



30 Minute Tefillin Educational Activity

Rabbi Alex Greenbaum

Supplies needed:
Prayer books
Mezuzah & scroll (Klaf)

Open Tefillin & (5) scrolls
Real Tefillin



The Question To Answer: What are Tefillin and why do we wear them?

We Use Visual Answers.



Start with the class singing the Shema/Veahavta and then reading its translation (pages 100 & 101 in Siddur Sim Shalom). Then ask class to focus on the words: *“And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand and they shall be a reminder above your eyes.”*

Ask the class: What else is there that we use in our homes that we find mentioned in the Veahavta?

The answer is Mezuzot (plural of Mezuzah). Show the Mezuzah casing (make sure that it has the letter Shin on it, some do not) and ask class:

What do Mezuzot and Torot (plural of Torah) have in common? The answer is: ***They both have scrolls.***

Show a Mezuzah scroll (KLAF) and show the class the words of the Shema. Point out the letter Shin on the outside of the Mezuzah casing.

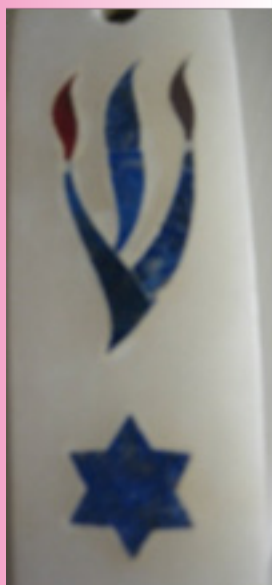
Ask the class what they think the Shin stands for?

No, it does not stand for the Shema (trick question), but rather for the word or name **“Shadai”** (which is another name for God); or **“Shadai”** can also stand for the acronym of Shomer Dalatot Yisrael (letters Shin - Dalet - Yud) which means the **“Guardian of the doorposts of Israel”**.

Who is that? God.

Lead into - Tefillin do the same for us - they protect us!

What does the word “Tefillin” mean? It is the plural of Tefillah, meaning “Prayer”. So, in the case of Tefillin, it means “Prayers” or we could say “Prayer Boxes.”



KLAF - Parchment from Mezzuzah

Question: We wear Tefillin on our arm and our head. Why? What are they close to?

Answer: Our hearts and our brains. Why? So God is close to our hearts and minds.



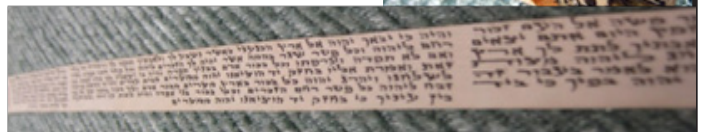
Now that we've seen an open Mezuzah, let's look at open Tefillin. Take out open Tefillin and show the five scrolls. Each scroll mentions Tefillin, "And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand..."

The word "Shadai" (Shin-Dalet-Yud) is formed by the hand (SHIN) and the knots of the Rosh (DALET) and Yad(YAD).

DALET



4
Scrolls
from
ROSH



One Long Scroll from YAD



SHIN

YAD



But, look closely at the Shins from the sides of the ROSH

. What's different about these Shins? The Answer: One Shin has 3 arms and one has 4. So, why 3 and 4 arms? Ask class how many commandments are there? No, not 10, but 613. Next, explain that every Hebrew letter has a numerical equivalent. Alef = 1, Bet = 2, Gimel = 3, and the numerical equivalent of Shin is 300 (So, 2 of the letter Shins = 600). Plus, the word Sheish (that's 2 Shins sounded out) = 6. 600+6=606, so far. Plus, the total number of arms of the Shins (3 on one and 4 on the other = 7). So, in total, we have 600+6+7 = 613. So, when we see the Tefillin what should we think of?

Now that we've seen an open Mezuzah, let's look at open Tefillin. Take out open Tefillin and show the five scrolls. Each scroll mentions Tefillin, "**And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand....**"

(Not everyone has seen Tefillin because they are not worn on Shabbat?
The reason is a little technical. Tefillin are called a "Sign" in the Torah and the holiday of Shabbat is also called a "Sign" in the Torah, so we don't need two "Signs" on Shabbat, therefore we don't wear Tefillin on Shabbat.)

End with an interesting fact.

Did you know that according to the Talmud (the 2000 year old Jewish Book of Law) that God also wears Tefillin?
What does God's Tefillin say?
On God's Tefillin it says that God loves us.

So, what did we learn about Tefillin?

- 1) They protect us.
- 2) We wear them so God is close to our hearts and our minds.
- 3) When we see them we should think about God's 613 commandments.
- 4) God also wears Tefillin which talk about God's love for us.