קמב. יעשה כל הארבעה בתים של ראש בשווה, שלא יהיה אחד גדול מחבירו (תמונה ס"ה). [רמ"א סל"ט]. והוא למצוה לכתחילה, משום נוי תפילין. [קול יעקב ס"ק קפב], אבל אם לא עשה כן ואחד רחב מחבירו כשר, כל זמן שנשמר ריבוע הבית של ראש. [ראה משנ"ב ס"ק ס"ק קפב]

ריבוע התפירות

קמג. תפירות התפילין של יד ושל ראש צריכות להיות במרובע, בין למעלה ובין למטה (תמונות מ"ד, מ"ה). [ראה ש"ע סל"ט, ומשנ"ב ס"ק קעד וס"ק קעז]

ויש להשגיח לגבי ריבוע התפירה, שלא יעשו נקבים גדולים, כי אז ימשך החוט לצדדין, ועל ידי זה אין התפירות שוות בריבוע, זה נכנס וזה יוצא. [משנ"ב ס"ק קעז]. ומכל מקום אין צריך שחוטי התפירה שבריבוע התפילין יהיו נוגעים בפינות זה בזה, אלא כל שנראים כריבוע כשר. (תמונה ס"ו) [אול"צ ח"א סי' ד, ח"ב עמ' רפג]

Four symmetrical compartments

142) All four compartments of the *tefillin shel rosh* should be symmetric – each compartment should be equally wide, and none should be wider or narrower than the others. (Illustration № 65) This is important for the beauty of the tefillin. If the *bayit* turned out to have some compartments wider than the others, it is still kosher as long as the four compartments together form a perfect square.[121]

Day 36

Square Stitching

Stitches form a square

143) The stitches with which the tefillin *battim* are sewn must form a perfect square on top of the *titura* and a corresponding square on its bottom. (Illustrations № 44 and 45) For this reason, the manufacturer must make sure to drill very small holes for the stitches, for if they are too large, the stitches might zigzag instead of forming straight lines. As long as the stitches form straight lines, the *tefillin* are kosher even though the stitches do not meet at the corners to complete the square.[122] (Illustration № 66)

121. The Rama (32:39) ruled that all four compartments should be of equal width. This is apparently the ruling of the *Shulḥan Arukh* as well, as one may deduce from the halakha in *Siman* 32:14, cited above in halakha 46.

The *Olat Tamid* and Harav Zalman, cited by the *Kol Yaakov* (32:182), explained that by making all four compartments symmetrical, the *bayit* is more beautiful. If this is not done, the *bayit* is still perfectly kosher. The words used by the *Mishna Berura* (32:182), however, suggest that it is not considered perfectly kosher but it may still be used. The *Halakha Berura* (page 426) insisted that the *bayit* is perfectly kosher even according to the *Mishna Berura*, but that he chose the wrong words to explain the halakha.

122. Wide holes for the stitches

The *battim* manufacturer drills twelve holes through the *titura* for the stitches, one in each corner and two on each side. These holes must be positioned in straight lines so that the stitches will form a perfect square, both on the top and the bottom of the *titura*. The *Ḥaye Adam* warned that these holes must not be too large, so that the stitches will follow one another in straight lines. If the stitches zigzag from hole to hole, they do not form a square. Nevertheless, the *Aḥaronim* ruled that as long as the stitches form straight lines, then even if the stitches do not meet at the corners the tefillin are kosher. The *Or Letziyon* (Vol. I, #4) explained that the stitches do not have to form points in the corners of the square.

קמד. נהגו בעלי המלאכה יצרני התפלין לעשות חריץ בתיתורא בין נקב לנקב, בצורה של ריבוע, וכך חוט התפירה העובר בתוך החריץ, אינו זז ממקומו, ועומד בריבועו. ואין בזה פגם וחסרון בריבוע. וכן נתפשט המנהג (תמונה ס"ז). [מנחת שלמה ח"ב סי' ס אות א ועוד]. ומכל מקום יש לימנע מלעשות חריץ זה עמוק מידי ולכסות טיח הצבע מעליו, עד שאין החוט נראה. [ראה פסקי תשובות אות סד]

קמה. יש ליזהר שהחוט יהיה ישר ומתוח כהוגן ולא יתנועע לכאן ולכאן, שעל ידי זה אין עליו שם ריבוע (תמונה ס"ח). ולא יהא שום דבר חוצץ בין החוט לבית. [שם]

Grooves to guide the stitches

144) Nowadays, it is customary for the *battim* manufacturers to cut a groove from one hole to the next in the *titura*. In this way, the thread is run through the groove and always forms perfectly straight lines. (Illustration №67) This groove must not be cut deeply into the *titura*, for then the paint will cover the stitches and the thread will be invisible. The thread must visibly form a square on top of the *titura*.[123]

Pulling the thread taut

145) The thread must be pulled taut with each stitch. If there is slack and the thread bulges toward the right or left, the square form of the stitches is ruined. (Illustration №68) Furthermore, nothing may interrupt the thread's direct contact with the *bayit* anywhere along the course of the stitches.

The responsa *Shevet Halevi* (Vol. V, #14) added that this is clear from the *Haye Adam* as well, since his problem with large holes is only that the stitches might zigzag. He was not concerned whether or not the stitches meet at the corners. Likewise, the responsa *Zikhron Yehuda* warned about drilling wide holes since that might warp the square shape of the stitches altogether, but not because the stitches must meet at the corners. Nevertheless, the *Piske Teshuvot* (32:64) recommended that one attempt to form the stitches so that they meet at the corners. The *Or Letziyon* and *Shevet Halevi*, on the other hand, did not mention such a stringency.

123. Harav Shelomo Zalman Auerbach (*Minhat Shelomo* Vol. II, #60:1; *Halikhot Shelomo Tefillap age* 52) commented that although because of these grooves the stitches run slightly below the level of the *titura*, the halakha requiring the stitches to form a square on top of the *titura* is still fulfilled. This must be so, since at each of the holes prepared for the stitches, the thread goes down under the level of the *titura*, and if someone added many more holes and many more stitches the tefillin would still be kosher. If so, these grooves do not cause any halakhic problem. In fact, Rav Auerbach examined tefillin made by the famous Rav Netan'el Tefillinsky, the originator of the process used today for *battim* production, and he saw that the stitches ran through such grooves. Harav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (*Yisa Ish* Vol. III, #15) likewise affirmed that the grooves do not infringe on the halakha in any manner.

The responsa *Divre Yatziv* (Vol. I, #21), however, complained that these grooves are a new innovation, and they detract from the kosher status of the tefillin. although the *Tikun Tefillin* states that a square should be scratched onto the surface of the *titura* and the stitches should follow those scratches [*sirtutim*], this does not mean to cut grooves into the *titura*.

The responsa *Shevet Halevi* (Vol. VII, #9) countered that on the contrary, the term *sirtutim* means grooves and not just surface scratches. Although it is best to avoid making the grooves so deep that the stitches are not visible at all on the level of the *titura*, we have no reason to deduce that grooves must be avoided altogether. It is true that in earlier generations grooves were not cut in the *titura*, but that was because there was no need for grooves to keep the stitches in straight lines. You might argue that it is best to continue making the *battim* in the traditional manner without grooves, but there is no basis to complain that the tefillin are not kosher if they have grooves.

At any rate, the overwhelming majority of *battim* produced in our time have these grooves, following the ruling of Rav Auerbach and Rav Elyashiv, and the tradition introduced by Rav Tefillinsky. In fact, the *Mikdash Me'at* (gloss to *Da'at Kedoshim* 27:4) testified that this practice existed already in his time (Nineteenth Century).

קמז. יש להקפיד שריבוע התפירות יהא כנגד ריבוע הבית והתיתורא במרחק שוה מכל הצדדים, כך שיהיה הריבוע מקביל לריבוע הבית והתיתורא (תמונה ס"ט). [שם]

דיני שחרות הבתים

קמז. עור הבתים מצוה לעשותו שחור (תמונה ע'). [ש"ע סי' לב ס"ק]. כלומר: שהלכה למשה מסיני, שיהיו הרצועות של התפילין שחורות, אבל הבתים טוב שיהיו שחורות למצוה בעלמא, ולא לעיכובא.

Three concentric squares

146) The three squares formed by the *ketzitza*, the stitches, and the *titura* must be concentric. That is, the squares formed by the stitches and the *ketzitza* must be perfectly centered within the square of the *titura*. (Illustration № 69)

Day 37

Black *Battim*

Painting *battim* black

147) According to *halakha leMoshe miSinai*, the tefillin straps must be painted black. (Illustration № 70) It is highly recommended that the *battim* also be painted black, but even if they are not painted black the tefillin are kosher.[124]

Visible stitches

The responsa *Shevet Hakehati* (Vol. II, #33) ruled that if the thread of the stitches runs through a deep groove, care must be taken not to cover it with the paint used to blacken the *bayit*. It is alright to blacken the thread, but if a thick layer of the paint covers the thread it will be buried in the paint and there will be no square on top of the *titura*. The *Piske Teshuvot* (*Siman* 32, footnote 449) cited the *Tif'eret Arye* (a disciple of the *Hatam Sofer*) who expressed anger at those who sew the tefillin in deep grooves and then cover the entire *titura* with a thick layer of black paint, making the thread invisible. If the thread becomes worn and tears, no one will notice the problem since it is covered up.

The *Piske Teshuvot* added that there must be holes for the stitches in each corner. If the hole is not exactly in the corner, it cannot be compensated for by cutting grooves in the *titura* and pulling the thread around the corner where the grooves meet. Tefillin made in this way are not kosher.

124. Must the *battim* be painted black?

Rambam ruled (*Hilkhot Tefillin* 3:14) that the tefillin straps, both for *tefillin shel yad* and for *tefillin shel rosh*, must be painted black. This, he asserted, is *halakha leMoshe miSinai*, as the Talmud teaches in *Menahot* (35a). He then added that for the sake of beautifying the mitzvah, all the parts of the tefillin should be painted black. This means that the *halakha leMoshe miSinai* applies only to the straps, not to the *battim*.

Based on this, the *Shulhan Arukh* states (32:40): "It is a mitzvah to paint the *battim* black," meaning that this is not a requirement, and certainly not based on *halakha leMoshe miSinai*, and this appears to be the opinion of the Rama (gloss to 33:4) as well. Regarding the halakha requiring the *battim* to be square (32:39), and the halakha requiring the letter *shin* to be formed on the sides of the *tefillin shel rosh* (32:42), the *Shulhan Arukh* specified that they are *halakha leMoshe miSinai*.

The *Mordekhi*, however, ruled that the *halakha leMoshe miSinai* requires the *battim* to be painted black, and ruled that the tefillin are not kosher unless they are painted black. A number of *Rishonim* concurred with this, and this is the ruling of the *Bayit Hadash*. The *Mishna Berura* (32:184) added that this is the ruling of Harav Eliyahu of Vilna, the *Yeshu'ot Yaakov*, and the *Eliya Rabba*. The *Sheyare Kenesset Hagedola* (cited in the *Kol Yaakov* 32:183) ruled to follow the stringent opinion, but added that in a situation where it is not feasible one may rely on the lenient opinion.

The *Od Yosef Hai* (*parashat Haye Sara* halakha 10) ruled that according to *halakha leMoshe miSinai* both the *battim* and straps must be painted black. Maran the Rishon Letziyon (*Halikhot Olam* Vol. VIII, page 322) pointed out that this is a mistake, since Rambam ruled that the *halakha leMoshe miSinai* does not require the *battim* to be painted black.

The practical differences

If the *halakha leMoshe miSinai* requires the *battim* to be painted black, then it is necessary to pay attention to the tefillin as time wears on. Eventually, the paint will chip or