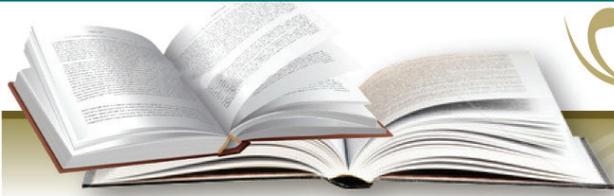


TORAH & HORAHAH



Shelach 5777

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Dear Reader,

Parashaa Shelach begins by relating the most notorious sin in our national history: Moshe dispatched twelve spies from the wilderness, whose task was to reconnoiter the Land of Israel, and return with a report of what challenges the Children of Israel were about to face in their conquest of the Promised Land.

As we know, the mission ended in disaster and calamity. The spies died a terrible death of plague, and the entire nation was doomed to perish in the wilderness, never to see the Promised Land.

After the terrible episode, the Torah continues with a number of *mitzvos* that were given to the people, concluding with *tzitzis*. It would appear that there is a profound connection between *tzitzis*, with which the *parashah* concludes, and

This week's article discusses the specific mitzvah of *techeiles*. What is the obligation of affixing *techeiles* to one's *tzitzis*? What is the halachic status of "safek *techeiles*"? What are the laws of tying *techeiles*? And what of the historical loss of *techeiles* and the recent claims of its rediscovery? These questions, among others, are discussed in this week's article.

This week's Q & A addresses the question of eating after saying *Hamapil*.

Blue and White: The Two Mitzvos of Tzitzis

The end of Parashas Shelach instructs us in the mitzvah of *tzitzis*. "Speak to the Children of Israel, and instruct them that they make them fringes on the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a blue thread" (*Bamidbar* 15:38).

Reading the words of the Pasuk in their literal sense, it seems that the principle mitzvah of the Torah is to affix a blue thread (although the Gemara in *Menachos* 39A states that the white has more *kedusha*). The next Pasuk tells us that we are to look upon the *tzitzis* threads (or specifically at the *techeiles* thread), which will lead us to "remember all the commandments of Hashem, and perform them," and assist us in refraining from straying after our hearts and our minds.

In fact, Chazal understand that the Pasuk teaches us two distinct mitzvos: one of wearing white strings, and another of the blue, *techeiles*, string. But can one part of the mitzvah be fulfilled without the other? How many *techeiles* strings need to be used in tying the *tzitzis*? And what is the status of *techeiles* today, which some wear on their *tzitzis*?



the sin with which it opens.

What is the purpose of *tzitzis*? The Torah tells us: “And you will see it, and you will remember all the *mitzvot* of God and do them, and you will not stray after your heart and after your eyes, which you lustily stray after.” *Tzitzis*, then, are a reminder to spur us to do *mitzvot* and a reminder to protect us against doing sins.

How does the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis* achieve this? By means of sight. The Gemara explains that blue hue of *techeles* directs us to reach awareness of Hashem: Blue is similar to the blue of the ocean, which is similar to the blue of the sky, which is similar to the blue of Hashem’s heavenly throne.

The lesson that the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis* teaches is not *what* to see, but rather *how* to see. A person can see something on a superficial level, accepting what he sees at “face value,” and not probing to perceive the deeper layer of what lies before him.

This is the type of sight that led to the first sin of humankind, as the Torah relates: “the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing

We will discuss these questions, and others, below.

Independent Obligation of *Techeiles* and *Lavan*

As noted in the Pasuk mentioned above, the Torah stipulates that the *techeiles* thread must be placed upon the tassels of *tzitzis*: “that they put upon the fringe of the borders a blue thread” (*Bamidbar* 15:38). This is the source for the obligation to add a blue string to the white strings of *tzitzis*.

The Gemara cites a dispute among *Tana'im* as to whether these two obligations, one of blue strings and the other of white strings, require one another. According to Rebbi (cited in *Menachos* 38a), the white strings and the *techeiles* strings can only be worn together; one without the other does not fulfill anything. This is the halachic ruling of the *Ba'al Ha-Meor* (*Shabbos*, 11b in pages of *Rif*).

According to this opinion, the obligations of *techeiles* and *lavan* (white) apply together, and it is forbidden to wear a four cornered garment unless one ties both to the corners of the garment. Wearing such a garment with white *tzitzis* alone on Shabbos will be violate the Shabbos prohibition of carrying those white strings in the public domain.

Yet, the *Ba'al Ha-Meor* explains that despite this basic position, there is a rabbinic *mitzvah* of wearing *lavan* strings, even in the absence of *techeiles*.

By contrast with this position, the great majority of *rishonim* rule the opinion of the Chachamim, as cited by the Mishnah (*Menachos* 38a), by which the two *mitzvos* may be fulfilled independently of one another. According to this opinion, affixing white strings to a four-cornered garment fulfills a full Torah obligation, even in the absence of *techeiles*.

The Obligation of *Techeiles*

The fact that the obligations of *techeiles* and *lavan* apply independently opens up the question of the extent to which we are obligated in the *mitzvah* of *techeiles*.

The other cases of parallel *mitzvos* mentioned in the same Mishnah, such as the two *mitzvos* of *tefillin*, can be helpful in understanding the relationship between the *lavan* and the *techeiles*. Although the two *mitzvos* of *tefillin*, one of the arm

and the other of the head, are independent of one another, they are both fully obligatory. This will also be true of *techeiles*: while a full obligation, it is independent of the *lavan*.

The Rambam (*Tzitzis* 1:4) writes that the independence of the *lavan* and the *techeiles* applies specifically where a person has only one of the two types of *tzitzis* (*techeiles* or *lavan*). In this circumstance, the two *mitzvos* are indeed independent of one another, and one must fulfill whichever of them one is able to. As the *Chinuch* (386) elaborates, this applies in our times when *techeiles* is not available, but not in times when *techeiles* is available.

In a similar vein, the *Sha'agas Aryeh* (32) asks how it is permitted for us to wear white strings alone, for surely by so doing we transgress the Torah obligation of affixing *techeiles* to the *tzitzis*. He answers the question by explaining that since we don't have *techeiles* today, it is permitted to wear *lavan* alone, and this does not constitute a transgression.

It is interesting to note the wording of the *Penei Yehoshua* (*Bava Metzia* 61b), who writes that the *mitzvah* of *techeiles* is a “*mitzvah min ha-muvchar*.” While *techeiles* is of course an obligation, the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis* is fulfilled even with white strings alone, while the superior *mitzvah* is fulfilled with the combination of white and blue strings. When we affix white strings alone to our four cornered garments, we are thus fulfilling one of the two parts of the *mitzvah*. In the words of Rashi (cited by the *Ramban, Milchamos Hashem, Shabbos* 12a): “The principle *mitzvah* is with *techeiles* and *lavan*, and one who fulfills *lavan* without *techeiles* does not have a complete *mitzvah*, but only one out of two.”

The Blue Dye of Techeiles

Do we have *techeiles* today? For more than a hundred years, the debate over identifying the true *techeiles* has been active in the Torah world, and in recent times many have started to wear a blue string as part of their *tzitzis*.

By way of introduction, we will outline the historical development of this research, together with its practical ramifications, until the current time.

The Gemara teaches that the source for *techeiles*, a blue dye, is

to the eye.” Rather than penetrating to a deeper layer, the fruit was seen as being superficially pleasing – which paved the way to sin.

This, too, was the sin of the spies. Indeed, they brought back a faithful report of what they saw. The problem was that their report was faithful to a superficial vision alone. They perceived the physical difficulties inherent to the land, the giant fruit and the giant and mighty people; but they did not perceive the inherent connection between the Land of Israel and the People of Israel, the spiritual potential of the Land and its necessity for the national purpose of the nation.

Had they seen with the perception of *tzitzis*, they would not have sinned. The Sages thus teach that the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis* is parallel to all the *mitzvos* of the Torah: if we see correctly, the road to keeping all the *mitzvos* is close. The *mitzvah* of *tzitzis* thus involves a rectification of the sin of the Spies.

May our meticulousness in this *mitzvah* bring us, indeed, meticulousness in keeping the entire Torah, distancing ourselves from sin, and clinging to *mitzvos*.

a marine creature known as the *chilazon*, which translates as “snail” in Modern Hebrew (though see Rashi to *Menachos* 44a, where it appears that it is extracted from the earth). The Gemara also mentions a counterfeit dye from a plant called Kela-Ilan, known as *Indigofera tinctoria*, the ubiquitous source of blue dye in the ancient world.

The equivalence of color between these two sources teaches us that *techeiles* is, indeed, a blue hue. The Gemara writes that the color of the *techeiles* thread is similar to the sea, suggesting again a blue color, and a broad consensus of early authorities agrees that the color of *techeiles* is blue.

Beyond this, however, the identity of the *chilazon* from which the dye is extracted was lost at some point after the Roman exile of the Jews from the Land of Israel. It is clear that in Talmudic times, the *techeiles* dye was still in use. At some stage, it was lost.

Identifying the Techeiles Chilazon

In 1887, Rabbi Gershon Henoch Leiner, the Radziner Rebbe, researched the subject, trying to identify the *chilazon* species based on a number of criteria mentioned in the Gemara and other writings of the Sages. His conclusion was that the *Sepia officinalis* (common cuttlefish) met many of the criteria, and within a year Radziner chassidim began wearing *tzitzis* dyed with a colorant produced from this species. [Some Breslov Hasidim also adopted this custom, and continue to use this form of *techeiles* to this day.]

Rabbi Yitzhak Ha-Levi Herzog (1889–1959) rejected this identification, after showing, by means of chemical analysis, that the dye was none other than a well-known synthetic dye, “Prussian blue.” The dye is made by reacting

iron sulfate with an organic material, in this case supplied by the cuttlefish.

As part of his doctoral research on the subject of *techeiles*, Rabbi Herzog placed great hopes on demonstrating that the *Murex trunculus* was the genuine snail *chilazon*. However, Rabbi Herzog failed to consistently achieve blue dye from the *Murex trunculus*, and he therefore abandoned this identification, suggesting an alternative: “If for the present all hope is to be abandoned of rediscovering the *chilazon shel techeiles* in some species of the genera *Murex* and *Purpura*, we could do worse than suggest the *Janthina* as a not improbable identification.”

In present times, however, the *Murex trunculus* (a sea snail also known as the *Hexaplex trunculus*, which is known to have been a common source of blue dye in the ancient world) has returned as the primary candidate for identification with the *techeiles chilazon*.

The *Murex*, as Rabbi Herzog pointed out, fulfills many of the Talmudic criteria, and Rabbi Herzog only rejected it on account of his inability to consistently obtain blue dye (sometimes the dye was purple) from the snail. In the 1980s, Otto Elsner, a chemist from the Shenkar College of Fibers in Israel, discovered that if a solution of the dye was exposed to sunlight, blue instead of purple was consistently produced.

In 1988 Rabbi Eliyahu Tavger dyed *techeiles* from *Murex trunculus* for the *mitzvah* (commandment) of *tzitzis* for the first time in over 1300 years. Based on his work, four years later the Ptil Techeiles Organization was founded to educate about the dye production process and to make the dye available for all who desire to use it.

It is important to note that Rabbi Herzog was not

the first to suggest the *Murex* as the historical source of *techeiles*. The suggestion already appears in the writings of Rabbi Yair Chaim Bachrach, the renowned *Chavas Yair* (1638–1702), who writes (in this *Mekor Chaim, Orach Chaim I:99*) that the blue dye of *techeiles* is *porphura*, a word meaning “purple fish” in ancient Greek, and referring to the *Murex*. In academic research, the identification of *techeiles* with the *Murex* also predates the findings of Rabbi Herzog (see *Ha-Techeiles* p. 418–9).

Halachic Obligation?

Given that there seems to be at least a matter of doubt surrounding the identification of the *techeiles* as the *Murex*, is there an obligation to wear the modern-day *techeiles*?

Today, there are several rabbinic figures who support the use of *techeiles* as produced from the *Murex*, and many indeed have begun to tie a *techeiles* string upon their *tzitzis*. However, the majority of prominent rabbis remain unconvinced, and have declared that there is no obligation to affix the *techeiles* thread to *tzitzis*. These include Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv *zt”l*, Rav Moshe Sternbuch *shlita*, Rav Shlomo Miller *shlita*, and many others.

One of the most detailed responses against the practice of wearing *techeiles* is a *teshuva* of Rav Asher Weiss *shlita*, published in the second volume of his *Shut Minchas Asher*. Rav Weiss makes three basic arguments:

The arguments presented by *Murex* supporters are not sufficient to constitute a halachic *safek* (a matter of doubt), since they are non-halachic in their nature.

A straightforward reading of the statements of the Gemara and the Rambam concerning

techeiles do not fit with the *Murex*.

The *Sifri*, *Midrash Rabba*, *Tanchuma*, and the Arizal indicate that the use of *techeiles* will not return until the days of Mashiach.

A number of detailed responses have been written to Rav Weiss’s *teshuva*. In the present article we will not enter the complex debate around the use of the modern *techeiles*.

String Issues

The wearing of a *techeiles* string raises several issues that require clarification:

The number of *techeiles* strings that must be used.

Are the windings (*kerichos*) of *techeiles*, or of both *lavan* and *techeiles*?

The number of *chulyos* (sets of windings), and the number of windings in the *chulyos*.

The form of the *chulyos*.

The knots and their relationship with the *chulyos*.

Of all these issues, the most crucial is undoubtedly the first: If a person used a smaller number of *techeiles* strings, he will not fulfill the *mitzvah* according to the opinion requiring more strings. The other matters mentioned are not essential for the fulfillment of the *mitzvah*, and are mainly questions of custom, or of fulfilling the *mitzvah* in the best possible manner.

We will therefore focus on the first issue alone.

There are three distinct opinions among *rishonim* concerning the ratio of white to *techeiles* strings:

Raavad (*Tzitzis* 1:6) and the *Aruch*: One full string (when folded it becomes two of the eight) must be *techeiles*.

Rashi and *Tosafos* (*Menachos* 38a): Two full

strings (four of the eight) are *techeiles*.

Rambam: Half of one string (when folded it is one of the eight strings) is *techeiles*.

One statement of the Sifri (*Shelach* 115) accords with the ruling of the *Raavad*: “How many strings must one place? Not less than three – this is the opinion of Beis Hillel. Beis Shamai say: Three [strings] of [white] wool and a fourth of *techeilet*. The *halachah* follows the opinion of Beis Shamai.”

However, another statement of the Sifri (*Devarim* 234) seems to uphold the opinion of Rashi: “How many strings are placed? Not less than three strings according to Beis Hillel. Beis Shamai say: Four strings of *techeiles* and four strings of white. The *halachah* follows the opinion of Beis Shamai.”

However, the Vilna Gaon writes that the correct version is that of the former Sifri, and amends the latter source to match it: “With three strings of white and a fourth of *techeiles*.” In keeping with this approach, the Vilna Gaon (glosses to *Raya Mehemna, Pinchas* 228) sides with the ruling of the *Raavad*, and many who wear the *techeiles* thread follow this ruling.

It is Permitted to Wear Safek Techeiles?

One of the potential issues that are brought up with regard to the modern *techeiles* is whether wearing a wrong color might detract from the fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *lavan*. If the *Murex* is not the real *chilazon*, would affixing the blue thread affect one’s fulfillment of the *mitzvah*?

The Gemara (*Menachos* 40a) discusses the issue of wearing *tzitzis* on a linen garment. Given that the *techeiles* string must be made of wool (*Yevamos* 4b), placing them on a linen garment would constitute a forbidden blend of materials:

shaatnez or *kilayim* However, since in so doing one is fulfilling the positive *mitzvah* of *tzitzis*, this overrides the negative injunction forbidding *kilayim*.

Nevertheless, the Gemara explains that a decree barring such garments was made in Yerushalayim, to ensure that people would not think that *kilayim* was permitted in other instances.

Rava bar Rav Chana raises a series of objections as to why the decree is unjustified, all of which Rava resolves. At one point, Rava explains that the decree was issued to ensure that one would not violate the prohibition of *kilayim* if he unwittingly wore *kela ilan*—an inauthentic (and far cheaper) version of *techeiles*, with the same color as the true dye – in place of *techeiles*. Doing so would mean a failure to fulfill the complete positive *mitzvah* necessary to override the prohibition.

To this, Rava bar Rav Chana exclaims: “but let [the *kela ilan* string] be considered like a white thread!” Meaning, the *kela ilan* string is a valid string for *lavan*, and so one is still fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis*. This is true to the point that it can be used to override the prohibition of *kilayim* (though Rava responds that since one doesn’t need to use wool, the prohibition is not overridden).

The *Chazon Ish* (*Orach Chayim* 3:25) derives from this statement that it is permitted to use varying colors for the *lavan* strings, including that of *kela ilan*. There is no requirement that the white (meaning non-*techeiles*) strings be the color of the garment. According to the Rambam, who requires the *lavan* strings to be the same color as the garment, the *Chazon Ish* explains that that the strings that were to be *techeiles* could be any color at all – even *kela ilan* – where *techeiles* is unavailable.

From this analysis it is clear that if one unwittingly tied *kela ilan* in place of *techeiles* (on a non-linen *tallis*—for a linen *tallis* it would be a problem of course) he would still be fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis*. Similarly, if one employed a blue dye

believed to be *techeiles*, even if it turned out to be inauthentic, he would have nevertheless fulfilled the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis* no less than if he had used only white strings.

Halachic Responsa

to Questions that have been asked on our website dinonline.org



The Question:

If I said Hamapil already and cannot fall asleep, and I then feel very hungry and it will keep me up if I don't eat – may I eat something?



Answer:

Although a person has already said the berachah of Hamapil, if he feels hungry and suffers from discomfort, it is permitted to eat and of course to make the required berachos.

Best wishes.



Sources:

The Rema (239:1) rules that one should not make a hefsek between reciting the Shema and going to sleep, but he does not specifically address the issue of ha-mapil.

However, the Mishnah Berurah (4) writes that one should be careful not to eat, drink, or speak after saying hamapil, so as to avoid a hefsek between the berachah and actually sleeping.

Nonetheless, it appears clear that the berachah is not a birchas hanehenin: sleep is not a type of “pleasure” over which Chazal enacted a berachah, and the blessing is rather an expression of praise, which corresponds to the blessing of “ha-maavir sheina” in the morning (this parallel is drawn by the Mishnah Berurah).

Thus, just as the berachah of “hamaavir sheina” should be made upon waking up, but not necessarily immediately upon waking up, so too the berachah of hamapil does not have to be made immediately before going to sleep, and where one needs to make an interruption, it is permitted to do so.

The Biur Halachah also adds that according to the Chayei Adam the berachah is made over the general “way of the world,” and not over the individual’s personal sleep, so that even somebody who is not going to sleep at all can still make the berachah. The Mishnah Berurah does not rely on this, but for purposes of an interruption it can be added as another reason for leniency.

For this reason we find a number of authorities ruling that *asher yatzar* can and should be said after hamapil: see Shut Pri Ha-Sadeh Vol. 1, no. 93; Shut Hitorerus Teshuvah Vol. 1, no. 125; Halichos shlomo Chap. 13, note 14; Shut Tzitz Eliezer Vol. 3, no. 27; Shut Be'er Moshe Vol. 1, no. 62. The same is true for eating where there is a need; see Tzitz Eliezer Vol. 7 no. 27 sec. 3.