The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
Tues, Oct 21, 2025 ■ כ"ט תשרי, תשפ"ו
סימן כ"א סעיף א'-ב'

Overview

Siman 21 Seif 1:

***Tzitzis* strands that rip may be thrown in the garbage since they are a *mitzvah* object that does not possess sanctity. While the *tzitzis* are on the *talis* it is prohibited to use them, for example, to tie something, since it is disrespectful to the mitzvah.** (There are those who maintain that even after the *tzitzis* were removed one should not treat them with disrespect and throw them in the garbage, it is just that it is not necessary to bury them. Some are careful to bury them and those that do so should be blessed.)

- The same halacha of *tzitzis* applies to all mitzvah objects, e.g. *sukkah, lulav* and *shofar*. (M.B. 1)
- The halacha in Shulchan Aruch applies even if the *tzitzis* were intentionally removed. (M.B. 2)
- One should also be careful not to throw away one's mitzvah objects. (M.B. 6)
- The prohibition is to throw the mitzvah objects in the garbage but if they are left out and as a result are thrown away it is of no concern. (M.B. 7)
- Maharil writes that one should use ripped *tzitzis* as a bookmark or for some other mitzvah. (M.B. 8)

Siman 21 Seif 2:

If a *talis* becomes worn one must restrain himself from using it. It may also not be used to wipe off dirt or some other degrading use. It should be thrown out and left to wear out on its own.

- A worn out *talis* may be used for a non-degrading use. (M.B. 12)
- There is a disagreement whether a *talis* with *tzitzis* may be used for a non-degrading purpose. Pri Megadim writes that a *talis* designated for davening may not be used but a *talis koton* may be used. (M.B. 12)

Halacha Highlights

Using a *talis* for mundane purposes

Mishnah Berurah Siman 21 Seif Koton 12

ובעוד הציצית עליו אם רשאי להשתמש בהטלית תשמיש שאינו מגנה וכו'

And whether one may use the *talis* for something that is not demeaning while the *tzitzis* are still upon it etc.

Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק י"ב) writes that there is a disagreement whether one may use their *talis* for mundane purposes that do not disgrace the *talis* while the *tzitzis* are still intact. He cites Pri Megadim who contends that a *talis* that is used exclusively for davening should be treated with the same respect as *tzitzis* and one may not use it for mundane purposes. Kaf HaChaim (סק"י) asserts that nowadays that we wear a *talis koton* for the purpose of the *mitzvah* rather than as a regular garment it should be treated with the same respect as a *talis* that is used exclusively for davening.

Poskim discuss whether a *talis* may be used for many different activities. For example, may one may use his *talis* to wipe off his glasses. Rav Yosef Sholom Elyashiv (קובץ תשובות ח"א סי' ג') asserts that one may use his *talis* to wipe his glasses. The rationale for this lenient ruling is that people don't hesitate to use even expensive garments for that purpose so this activity is not in any way demeaning to the *talis*. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach(הליכות שלמה פ"ג ס"ק י"ט) maintains that even though it is not demeaning to use one's *talis* to wipe his glasses, nevertheless, Mishnah Berurah ruled that one may not use his *talis* for mundane purposes even if they are not demeaning to the *talis*. In Sefer Nefesh Dovid (אות ס"ז), the Aderes writes that he would use his *talis* to wipe his glasses but only while he was learning or davening. This seems to indicate that one may use one's *talis* for other purposes if they can be associated with a *mitzvah*. Support for this is found in the Sha'ar HaTzion (סוף קל"ב) who writes that it is permitted for one to use his *talis* to separate between his face and the floor when bowing on the floor on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur.

Stories to Share

A Disgrace or Not?

ש"ע ס' כ"א, ס"ב ס"ק י"ב "טלית קטן פשיטא דשרי לכל תשמיש שאינו מגונה"

On today's amud the Mishnah Berurah writes that although one may not use the garment of his tallis katan to do something that disgraces it, he can use it for an activity that does not debase it.

Once the Steipler, zt"l, saw his nephew wiping his glasses with his tallis katan. To the young man's surprise the Steipler got very upset and ordered him to immediately stop.

אורחות רבינו, ח"ג, ע' ק"צ

Yet we find that the Chazon Ish, zt"l, permitted what is apparently an even more shameful activity. When someone who was sweaty asked him if he was permitted to use his tallis katan to wipe away the sweat, he permitted this.

מעשה איש, ח"ב, ע' קל"א

Many are unaware of how nuanced Rav Chaim Kanievsky's answers are.From his very short answer when someone asked him this question, we can see how deep and inclusive of machlokes haposkim—even achronim—his answers are. When he was asked about these conflicting approaches, his cryptic reply could be understood either like the Chazon Ish or the Steipler. "Look in the Mishnah Berurah 21:12."

דולה ומשקה, ע' כ"ח

When someone asked Rav Elyashiv, zt"l, if wiping his glasses was classified as a shameful activity he brought a very compelling proof that it is not. "I don't see any halachic problem with this at all. After all, if something is shameful, people will not use a better garment for it. Yet people publicly clean their glasses with the edge of any sort garment that they are wearing, no matter how fine. How could this be a problem?"

קובץ תשובות, ח"א, ס' ג'