhelming love for each and every Jew was legendary and made everyone who came into contact with him feel special and unique. His directives to his emissaries, students, Chassidim and followers: to do one positive Mitzvah more and better today than yesterday--and tomorrow, better than today--continues to inspire and charge us to live with that credo. Let us do another good act today.

THE MITZVAH OF TEFILLIN

by Michael H. Cohen

Importance

For a Jewish man, putting on Tefillin is one of the most important mitvahs he can perform. The Shema, the most important prayer in Judaism, specifically mentions the positive mitzvah of putting on Tefillin. It says, "Bind them as a sign upon your hand; let them be a symbol before your eyes..." (Deuteronomy 6:8) In fact, when you put Tefillin on, you are actually fulfilling two separate mitzvahs: one for the head and one for the hand.

The commandment to wear Tefillin is so important that it is repeated three other times in the Torah: "And it shall be a sign on your hand, and a reminder between your eyes, so that G-d's Torah be on your lips..." (Exodus 13:9); "And it shall be a sign on your hand, and Tefillin between your eyes, because with a mighty hand G-d brought you out of Egypt" (Exodus 13:16); and "Therefore, take these words of Mine upon your heart and upon your soul, and bind them for a sign on your hand, and for Tefillin between your eyes" (Deuteronomy 11:18). Any commandment repeated three times in the Torah must be of enormous importance. Only a handful of commandments are mentioned more than once in the Torah.

Demonstration of Our Love for G-d

In the Shema we say "...you shall love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5). Putting on Tefillin is a physical demonstration of the spiritual commitment to G-d. The box of the hand Tefillin is angled in to point at our heart--the source of our emotions--and goes over our bicep--a symbol of might. By wearing the hand Tefillin we honor the commandment to love G-d with all our heart and all our might. The head Tefillin honors the commandment to love G-d with all our soul, the source of our intellect. In short, wearing Tefillin represents the love we have for G-d.

Construction and Composition

Tefillin must be constructed from the hide of a kosher animal. The head Tefillin contains four separate parchments in four separate compartments. It contains four "parshios" (paragraphs); the "Shema" (Deuteronomy 6:4-9), pronouncing the unity of G-d; the "Vehayah Im Sh'moa" (Deuteronomy 11:13-21), expressing G-d's assurance to us of the reward that will follow our observance of the Torah's precepts; the "Kadesh" (Exodus 13:1-10), stating the duty of the Jewish people always to remember the redemption from Egyptian bondage; and "Vehayah Ki YeViaCha" (Exodus 13:11-16), stating the obligation of every Jew to inform his children of all these matters. The hand Tefillin contains all four paragraphs on one parchment inside of one compartment, because the Torah refers to the hand Tefillin in singular terms.

The Tefillin must be constructed according to criteria laid out in the Talmud (oral Torah written down in 200 C.E.). They must be made of the outermost hide of a kosher animal, be sewn with thread made from veins or tendons, placed in a perfectly square box, have the Hebrew letter shin on the head box, and have several other important characteristics. For more details on the construction criteria and other facets of Tefillin, see *Tefillin*, by Aryeh Kaplan (available through The Aleph Institute). If you are not sure whether your Tefillin meet the requirements to be kosher, take them to a scribe and get them checked (usually for a modest fee). The fact that a pair of Tefillin were made in Israel is, unfortunately, no guarantee that they are kosher.

electric or battery-powered candles," Corrections Department program coordinator Dave I Burnett said in a Dec. 6 memo.

According to Jewish law, a Hanukkah menorah must use a flame to fulfill the religious commandment to observe the holiday, Jaroslawicz said from his Surfside, Fla., office.

"Such a blanket policy forces observant Jewish inmates to violate a basic, mandated religious ritual," Jaroslawicz wrote to Corrections Director Kenneth McGinnis on Thursday.

On Friday, the Corrections Department reversed the ban, telling the state's prison wardens that Jewish prisoners should be allowed to participate in candle lighting ceremonies.

KOSHER MRE'S NOW AVAILABLE THROUGH SUPPLY

For years we have been hearing about the development of a Kosher, or "multi-faith," as the military calls it, ration. We no longer have to wait! Effective immediately, there are kosher-certified rations now available through supply. These are not made by the DOD; they are commercially produced and purchased with appropriated funds.

Mary Anne Jackson, of *My Own Meals* in Deerfield, IL, led the fight, along with the Aleph Institute, the JWB/JCC, and Agudath Israel of America, to turn the Defense Personnel Support Center (DPSC) around on some very fundamental issues of Kashrut and nutrition. Her years of hard work on this matter have paid off and we now have 100% Kosher MREs with meat, dairy and parve entrees.

A coordinated official announcement with national stock numbers from the DPSC will be distributed soon. The initial buy will be for 150,000 units, with a shelf life of one year. If you anticipate using them, it's best to order them now so they are available when you deploy.

A tremendous amount of work has gone into getting Kosher MREs approved. Please use them! Like anything else, if you don't use them you'll lose them.

LAY LEADER'S CORNER

Major Karla Smith - Eglin AFB, FL

Major Karla Smith is the Jewish Lay Leader for the largest (land-wise) U.S. Air Force Base in the world, Eglin AFB, FL. Turnout for events is very good, with about 15 regulars showing up for the weekly Friday night service.

Major Smith works closely with Lt Col Jeffrey Himan, Jewish Lay Leader for Hurlburt Fld, FL, which is located in the same town as Eglin, Ft. Walton Beach, FL. Because the bases are so close to one another, the congregations have been combined into one. Major Smith concentrates on the administrative side of things; organizing events, dealing with the Chapel, writing a monthly newsletter, *The Ram's Horn*,

and communicating with Aleph. Lt Col Himan is responsible for leading services and assists Karla with planning events when his busy schedule permits.

Major Smith was initially reluctant to take on the job due to her lack of experience and extremely busy schedule at the base hospital, where she is a Nurse Midwife. "With so many days spent on call and a critical shortage of manpower at the hospital, I questioned whether I would have the time for this job." Yet Karla goes on to note that, "Even though I remained extremely busy, being a lay leader gave me an outlet for the stress of my work. Seeing people enjoy themselves and advance spiritually at the events I had planned gave me a lot of satisfaction." When asked what other benefits she obtained, Major Smith noted: "Naturally, the job has brought me closer to my Judaism, raised my own level of spirituality, and taught me much about myself."

Her biggest challenge since taking over has been planning this year's Seder for Passover. She is trying to organize a community Seder with the civilian Temple Beth Sholom, a first for the base, to be held at the Officers Club. She is also increasing her Hebrew language skills through an adult education Hebrew class. Her goal is to be proficient enough to lead services herself. Based upon her track record as a lay leader, there is no doubt she will succeed. Yasher Koach, Major Smith!

"The Egyptian, the Babylonian and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished.

The Jew saw them all, beat them all and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no stowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal, but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"

Mark Twain, "Concerning the Jews,"
Harper's Magazine, 1897

**Have you ordered your Purim kits yet?
Now you can place your order directly from
our home page on the World Wide Web at:
<http://www.chabad.org/aleph>**