The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
Thurs, Nov 6, 2025 ■ ט"ו חשון, תשפ"ו
סימן כ"ז סעיף י"א

Overview

Siman 27 Seif 11:

The black side of the *retzuos* must face outwards. This applies to the *shel yad* and *shel rosh*. The *retzuos* of the *shel rosh* should hang in front and should reach at least one's navel or a little above. The width of the *retzua* is the length of a barley kernel. If the *retzua* is too short or too narrow one should nevertheless wear them until he can obtain valid *retzuos*. The *shel rosh* should be visible but it is disrespectful for a student to allow his *shel rosh* to be visible to his rebbi. There is no preference whether the *shel yad* is visible or covered. It appears to me that nowadays since we wear *tefillin* only during davening a student may uncover his *shel rosh* before his rebbi and that is the custom.

- The only concern is that the *retzua* around one's head or the first time around the arm does not turn over but there is no concern regarding the part of the *retzua* that wraps around the rest of the arm or hangs down. Nevertheless, the *mitzvah* is beautified if the black side faces outwards. (M.B. 38)
- All agree that the *retzua* on the right side of one's head should be longer than the left but there is a dispute concerning the correct lengths. (M.B. 41)
- According to some it is sufficient if the *retzua* is as wide as the length of a wheat kernel and if absolutely necessary one could rely on that opinion. Regarding the minimal width of the *retzua* one must be particularly mindful in those places that the *retzua* is bent. (M.B. 42)
- If the *retzua* of the *shel yad* is shorter than the minimum one should put it on without a *beracha* and if the *retzua* of the *shel rosh* does not extend at least two *tefachim* one should not recite the *beracha*. Similarly, if the *retzua* is not at least the width of the length of a wheat kernel the *beracha* should not be recited. (M.B. 44)
- It is best for the *shel yad* to be covered. (M.B. 47)

Halacha Highlight

Fasting if one's *retzua* turns over

Shulchan Aruch Siman 27 Seif 11

צריך שיהיה השחור שברצועה לצד חוץ ולא יתהפכו

The black part of the *retzua* should face outwards and one should be cautious that it does not turn over

The Gemara Moed Katan (25a) relates that R' Huna's *retzuos* turned over and he fasted forty times because of it. Rosh (הלכות תפילין סי' י"ב) cites two comments from the Gaonim. In the first comment it is explained that R' Huna, who fasted because his *retzuos* turned over, was motivated by his piety but it is not obligatory for one to fast because his *retuza* turns over. In the second comment it is related that one who turns over his *retzua*, whether from the *shel rosh* or from the *shel yad,* is considered negligent and must fast. Ma'adnei Yom Tov (על הרא"ש הנ"ל אות צ') explains that the two statements are not contradictory. The first statement refers to a circumstance in which the *retzua* turned over by accident and the second statement refers to where the person intentionally turned his *retzua* over so that the black side would face his body. That is why in the second comment he is called negligent and thus obligated to fast.

Mishnah Berurah (סי"ק ל"ח) mentions that it is an act of piety for one to fast or at least redeem the fast with money. Furthermore, the concern applies only for the part of the retzua that goes around a person's head and the first time around one's arm. One is not technically obligated to assure that the rest of the *retzua* that is wrapped around one's arm and what hangs from the *shel rosh* does not turn over since it is not an essential part of the mitzvah; nevertheless, it is considered a beautification of the mitzvah if the black part of the *retzua* faces outwards even for these parts of the *retzua*. Piskei Teshuvos (אות כ') writes that nowadays the custom is not to fast since fasting leads to *bitul* Torah and anger and one should redeem the fast.

Stories to Share

Extra Stringency

ש"ע סי' כ"ז, י"א: "צריך שיהיה שחרות הרצועות לצד חוץ..."

A certain man noticed that in more recent times people have been coloring both sides of the straps of their tefillin black. Although there have always been some people who did so, as the Rambam rules in Yad Hachazakah, most are not careful in this regard. After all, the Beis Yosef himself writes that he has never seen anyone do this practically. (ב"י, סי' ל"ג) Although some kabbalists are careful, as we find in the Kaf Hachaim, he was surprised to see such a huge increase in people following this practice in recent generations.

כף החיים, סי' ל"ג

The man considered what he should do. Of course he was willing to change over to coloring both sides if that was daas Torah. Barring that, though, why should he change his practice? He decided to put the matter to a test to determine whether it was truly worthwhile to switch.

He asked Rav Elyashiv, zt"l, if he should be careful in this regard. After all, Rav Elyashiv himself ass not particular about this point when it comes to his own tefillin. Rav Elyashiv replied that he need not take this on. "When they were changing my own straps because of wear, they offered to color both sides but I refused to be stringent in this regard."

When another person asked Rav Elyashiv whether he should color the points of the straps as the Keses Hasofer recommends, he also replied that this was unnecessary. "I do not see any particular reason to color the points."

קונטרס הל' תפילין, סי' ל"ב

When another person inquired about straps which are longer than required that were not blackened at the bottom, Rav Elyashiv replied that they were kosher b'dieved. "This is not a problem b'dieved since the parts of the straps that are longer than the shiur is considered as if they do not exist."

פסקי הלכות, ע' ס"ח