



Thursday, September 3, 2026
Foundations for the Believer to Live the Spiritual Life.

The Transformed Life.

7. The Devotional Life; Being truly devoted to our Triune God, (continued).

b. “Individuals” and “Collectives” to live the Devotional Life.

1) **The Individuals:** These are things God exhorts us to do predominately by ourselves, in the privacy of our own priesthood, so that God can accomplish His renewing and transforming work upon our souls. The Individuals include:

a) Daily Time in God’s Word.

b) Meditating on God’s Word.

c) Memorization of God’s Word, (continued).

This Individual principle is that of learning God’s Word so that you do not forget it. It comes through repetition in reading and studying Scripture, as well as meditating on it, where it is cycled through your mind and thoughts over and over again until you memorize it. We are instructed to memorize God’s Word in both the Old and New Testaments. We begin with some OT passages.

Prov 6:20-22, “My son, observe the commandment of your father and do not forsake the teaching of your mother; ²¹Bind them continually on your heart; tie them around your neck. ²²When you walk about, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk to you.”

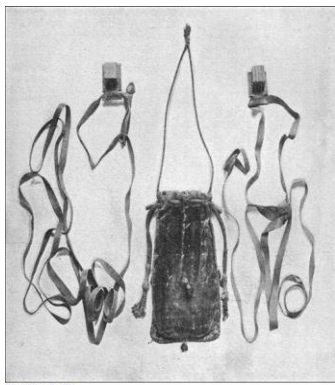
Ex 13:9, “And it shall serve as a sign to you on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth; for with a powerful hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt.”

Ex 13:16, “So it shall serve as a sign on your hand and as phylacteries on your forehead, for with a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt.”

Deut 6:8, “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.

We see the example of memorizing God’s Word by binding it around your neck, and to tie it or bind a phylactery on the forehead, or around the hands and wrist. The binding process gives us the imagery of going over the Word of God again and again until it is memorized, i.e., around and around.

Now if you are unfamiliar with a “phylactery,” it is a little leather box or pouch, cubed-shaped, that contained parts of Scripture from **Deut 5, 6, 10, 11,** and **Ex 12, 13,** or other prayers that they wore on their foreheads and hands or wrists as a reminder of God’s commandments and to keep them. One of these phylacteries was found in the caves of Qumran.



The Pharisee



Phylactery is the Hebrew word TOTAPHOTH that means, “bands, frontlet, or marks,” that is frontlet-bands that are between the eyes. It comes from an unused root meaning, “to go around or bind; an object for the forehead: frontlet.” It denotes a mark or sign placed on the forehead between the eyes as a memorial. It is used as phylacteries in **Ex 13:16**, and then in **Deut 6:8; 11:18** translated as “frontals.”

For the Hebrew Noun TOTAPHOTH:

The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament notes, “*Its primary sense in the figurative equation with God's commandments as the "frontlets"—the statutes of the feast of unleavened bread (Exodus 13:1-10), the regulations of the firstborn (Exodus 13:11-16), and the overall stipulations of the Mosaic covenant (Deut. 6:8; Deut. 11:18). These "frontlets" were to be "memorials" on the forehead (cf. the substitution of ZIKKARON for TOTAPOT in Exodus 13:9), reminding the Israelite to think upon the commandments of the Lord and to keep them. Later Jewry took these "frontlets" in a literal ostentatious way and were rebuked by Jesus (Matthew 23:5). They tied little boxes on their foreheads and wrists and placed scripture verses in them as a reminder.*”

The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon notes, “*It is figurative of dedication of firstborn, Ex 13:16; of commandments, Deut 11:18 and Deut 6:8. And figurative for perpetual remembrance. It was taken literally by later Jews, and hence the custom of wearing phylacteries.*”

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia notes, “*In Ex 13:9. the corresponding word to the TOTAPHOTH of Ex 13:16, is ZIKKARON, “memorial or reminder;” and in the parallel clauses of both verses the corresponding word is 'OTH, “a sign” upon the hand.*”

It also states about the Phylactery: “*The phylactery was a leather box, cube-shaped, closed with an attached flap and bound to the person by a leather band. There were two kinds: (1) one to be bound to the inner side of the left arm, and near the elbow, so that with the bending of the arm it would rest over the heart, the knot fastening it to the arm being in the form of the Hebrew letter yodh (י), and the end of the string, or band, finally wound around the middle finger of the hand, "a sign upon thy hand" (Deut. 6:8). This box had one compartment containing one or all of the four passages given above. The writer in his youth found one of these in a comparatively remote locality, evidently lost by a Jewish peddler, which contained only the 2nd text (Exodus 13:11-16) in unpointed Hebrew. (2) Another was to be bound in the center of the forehead, "between thine eyes" (Deut. 6:8), the knot of the band being in the form of the Hebrew letter dalet (ד), with the Hebrew letter shin (ש) upon each end of the box, which was divided into four compartments with one of the four passages in each. These two Hebrew letters, with the yodh (י) of the arm-phylactery (see (1) above), formed the divine name שדי, shaddai, "Almighty." Quite elaborate ceremonial accompanied the "laying" on of the phylacteries, that of the arm being bound on first, and that of the head next, quotations from Scripture or Talmud being repeated at each stage of the binding. They were to be worn by every male over 13 years old at the time of morning prayer, except on Sabbaths and festal days, such days being in themselves sufficient reminders of "the commandment, the statutes, and the ordinances" of Yahweh (Deut. 6:1).*”

A few years ago, I and several others from our Church, attended an Orthodox Jewish Rosh Hashana celebration, (which this year, 2026, will be on September 11). At that service the Jewish men were binding their arms with the phylactery. I asked what it was for and if I could participate. They said it was a way of putting on the Holy Spirit, and that it would be useless for me to do it, (I presumed because I was a Gentile who was not practicing their religion). Nevertheless, it is interesting that Orthodox Jews today see this as a symbol of putting on the Holy Spirit, who is the Helper and Teacher of believers in Jesus Christ. And as we have noted above, He helps us learn and memorize God's Word through the Grace Apparatus for Perceptions (GAP), cf. **John 14:26; 16:13**.

As such, the Phylactery gives us the imagery of memorization by keeping something near and close to us as a reminder of its contents and importance. Today, you could keep your Bible or a notebook with Bible study materials near to you as a reminder of its contents.

I learned many years ago in a business seminar that people remembered about 5-20% of the content they are taught in a lesson or seminar. But if they simply touch a book or notebook from that lesson they were taught, they will retain 20-50% more of the information. And if they review the information in those books or notebooks, they will retain another 20-50% of the information. God may have used this phylactery in such a way for the OT saints, but more likely this was just an image or object lesson regarding the importance of memorizing Scripture.

The latest research on retention of information when we review materials after we have been taught them, shows:

Reviewing the material resets the forgetting curve. However, how someone reviews, dictates exactly how much more they remember.

- **Passive Review (Rereading):** Rereading text or scanning notes only offers a “feeling of knowing” (recognition) rather than true memory consolidation. While it stops immediate forgetting, the long-term gains are minimal, and retention drops to around **34% after a week**.
- **Active Review (Active Recall):** Forcing the brain to retrieve information without looking at the notes pushes retention to **80% after a week**.
- **Spaced Repetition:** Reviewing the material at expanding intervals (e.g., 1 day later, 3 days later, 7 days later) is the most powerful technique. Instead of losing 90% of the lesson after a few months, studies show that **spaced repetition yields up to 95% retention over 6 months, a 2.5x improvement over traditional cramming**.

Retention Comparison

Learning Method	Typical Retention Rate	Primary Cognitive Trigger
Passive Lecture	5% – 10%	Auditory/Visual observation only
Passive Review (Rereading)	~34% (After 1 week)	Visual familiarity/recognition
Hands-on / Tactile Learning	70% – 75%	Multi-sensory motor & memory syncing
Active Recall / Spaced Review	80% – 95% (Long-term)	Neural pathway strengthening via retrieval

Next, we see that “Phylacteries” is only used in the NT in **Mat 23:5**, when Jesus rebuked the Pharisees’ arrogance for broadening them as a hypocritical symbol of their self-perceived greater piety. He condemned the Pharisees for the external show of their religious practices motivated by their approbation lust.

Mat 23:5, “But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments.”

The Greek word is PHULAKTERION and means “a phylactery.” It comes from the root word PHULAKE that meant “to guard or a safeguard,” as a means of protection. It also came to denote an amulet; a protective charm of some sort that had the image of pagan false gods or goddesses.

A cognate word is the Verb PHULASSO that means, “guard, defend, watch over, protect, keep safe; obey, follow; guard against, avoid.”

As such, PHULAKTERION in the Greek language came to mean, “*a fortified place provided with a garrison, a station for a guard or garrison, and a preservative or safeguard, or an amulet,*” (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament).

As such, wearing a phylactery came to be used by some as a kind of charm necklace called an “amulet,” that wards off evil and evil spirits. Many people today wear crosses around their neck in the same vein, or even worse necklaces or bracelets for their favorite saints or religious leaders, which amounts to paganism. They do it as a charm to ward off evil and evil spirits. They think the power is in the necklace or bracelet, when the true power is in the Word of God.

Whether a phylactery or cross or other imagery, the Word of God is not to be carried as an ornament or amulet, but stored in the mind as a safe guard against Satan’s cosmic viewpoint, the viewpoint of the world, humanistic viewpoint, Satan’s devices, and the Old Sin Nature’s tempting influence.

God speaks of wearing phylacteries “between the eyes or on the forehead” as a symbol of the perpetual remembrance of His Law (for the OT saints). Binding the phylactery “between one’s eyes” was given along with an instruction to bind the Lord’s command to “one’s hand.” Both were a symbol of the Law’s involvement in every part of an Israelite’s life, both in his actions (thus the binding on the hands), and his thoughts (thus the binding on the head).

In regards to what was stated in the Law, it was to be a reminder of the dedication of the firstborn, as used in **Ex 13:16**, and of the Lord’s commandments, as used in **Deut 6:8; 11:18**. See also, **Ex 13:1-10; 13:11-16; Deut 4:4-9; 11:13-21**.

Yet, the Pharisees of Christ’s day took this literally and wore phylacteries. As noted above, some wore them as a charm for protection against evil, an amulet as such, or as a good luck charm, which was never God’s intent. Jesus Christ strongly condemns this in **Mat 23:5**, because it missed the metaphorical picture and original intent.

Notice the context of **Deut 6:8** and what this signifies in **vs 5-7**.

Deut 6:4-7, “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.”

And by way of example, not literally, God said in **vs. 8-9**, “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” Cf. **Deut 11:18-20**.

Deut 11:18-20, “You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. ¹⁹You shall teach them to your sons, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you rise up. ²⁰You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

Therefore, in **Ex 13:9, 16** and **Deut 6:8**, the phylactery seems to be used figuratively for remembering God’s truth, so that it is readily available to apply to the situations of life. And think of it. How could they write all of the laws found in the Law (The Pentateuch) and put them in a little tiny box or even on the door posts of their houses? They could not.

Therefore, these are figurative symbols to impress the importance of memorizing God's Word. The frontals or frontlet bands on the forehead stood for the retention and thinking area of the mind. The sign on the hand referred to the application of Bible doctrine to the concerns and details of life. The hand also speaks of doing, working, and serving from the motivation, skill, and ability which God's Word gives. Therefore, these and other passages are God teaching His people to memorize Scripture so that later on, when needed, they could recall and apply it to the situation.

Interestingly, the wearing of phylacteries is practiced by orthodox Jews to this day, especially with the SHEMA of **Deut 6:4**, "**Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!**" And in the near future, the Antichrist will replace the phylacteries of God on the forehead and hand with the mark of the Beast, as noted in the Book of Revelation, cf. **Rev 7:3**, with **13:16; 14:9; 20:4**. This has strong symbolic significance in that the phylactery was a sign of allegiance to God that will be replaced / counterfeited by a sign of allegiance to the Antichrist / Beast and his rule.

Rev 13:16-18, "**And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead,** ¹⁷**and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.** ¹⁸**Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.**"

Based on Jesus's rebuke of the hypocritical Pharisees in **Mat 23:5**, we have pertinent warning regarding our worship practices whether they are Individual or Collective. Our worship is never to degenerate into mere religious, external practices as a kind of mysterious charm against evil, nor are we to do them to impress others. Rather, they are a means of getting the Word within our hearts so that, if it is understood clearly and retained, it can then be applied carefully and accurately to bring every thought and action into the captivity and obedience of Christ.

2 Cor 10:4-5, "**For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.** ⁵**We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.**"