ב. שיעור זה של הטלית קטן, הוא מלבד הנקב של בית הצואר. כלומר, שצריך שיהיה שיעור הטלית אמה מלפניו ואמה מלאחריו מלבד הנקב, וחצי אמה מכל צד ברוחב הטלית שעל כל כתף. [תמונה צ"ד]

[הליכו"ע שם]

The opening for one s head

2) The measurements given in the previous halakha do not count the space through which one places one's head. There must be the measure of one square cubit in front of the person and one square cubit behind him. Also, the part of the tallit resting on his shoulders should be a half-cubit wide on each shoulder.[220] (Illustration №94)

Yalkut Yosef (page 208) concurred with this ruling, as long as the *tallit katan* has the proper measurement and the tzitzit strands have been examined and found intact. See above in *Siman* 8:24.

220. The *Mishna Berura* (16:4) and other *Aḥaronim* cited Harav Zalman's prayer book ruling that a *tallit katan* must be at least two cubits long, not counting the opening through which the wearer's head protrudes. That is, it must be at least one cubit long in front of the opening and one cubit long behind the opening. Maran the Rishon Letziyon (*Halikhot Olam* Vol. I, page 10) concurred with this.

A *tallit katan's* width

The Mahari"l (responsa *Heḥadashot* #4) ruled that the shoulders of a *tallit katan* must be wide. If the empty space is greater than the shoulders' width, they will not count at all. At first reading, this implies that the total width of the two shoulders must be greater than the width of the opening. The *Maḥatzit Hashekel* and the *Petaḥ Hadevir*, however, explained that it means simply that the shoulders must be wide enough so that the entire tallit is considered one garment and not two pieces connected by two shoulder straps. According to this interpretation, the *Kaf Haḥayim* Sofer (16:6) suggested that it should be sufficient if each shoulder is three fingerbreadths, since that is the minimum size of a "garment."

The *Ḥazon Ish* (*O.Ḥ.* 2:9) interpreted the Mahari"l's words according to their simple meaning. His instructions (*Kovetz Igrot* Vol. I, #10) are that, considered that a cubit is 60 centimeters according to his measuring system, the opening must be no more than 18 centimeters wide so that each shoulder will be at least 21 centimeters wide. According to the measuring system we follow, a cubit is 48 centimeters, and so the opening must be no wider than 14 centimeters so that each shoulder will be at least 17 centimeters wide. (Illustration №94)

Maran the Rishon Letziyon did not elaborate, and it appears from his words that the two shoulders must equal 48 centimeters besides the width of the opening. If this is what he means, it is a stringency uncharacteristic of his rulings. Even the *Mishna Berura*, who ruled stringently that the opening cannot count toward the length of the *tallit katan*, ruled quite leniently regarding its width, and each shoulder can be as narrow as three fingerbreadths. The *Ḥazon Ish* ruled that the shoulders must be wider, but he agreed that the opening does count as part of the width.

It must be, therefore, that Maran the Rishon Letziyon meant only that the two shoulders together with the opening must equal a cubit. A careful reading of his words reveals that although he stated that the opening cannot count as part of the length, he did not state that the opening cannot count as part of the width.

The slit extending the opening

The average woolen *tallit katan* manufactured today has an oblong opening for the head extended by a slit on the front side to make it easier to put on. It is likely that the slit-open section counts toward the length of the garment since none of the material is missing along that section; it is only slit in half. Indeed, this is the ruling of the *Eshel Avraham* Butchatch, cited in the *Piske Teshuvot* (footnote 17). This is likewise implied in the words of Harav Zalman in his prayer book. Nevertheless, the *Ḥazon Ish* had a button and buttonhole fashioned at the top of the slit in his *tallit katan*. In practice, he never bothered to button up the slit, but the fact that it was possible made it as if the slit was officially closed. (Illustration №94)

סימן יז

מי הם החייבים בציצית

א. סומא חייב בציצית. [ראה ש"ע סי' יז ס"א], ואף רשאי לברך עליה, דבמקום מנהג לא אמרינן סב"ל. [באו"ח פ' לך לך הט"ו, משנ"ב ס"ק א, כה"ח ס"ק ב, יבי"א ח"ה סו"ס מב, ח"ט סי' צח אות יט]

Siman 17

Who Is Obligated in the Mitzvah of Tzitzit

Blind men

1) Blind men are obligated in the mitzvah of tzitzit[222] and they may recite the blessing over their tallitot as well. Since this is the common custom, the principle of *safek berakhot lehakel* does not apply.[223]

222. The Talmud (*Menaḥot* 43a) teaches that a garment designated for nighttime wear is exempt from the mitzvah of tzitzit since the Torah states (*Bemidbar* 15:39), "וּרְאִיתֶם אוֹתוֹ – when you will see it." It then challenges this inference, since it is possible to say that the verse means to exempt blind men from the mitzvah. The Talmud then claims that blind men cannot be exempted since they are included by the Torah's statement (*Devarim* 22:12), "אֲשֶׁר תְּכַסֶּה בָּהּ – with which you cover yourself." Therefore, the former verse must come to exclude nighttime garments. But, the Talmud counters, maybe it is the opposite, excluding blind men and including nighttime garments? Its conclusion is that it makes more sense to include blind men since other people can see the blind man's garments, but no one can see a garment in the darkness of night.

Maran in the *Bet Yosef* pointed out that the verse of "with which you cover yourself" is needed to include garments with five or more corners, as explained above in the footnote to *Siman* 10:1. He reconciled this, explaining that this halakha is derived from the term "אֲשֶׁר – with which" and blind men are included by the term "you cover yourself."

223. The responsa *Lev Ḥayim* Palachi (Vol. I, #100) cited a responsum of the *Ge'onim* (*Sha'are Teshuva* #156) stating that Rav Sheshna Ga'on ruled that blind men are exempt from the mitzvah of tzitzit. Based on this, he ruled that although we follow the ruling of Maran that blind men are obligated to fulfill the mitzvah of tzitzit, they should not recite the blessing over this mitzvah, following the principle of *safek berakhot lehakel*.

Nevertheless, the responsa *Rav Pe'alim* (Vol. II, #17) proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that the common custom is that blind men recite the blessing over a tallit, overriding the principle of *safek berakhot lehakel*. Harav Palachi himself subscribes to this rule, as evidenced in his *Mo'ed Lekhol Ḥai* (10:48). The *Kaf Haḥayim* Sofer (17:2) and responsa *Yabia Omer* (Vol. IX, #98:19) concurred that the common custom is that blind men recite this blessing. Although Ribbi Yehuda taught that blind people are exempt from all the mitzvot, the responsa *Ḥazon Ovadya* (Vol. I, #20), repeated in *Ma'or Yisrael* (comment to *Eruvin* 96b) asserted that the halakha does not follow his opinion. In fact, a blind man can perform mitzvot on behalf of others as well.

In *sefer Mikabtze'el*, Harav Yosef Ḥayim offered another reason for permitting blind men to recite the blessing. If we are always going to refrain from reciting the required blessing because of the possibility that the halakha follows a variant opinion, we would hardly ever be able to recite the blessing on the mitzvot we perform. Almost every situation regarding the mitzvot is subject to some disagreement among the *Poskim*. For example, we follow the halakha that if someone forgets and uses he expression of *ha'El hakadosh* instead of *haMelekh hakadosh* during the Ten Days of *Teshuva*, the *Amida* must be repeated. Even this halakha is not accepted unanimously among the *Poskim* and yet we follow it and repeat the blessings. In this case as well, since the mainstream *Poskim* agreed that blind men are obligated to perform the mitzvah of tzitzit, it is permissible to recite the blessing, ostensibly because this has become the common custom.

ב. נשים פטורות ממצות ציצית, מפני שהיא מצות עשה שהזמן גרמא. [ש"ע סי' יז ס"ב]. ואם לבשה ציצית אסור לה לברך עליו. [ראה יביע"א ח"א סי' לט-מב]

ומכל מקום אין לנשים לחייב עצמן במצות ציצית כלל אפילו בלי ברכה, משום דמיחזי כיוהרא. [רמ"א שם]. ויש אומרים שיש בזה גם חשש משום לא יהיה כלי גבר על אשה [תרגום יונתן ולבוש]. וראוי למונען

Women

2) Women are exempt from the mitzvah of tzitzit since it is a mitzvah that does not apply at all times.[224] If a woman does wear a garment with tzitzit attached to it, she may not recite the blessing.[225]

Furthermore, it is forbidden for a woman to wear a garment with tzitzit attached even if she does not recite the blessing since it displays haughtiness on her part. Some *Poskim* added that any garment with tzitzit attached to it is automatically considered a male

Is it better to listen to someone else reciting the blessing?

The *Ben Ish Ḥai* added that we cannot expect a blind man to find someone else who will recite the blessing over a tallit out loud on his behalf. Even if he could occasionally do this, it is improbable that circumstances will permit it on a daily basis.

In *Sefer Mikabtze'el*, however, Harav Yosef Ḥayim recommended that a blind man find someone who will recite the blessing for him every day if possible, and when it is impossible he may recite the blessing for himself. Obviously, the author changed his mind about this ruling, but it is impossible to determine which ruling came first and which one is his final decision. Nonetheless, logic dictates that the ruling found in the *Ben Ish Ḥai*, in this case, is the final word.

Examining the tzitzit

The *Mishna Berura* (17:1) and the *Kaf Haḥayim* Sofer (17:2) recommended that a blind man examine his tzitzit every day with his fingers, unless he can ask a sighted person to examine them for him. This stringency is probably based on the fact that these *Aḥaronim* ruled that the blind man recites the blessing on his tallit. According to the *Lev Ḥayim*, however, a blind man should not recite this blessing. If so there should not be any obligation to examine the tzitzit as long as it is known that they had previously been kosher. The rule is, in fact, that if someone asks another person to recite the blessing on his behalf and then he discovers that his tzitzit are not kosher, he is guilty of reciting a blessing in vain even though he did not recite the blessing himself. Therefore, before the blessing is recited he should examine the tzitzit. See responsa *Yabia Omer* (Vol. VIII, #24). Nevertheless, the opinion of Maran the Rishon Letziyon is that it is not absolutely necessary to examine the tzitzit even if one plans to recite the blessing, as explained above in *Siman* 8:36.

224. The mitzvah of tzitzit is time-limited since there is no mitzvah of tzitzit at night, as explained below in *Siman* 18. Women are exempt from most mitzvot that are time-limited. Our Sages (*Kiddushin* 34a) deduced this general rule through a number of steps. First of all, the Torah teaches that only men are obligated in the mitzvah of Torah study, since the verse states (*Devarim* 6:7), "וְלִמַּדְתֶּם אוֹתָם אֶת בְּנֵיכֶם – Teach them to your sons" and not to your daughters. Since the very next verse speaks of the mitzvah of tefillin, it is connected to the mitzvah of Torah study. This teaches us that women are exempt from the mitzvah of tefillin. The mitzvah of tefillin, in turn, is connected to all the Torah's mitzvot, since the Torah tells us to put on tefillin "לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת ה' בְּפִיךָ – so that God's Torah will be on your lips" (*Shemot* 13:9). Thus, just as women are exempt from the time-limited mitzvah of tefillin, they are exempt from all mitzvot that are time-limited. See the *Mishna Berura* (17:3).

225. The *Arba'a Turim* cited Rambam ruling that if a woman wears a tallit with tzitzit she may not recite the blessing over it since the general rule is that a woman may not recite a blessing for performing a mitzvah if she is technically exempt from performing it. Rabbenu Tam ruled that even though women are exempt from certain mitzvot they may recite the blessings if they choose to perform them. He agreed, however, that it is best that they refrain from reciting the blessing.

Sefardic Jews definitely follow Rambam's ruling and women may not the blessings for mitzvot that they are not obligated to perform. Maran the Rishon Letziyon dealt with this issue in great length in responsa *Yabia Omer* (Vol. I, #39-42). We must follow the ruling of the *Shulḥan Arukh*, which concurs with that of Rambam. Therefore, women may not recite a blessing when performing the mitzvah of sukkah, *lulav* or tzitzit.