מה. לאחר מכן לוקח החוט הארוך וכורך סביב שבעת החוטים שבע פעמים [תמונה ע"ד], ולאחר מכן קושר ארבעת החוטים שבצד אחד עם ארבעת החוטים שבצד השני, בשני קשרים זה על גבי זה. [תמונה ע"ו.א-ב].

ולאחר מכן שוב כורך את החוט הארוך שמונה פעמים סביב שבעת החוטים [תמונה ע"ו.ג], ושוב קושר שני קשרים זה על גבי זה. ושוב כורך החוט הארוך אחר עשר פעמים, וקושר שני קשרים זה על גבי זה. ושוב כורך החוט הארוך שלשה עשר פעמים, וקושר שני קשרים זה על גבי זה.

נמצא שהשלים, חמשה קשרים כפולים, וארבעה אוירים ביניהם מלאים כריכות, שלשים ותשע כריכות. שבע, שמונה, אחד עשרה, עולה מנין שם ה'. ועוד שלש עשרה מנין 'אחד', עולה שלשים ותשע, כמנין "ה' אחד". [תמונה ע"ז]. [ראה ש"ע סעיף יד, ובמשנ"ב ס"ק ע, ובכה"ח ס"ק מז]

Day 69

Winding the longer strand

45) After tying the first two overhand knots, the one especially long strand is used to wind seven coils around the seven other strands. (Illustration № 74) Then, the two groups of four strands are once again tied into two overhand knots. (Illustration № 76a, b)

After this, the long strand is wound eight coils around the seven other strands, (Illustration № 76c) followed again by two overhand knots. Then it is wound eleven coils, followed by another two overhand knots, and finally it is wound thirteen coils and the two groups are tied in two final overhand knots.

The resulting tassel consists of five pairs of two overhand knots separated by groups of seven, eight, eleven and thirteen coils, for a total of thirty nine coils. This number equals the numerical value of God's Name (26) plus that of the word *ehad* (13), representing the concept of, "There is but one God."[142] (Illustration № 77)

142. Significance of the number of knots and loops

A tzitzit tassel consists of two sections: the *gedil*, which is the section with the strands knotted together with one strand wound in loops around the others, and the *anaf*, which is the section of strands that hang loosely, independent of one another. It is important to be aware of which elements are necessary by Torah law, which are required by our Sages and which are based on common custom.

Knotting: The Torah requires the strands to be knotted together and attached to the garment, as our Sages taught (*Menahot* 39a): Since the Torah (*Devarim* 22:11, 12) juxtaposed the prohibition against wearing *sha'atnez* with the mitzvah of wearing tzitzit, this defines the mitzvah of placing tzitzit tassels on one's garment. Just as a mixture of wool and linen is forbidden only if they are knotted together, the tassel must likewise be knotted onto the garment. Wool and linen become *sha'atnez* only if they tied together with a secure knot, and therefore the mitzvah of tzitzit demands that the tassels be tied onto the garment with such a knot.

***Gedil*:** Our Sages taught (*Menahot* 39a) that a section of the tzitzit strands must be tied with knots and wound together. They explained that this is the meaning of the Torah's term *gedilim* (*Devarim* 22:12).

***Anaf*:** Our Sages taught (*Menahot* 42a) that the tzitzit tassel must have a section of loose strands hanging independent of one another. They explained that this is the meaning of the word tzitzit, as we find in the verse, "וַיִּקָּחֵנִי בְּצִיצֹת רֹאשִׁי" – He took me by the locks of my hair." To see a full explanation of the definition of the term tzitzit, see the preface to *Siman* 8.

In summary, the Torah requires that tzitzit tassels have one strand wound into loops around the others, that each tassel be tied with two overhand knots, and that the strands hang loose below the knotted section.

Our Sages instituted: The Torah does not specify how long each tassel must be. Even if someone would form a *gedil* by winding one strand around the others to form only three loops and then tying them into two overhand knots, it would satisfy the Torah requirement of *gedil*. Our Sages, however, instituted a rule that the tassel must be one third *gedil* and two thirds *anaf*, since this balance beautifies the mitzvah. Since the tassel is supposed to be twelve *godalim* long, the *gedil* must be four *godalim* long while the the *anaf*

מו. יש נוהגים בטלית קטן לכרוך החוליות כמנין הוי״ה, באופן שכורכים עשר חוליות, ואחר כך חמש, ואחר כך שש, ואחר כך חמש. [תמונה ע״ח]. [כה״ח פלאג׳י סי׳ י אות ד]. ומנהגינו לעשות מנין חשבון ט״ל הן

Winding 10, 5, 6, 5

46) There is an alternative custom to wind the strand a total of twenty-six coils, equaling the value of God's Name. The sections of coils represent the four letters, the first consisting of ten coils (*yod*), followed by a section of five (*he*), then of six (*vav*) and finally by another five (*he*). (Illustration №78) This custom is practiced

is eight *godalim* long. This was explained above in halakha 21.

Winding coils: As mentioned just above, the Torah requires only that one strand be wound three coils around the others. However, such a *gedil* would not be four *godalim* long. Therefore, our Sages instituted a rule demanding a greater number of coils and knots.

There are several customs regarding the number of coils and knots on the *gedil*. Rambam's instructions are (*Hilkhot Tzitzit* 1:7, 8) to "take one of the white strands and wind it once around the others. Then one takes the strand that is dyed *tekhelet* and wind it twice around the others, and after that the strands are tied with two overhand knots. This group of three coils is called *hulya*. After forming this first *hulya*, an empty space is left along the length of the tassel. The second *hulya* is then formed, this time with the *tekhelet* strand wound all three coils. After leaving another space, the third *hulya* is formed, and this is repeated a number of times. When forming the final *hulya*, the *tekhelet* strand is wound twice around the others and then the final coil is made with a white strand. How many *hulyot* should be formed on a tassel? No less than seven, but no more than thirteen. This is the ideal way to fulfill the mitzvah of tzitzit."

The custom of many Yemenite Jews follows Rambam's instructions. Although we have no *tekhelet*, they form seven such *hulyot*, with each one having three coils. The responsa *Olat Yitzhak* Ratzabi (Vol. I, #4) discusses the Yemenite custom at length.

The common custom among most Sefardic and Ashkenazic communities is to tie five pairs of overhand knots on each tassel. Maran wrote in the *Shulhan Arukh* to wind one strand forty loops around the others (7+9+11+13). The more common custom, however, is to follow the Arizal's instructions and wind thirty-nine loops (7+8+11+13).

All these systems are based on custom. The basic halakhic requirement is to wind one strand three loops around the others and to tie two overhand knots, and any tassel that consists of this minimal *gedil* is kosher. The tallit may be worn and one may recite the blessing for the mitzvah on this tallit. Based on this, the *Magen Avraham* (11:19) and the *Mishna Berura* (11:66) ruled that if someone is pressed for time (for example, it is Friday afternoon shortly before sunset) he may form tzitzit tassels with this basic *gedil* and wear the tallit. On another occasion, when he has more time, he should fashion the tassels according to his custom so that the tassels are one-third *gedil* and two-thirds *petil*. If he fails to do this even when he has the time, he is guilty of disobeying our Sages' rules. The *Mishna Berura* added that when forming these minimal tassels, it is best to begin with two overhand knots and then wind three loops and tie two more overhand knots. This is because some *Poskim* ruled that the first knots are the actual Torah requirement. See more in the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (11:41, 42).

Thirty-nine coils

Maran wrote in the *Shulhan Arukh* to wind the strand in groups of seven, nine, eleven and thirteen coils, totaling forty. He explained that this system likewise represents the words, "There is but one God." The Arizal, however, instructed his followers to use the formula given here. See the *Mishna Berura* (11:70) and the *Kaf Hahayim* (11:47).

Harav Shelomo Luria (*Yam Shel Shelomo* on *Yevamot* 1:3) wrote that this custom is alluded to in the verse (*Yeshayahu* 26:19), "כִּי טַל אורות טַלֶּיךָ – Your dew is the dew of lights." The word *talekha* refers to a tallit, while the word *tal* has the numerical value of thirty nine. The word *orot* (when spelled with two letters *vav*) has the numerical value of 613, the total number of mitzvot in the Torah. The numerical value of the word *tzitzit* (when spelled with two letters *yod*) is 600, and by adding 5 for the knots and eight for the strands in each tassel, we again come to a total of 613.

The *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Lekh Lekha* halakha 1) offered this verse to represent the common custom: "תֵּן חֵלֶק לְשִׁבְעָה וְגַם לִשְׁמוֹנָה – give a portion to seven and likewise to eight" (*Kohelet* 11:2). We form a section with seven loops and one with eight loops. The words *leshiv'a* and *lishmona* together consist of eleven letters, and the words *ten helek leshiv'a vegam* consist of thirteen letters.

בטלית קטן והן בטלית גדול, שכך משמע מסתמיות דברי האר״י. [כה״ח סופר ס״ק מז, וכ״מ בילקו״י מהדו״ק עמ׳ כד].
אולם רבים נהגו כמנהג הראשון, שבטלית קטן עושים לפי חשבון יהו״ה.
ומכל מקום, ודאי שאין בהתרת הכריכות מנין הוי״ה, משום איסור מחיקת ה׳. [באו״ח פ׳ לך לך ה״ח, כה״ח סופר ס״ק מח. ועי׳ לב חיים ח״א סו״ס צד]

only on the *tallit katan*. Our custom, however, is to wind thirty-nine revolutions on both the *tallit katan* and the *tallit gadol*, since that appears to be the intention of the Arizal's instructions. Nevertheless, the other custom is valid and is practiced by many.[143]

If someone follows the alternate custom, it is nevertheless permissible to unravel the revolutions if this is desired. It is not considered to be an act forbidden as if one is erasing God's Name.[144]

143. Harav Yaakov Castro (11:14) wrote: "Our custom is to wind the loops to represent the four letters of God's Name." The *Magen Avraham* (11:22) cited the *Lehem Hamudot* testifying that the tzitzit of Harav Shelomo Molkho were tied in this manner as well.

Harav HIDA (*Birke Yosef* 11:9) wrote that "the majority of people tie their tzitzit with a total of twenty-six loops, representing God's Name. Those who are particular to perform the mitzvah in the ideal manner, however, wind thirty-nine loops, following the Arizal's instructions." It appears from this testimony that most people wound twenty-six loops on both the *tallit gadol* and *tallit katan*.

The *Kisse Eliyahu* (cited in the *Kaf Hahayim* Palachi 10:4) stated that the proper custom is to wind thirty nine on the *tallit gadol* and twenty six on the *tallit katan*. The *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (11:47) insisted that there is no difference between the *tallit gadol* and *tallit katan*. One should wind thirty-nine loops on both, as is apparent from the Arizal's instructions.

In practice

The *Or Letziyon* (Vol. II, page 279) ruled that one may follow either custom, but he recommended winding thirty-nine loops on both the *tallit gadol* and *tallit katan*. The *Yalkut Yosef* (first edition, page 24) states: "Our custom is to wind thirty-nine loops, but if one does not have strands that are long enough one may follow the custom of tying twenty six." Nevertheless, he admitted afterward that most people wind thirty-nine loops, following the testimony of Harav HIDA, and this is what he recommended. Both the *Yalkut Yosef* (page 155) and the *Halakha Berura* (page 271) recommended the custom of winding thirty nine, even on the *tallit katan*.

The *tallit gadol* of Maran the Rishon Letziyon was fashioned with thirty-nine loops, but his *tallit katan* was fashioned with twenty-six. The person who tied the tzitzit for him explained that before he began his work he told Maran the Rishon Letziyon that he plans to wind twenty-six loops, and Maran the Rishon Letziyon did not complain. It could be that Maran the Rishon Letziyon did not wish to insist on bothering the young man to do the extra work of winding thirty nine loops.

Likewise, it is known that the *tallit katan* of Harav Shalom Cohen, Rosh Yeshivat Porat Yosef, has twenty-six loops. According to the introduction to the *Ish Matzli'ah* edition of *Mishna Berura*, this was likewise the custom of Harav Shalom Messas.

144. This is the ruling of the responsa *Bet Yehuda* Ayash (#25). He explained that the prohibition against erasing God's Name applies only to erasing the actual letters of the Name. In this case, the letters are represented only symbolically by the number of loops on the tassel. Unwinding the loops is not considered erasing the Name. This ruling is cited in the *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Lekh Lekha* halakha 8), in *Mikabtze'el* (*parashat Lekh Lekha* halakha 15), the *Petah Hadevir* (15:1), the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (11:48) and the *Yalkut Yosef* (first edition, footnote on page 23).

The *Lev Hayim* (Vol. I, #94) commented that the issue of erasing God's Name when unwinding tzitzit tassels applies even if the tassel was formed with thirty-nine loops. Although the numbers of loops in each group do not equal the value of the letters in the Name, the total number still symbolizes the Name. He added that although it is not actually forbidden to unwind the tassel, it is better to cut it off the garment and leave the loops intact.