

**Rabbi David Lerner**  
**CHUSY Kinnus, 5763/2003**  
**Tying "K-nots:" Women and Tefillah**

**Tefillin**

V Mishnah Brakhot 3:3 – women exempt, but can put on tefillin – just like they can recite the Sh'ma → Why are they exempt?

Women, (and) slaves<sup>1</sup> and minors<sup>2</sup> are exempt<sup>3</sup> from the recital of the *Shema* and from *Tephillin*, but are in duty bound to observe the *Eighteen Benedictions*,<sup>4</sup> (and) *Mezuzah* and the *Grace after Meals*.

וְשִׁים יוֹעֲבָדִים יוֹקְטָנִים נְפֹטוּרִין  
מְקַרְיָאָת שְׁמַע וּמִן הַתְּפִלִּין  
וְחֵיבִין בְּתַפְלָה וּבְמִזְוָה  
וּבְבִרְכַת הַמְּזוּזָה

VI Mekhilta, Bo, 17 – Examples of women who wore tefillin in Jewish history

מיכל בת כושי היתה מנחת תפילין. אשתו של יונה היתה עולה לרגלים. טבי, עבדו של רבן גמליאל, היה מניח תפילין.

Michal, the daughter of Kushi [King Saul],<sup>1</sup> used to don Tefillin. The wife of Jonah [the prophet] went up [to Jerusalem] for the Pilgrimage Festivals. Tabi, R. Gamaliel's bondsman, used to don Tefillin.<sup>2</sup>

VII Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin, 96a – Women are exempt because tefillin is a positive time-bounded commandment. These mitzvot are optional for women.

We have learned: Michal the daughter of Kushi used to don

Tefillin and the Sages did not object; Jonah's wife would go up for the Pilgrimage Festivals and the Sages did not object. We must infer [from the lack of objection] that these are regarded as Positive Precepts not dependent upon a set time.<sup>6</sup> Or perhaps the teaching is in accord with the view of R. Yose who says that women may opt to lay their hands [on an offering]; If you do not say so, why did the Sages not object to Jonah's wife going up for the Pilgrimage Festivals? Can anyone maintain that going up for the Pilgrimage Festivals is not a Positive Precept dependent upon a set time? We must conclude that this teaching is in accord with the view that these mitzvot are optional for women.<sup>7</sup>

VIII Tosafot ad loc – Women should not wear tefillin if they are not sufficiently "clean."

It would seem that the reason for the view that donning Tefillin is not permissible for women is because Tefillin requires bodily cleanliness, and women are not sufficiently careful [to avoid uncleanness].