ט. יש מחמירים על פי הקבלה לצבוע הרצועות אף מלמטה מצד פנים. [באו"ח חיי שרה ה"ד, קול יעקב ס"ק יג, אול"צ ח"ב עמ' רפד]. **וכן נוהגים כיום רבים, ובפרט אצל הספרדים** (תמונה קל"ח).

Day 53

Black on all sides

9) Some *Poskim* maintained that according to the Kabbalah the straps must be painted black on all sides. This has become a common custom today, especially among Sefardic Jews.[192] (Illustration № 138)

192. Rambam (*Hilkhot Tefillin* 3:14) wrote that it is aesthetically pleasing to have tefillin that are totally black, including the *ketzitza* and the entire strap. The *Bet Yosef* explained that this means that even the inner side of the straps should be painted black, but he added that this is not the common custom. Likewise, the Rama (*Darkhe Moshe* 33:2) declared that although the *Or Zaruwa* ruled that both sides of the straps must be painted black, this is not the common custom. Harav David ben Zimra stated that anyone who wishes to fulfill Rambam's instructions must paint the inner side of the tefillin straps black, but the *Kenesset Hagedola* (gloss to *Bet Yosef* 33:3) commented that this is not the common custom.

The *Sefer Hakavanot* (*Derushe Tefillin* #4) states that one must paint the straps, both the inner and outer sides, as black as a raven. The *Kol Yaakov* (33:13) cited this, although he admitted that this is not the common custom, explaining that this is recommended for those who are scrupulous. The *Zera Emet* (Vol. III, #3) likewise ruled that it is best to paint both sides of the tefillin straps.

The *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Haye Sara* halakha 4) wrote that although the Arizal in *Sha'ar Hakavanot* instructed us to paint the inner and outer sides of the straps black, this is not the common custom. He inquired about the practice of those who live in Yerushalayim, and he was told that some people paint the inner side of the straps black, and others do not. The *Or Letziyon* (Vol. II, page 284) likewise mentioned that some people paint the inner side of the straps black, based on the Kabbalah.

The responsa *Shevet Halevi* (Vol. IX, #16) cited the *Poskim* who testified that the common custom is not to paint the inner side of the straps black, and commented that apparently there must be a reason for not painting it black. Therefore, we ought to continue our tradition to not purposely paint them black. Based on this, he refrained from even recommending that some people follow the instructions of the *Sha'ar Hakavanot*. The *Piske Teshuvot* (33:5) likewise emphasized that the common custom is to leave the inner side of the tefillin straps unpainted.

Nowadays, some manufacturers of tefillin straps have developed a method in which they soak the leather in a solution of black dye until it is absorbed through the strap entirely. Even if someone would cut into the strap, he would not find any spots that are not colored black. There are several advantages of using this method:

a) It fulfills the instructions of Rambam and the Arizal.

b) It fulfills the ruling of the *Keset Hasofer* requiring the edges of the straps to be painted black. See above in the previous halakha.

c) In case the straps ever get scratched or if the surface paint comes off, the strap will still be completely black. With other tefillin straps, the place on the strap of the *tefillin shel yad* that is drawn taut each time a person puts on his tefillin is liable to lose its paint. With these straps that does not present any problem.

d) Even if the outer side of the straps were never really painted, but instead were covered with a black adhesive, it would not matter since the straps were blackened beforehand anyway.

The *Yafe Lalev* (*O.H.* 33:1 and 33:2) cited proof from the *Tikkune Zohar* that only the outer side of the straps are painted black, while the inner side displays its naturally light color. On the other hand, in *Siman* 143:1 he mentioned that even if someone paints both sides of the straps black, he should always wear them with the glossy surface on the outside. See the footnote in HaKeter's new edition of *Yafe Lalev*.

Black adhesive

A number of years ago, it was discovered that some tefillin manufacturers were supplying straps that were "painted" with a black adhesive that would melt off the strap if it was soaked in hot water. (Illustration № 139) Several contemporary *Poskim* ruled at that time that these straps were not kosher. See the responsa *Binyan Av* (Vol. I, #2).

Above in the footnote to *Siman* 32:150, there is a discussion about painting the *battim* with a type of paint that could be peeled off after it dries. The *Noda Bihuda* ruled that it is kosher, while the *Haye Adam* ruled that it is not. Maran the Rishon Letziyon (gloss to responsa *Yabia Omer* Vol. I, #2) ruled leniently regarding this matter. It is possible to deduce from that discussion that if the straps, but not the *battim*, are painted with a paint based on plastic, the straps are kosher even though it might be possible to peel the paint off the straps. In fact, it is possible that the author of the *Haye Adam* would agree to this. His argument against the use of this paint was that the surface of the *battim* must be

י. מצוה להשחיר הרצועות עד שיהיו שחורות כעורב. [משנ"ב ס"ק יט]. וזהו למצוה בעלמא, אבל מדינא כל שחל עליו שם שחור לפי ראות העין, יצא. [ביאוה"ל ד"ה הרצועות, הליכות שלמה תפלה עמ' נד]

יא. אם במשך הזמן נשחקו הרצועות והלבינו, או שאינן שחורות עוד כהלכה, צריך לחזור ולהשחירן מחדש (תמונה ק"מ). [ראה באו"ח חיי שרה ה"ד, משנ"ב ס"ק יט ובקול יעקב ס"ק יב]. ומצוי מאוד שבמקום הידוק הקשר בתפילין של יד, שישחק הצבע שם, ויש ליזהר בזה. [משנ"ב ס"ק יט]

יב. יזהר שתהיה הרצועה שחורה כולה לכל אורכה, מתחילתה ועד סופה. [ראה ביאור הלכה ד"ה הרצועות]. וכן חתיכת הרצועה שתהיה במעברתא, יזהר שתהיה שחורה. [ראה ביאוה"ל שם]

What shade of black?

10) The mitzvah is to color the straps so that they are as black "as a raven." Despite this, as long as the straps appear to be black to a casual observer they are kosher.

If the color fades

11) If the straps' black color is dulled with the passage of time until there are spots that are no longer black, they must be painted black again. (Illustration № 140) The spot where the strap of the *tefillin shel yad* is fastened to one's arm is most susceptible to losing its black color, and one must examine it often.[193]

Spots that are no longer black

12) One must make sure that the entire length of the tefillin straps is black. Likewise, the portion of the strap that is hidden inside the *ma'abarta* must be black.[194] If someone discovers that spots of his tefillin straps are no longer black, but those spots are beyond the minimum length[195] of a kosher strap, he may

exposed to the air and he considered this paint to be a substance blocking the *battim* from contact with the air. Regarding the tefillin straps, this is not an issue. All that is necessary is that they are painted black, and therefore even plastic-based paint should be acceptable.

On the other hand, it might be that the *Haye Adam* does not consider this type of paint to be acceptable for any purpose, for if it can be peeled off it is as if the item was never painted at all. The halakha regarding painting the straps is much more critical than the halakha regarding painting the *battim*. The *halakha leMoshe miSinai* requires the straps to be painted black, while the *Poskim* only recommended that the *battim* be painted black. Therefore, it is important to make sure not to color the straps with such paint. As mentioned above, the entire issue is no longer problematic if one uses straps that were dyed black even before they were painted.

193. It might be that the halakhic principle of *rubo kekhulo* applies here, and we can say that as long as most of the strap is black it is as if the entire strap is black. See the discussion about this in the footnote to the following halakha. In practice, we should not rely on this, and as soon as any portion of the strap loses its black color it must be repaired or replaced. This is the ruling of the *Or Letziyon* and the *Halakha Berura*, based on the *Mishna Berura*.

194. The portion of the strap hidden inside the folds of the knot

The *Zikhron Eliyahu*, cited in *Piske Teshuvot* (33:6), ruled that if the portion of the strap hidden inside the knot is not black, it is kosher since that portion is never visible. Even if the back side of the unpainted portion is visible, the strap is still kosher.

195. Minimum length of the straps

Above in *Siman* 27 it is explained that the strap of the *tefillin shel yad* must be long enough to be looped around the upper arm, stretched directly down the arm to the middle finger, and wound around that finger three times. The strap of the *tefillin shel rosh* must be long enough to form a loop around the person's head and for the two ends to be brought forward and run down his chest. The two ends must reach down at least to his navel. According to the

ובדיעבד, אם השחרות נתקלפה במקום שהוא אחר שיעור רצועה, בדיעבד כשר (תמונה קמ"א). (ומיד כשיוכל ישחיר הרצועה כולה). **אבל אם נקלף השחרות בתוך השיעור רצועה, יש להחמיר.** [ראה ביאוה"ל שם, אול"צ ח"ב עמ' רפד, הלכה ברורה עמ' תצ]

consider the strap to be still kosher. (Illustration №141) Nevertheless, he must make sure to paint those spots black at the first opportunity. If he discovers such spots within the minimum length, however, he must consider the strap not kosher until he paints the spots black again.[196]

Kabbalah, the right end must reach down to his groin, while the left end must reach down to his navel.

196. Does the extra length need to be painted black?

The *Mishna Berura* (*Bi'ur Halakha* 33:3) debated whether the Torah requires the entire length of the straps to be painted black, or if it is sufficient to paint the portion of the strap that constitutes its minimum length in order to be kosher, and painting the rest of the strap is simply a commendable practice. He did not come to a definite conclusion. The *Mishnat Hasofer* suggested bringing proof from the ruling of the *Haye Adam* (cited in the *Sha'ar Hatziyun* 650:3) regarding a *lulav*: All the different blemishes that disqualify a *lulav* count only along the top four *tefahim* of the *lulav*, since that is the minimum required length. Any blemish along the *lulav's* length lower than this does not disqualify it. The *Mishnat Hasofer* suggested that the same concept can be applied to tefillin straps, and so if the black color fades from a spot beyond the minimum required length, the strap will still be kosher.

Rubo kekhulo

Several *Aharonim* (*Da'at Kedoshim*, *Mikdash Me'at*, responsa of Harav Shim'on Greenfeld Vol. I, #7, responsa *Salmat Hayim* #35) argued that as long as a majority of the strap is black, it is considered as if it is entirely black. The *Halakha Berura* (page 490) cited these *Aharonim* and asserted that their discussion applies only when the black color is missing from a portion of the strap beyond its minimum length. The minimum length of the straps, however, must be totally black; the concept of *rubo kekhulo* does not apply to the halakha requiring the minimum length to be black. This is similar to the halakha requiring the entire *tefillin shel rosh* to be positioned on the part of the head where hair grows and not down on the forehead (above in *Siman* 27), and to the halakha requiring the entire tefillin scroll to be inserted into its compartment (above in the footnote to 32:186). Regarding those halakhot as well, no one suggests that the concept of *rubo kekhulo* applies.

In reality, however, the *Salmat Hayim* clearly ruled that the principle of *rubo kekhulo* applies within the minimum length of the strap as well. The *Da'at Kedoshim* and Harav Greenfeld likewise gave no hint that the rule applies only to the extra length beyond the minimum. Based on this, Harav Meir Mazuz (*Mekor Ne'eman* #65) ruled that the straps are kosher as long as a majority of their area is black, and that this applies both to the strap's length and to its width. This ruling matches Rav Mazuz's ruling regarding tefillin scrolls that protrude from their individual compartments, as cited above in the footnote to *Siman* 32:186.

On the other hand, it appears from the *Mishna Berura* (33:19) that the principle of *rubo kekhulo* does not apply to tefillin straps. He warns us to pay attention to the spot on the strap of *tefillin shel yad* where one tightens the loop around one's arm since the black paint is most likely to wear away at that point. If we would say that the principle of *rubo kekhulo* applies, the strap would still be kosher even if that spot lost its black color. Likewise, Harav Shelomo Zalman Auerbach, cited in the *Yitzhak Yikare* edition of the *Mishna Berura*, ruled that the principle of *rubo kekhulo* does not apply to the halakha of black tefillin straps, disagreeing specifically with the *Salmat Hayim*. This is also the opinion of *Teshuvot Vehanhagot* (Vol. II, #22).

The *Or Letziyon* (Vol. II, page 284) asserted that if any spot on a tefillin strap loses its black color, it is as if that spot has been severed from the strap. According to this definition, it seems clear that if a portion of the strap beyond its minimum length has lost its black color, the strap is still kosher. It is no worse than if the strap was severed at that point. Furthermore, if a spot within the minimum length loses its black color, it is as if the rest of the strap is missing and it is not kosher. The principle of *rubo kekhulo* could not be applied at all in such a case according to the *Or Letziyon*.

Spots or cracks that lost the black color

The *Halikhot Shelomo* (*Tefilla* page 54) stated that as long as the strap appears to be black at a glance, it is kosher even though there are spots on the strap that are not black. The *Teshuvot Vehanhagot* (Vol. II, #22) related that Harav

יג. אם נתקלף השחור ברוחב הרצועה, ונותר שחור בשיעור רוחב הרצועה (1 ס״מ), כשר (תמונה קמ״ב). אולם אם לא נותר שחור בשיעור רוחב רצועה (שאין שחור בשיעור 1 ס״מ), אף שיש מכשירים גם את זה מדין ״רובו ככולו״, למעשה נראה להחמיר בזה, וישחיר כל רוחב הרצועה. [ראה אול״צ ח״ב עמ׳ רפד, ובפסקי תשובות סוף אות ו]

יד. ברצועות המצויות כיום שמשחירים אותם משני צידיהם, ואף תוכם ספוג בצבע שחור, אין כל חשש שנקלף הצבע המבריק שבחוץ, כיון שאף תוכו צבוע בשחור, ואין כאן שום חלק שהלבין. (תמונה קמ״ג)

Across the strap's width

13) If a spot along the width of the strap loses its black color, but there still is a full centimeter along its width that is black, it is kosher. (Illustration № 142) If at any point the black section is less than one centimeter wide, however, the strap is not kosher for use. Although some *Poskim* ruled leniently in this case, applying the principle of *rubo kekhulo*, one should not rely on that ruling, and one should make sure that the strap is black all across its width.[197]

Black through and through

14) Nowadays, it is common to use tefillin straps that are blackened on all sides, and which have soaked the black dye through the thickness of the leather. Even if the glossy black coating on the outside peels off, it is still perfectly kosher since every surface is black.[198] (Illustration № 143)

Day 54

Yaakov Yisrael Kanyevski was very careful to make sure that his tefillin straps were entirely black. This is the recommended attitude.

197. The strap's width

As explained above in *Siman* 27, the minimum width of tefillin straps is the length of a barley corn. According to Harav Avraham Hayim Na'eh (*Shi'ure Torah* Vol. I, #3:37), this means one centimeter. Maran the Rishon Letziyon (responsa *Yabia Omer* Vol. IX, #97:22) concurred with this definition. In the previous footnote, the discussion was about the length of the strap, and the conclusion was that one ought to adopt the stringent view and not rely on the principle of *rubo kekhulo*. Here, the discussion is about the width of the strap.

The average tefillin strap used today is 14 or 15 centimeters wide. If the edges begin to lose their black color, there is still a full centimeter of black strap in its center, so it will be kosher even without relying on the principle of *rubo kekhulo*. As explained in the previous footnote, the *Or Letziyon* and *Halakha Berura* ruled that as long as the minimum area of the strap is black, it is kosher even though the extra area has lost its black color.

What if the strap was scratched down the middle, leaving less than a centimeter of black strap to either side of the scratch, but more than a centimeter if we combine the two sides? The responsa *Kinyan Torah* (Vol. VI, #1) ruled that if a hole is punctured in the middle of a tefillin strap, we can combine the two sides and say that the strap is kosher. Therefore, the owner may use his tefillin and recite the blessing on it. The same should apply to a strap with a spot in its center that is no longer black.

If the tefillin strap is exactly a centimeter wide and the edge loses its black color, the *Or Letziyon* ruled that as long as the majority of its width is black the strap is kosher, applying the principle of *rubo kekhulo*. This concurs with the ruling of the *Salmat Hayim* and Harav Shim'on Greenfeld. This ruling seems to be a contradiction to the *Or Letziyon's* definition, cited in the previous footnote, of the status of a portion of a tefillin strap that is not black, explaining that we must view any portion not painted black as if it was severed from the strap. At any rate, according to the *Poskim* who ruled that one cannot apply the principle of *rubo kekhulo* to tefillin straps, it would not be kosher in this case.

198. This was already mentioned in the footnote to halakha 9. Even though the strap is kosher either way, the *Yafe Lalev* recommended that the outer side of the strap be painted a glossy black.