Making Meaning of the Commandment to Wear Tefillin

Goals:

* Participants will understand the origin verses of tefillin
* Participants will learn how Rabbis and later scholars interpret Torah instructions

Create something that follows these specifications with the materials provided:

*“It shall jiggle, and protect you from awkward apologies, and prevent you from falling asleep, and you shall wear it.”*

Participants can only use the materials provided. However, they can take up to 8 markers, 3 pens, 1 roll of streamers, 10 paper clips, and 10 popsicle sticks if they would like.

Give 8 minutes for tzevet to create their object.

After 8 minutes, ask tzevet to give a 30 second description of their creation and how it works.

Now, I gave you all a vague description of what your object should like and do. You all gave me something TOTALLY different. What if I said the Rabbis were put in the same situation when coming with the idea of tefillin. (Read torah verses)

As you can hear, these verses are totally vague. Later scholars interpreted these verses and created tefillin. Modern scholars who study archaeology observed amulets that other Hellenistic cultures wore and hypothesize that the origins of tefillin come from ancient scholars interpreting these verses These scholars looked outward to the culture around them in order to create this physical reminder.

Today, I had you, in a more brief and sillier way, deal with the same issues the Rabbis had thousands of years ago. I want you to put yourself in their shoes for a second, they were doing what was cool back in the day.

I also want to relate this to today’s world. In my opinion, the GOAL of tefillin in the ancient rabbis’ mind was to serve as a reminder of the Torah’s mitzvot. A PHYSICAL reminder to treat yourself and others with respect, be charitable and have empathy for others. This kayitz, I would hope that you see tefillin, not as an ancient custom that might feel a little uncomfortable in the morning. RATHER, use tefillin as a jumping off point to create other reminders for yourself and your hanichim to exemplify the core values of Judaism and forge deeper connections to our faith.

Todah Rabbah, now let’s put on our tefillin and head out to the mirpesset for t’fillot.

Source: <https://thetorah.com/the-origins-of-tefillin/>

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