The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן י"א סעיף ט"ו

Overview

Siman 11 Seif 15:

There are those who write that one should be careful that the *tzitzis* should hang to the length of the *talis* so that they will hang over the corner and if they hang to the width of the *talis* they would not hang over the corner. According to some, one should not put additional material over the hole into which the *tzitzis* are inserted and others permit the practice and the custom follows the latter opinion.

- Not only should the *tzitzis* initially extend over the length of the *talis* but if they later slip over the width of the *talis* they should be returned to their proper place. (M.B. 73)
- *B'dieved*, the mitzvah is fulfilled even if the *tzitzis* extend to the width but one should be cautious that they should not extend directly over the corner since that is a Karaite custom and if they are over the corner they should be moved back into their proper place. (M.B. 73)
- According to the second opinion since the additional material is added to strengthen the garment it is subordinate to the garment and could even be made from leather. This is the position followed by the Poskim. (M.B. 75)

Stories to Share

The Gaon's Emissary

ש"ע ס' י"א, מ"ב, ס"ק ט"ו: "מפני שהוא מנהג הקראים..."

On today's amud we find that one should not let his tzitzis hang down on the corner of his tallis since this is the custom of the Karaites. Although many believe that the Karaites were merely an ancient sect who more or less died out many centuries ago, they still exist today and in their heyday tried to undermine rabbinic authority at every opportunity.

During the year תקל"ו, the king of Poland received a very strange proposal. A group of Karaites claiming to be the "real Jews" who follow the law of Moshe and no one else, advised the king to get rid of the "Talmudic rabbis" who they claimed fabricated anything not explicit in the Torah. This claim is of course ridiculous, but the challenge presented by the Karaites was still fairly serious and the rabbanim needed an explanation that would leave no doubt in the king's mind as to who are the real Jews and who are the imposters.

The Vilna Gaon, zt"l, recommended Rav Yehudah Leib Maitos, zt"l, for this mission, since he was known for his brilliant rhetorical skills. The Gaon blessed him and he went to the capital city for the debate.

Right before he entered the king's audience chamber, Rav Yehudah Leib removed his shoes. Carrying them in his hands he entered the king's presence.

"What nerve these Talmudists have to enter into the presence of the king with their shoes in their hand!" cried his indignant opponent.

"I am sorry, your Majesty," replied Rav Yehudah Leib. "I am just afraid of these Karaites. Do you know that when Moshe took off his shoes by the burning bush, a Karaite stole them?"

"That's a dirty lie! There were no Karaites then!" roared his incensed opponent.

Reb Yehudah Leib delivered his death blow, "If you admit that there were no Karaites then, how can you claim to be the real Jews? If you admit that your group was formed thousands of years after Sinai, there is no point debating with you, since you are obviously not the original Jews!"

Halacha Highlights

The proper direction of the *tzitzis*

Shulchan Aruch Siman 11 Seif 15

דבעינן שתהא נוטפת על הקרן

Because we require the *tzitzis* to hang on the corner

The Gemara Menachos (42a) teaches that *tzitzis* must strike the corner of the garment when it is worn. Rashi (ד"ה שתהא) explains that the hole into which the *tzitzis* are inserted should be raised above the edge of the garment so that when the *tzitzis* hang down they will touch and hang over the corner. Kol Bo (סי' כ"ב) explains that the intent of the Gemara is that the *tzitzis* should extend out to the length of the garment so that when they hang down they will rest on the corner rather than extending to the width of the garment and they will hang towards the ground. Shulchan Aruch's ruling follows Kol Bo's explanation and he writes that the *tzitzis* should extend to the length of the garment. Biur Halacha (ד"ה לאורך הטלית) in the name of Magen Avrohom explains that the length of the *talis* refers to the long ends of the garment, i.e. the part that does not have tassels, whereas the width of the *talis* refers to the shorter ends of the garment, i.e. the part that has the tassels. Accordingly, Shulchan Aruch's instruction that the *tzitzis* should extend to the length of the garment means that the *tzitzis* should extend out of the garment together with the tassels.

Biur Halacha then notes that later authorities contend that the front *tzitzis* should run to the width of the garment, i.e. perpendicular to the tassels, so that when the *tzitzis* hang down they will rest on the corner. Other Poskim (פסקי תשובות אות ל"ב) explain that it all depends upon the manner in which one wears his *talis*. According to the common custom that people fold their *talis* on their shoulders the *tzitzis* should be configured as described in Shulchan Aruch. Concerning one's *talis koton,* the *tzitzis* should extend out the side (the long side) of the garment so that they will rest over the corner.