

THE HALACHOS OF LEFTIES

Below is a listing of special Halachos for left-handed people, excerpted from the *Sefer Yad Eliezer: A collection of various Halachos, Mitzvos and minhagim pertinent to left-handers*, by Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn, Shlita. As always, one should consult with his Rav or Posek regarding his personal circumstances:

1. **When Making a Bracha.** When making a bracha, the left-hander holds the food in his left hand. The same is true when a left hander is holding any *Devar Mitzvah* that he is about to utilize so that he would hold any *Kos Shel Bracha* (even if he does not personally drink from it) in his left hand, the besamim at Havdalah in his left hand, etc.
2. **Chasunah.** The Kallah stands to the right of the Chosson during the Chupah. This is based on the Pasuk (*Nitzvah Sheigal Limincha*) in Tehillim (45:12). There is accordingly no difference if the Chosson or Kallah is a right or left-hander.
3. **Left Handed Chosson or Kallah.** From the Teshuvos Maharam of Mintz (109) it would seem that a left-handed Chosson should give the ring to his Kallah with his left hand, and that a left-handed Kallah should receive the ring on her left index finger.
4. **Putting on Shoes.** Both right-handers and left-handers put on their right shoe first, but there is a difference with regarding to tying their laces. The right-hander should tie his left shoe first, whereas the left-hander ties his right shoe first.
5. **Removing Shoes.** When removing shoes, the right-hander unties his right shoe first, and then unties his left shoe. However, he takes off his left shoe first and then removes his right shoe. The left hander unties his left shoe first and then unties his right shoe. However, he too, removes his left shoe first and then removes his right shoe (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 2:5, Mishna Berurah seif katan 8). Hakhel Note: It is a matter of getting used to doing the right thing--we are all familiar with the story of the person who did not intermarry because he realized that a Jew is guided even as to how one ties and unties his shoelaces.
6. **Cutting Nails.** HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, rules that both a right-handed and left-handed person should begin cutting his nails on the left hand first.
7. **Shema.** The Mishna Berurah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 61, seif katan 17) writes that one places his hand over his eyes when reciting the first Pasuk of Shema in order to increase one's concentration. HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, writes that the use of the right hand in this instance is Ahl Pi Kabbala, and accordingly, there is no difference between right-handed and left-handed people in this regard.

8. **Tzedaka.** One should give Tzedaka with his right hand, Ahl Pi Kabbalah--whether or not a person is a right-hander or left-hander. (Ohr Tzadikim 66 from the Arizal)

9. **Mezuzah.** A Mezuzah should always be affixed on the right side of the entranceway. (Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De'ah 289:2) This is the Halacha even if a left-hander is living alone in the house or if all who live in the home are left-handers. The reason Mezuzah differs from Tefillin is because the determination of how to wear Tefillin is based on each individual, whereas Mezuzah is a Mitzvah on the house. (Shach to Yoreh De'ah 289:2:5) The Debritziner Rav (Be'er Moshe Vol. 2:2) suggests however, that a left-handed person should kiss the Mezuzah with his left hand.

10. **Blessing Children.** According to the Arizal (cited in Sefer *Ohr Tzaddikim* 29) children are blessed on Friday night with the right hand. HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, emphasizes that both right-handers and left-handers bentsch their children in the same way.

11. **Putting on Clothes.** Both the right-handed and left-handed individual follow the same procedure. When putting on a shirt or jacket, one should put on the right sleeve first, and then on the left. This is true for pants and socks as well. In removing these items, one removes the left one first and then the right one (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 2:4, 5, and Mishna Berurah seif katan 5, 8).

12. **Netilas Yadayim.** Both the right-handed and left-handed individual follow the same procedure. When washing hands in the morning, one picks up the *k'li* in his right hand and then puts it into his left hand so that he will wash his right hand first. The right hand is washed first and then the left (this is true when washing for bread as well).

13. **Vidui.** Based on the Siddur Arizal, it is our Minhag to tap the right first firmly against the heart when reciting Vidui, and when reciting Ahl Cheit on Yom Kippur. HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, writes that both right-handers and left-handers do the same.

14. **Taking Three Steps Back.** At the completion of Shemone Esrei the left hander should begin taking his three steps backward with his right foot, as he should begin to retreat with his weaker foot to show that it is not pleasant for him to part with the Presence of Hashem.

15. **Havdala.** The Rema writes that during Havdala one should look at the nails of his right hand as he holds the cup of wine in his left hand (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 298:3). HaRav Chaim Kanievsky teaches that Ahl Pi Kabbalah both right and left-handers look at the nails of the right hand.