Meditation before putting on the tefillin

I put on tefillin that I may fulfill the mitzvah of my Creator who commanded us to wear tefillin, as written in the Torah: “Bind them as a sign upon your hand and as a reminder above your eyes.” The tefillin contain four passages from the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Exodus 13:1-10, 11-16) which affirm the uniqueness of God. I place the tefillin of the arm opposite my heart to recall God’s outstretched arm and to direct my heart to the worship of God. I set the other tefillin on my head as a reminder to devote my thoughts, senses, and abilities to the service of God.

We put on the tefillah of the arm.

Praised are You Adonai our God, who rules the universe, instilling in us the holiness of mitzvot by commanding us to put on tefillin.

We wind the strap seven times around the forearm.

As we wind the strap three times around the middle finger, we say:

Hosea 2:21-22
I betroth you to Me forever.
I betroth you to Me with righteousness and justice, with love and compassion.
I betroth you to Me with faithfulness; then shall you be at one with Adonai.

Although tefillin may be worn at any time during the day, they are customarily put on during the morning prayers. It is considered meritorious to recite the Sh’mah while wrapped in tallit and tefillin. Tefillin are regarded as a sign of the ideals inherent in the mitzvot.

Since the observances of Shabbat and Festivals are a sufficient sign in themselves, the added reminder of tefillin is unnecessary. However, on Hol Ha-mo’ed — the intermediate days of the Festivals of Sukkot and Pesah, days on which work is permitted — some do wear tefillin. (On Tishah B’Av we postpone wearing tallit and tefillin until the Minḥah Service.)