HALAKHA

And with regard to the Prophets, three verses at a time – שְׁלֹשָׁה פְּסוּקִים – it is permitted to skip from one section to another while reading the Torah, as long as both sections address the same topic. Conversely, while reading the Prophets, it is permitted to skip from one section to another within one book of the Prophets even if they address different topics. However, one should not cause the congregation to have to wait for the reader to continue. It is prohibited to skip from one book of the Prophets to another, unless the sections address the same topic, in which case it is permitted (Men Sh. 38a). Within the twelve books of Prophets that are grouped together, it is permitted to skip from one book to another, but only if one skips ahead to a section that comes later (Shulhan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim 141:1).

NOTES

If the three verses constitute three separate paragraphs – המגCSRfיכוט: The Ran adds that even if the verses do not constitute three separate paragraphs, if they address different topics, they should not be read together. Rabbeinu Yehonatan explains that the reason the mishna specifically cited the example of verses that constitute distinct paragraphs is to allude to the prophecies of consolation that these verses express.

MISHNA

One who reads from the Torah should not read fewer than three verses – שְׁלֹשָׁה פְּסוּקִים – and with regard to the Prophets, it is permitted to skip from one section to another while reading the Prophets, but one may not skip from one place to another while reading the Torah – והאין שְׁלֹשָׁה פְּסוּקִים – why? Because if the three verses are not skipped, the translator will not conclude Shelosh P’sukei, אַחֲרֵי שְׁלֹשָׁה פְּסוּקִים, why? Because the translator will conclude Shelosh P’sukei, אַחֲרֵי שְׁלֹשָׁה פְּסוּקִים.

And with regard to the Prophets, one may read to the translator three verses at a time. If with regard to the Torah, an incorrect translation might lead to an error in practice, but this concern does not apply to the Prophets. If the three verses constitute three separate paragraphs, that is to say, if each verse is a paragraph in itself, one must read them to the translator one by one.

GEMARA

The Gemara asks: Corresponding to what were these three verses, i.e., the minimal Torah reading, instituted? Rav Asi said: They correspond to the Torah, Prophets, and Writings.

We learned in the mishna: And when it is being translated, one should not read to the translator more than one verse at a time. And with regard to the Prophets, he may read to the translator three verses at a time. If the three verses constitute three separate paragraphs, he must read them to the translator separately, for example, the verses: “For thus says the Lord, You were sold for naught” (Isaiah 52:3); “For thus says the Lord God, at first My people went down to Egypt” (Isaiah 52:4); “Now therefore what have I here, says the Lord” (Isaiah 52:5). These are three adjacent verses, each one constituting an independent paragraph.

§ We learned further in the mishna: One may skip from one place to another while reading the Prophets, but one may not skip from one place to another while reading the Torah. The Gemara raises a contradiction from a mishna (Yoma 68b): On Yom Kippur, the High Priest reads the section beginning with the verse: “After the death” (Leviticus 16:1), and then he reads the section beginning with the verse: “Only on the tenth day” (Leviticus 23:27). Doesn’t he skip from the first section to the second section?

Abaye said: This is not difficult. Here, where it says that one may not skip in the Torah, the translator will conclude his translation before the reader is ready to continue reading. There, where it is permitted to skip, the translator will not conclude his translation before the reader is ready to continue reading.

Rabbi Abbahu said: The mishna is referring to one who says: My assessment is incumbent upon me, and thereby pledges to donate a sum of money equivalent to his own monetary value to the Temple treasury, as it is taught in a baraita: With regard to one who says: My assessment is incumbent upon me, the court assesses him as though he were a slave in order to determine the amount he is obligated to donate to the Temple treasury. And a slave is compared to land, as it is written with regard to slaves: “And you shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession” (Leviticus 25:46). Consequently, the same criteria that apply to assessing consecrated land apply to assessing the monetary value of an individual.
The Gemara asks: Wasn’t it taught in the mishna with regard to that issue: One may skip while reading the Prophets, but one may not skip while reading the Torah. How far may he skip? As far as he can, provided that the translator will not conclude his translation before the reader is ready to continue reading. This applies to reading the Prophets; it therefore proves by inference that while reading the Torah one may not skip at all.

Rather, Abaye said it is not difficult for a different reason: Here, where it says that the High Priest skipped from one section to another, it was permitted because the two sections address one topic. There, where the mishna says one may not skip while reading the Torah, it is where the two sections address two distinct topics. And so it is explicitly taught in a baraita: One may skip from one section to another while reading the Torah if the two sections address one topic, and in the Prophets one may skip even if the two sections address two distinct topics. Both here and there, with regard to the Torah and the Prophets, one may skip only if the translator will not conclude his translation before the reader is ready to continue reading.

It is taught in another baraita: One may not skip from prophet to prophet, i.e., from one book of Prophets to another, even if the selections address the same topic. However, one may skip from one prophet to another among the twelve books of Prophets, which are grouped together, provided that he does not skip from the end of the book to the beginning, i.e., that he does not read a later section and then an earlier section.

**MISHNA** The one who concludes with a reading from the Prophets [haftara] is also the one who is honored to recite the introductory prayers and blessing before Shema, and he passes before the ark to repeat the Amida prayer, and if he is a priest he lifts his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction. And if the one who reads the haftara is a minor, who may read the haftara but is not qualified to lead the congregation in prayer, his father or teacher is honored to pass before the ark in his place.
He may not pass before the ark — unless he is a minor.

Only one whose beard has fully grown should be appointed as the regular prayer leader. This does not refer to growing an actual beard; rather, it indicates that one must have reached the age when this usually occurs (Arukh HaShulhan). Some say that since this is out of respect for the congregation, the congregation may forgo its honor in this matter (see Magen Avraham). Others disagree (Baltz, Taz). However, it is permitted for anyone who has reached adulthood to lead the prayers on a temporary basis. On public fast days and the High Holidays, however, even one who serves as the prayer leader on a temporary basis must be one whose beard has fully grown (Mishna Berura, Shulhan Arukh, Orad Hayyim 53:6).

He may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction — unless he is a minor. One who has not reached physical maturity, signified by the growth of two pubic hairs, may not recite the Priestly Benediction on his own (even a minor may join him). He may not serve as prayer leader to wear clothes that cover his legs, and if his legs are reciting the Priestly Benediction, even a minor may join him in order to learn how to perform this mitzva. Once he has reached maturity, a priest may recite the benediction even if no other priests are present. However, he should not do this on a regular basis until his beard has grown in (Shulhan Arukh, Orad Hayyim 128:4).

One whose limbs are exposed (poche’ah) — even if he is a minor: A poche’ah is one whose garments are torn so that his arms and shoulders are bare (Wino Gaon). He may not serve as the prayer leader or read from the Torah, but he is permitted to lead the congregation in reciting the introductory prayers and blessing before Shema. It is proper for the prayer leader to wear clothes that cover his legs, and if his garments are not long enough, he should wear socks that go up to his knees (Rambam Sefer Avoth, Hilkhot Tefilla 8:12; Shulhan Arukh, Orad Hayyim 531:13; Kaf Ha Haayim).

One who is blind may recite the introductory prayers and blessing before Shema — unless he is a minor. One who is blind may recite the introductory prayers and blessing before Shema, even if he has been blind his entire life. Others hold that it refers to one whose garments are torn so that his arms and shoulders are bare (Rashi). Others hold that it refers to one whose garment does not have sleeves (Arukh), one whose arms and shoulders are bare (Rashi), or one whose cloth is bare (Meir; Rid the Younger). It appears that the term is used in tractate Sofrim to refer to one whose legs are bare. Some of these interpretations are based upon the verse: “Like as my servant Isaiah has walked naked (pachot) and barefoot” (Isaiah 20:3).

A minor may read the Torah in public and also translate the text for the congregation into Aramaic, but he may not recite the introductory prayers and blessing before Shema, and he may not pass before the ark to lead the congregation in prayer, and he may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction.

One whose limbs are exposed (poche’ah) may recite the introductory prayers and blessing before Shema and translate the Torah reading into Aramaic, but he may not read from the Torah out of respect for the Torah; he may not pass before the ark to lead the congregation in prayer; and he may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction out of respect for the congregation.

One who is blind may recite the introductory prayers and blessing before Shema, and he may also translate the Torah reading into Aramaic. Rabbi Yehuda says: Anyone who has not seen the luminaries, the sun, moon, and stars, in his life, i.e., he was blind from birth, may not recite the introductory prayers and blessing before Shema. The first of the blessings before Shema is the blessing over the luminaries, and one who has never seen them cannot recite the blessing at all.

**GEMARA**

The Gemara asks: What is the reason that the one who reads the haftara is honored with these other roles? Rav Pappa said: It is due to a desire to grant him honor. Since even minors are qualified to read the haftara, it was considered an insult for a person to be called up to read the haftara rather than be called up as one of those needed to read the Torah. Since he was willing to serve in this role, he is granted other, more honorable roles in the synagogue. Rabba bar Shimi said a different reason: It is due to a concern that they will come to quarrel, as the individual who reads the haftara will quarrel with the individual honored to lead the congregation in prayer.

The Gemara asks: What is the practical difference between them? The Gemara explains: There is a practical difference between them where the one who passes before the ark does so free of charge. In that case, there is still a need to grant the one who read the haftara honor, but it is not likely that they will quarrel.

We learned in the mishna: And if the one who reads the haftara is a minor, his father or teacher is honored to pass before the ark in his place. If you say that the reason the reader of the haftara passes before the ark is due to a concern that they will quarrel, will a minor engage in quarreling? Has he no valid claim to the right to pass before the ark. Consequently, the concern for strife must not be the reason for the halakha stated in the mishna.

The Gemara rejects this argument: Rather, what is the reason; is it due to honor? Does a minor have honor that is slighted when he reads the haftara and therefore must be assuaged? Rather, according to Rav Pappa it is a display of honor to his father and his teacher.

**NOTES**

One whose limbs are exposed (poche’ah) — even if he is a minor: Many explanations have been suggested for the term poche’ah, which indicates someone who is not properly dressed, and parts of his body are therefore exposed. Some explain that it refers to one who is wearing only a sash around his hips and waist (Sefer Halakhot Gedolot). Others hold that it refers to one whose garment does not have sleeves (Arukh), one whose arms and shoulders are bare (Rashi), or one whose cloth is bare (Meir; Rid the Younger). It appears that the term is used in tractate Sofrim to refer to one whose legs are bare. Some of these interpretations are based upon the verse: “Like as my servant Isaiah has walked naked (pachot) and barefoot” (Isaiah 20:3). The previous verse states: “Loosen the sackcloth from off your loins” (Isaiah 20:2), indicating that removing certain garments causes one to be a poche’ah (see Rashi and Rosh).

Where he does so free of charge — translated: According to most commentaries, it was customary for those leading the prayer service to be paid for their services. Alternately, some explain that this means that one reads the haftara without the desire to receive another honor in return (Sefat Emet).
Here, also, according to Rabba bar Shimi, it is to prevent his father or teacher from quarreling.

§ We learned in the mishna: One whose limbs are exposed [polca'] may recite the introductory prayers and blessing before Shema and translate the Torah reading into Aramaic, but he may not read from the Torah. Ulla bar Rav raised a dilemma before Abaye: What is the halakha with regard to whether a minor whose limbs are exposed may read from the Torah? Can it be argued that a minor’s bare limbs do not fall under the category of nakedness, and therefore it is permitted for him to read the Torah despite the fact that parts of his body are exposed?

Abaye said to him: And according to this reasoning, raise the dilemma with regard to a minor who is totally naked. What is the reason that a minor who is naked may not read the Torah?  
It is due to respect for the public. Here, too, a polca’ may not read from the Torah due to respect for the public.

The mishna continues: One who is blind may recite the introductory prayers and blessing before Shema, and he may also translate the Torah reading into Aramaic. Rabbi Yehuda says: Anyone who has not seen the luminaries in his life may not recite the first of the blessings before Shema, which is the blessing over the luminaries. It is taught in a baraita that they said to Rabbi Yehuda: Many have seen enough with their mind to expound upon the Divine Chariot, although they have never actually seen it. Similarly, even one who has never seen the luminaries may recite the blessing.

And how does Rabbi Yehuda counter this argument? He can say that there, with regard to the Chariot, the matter depends upon the heart’s comprehension, and one can concentrate his mind and understand the Chariot even if he has never actually seen it. But here, with regard to the luminaries, the blessing is recited due to the benefit one derives from them, and one who is blind does not derive any benefit from them, and therefore he may not recite a blessing over them.

And the Rabbis maintain that even a blind man derives benefit from the luminaries, in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yosei, as it is taught in a baraita that Rabbi Yosei said: All of my life I was troubled by this verse, which I did not understand: “And you shall grope at noon as the blind man gropes in the darkness” (Deuteronomy 28:29). I was perplexed: What does it matter to a blind person whether it is dark or light? He cannot see in any event, so why does the verse speak about a blind man in the darkness?

I continued to ponder the matter until the following incident occurred to me. I was once walking in the absolute darkness of the night, and I saw a blind man who was walking on his way with a torch in his hands. I said to him: My son, why do you need this torch if you are blind? He said to me: As long as I have a torch in my hand, people see me and save me from the pits and the thorns and the thistles. Even a blind man derives at least indirect benefit from the light, and therefore he may recite the blessing over the heavenly luminaries.

As the blind man gropes in the darkness – may recite the blessing for the luminaries. As Rabbi Yosei explains, during the daytime the blind man is seen by others who can direct him to safety. At night, when he is unable to see and others do not see him, he is more likely to become injured. The plain meaning of the verse is that a blind man constantly gropes in the darkness due to his blindness.
Satis is the Greek word for indigo, which is the woad plant.

Satis is referring to Isatis tinctoria L., also known as dyer’s woad, a plant from the Brassicaceae family that can be annual or perennial. It grows to a height of 1 m and has smooth leaves and yellow flowers. A blue dye, indigo, can be produced from material extracted from the leaves of this plant. Indigo is a very stable dye, and it is therefore easier to clean from one’s hands. Nowadays, this plant is generally not used for dying, as synthetic indigo is cheaper and more readily available. However, it still grows wild in many places in Eretz Yisrael.

Indigo from woad

**MISHNA**

A priest who has blemishes on his hands may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction. Because of his blemish, people will look at his hands, and it is prohibited to look at the hands of the priests during the Priestly Benediction. Rabbi Yehuda says: Even one whose hands were colored with satis, a blue dye, may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction because the congregation will look at him.

**GEMARA**

It is taught in a baraita: The blemishes that the Sages said disqualify a priest from reciting the Priestly Benediction include any blemishes found on his face, hands, and feet, but not blemishes that are not visible to others. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: If his hands are spotted with white blotches, he may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction. The Gemara notes that this is also taught in a baraita: If a priest’s hands are spotted, he may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction. Similarly, if his hands are curved inward or bent sideways, he may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction.

Who has blemishes on his hands? Most commentaries explain that the reason he cannot recite the Priestly Benediction is because people will look at him. However, the Rambam explains that the reason is because it is not respectful to the congregation for a deformed man to bless them.

Because the congregation will look at him: Rashi explains that the reason it is prohibited to look at the priests during the Priestly Benediction is because the Divine Presence rests on their hands. However, Tosafot (HaKagenta 16a) and other commentaries point out that this is true only in the Temple. They explain, based on the Jerusalem Talmud, that the reason it is prohibited to look at the priests during the Priestly Benediction outside the Temple is because one will be distracted from focusing on the blessings themselves.

Bent sideways – Rashi: Some explain this term as indicating that his hands are clenched and he cannot open them (Ran).

**HALAKHA**

A priest who has blemishes on his hands may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction. A priest who has a blemish on his face or hands may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction because the people will look at him during the Priestly Benediction. The same applies to one who has a blemish on his feet, in a place where the priests recite the Priestly Benediction without socks. This also applies to one whose saliva drools from his mouth, or whose eyes constantly tear, or if he is blind in one of his eyes and it is a noticeable condition (Mishna Berura). In all of these cases, the priest is a familiar figure in his community and people are accustomed to seeing his blemish and no longer gaze at it; he may recite the Priestly Benediction, even if he is blind in both eyes.

Anyone who is a permanent resident of a city, or who moves to a new city and has been there for thirty days, is considered a familiar figure. If one visits another city, some hold that after thirty days he is considered a familiar figure (Maqam Avraham, citing Rambam), while others hold that he is not a familiar figure until he has been there for twelve months (Shulhan Arukh HaRav).

If it is customary in a particular location for priests to cover their hands with their tallit during the Priestly Benediction, even a priest who has multiple blemishes may recite the Priestly Benediction; this is so long as his blemishes are not noticeable from under his tallit (Kaf HaHaim, citing Radvaz) and he does not uncover his hands (Rema). Some permit him to recite the Priestly Benediction even in a place where this is not the custom, if it is the custom for the members of the congregation to cover their faces with a tallit (Taz). However, common custom is not in accordance with this opinion (Shulhan Arukh HaRav; Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim 128:31).

One whose hands were colored – Rashi: A priest whose hands are colored may not recite the Priestly Benediction. However, if the majority of the residents of the town work in a profession that causes their hands to become colored, he may recite the Priestly Benediction. Similarly, a priest may recite the Priestly Benediction if he is a familiar figure in town (Shulhan Arukh HaRav), or if he is in a place where the priests cover their hands with a tallit (Mishna Berura; Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim 128:31).
Apropos the previous discussion, Rav Asi said: A priest from Haifa or Beit She’an may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction, as he does not know how to properly pronounce the guttural letters. This is also taught in a baraita: One may not allow the people of Beit She’an, nor the people of Haifa, nor the people of Tivon to pass before the ark in order to lead the service because they pronounce alef as ayin and ayin as alef, and they thereby distort the meaning of the prayers.

The Gemara relates that Rabbi Hyya’s once said to Rabbi Shimon, son of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi: If you were a Levite, you would be disqualified from singing on the platform in the Temple courtyard because your voice is thick. Offended by this remark, Rabbi Shimon went and told his father, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, what Rabbi Hyya had said. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi said to him: Go and say to him: When you study and reach the verse: “And I will wait upon [vehiqkiti] the Lord” (Isaiah 8:17), will you not be a malignant and a blasphemer? Rabbi Hyya, who was from Babylon, was unable to differentiate between the letters het and heh, and he would therefore pronounce the word vehiqkiti as vehiqkiti, which means: And I will strike.

Rav Huna said: A priest whose eyes constantly run with tears may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction. The Gemara asks: Wasn’t there a certain priest with this condition in the neighborhood of Rav Huna, and he would spread his hands and recite the Priestly Benediction? The Gemara answers: That priest was a familiar figure in his town. Since the other residents were accustomed to seeing him, he would not draw their attention during the Priestly Benediction. This is also taught in a baraita: One whose eyes run should not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction, but if he is a familiar figure in his town, he is permitted to do so.

Background

The people of Beit She’an – רפי בר יבי יייאו: Whereas residents of Judea, including the family of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, had a rich vocabulary and clear pronunciation, the residents of the Galilee had difficulty pronouncing the guttural letters properly and hardly differentiated between the letters alef and ayin. This was particularly true in certain cities in the Galilee, especially those with large gentile populations. Similarly, Babylonian Jews, perhaps due to the influence of the Babylonian language, which had eliminated guttural letters in ancient times, also had difficulty pronouncing these letters. It is therefore not surprising that Rabbi Hyya, who was Babylonian, had difficulty pronouncing the letter het and would pronounce it as a heh.

Notes

Because they pronounce alef as ayin and ayin as alef – חוכו והרואים אלי אמו בנה אלי אמו בנה כד כד: Although most modern Hebrew speakers pronounce these letters the same, the ayin is actually a more guttural sound than the alef.

Go and say to him – רפי בר יבי יייאו: The Hatam Sofer (Vada 490) offers the following explanation of this conversation: Rabbi Hyya was of the opinion that Rabbi Shimon, son of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, was unfit to succeed his father as Nasi because one who has a blemish that would disqualify a Levite from singing on the platform in the Temple is disqualified from serving on the Sanhedrin. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi responded that just as Rabbi Hyya himself was fit to serve on the Sanhedrin despite his own speech defect, Rabbi Shimon was also fit to serve on the Sanhedrin.

A familiar figure in his town – רפי בר יבי יייאו: This is generally interpreted to mean that the residents of the town were used to seeing this priest. However, the geonim interpreted this expression to mean that if the priest is used to reciting the blessings, he may continue to do so, even in a different city.

Personnel

Rabbi Hyya – רבי יייאו: Rabbi Hyya, son of Abba from the Babylonian city of Kaff, was one of the last of the tanna’im and a contemporary of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. Rabbi Hyya was born to an important family that traced its roots to King David and included many important Jewish sages. Rabbi Hyya was recognized as the leader of the Jewish people but still remained a close friend of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. He also became a close friend of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi’s son, Rabbi Shimon, with whom he became partners in trade. A powerful force in his generation, Rabbi Hyya also worked closely with Rav, who was recognized as the leader of the Jewish people but still learned from Rabbi Hyya.

Rabbi Hyya’s greatest work was his compilation of oral traditions that were not included in the Mishna of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. This collection, which was assembled with the assistance of Rabbi Hyya’s disciple-colleague, Rabbi Oshaya, was viewed as authoritative, to the extent that there are statements of amora’im that assert that any baraita that was not found in his work should not be discussed in the study hall. Some believe that Rabbi Hyya edited the version of the Tosafists that is extant today.

While it appears that Rabbi Hyya received financial support when he first came to Eretz Yisrael, ultimately he became a successful merchant. He dealt in international business ventures, particularly the silk trade. He had a set of twin daughters, Pazi and Tavi, as well as twin sons, Yehuda and Hikhyia, who were leading sages in the generation between the tanna’im and amora’im. Apparently, they took over Rabbi Hyya’s yeshiva in Tiberias after his passing.

Rabbi Shimon, son of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi – רבי בר יבי יייאו: Rabbi Shimon was the youngest son of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi and his close student. He was one of the great students of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi and discussed various halakhic issues with Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi’s other prominent students. He was especially close to Rabbi Hyya, who was also his partner in the silk business. In many places, it is noted that Rabbi Shimon was very meticulous about his honor, which he saw as related to the honor of the Nasi. In particular, he was careful to ensure that nothing he did would imply offense to his great father. At least one of his sayings is found in the Mishna itself, although he actually lived in the transition generation between the tanna’im and amora’im. His sayings are often introduced by the word: Iman, it was stated, which commonly introduces statements of amora’im.

Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi considered Rabbi Shimon to be a great scholar, and before his death he appointed Rabbi Shimon as the Hakham, the third-highest position in the Sanhedrin after the Nasi and the president of the court. However, he appointed Rabbi Shimon’s older brother, Rabban Gamliel, to be his replacement as Nasi.
I will not pass before the ark in colored garments – אֵין עַר בָּהּ וְאֵין הָאָרֶץ גָּלֶגֶת. One who says that he will not lead the prayer while he is dressed in colored clothes or wearing shoes may not serve as the prayer leader for prayer at all, due to a concern that he has been affected by heretical beliefs. This applies even if he gives a different reason for his actions (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 338:1 and in the comment of Rema).

And he does not fulfill the mitzva – לֹא עֹבֵר בָּהּ וְלֹא עֹבֵר בַּעֲגוּלָה. One who plated his phylacteries with gold – וְאֵין הָﬠִיר דֶּרֶךְ חִיצּוֹנִים. If one plated his phylacteries with gold, the phylacteries are disqualified (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 324:8).

The requirement that phylacteries must be square – כַּפָּיו דָּשׁ. There is a haikah transmitted to Moses from Sinai that requires both the phylacteries worn on the arm and those worn on the head to be square. This applies both to the base of the phylacteries as well as to the box that sits on the base. However, they do not need to be a perfect cube, and therefore the height of the box does not need to be the same dimension as its length and width (Rema). Some say that even if the phylacteries were originally square, if they become damaged and are no longer square, they must be repaired (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 323:9).

He exposes himself to danger – לֹא יִשָּׂא אִם תְּפִלִּין שֶׁהָיוּ דַּהֲוָה לְאִשֵּׁר יִשָּׂא הָאוֹמֵר. One who says that he will not lead the prayer at all, due to a concern that he has been affected by heretical beliefs, may not serve as the prayer leader for prayer at all, due to a concern that he has been affected by heretical beliefs. This applies even if he gives a different reason for his actions (Rema). Some say that even if he gives a different reason 

Rabbi Yoḥanan said: One who is blind in one eye may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction because people will gaze at him. The Gemara asks: Wasn’t there a certain priest who was blind in one eye in the neighborhood of Rabbi Yoḥanan, and he would lift his hands and recite the Priestly Benediction? The Gemara answers: That priest was a familiar figure in his town, and therefore he would not attract attention during the Priestly Benediction. This is also taught in a baraita: One who is blind in one eye may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction, but if he is a familiar figure in his town, he is permitted to do so.

We learned in the mishna that Rabbi Yehuda said: One whose hands are colored should not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction. It was taught in a baraita: If most of the townspeople are engaged in this occupation, dyeing, he is permitted to recite the Priestly Benediction, as the congregation will not pay attention to his stained hands.

One who constructs his phylacteries in a round shape exposes himself to danger during times of persecution, when foreign governments impose a ban on the mitzva of phylacteries, and yet he does not fulfill the mitzva to do phylacteries, as phylacteries must be square. If one plated the phylacteries worn on the head on his forehead, and not in its proper place above his hairline, or if he plated the phylacteries worn on the arm on his palm, and not on his bicep, this is the way of the heretics, i.e., those who reject the tradition of the Sages with regard to the proper placement of the phylacteries. If one plated his phylacteries with gold or plated the phylacteries worn on the palm on the outside of his sleeve, this is the way of the outsiders, i.e., those who do not take part in the traditions of the Jewish people.

Sleeve (unkelī) – עֶקְלֵי. From the Greek ἄκλωτος, analogous, meaning a short garment, like a short tunic with sleeves. According to this interpretation, one who places his phylacteries there does not fulfill the mitzva because he has plated it on his garment rather than directly on his body. Conversely, some explain that unkelī is from the Greek ἄκλώτος, anikēlē, meaning a bent arm or elbow. According to this interpretation, the problem is that one has placed the phylacteries on the wrong part of his arm.

Their diagonals (alakhsonan) – עלachable. From the Greek ἀλαχῶς, laxon, meaning slanting or crosswise. This term is generally used in talmudic parlance to refer to the hypotenuse of a triangle.
May the good bless You, this is a path of heresy, as heretics divide the world into two domains, good and evil. If one says the following in his prayers: Just as Your mercy is extended to a bird’s nest, as with the prohibition of slaughtering an animal and its offspring, have mercy and pity upon us, or: You have shown mercy to animals, as reflected in the prohibition of slaughtering an animal and its offspring on the same day, have mercy and pity upon us, is silenced. These mitzvos are not due to mercy, but they are decrees of God (Rambam Sefer Ahava, Hilkhot Tefilla 9:7).

We give thanks, we give thanks. One who says this twice is silenced (Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim 121:2).

One is obligated to bless God for the bad – may Your mercy be round – One is obligated to recite the blessing: The true judge, when bad things occur. The blessing should be recited with full sincerity, just as when one recites a blessing over good tidings (Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim 223:3).

May the good bless You – אֲמִרָא יֶזֶרְכָּה יִלָּעַם – a statement person responsible. This engenders jealousy etc., in the understanding of the angels. Furthermore, one who says this phrase removes God’s glory from the earthly world and confines it to the upper realms. This constitutes heresy.

This engenders jealousy, etc., in the Jerusalem Talmud, and it is explained that the problem is that the individual mitigates God’s mercy by implying that it is applied only to birds.

And they are nothing but decrees of the King – כִּי יָדְכוֹ תַּֽעֲבִ֥ר, כִּשְׁהָרְךָ תַּמְּצַ֝י – the king’s hand is not to be transferred. The great thinkers and philosophers have debated the meaning of this statement; they especially discussed its implications with regard to suggesting reasons for the mitzvot. According to the Rambam, presenting reasons for the mitzvot is problematic when one assumes that he has completely understood the full significance of a mitzva. This is an assumption that human beings have no right to make. Some explain that with regard to the mitzva of chasing away a bird, mercy is indeed a reason for the mitzva; however, the mitzva is not due to God’s mercy toward the birds, but rather by God’s interest in training mankind to be merciful (Meir; see Maharal, Tiferet Yisroel).