

# Phylactery

## Tefillin



Fragment A: height 17.7 cm (7 in.)  
length 3 cm (1 3/16 in.)

Fragment B: height 3.8 cm (1 1/2 in.)  
length 2.8 cm (1 1/8 in.)

Mur 4 Phyl

Parchment

Copied first century-early second century C.E.

Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority (3)

The command "*And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes*" (Deut. 6:8) was practiced by Jews from early times. In the Second Temple period the sages established that *tefillin* (phylacteries; amulets in Greek) would include four scriptural passages inscribed on parchment placed in box-like containers made of black leather. One of the phylacteries was worn one on the left arm and the other on the forehead. These served "*as a sign upon your hand and as a symbol on your forehead that with a mighty hand the Lord freed us from Egypt*" (Exodus 13:9, 16).

The Dead Sea region has now yielded the earliest phylactery remains, both of the leather containers and the inscribed strips of parchment. As a rule, phylacteries include the same four selections, two from the book of Exodus (Exod. 13:1-10; 13:11-16) and two from Deuteronomy (Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21). The scriptural verses were penned in clear minuscule characters on the elongated writing material, which was folded over to fit the minute compartments stamped into the containers.

### References:

Milik, J. T. "Textes Hebraux et Arameens." In *Les Grottes de Murabba`at, Discoveries in the Judaean Desert, II*, pp. 80- 85. Oxford, 1961.

Yadin, Y. "Tefillin (Phylacteries) from Qumran [XQ Phyl 1-4]" (in Hebrew), *Eretz-Israel 9* (1969):60-83 and plates.

## English Translation of the Phylactery (Tefillin) Scroll

Mur 4 Phyl

Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority (3)

Exod. 13:1-3

1. (1)And spoke
2. the Lord to
3. Moses
4. saying, (2)"Consecrate
5. to Me every first-born
6. the first issue of every womb of the
7. Israelites, man
8. and beast is Mine."
9. (3)And Moses said to the people,
10. "Remember this day
11. on which you went (free)
12. from Egypt, the house of bondage,
13. how with a mighty hand
14. the Lord freed you from it; no
15. leavened bread shall be eaten. (4)This day

Transcription by J. T. Milik; translation adapted from "Tanakh," pp. 103-4. Philadelphia, 1985.

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- Return the *Phylactery* to [The Qumran Library](#)

## Phylactery Cases

### Qumran Phylactery Cases



Leather

First century B.C.E.-first century C.E.

LAYOUT OF PHYLACTERY CASES IN COMPUTER IMAGE

C

D

B

A

E

4Q Phyl cases 1008

Case A: length 3.2 cm (1 1/4 in.), width 1 cm (3/8 in.)

Case B: length 2.2 cm (7/8 in.), width 1.2 cm (1/2 in.)

Case C: length 2 cm (3/4 in.), width 1 cm (3/8 in.)

Case D: length 2.3 cm (7/8 in.), width 2.6 cm (1 in.)

Case E: length 1.3 cm (1/2 in.), width 2.1 cm (13/16 in.)

Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority (84)

Phylactery case A is constructed of two pieces of stitched leather. It contains four chambers and each compartment can hold a minute slip containing a prayer. Meant to be worn on the arm, phylactery case B has only one compartment. It is formed of a single piece of leather folded in two, with one half deeply stamped out to contain a tiny inscribed slip. A fine leather thong was inserted at the middle, and the halves were folded over and stitched together. Cases C-E are similar to the four- compartment case A.

Reference

Discoveries in the Judaean Desert, I, p.7. Oxford, 1955.

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- [More artifacts from the Qumran Site](#)