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.

מזה בפרט בזמן הזה, כאשר הרפורמים עוקרי הדת מנהיגים כן בקהילותיהם. [ראה ילקו"י עמ' רכט, הלכה ברורה עמ' שנט]

garment, and the Torah forbids women to wear a male garment. In our times it is even more important for women to refrain from this practice since it is identified with the Reform movement.[226]

Curiously, the *Arba'a Turim* ruled that Ashkenazic women may not recite the blessing for the mitzvah of tzitzit. The *Bayit Hadash* pointed out that this seems to contradict the ruling in *Siman* 589 that Ashkenazic women may recite the blessing for the mitzvah of shofar. He reconciled this, explaining that the longstanding custom is for women to fulfill the mitzvah of shofar, and for Ashkenazic women to recite the blessing for it. Therefore, we allow them to continue this tradition. It is quite unusual, however, for a woman to perform the mitzvah of tzitzit. There is no tradition for women to perform it and only exceptional women, like Mikhal the daughter of King Sha'ul who even fulfilled the mitzvah of tefillin, as related in *Eruvin* (96b), fulfilled the mitzvah of tzitzit. Therefore, if a woman asks whether she may perform it and recite the blessing, she should be told to avoid controversial halakhot and refrain from reciting the blessing.

The *Artzot Hahayim* (17:14) offered another reconciliation of these two halakhot. Actually, he explained, even men are not obligated to perform the mitzvah of tzitzit. A man could choose never to wear a four-cornered garment and he would not be guilty of any sin for not wearing tzitzit. Therefore, women's connection with this mitzvah is that much weaker and they must not recite the blessing even if they choose to fulfill the mitzvah of tzitzit. The mitzvah of shofar, on the other hand, is an absolute obligation for men. Therefore, it is sensible for women to perform this mitzvah and to recite the blessing. Of course, this discussion is pertinent to Ashkenazic women. For Sefardic women the halakha is clear that she may never recite the blessing for any of those mitzvot from which women are exempt.

226. The *Levush* (17:2) explained that women must not wear a tallit since it is an obligation for men only, and as such a tallit is strictly a male garment. The Torah forbids women to wear men's garments or for men to wear women's garments. Although Mikhal, the daughter of King Sha'ul, wore tefillin, her garments were distinctively those of a princess and could not be mistaken for a man's garment. The garments worn by ordinary women are not so distinctly female garments, and if tzitzit are attached to them they appear to be men's garments.

The *Eliya Rabba* took issue with the *Levush's* assertion that a woman wearing a tallit violates the prohibition of wearing a man's garment, since that prohibition applies only when the woman wears the garment to adorn herself, as explained in the *Shulhan Arukh* (*Y.D.* 182). The *Artzot Hahayim*, however, pointed out that the *Targum Yonatan* on this verse (*Devarim* 22:5) declaring this prohibition states openly that the Torah forbids a woman from wearing tzitzit or tefillin since these are strictly men's items. This coincides with the Targum of Yonatan ben Uziel on *Shofetim* (5) relating that Ya'el killed Sisera by driving a spike through his head. The Targum adds that she did not use a sword or spear since those weapons are wielded strictly by men and it was forbidden for a woman to use them. We can deduce from this that male garments are forbidden for women even if they are not worn as adornments.

The responsa *Rav Pe'alim* (Vol. I, #23) stated that the rule is to protest and prevent women from performing the mitzvot of tzitzit or tefillin since such behavior is altogether not feminine. Although Mikhal the daughter of King Sha'ul performed the mitzvah of tefillin and the Torah scholars of her day did not protest, the mitzvah of tzitzit is different since it involves wearing a garment that is clearly a man's attire. (According to this, Mikhal wore tefillin but not a tallit, unlike the assumption of the *Levush*.) See more about this subject in the *Halakha Berura* (page 360) and the *Yalkut Yosef* (page 230). The *Yalkut Yosef* (footnote on page 231) added that even if there are *Poskim* who technically permit women to perform the mitzvah of tzitzit, they would agree in our times that it is forbidden since this has become a symbol of the Reform Movement and its struggle against Torah Judaism. Furthermore, the *Rav Pe'alim* declared that it is incorrect according to the Kabbalah for women to wear tzitzit.