

Overview

Siman 32 Seif 38:

One should make four compartments from one piece of hide for the *shel rosh* and a single compartment for the *shel yad*.

- ❖ Poskim discuss whether sewing or gluing together pieces of leather is permitted and the custom is in accordance with the lenient position. Nevertheless, one should strive to have *tefillin* made from a single piece of leather. (M.B. 172)

Siman 32 Seif 39:

***Halacha L'Moshe M'Sinai* teaches that the *shel rosh* and *shel yad* must have square stitching and a proportionate diagonal. In other words its length and width must be equal so that its diagonal will have the correct ratio to the sides, i.e. 1:1.4. The place where it rests, meaning the stitches on the bottom and the *batim* must also be square.** It does not matter, however, whether the height is larger than the length and width. **If one's *tefillin* were made square but it became ruined one must restore it to its square shape.** One should make each of the four compartments the same size.

- ❖ Having square *tefillin* is essential even *b'dieved* but if no other *tefillin* are available he should put on the one that is not square without reciting the *beracha* until he can obtain one that is square. (M.B. 173)
- ❖ The stitching must be square on top and below. (M.B. 174)
- ❖ One should notch the *ma'avarta* so that the *titura* should be seen as square. (M.B. 177)
- ❖ One should be careful that the stitches remain square since if the holes for the stitching are too large it could cause the stitching to no longer former a square with perfectly straight lines. (M.B. 177)
- ❖ Both the *shel yad* and *shel rosh* must be square. The four compartments of the *shel rosh* must be square and they must be square for their entire height. (M.B. 178)
- ❖ If the *titura* becomes bent, even if it retains its essential square shape it must be repaired. (M.B. 181)

Halacha Highlight

The requirement for *tefillin* to be square

Shulchan Aruch Siman 32 Seif 29
הלכה למשה מסיני שיהיו מרובעות

***Halacha L'Moshe M'Sinai* teaches that it must be square**

Shulchan Aruch states that *Halacha L'Moshe M'Sinai* teaches that the stitches, the *titura* and the *batim* must all be square. In the event that one of these parts is not square the *tefillin* are invalid. In order to be certain that it is correctly squared Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק קע"ה) writes that one should measure two adjacent sides with their diagonal to assure that the correct ratio of 1:1.4 is in place. One should then measure the remaining two sides with their diagonal to make sure that from the other side the correct ratio is in place. Despite Mishnah Berurah's reference to measuring one's *tefillin* to assure that they are square, most Poskim (עי פסקי תשובות אות ס"ב) are of the opinion that it is not necessary for one to use a precise measuring instrument to ascertain that one's *tefillin* are perfectly square. If visibly it appears as though the sides are equal length and the diagonal seems to have the correct ratio one may assume that his *tefillin* are valid. Although it is unnecessary to measure with precise measuring instruments many scribes do use them since it is an easy procedure and does not involve a great expense (432 פסקי תשובות שם הע' 432).

Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק קע"ה) noted that one should pay special attention to the stitching since scribes sometimes make large holes for the stitching and that could cause the stitches to become misaligned. In order to remedy this potential problem a new practice was introduced which involved making square grooves into the *titura* where the stitching should go to assure that they align properly to form a square. Some Poskim welcomed the innovation since this assured compliance with the requirement that the stitches must be square. Other Poskim, however, opposed the practice since there is no reason to innovate new practices that were not followed by previous generations (עי פסקי תשובות אות ס"ד).

is the amount is insignificant if it appears square to the naked eye."

תשובות והנהגות, ח"ב, סי' כ"א

Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, shlit"a, asked Rav Elyashiv, zt"l, a similar question. "What is the precise measurement for merubah? Is up to half a millimeter of error acceptable? How about a millimeter? If it is according to how it appears to the naked eye, is this the eye of an expert or that of a layman?"

Rav Eliyashiv replied, "The minimum requirement is that it appear merubah to most people. Nevertheless, one should try to make it as square as he can."

ברכי נפשי, ח"א, ע' תשכ"ט

When Rav Sternbuch asked this question to the Brisker Rav he ruled similarly and explained the reason why. Rav Sternbuch recalled, "I heard from the Brisker Rav that one must do his utmost to make the *tefillin* as square as possible. He brought from Bechoros 17, 'Hashem said to do. When we do our utmost, He is pleased.' We see from here that one must do as much as he can."

תשובות והנהגות, שם

Stories to Share

"One Must Do As Much As He Can"

ש"ע סי' ל"ב, ל"ח: "הלכה למשה מסיני שיהיו מרובעות..."

On today's amud we find that *tefillin* must be "merubaos"-square. A certain manufacturer of *batim* wondered what the exact parameters of "merubaos" are.

When Rav Moshe Stermbuch, shlit"a, asked the Chazon Ish about this, he replied that it depends. "There is no exact measurement. If it appears to the naked eye to be merubah, it is kosher. If not, not."

Rav Sternbuch, explains, "This is clear from the Biur Halachah in 32:39. There we find that a small degree of inaccuracy at the edges does not make it insufficiently square, since it is no different than the altar. Although the altar is also required to be square, if it is missing up to a olive's-girth at the edge it is still considered to be an insignificant amount. According to the Chazon Ish, one tells