שלא יגררו הציציות בקרקע

יג. יזהר כשלובש טלית גדול, שלא יהיו נגררים הציציות על גבי קרקע משום בזיון מצוה, וכל שכן כשהוא מהלך. [עוד יוסף חי פ' לך לך ה"ג. מקבציאל שם הי"ט. וע"ע באי"ח שם הי"ט]

Day 92

Tzitzit Dragging on the Ground

Tzitzit on the floor

13) When wearing a *tallit gadol*, it is important to take care that the tzitzit are not dragging on the floor, especially while one is walking.[271]

serve the stringency of not sleeping while wearing a tallit, but one should refrain from using a non-Jewish laundress. The *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (21:17) cited a number of *Aharonim* who concurred with this.

The *Eliya Rabba* (21:5), however, noted that the *Levush* made no mention of the stringency not to use a non-Jewish laundress. Apparently, he understood from Rama that one may ignore both the stringencies he mentioned. Harav Zalman likewise ruled (21:4) that one may use a non-Jewish laundry.

The *Kaf Hahayim* concluded that anyone who practices this stringency will receive a special blessing from Heaven, but if it is difficult one may rely on the lenient opinion. Sefardic Jews may certainly be lenient since Maran testified that there is no such stringency in practice. Although some *Aharonim* mentioned that the custom in Morocco at one time was to refrain from using non-Jewish laundresses, nowadays no one practices this stringency. Besides, the responsa *Kinyan Torah* (Vol. II, #2) and *Shevet Hakehati* (Vol. IV, #19) suggested that this stringency was applicable back in the times when laundering was done by hand, but nowadays when the entire process is automated and the non-Jew does nothing more than press the button, it does not display any contempt for the mitzvah. Although the non-Jew irons the tallit by hand, there is no custom to refrain from this.

Nevertheless, the responsa *Haye Halevi* (Vol. III, #2) ruled that there is a basis for stringency even in modern times. When someone submits his tallit to the dry cleaners and the tallit has stains on it, the workers treat the stains by hand before placing the tallit into the machine. Therefore, one should always use a Jewish-owned dry cleaner. In fact, the *Kinyan Torah* ruled leniently only when the owner is Jewish and his employees are non-Jewish, but if the owner is non-Jewish he agreed that one should be stringent.

According to this logic, it should be permissible to have a tallit cleaned by one's household maid, especially since she uses a washing machine. Of course, this entire discussion is for Ashkenazic Jews who follow the stringencies of the Rama. Sefardic Jews, who follow the rulings of Maran, may be lenient in all cases.

A tallit with its tzitzit removed, and a *tallit katan*

The *Mishna Berura* (21:15) ruled that the custom of refraining from using a non-Jewish laundress applies only to a tallit with its tzitzit attached. If someone would remove the tassels from the tallit, he may then give it to a non-Jewish laundress. Harav Avraham of Butchatch, cited in the *Piske Teshuvot* (21:4), ruled that this stringency does not apply to a *tallit katan* even if its tzitzit are still attached.

271. This halakha is taken from the *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Lekh Lekha* halakha 3) and *Mikabtze'el* (ibid., halakha 19).

Original source

The *Agur* (#6), citing *Hagahot Mordekhi*, states that the Prophet (*Yeshayahu* 14:23) issued a harsh curse for those who allow their tzitzit to drag along the ground. In the very beginning of *parashat Ekev*, Rashi comments that there are people who "trample on mitzvot with their heels." The *Da'at Zekenim* explained that one example of this would be people who allow their tzitzit to be dragged along the ground, of which all too many people are guilty. He also mentioned that the Prophet issued a harsh curse for those who are careless in this matter. It is important, therefore, to always raise one's tzitzit off the ground. All this is cited in the *Bet Yosef*.

The *Magen Avraham's* question

The *Magen Avraham* argued that the *Shulhan Arukh* contradicts itself regarding this halakha, since in *Siman* 23:1 it states that it is forbidden to allow one's tzitzit to drag across the surface of graves since such behavior seems to mock the deceased who can no longer perform the mitzvot. This suggests that it is permissible to allow the tzitzit to drag along the ground anywhere other than a cemetery. Furthermore, the Talmud praises a wealthy man named Ben Tzitzit Hakeset who was famous for having servants hold pillows under his tzitzit as he walked through the street to prevent them from dragging on the ground. It seems from

this that most other people allowed their tzitzit to drag along the ground as they walked about.

To answer these questions, the *Magen Avraham* suggested that the graves were built high above ground level, and the people always held their tzitzit high off the ground so that they would not drag along the ground as they walked, but the tzitzit had to be lifted even higher to avoid dragging them along the graves' surface. Ben Tzitzit Hakeset wore longer garments than other people, and his tzitzit would have dragged along the ground if not for the cushions held underneath them. No one else needed to resort to such measures since their tzitzit did not reach the ground at all.

Only when putting on the tallit

The *Magen Avraham* then offered a second resolution for the contradiction, explaining that it is forbidden to have the tzitzit dragging along the ground only when first putting on the tallit since it appears as if the person purposely put the tallit on in this manner in order to sweep the floor with his tzitzit. Afterward, it is unnecessary to be careful not to allow the tzitzit to drag along the ground as one walks about, except in a cemetery. This explains also why Ben Tzitzit Hakeset's practice was such a novel stringency.

The logic of this distinction might be as follows: If someone puts on his tallit in a manner that allows the tzitzit to drag on the ground, he displays utter disregard for the sanctity of the mitzvah. If he is careful when putting on the tallit not to allow the tzitzit to fall to the ground, but then as he walks along the tzitzit end up dragging on the ground, it does not display such disrespect. It might simply be difficult for him to keep the tzitzit from falling to the ground while he walks.

The *Arukh Hashulhan* seems to have understood the *Magen Avraham* differently. He explained that when putting on the tallit one must be careful not to allow the tzitzit to fall to the ground in deference to the blessing one recites over the mitzvah. Afterward, when one's actions are not connected to the blessing recited previously, it no longer is a problem for the tzitzit to be dragging on the ground.

The wording of the *Shulhan Arukh* – "when putting on a tallit" – suggests that the *Magen Avraham*'s interpretation is correct. On the other hand, the words might mean "while someone is wearing a tallit," referring to all the time it is worn. In fact, it is possible that Maran really meant to say that the halakha applies when putting on a tallit, but that it applies afterward as well. Maran might have wanted to emphasize that it is forbidden to have the tzitzit dragging on the ground even while the wearer is standing in one place, and certainly while he is walking. In fact, the *Od Yosef Hai* (*parashat Lekh Lekha* halakha 3) ruled, "One must put on the tallit in such a way that prevents the tzitzit from dragging on the ground. It is even more important to make sure that they do not drag on the ground when one is walking." This, by the way, is diametrically opposed to the ruling of the *Sheyare Kenesset Hagedola* that it is forbidden while walking but permitted while one is seated in one place. Harav Zalman and the *Haye Adam* both ruled that it is forbidden, without specifying how and when, and it appears that they mean that it is forbidden in all situations, concurring with the *Od Yosef Hai*.

Trampling on the tzitzit

The *Ma'amar Mordekhai* (21:4) cited the *Roke'ah* ruling that one must take care not to trample on one's tzitzit since that displays gross disrespect for the mitzvah. Apparently, he ruled that it is permissible to have the tzitzit dragging on the ground, except in a cemetery, as long as one makes sure not to trample on them. According to this, the ruling of the *Agur* not to allow the tzitzit to drag on the ground is no more than a stringency for the devout. Nevertheless, the *Ma'amar Mordekhai* rejected this interpretation.

In a haughty manner

The *Ma'amar Mordekhai* offered another interpretation of the *Agur*. It is forbidden to allow the tzitzit to drag on the ground if it is done in a way that displays haughtiness and pompousness. If it happens unwittingly, it is not forbidden.

It is no more than a stringency

The *Nehar Shalom* (21:2, cited by the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer 21:18 and responsa *Yabia Omer* Vol. IX, #85:2) pointed out that the wording chosen by Maran is "one ought to take care to prevent..." but he did not state that it is absolutely forbidden, and in this way he disagreed with the *Agur*. We might assume that Maran based his lenient ruling on the same proofs with which the *Magen Avraham* challenged the *Agur*.

The *Mekor Hayim* Bachrach and Harav Menahem di Lonzano (*Adi Zahav*) both insisted that it is technically permissible to allow the tzitzit to drag on the floor. Despite the *Agur's* stern warning of punishment for such an offense, we must not believe his words.

The responsa *Kiryat Hana David* (Vol. I, #1) suggested that in the times of the Talmud it was permissible to allow the tzitzit to drag on the ground but not in our days since we have adopted the practice of winding the loops of the tzitzit in numbers (26 or 39) that allude to God's Name.

Regularly or momentarily

The *Nehar Shalom* (cited in the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer 21:18 and responsa *Yabia Omer* Vol. IX, #85:2) also suggested that the act forbidden by the *Agur* is to wear the tallit in such a way that the tzitzit are continuously dragged along the ground. If someone wears his tallit in a manner that usually avoids having the tzitzit drag along the ground, it is okay if they occasionally do drag on the ground, unless he is in a cemetery. The *Arukh Hashulhan* (21:7) likewise ruled that it is alright if the tzitzit occasionally fall and drag along the ground.

Based on the combined leniencies of these *Poskim* and the *Ma'amar Mordekhai* cited above, the *Halakha Berura* (page 402, *Sha'ar Hatziyun* #43) ruled that we can rely on the *Magen Avraham's* ruling that it is forbidden only when one first puts on the tallit but not afterward, and certainly if the tzitzit only occasionally drag along the ground. It does

יד. יקפיד להעלות הטלית על כתפיו, שבאופן זה לא יגררו הציציות על הרצפה. [כמ"ש כה"ח פלאג'י סי' י אות ה, הובא בכה"ח סופר ס"ק יט]. וגם בזה יהיה מסובב במצוות, כמבואר לעיל בסימן ח' הלכה ט"ז.

טו. אם יש אדם לובש טלית, והציציות נדרסים תחת רגליו ואינו מרגיש בזה, צריך שחבירו הרואה אותו יודיענו כדי שיגביה הציצית מתחת רגליו. [עוד יוסף חי פ' לך לך ה"ג, מקבציאל שם הי"ט]

טז. יש מחמירים אף שלא יגררו הציציות על גבי אבנים הקבועות בקרקע. והנזהר בזה תבוא עליו ברכה. ומכל מקום אין לאסור כלל שיגררו הציציות על גבי ספסל או איצטבא.

Lifting tallit on the shoulders

14) One must take care to lift the sides of the tallit over one's shoulders to prevent the tzitzit from dragging on the floor. Another advantage of this is that the tzitzit surround the wearer in this way [with two tassels in front of him and two behind him]. This was explained above in *Siman* 8:16.[272]

Tzitzit underfoot

15) If one person notices another who is unaware that his tzitzit are being trampled underneath his feet, he should notify him so that he will raise his tzitzit off the floor.

Stones protruding above the ground

16) Some people practice the stringency of taking care that their tzitzit are not dragging on stones protruding from the ground [even though no one walks on the surface of those stones]. These people will receive a special blessing from Heaven for their extra care. Nevertheless, there is no basis for stringency to refrain from allowing one's tzitzit to drag on a bench or stone ledge of a building.[273]

---

not appear that the *Aharonim* agreed with this, however. They stated that it is necessary to avoid dragging tzitzit on the ground in all cases.

Why it is forbidden

The *Levush* (21:4) wrote that one must take care that the tzitzit do not drag on the ground since that is disrespectful for the mitzvah. The *Matzat Shimurim* (Unit *Tzitzit*) cited the *Adi Zahav* explaining that the reason for keeping the tzitzit off the ground is to prevent them from becoming trampled upon and damaged. Most likely, the wearer will not be able to repair the torn tzitzit immediately. The two reasons are cited by the *Haye Adam* (11:40, quoted in the *Mishna Berura* 21:18), but the *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Lekh Lekha* halakha 18) cited the *Levush's* reason only.

272. The *Haye Adam* (11:40, cited in the *Mishna Berura* 21:18) instructed people to lift their tzitzit and tuck them into their belts. The *Arukh Hashulhan* (21:7) commented that he had not witnessed any leading Torah scholars following these instructions.

The first source of such instructions is the *Peri Ha'aretz* cited by Harav HIDA (*Birke Yosef* 21:19). Harav HIDA commented that one should make sure to tuck them into the back of one's belt so that one will fulfill the *Shulhan Arukh's* instructions (See above in *Siman* 8:16.) to keep two tzitzit tassels in front and two in back so that one will be surrounded by mitzvot. The *Kaf Hahayim* Palachi (10:5), however, wrote that it is better to raise the tallit higher on one's body to prevent the tzitzit from dragging on the ground. This is likewise the opinion of the *Hesed La'alafim* (8:4), cited in the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (21:19). In fact, Harav Menahem Azarya of Pano (*Asara Ma'amarot*, cited in the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer 21:18) insisted that the tzitzit should be allowed to hang freely from the corners of the tallit, and that it is not correct to tuck them into one's belt.

273. As discussed above, the *Magen Avraham* pointed out that it appears from the Talmud that it is forbidden to allow one's tzitzit to drag on the ground over graves but that it is permissible in other places. The *Sheyare Kenesset Hagedola* resolved this, explaining that it is forbidden to allow the tzitzit to drag on the ground in all places, but it is forbidden to allow them to drag over graves even above the ground on the stones covering the graves. That is, the

יז. אפילו אם האדם יושב, וכנף שבו הציצית נעקם ונעשה תחתיו [והוא יושב עליו], יש בזה בזיון לציציות אם יהיו תחתיו, וצריך להגביהם. אבל גוף הטלית לית לן בה [ומותר לישב עליו]. [עוד יוסף חי שם]

Sitting on tzitzit tassels

17) It is likewise disrespectful to be seated on top of the tzitzit tassels of one's tallit. They must be pulled out from underneath one's bottom. It is permissible to be seated on top of the tallit itself, however.

tombstones are above the ground level, and when someone walks by, even though his tzitzit are raised above the ground they will drag over the tombstones. With this explanation, the challenge of the *Ma'amar Mordekhai* (21:4) is resolved as well.

The *Sheyare Kenesset Hagedola* concluded that, despite his resolution, one should avoid allowing the tzitzit to drag along surfaces such as benches or tables even if they are raised above the ground level. The *Olat Tamid*, however, ruled (21:7) that it is forbidden on the ground only, but it is permissible to allow the tzitzit to drag on a chair or bench. Based on this, the *Halakha Berura* (page 402) concluded that if someone takes care to avoid his tzitzit dragging along a bench or a chair he will receive a special blessing from Heaven.

It is possible, however, that there is a difference between tombstones and a bench. A tombstone is set in the ground and it can be viewed as a raised part of the ground. Dragging the tzitzit on such a surface could be viewed as disrespectful to the mitzvah, but dragging them on a bench does not appear to be disrespectful at all, especially since the tzitzit are not in danger of being trampled upon. In fact, the *Sheyare Kenesset Hagedola* wrote specifically that the tombstones are "set permanently in the ground," and that is why there is room for stringency. In conclusion, it appears that there is basis to avoid allowing the tzitzit to drag along a bench.