The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן כ"ז סעיף ט'-י'

Overview

Siman 27 Seif 9:

The correct placement of the *shel rosh* is from the hairline by the forehead until the end of the soft spot of a baby's head.

- It is an error to put the *shel rosh* on one's forehead and those that do so violate the Biblical *mitzvah* because the entire *shel rosh* must rest on a spot that has hair. The hairline is determined by where the roots grow and the *shel rosh* should not be placed on the length of one's hair that extends onto one's forehead. It is best to put one's *shel rosh* higher than the hairline since there is room for two *tefillin* on one's head. (M.B. 33)
- The edge of the *ma'avarta* should rest higher than the soft spot of a baby's head. (M.B. 34)

Siman 27 Seif 10:

The knot must be behind the head above the *oref*. Additionally, the *ketzitza* must be aligned in the middle of one's head so that it could be "between his eyes." The knot should also be aligned in the middle of the back of one's head and should not be pushed to one side or the other. The visible part of the knot should appear like a *daled*. One must also be careful that the knot of the *shel yad* should not turn around.

- The *oref* is at the end of the skull opposite one's face and not lower down that would be opposite one's throat. It is preferred if most of the knot is above the hole (beneath the skull) and one must be certain that none of the knot rests on a place that does not have hair. For these reasons the *retzua* should wrap tightly around one's head. (M.B. 35)
- Many later authorities write that if the *shel rosh* is not "between one's eyes" the *mitzvah* is not fulfilled. (M.B. 36)
- One should be careful that the knot does not turn inside out. (M.B. 37)

Halacha Highlight

Using a mirror to assure that the *shel rosh* is properly aligned

Shulchan Aruch Siman 27 Seif 10

צריך לכון הקציצה שתהא באמצע כנגד בין העינים

One should align his *shel rosh* that it should be in the middle of one's head so that it should rest "between his eyes."

Shulchan Aruch writes that one should be careful that his *shel rosh* is aligned to the middle of his head so that it should fulfill the requirement to be "between his eyes." Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק ל"ו) cites Achronim who wrote that if the *shel rosh* is not properly aligned the mitzvah was not fulfilled. In a famous *teshuva,* the Divrei Chaim (שו"ת דברי חיים ח"ב או"ח סי' ו') wrote that the custom to look in a mirror to assure that his *shel rosh* is properly aligned is foolish since there is room for one to place two *tefillin* on his head, indicating that as long as one's *shel rosh* is within that area the *mitzvah* is fulfilled even though it is not aligned exactly between his eyes. Sefer *Os Chaim* (סי' כ"ז ס"ק י"ב) wrote that Divrei Chaim's primary opposition was the use of a mirror since Shulchan Aruch (יו"ד סי' קנ"ו וסו"ס קפ"ב) wrote that men are not permitted to look in a mirror since it is a utensil used by women to adorn themselves. On top of the prohibition associated with looking in a mirror he also saw no value in using a mirror since he maintained that it is not necessary for one's *shel rosh* to be perfectly aligned since there is a wide space that is acceptable for the *shel rosh* to sit.

Teshuvas Otzros Yosef (סי' י' נדפס בסוף ספר הלכה ברורה ח"ב) elaborates on the prohibition of looking in the mirror and cites numerous authorities who maintain that the prohibition is subject to what is considered normal in each time and place. Therefore, in those places that it is common for men to look in mirrors the prohibition does not apply. Furthermore, since the intent is to properly fulfill the mitzvah it would certainly be permitted. Sefer Chaye Moshe, in fact, cites numerous reports of those who regularly used a mirror to assure that their *shel rosh* was properly aligned.

Stories to Share

Gentle Guidance

ש"ע סי' כ"ז, ט': "מקום הנחת תפילה של ראש..."

Rav Shmuel Hominer was a master at giving spiritual direction in a manner certain not to give offense. Instead, his words would encourage others to change their ways and do as they should. A gentle nudge administered in the correct way at the right moment would often work wonders.

Once, he got onto a public bus whose driver had a head flowing with long hair, but no kipah. The elderly Rav Shmuel gently took a lock of hair in his hand and exclaimed, "What beautiful peyos! The only thing missing to complete this picture is a kipah..."

On another occasion, he worked to help a spiritual seeker return to his roots. This man was obviously proud of his long hair, which he kept well groomed. As he started to keep mitzvos decades ago, his hair stood out as incongruous with his actions, but Rav Shmuel never said a word about this. Instead he suggested that they learn the Shulchan Aruch, the Rema, and the main points of the Mishnah Berurah together, so that the new returnee should get a grasp of how to properly keep halachah. The two began a regular seder and the newcomer very much enjoyed the clear reasoning of the Mishnah Berurah. Every day revealed new details of how to properly keep halahcah that he had never known.

Finally, the two began to learn hilchos tefillin and got to the halachos in today's siman that deal with the exact place of the head tefillin, and that tefillin which are not exactly in the right place are considered as if they were still in their bag. They learned this very carefully although Rav Shmuel never referred to the hairstyle of his chavrusah.

The very next day, the young man arrived to their seder with a short haircut.

כן שמעתי מדודי, הרב שמחה גולשבסקי ז"ל