

## Overview

### Siman 32 Seif 40:

It is a *mitzvah* for the outside of one's *batim* to be black. The groove between one compartment and the next should descend all the way down to the stitches but if it does not go that deep it is valid but the groove must be recognizable so that one can easily see the four compartments.

- ❖ Shulchan Aruch's language implies that black *batim* are not essential but there are Poskim who are stringent and contend that it is essential. (M.B. 184)
- ❖ It is preferable for the *batim* to be the color black but without any substance and using a material that is black but could be peeled off is invalid. (M.B. 185)
- ❖ If the separate compartments are not discernable from the outside it is invalid. (M.B. 187)
- ❖ A simple scratch on the outside of the compartments is insufficient because there must be a real separation between the compartments. (M.B. 188)

### Siman 32 Seif 41:

There is no measurement for the length, width or height of one's *batim*.

- ❖ One should make an effort to comply with the Poskim who maintain that the *batim*, including the *titura* should not be less than two fingerbreadths by two fingerbreadths. (M.B. 189)

## Stories to Share

### "I Have Not Changed"

ש"ע ס' ל"ב, מ': "עור הבתים מצוה לעשותו שחור..."

A certain *sofer* wondered why people are not careful to color the bottom of the tefillin. After all, we find on today's amud that it is a *mitzvah* for the *sofer* to blacken the *batim*. Why not blacken the bottom, then? According to the Vilna Gaon, blackening the *batim* is a *halachah* l'Moshe miSinai, and so the *sofer's* question seemed even stronger. And even if there was no necessity to blacken the *batim*, he wondered why no one is careful to blacken the bottom in any case. After all, the Rambam requires one to blacken the inside of the straps. Doesn't that show that one should blacken the bottom of the *batim* as well?

When this query reached Rav Shamai Kehas Gross, shlit"a, he easily explained why we never find that *sofrim* blackened the bottom of the *batim*. "Quite simply, *soferim* are not careful since the bottom of the box comes into contact with the head and arm. If it were to be blackened this could not last long, due to being in contact with sweat which removes such coloration.

## Halacha Highlight

### Coloring the *batim* black

Shulchan Aruch Siman 32 Seif 40

עור הבתים מצוה לעשותו שחור

It is a *mitzvah* to color the *batim* black

The Gemara Menachos (35a) teaches that according to *Halacha* L'Moshe M'Sinai the *retzuos* on one's *tefillin* must be black. Rambam (פי"ג מה"ל תפילין הי"ד) first writes that according to *Halacha* L'Moshe M'Sinai one's *retzuos* must be black and at the end of that *halacha* he relates that it is a beautification for one's entire *tefillin* to be black. Since Rambam's presentation of these halachos clearly indicate that coloring one's *batim* black is only to beautify them, it implies that it is not essential. Tosafos (שם ד"ה רצועות) also writes that there are people who make their *tefillin* from white leather since it is only the *retzuos* that must be black. Mordechai (ע"ב מהספר) (ה"ל תפילין דף י"ג) maintains that *Halacha* L'Moshe M'Sinai requires that one's *batim* should be black just as one's *retzuos*. Tosafos in another place (Shabbos 28b ד"ה תפילין) also subscribes to this position. Bach rules that it is essential that one's *batim* are black and it is only if one has no alternative may he rely on those Poskim who do not require that one's *batim* be black. Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק קפ"ד) also mentions the position that *Halacha* L'Moshe M'Sinai requires one's *batim* to be black and he also writes that when possible one should be stringent.

Poskim (ע"י פסקי תשובות אות ס"ה) write that if one glances at his *tefillin* and they appear black they are valid and one may even recite the *beracha* on them even if one finds white dots upon a more careful examination. Some Poskim even maintain that as long as the majority is black they are valid but they should be repaired as quickly as possible. There are Poskim who write that before painting one's *batim* one should declare that he is doing so for the sake of the sanctity of *tefillin*. Similarly, when one notices that some of the paint has faded or come off one should declare his intent to touch up the color for the sake of the sanctity of *tefillin*.

"But there is an important *chumrah* when coloring the boxes according to the opinion that this blackening is a *halachah* l'Moshe miSinai and the *batim* must be colored l'shem kedushas tefillin, just like tefillin straps. But regarding *batim*, at least, even if one forgot to color them *lishmah* he can recolor *lishmah* and it will help.

ע"י בה"ל, ס' ל"ג, ד"ה ומיהו בדיעבד

"I will just conclude with the words of the Eliyahu Rabbah explaining the purpose of blackening tefillin: 'This hints to the absolute unity of Hashem. Just like black is its own color that is not changed when added to another color, the same is true regarding Hakadosh Boruch Hu. As the verse states, 'I am Hashem, I have not changed.'"

אורח כהלכה, ע' נ"ה