



On the Air with Rav Aviner ~ #84

From Ha-Rav's weekly radio program in Israel

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Techelet

Q: What is Ha-Rav's opinion about wear Techelet?

A: We only wear white. This is based on three reasons, each of which is sufficient on its own:

1. One of the authorities of last generation, the "Beit Ha-Levi," Ha-Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik of Brisk, held that in the absence of a continuous tradition, it is impossible to reinstitute the identification of the Techelet, even with proofs. This identification has disappeared until the reestablishment of the Sanhedrin. But even if we say that it is possible to reinstitute it with the aid of proofs, they must be strong, clear and beyond doubt. The proofs relating to the Murex Trunculus are not one hundred percent. And the identification of the Techelet today is the third identification. The first identification was by the Chasidic Rebbe of Radzyner, and the Breslav Chasidim also adopted it. The second identification was by Ha-Rav Yitzchak Herzog, who later became the Chief Rabbi of Israel. And this is now the third identification. The great Rabbis of our generation have not accepted these suggestions since they are waiting for a possible fourth identification.

2. We are not strict to wear any Techelet since our Sages said that a blue color which is not Techelet (called "kala ilan) invalidates an entire Talit (see Bava Metzia 61b and Menachot 40a, 43a). It is thus possible that wearing this Techelet could invalidate the entire

Talit. Furthermore, when we are strict about something in general, it is when we are certain that we are better off regarding the mitzvah, but if we are uncertain, it is not considered a "stricture."

3. This is casting dispersion on the earlier ones and the great Rabbis of our generation who did not and do not wear the Techelet. A Torah scholar once asked Maran Ha-Rav Kook about Techelet. He did not ask if he should wear Techelet. He said: "I wear Techelet on my Tzitzit which I tuck in. Should I also wear them on my Talit?" Maran Ha-Rav Kook answered: "No, by doing so you would be casting dispersion on the earlier ones who did not do so. It is fine if you are wearing them and they are tucked in, "I walk with wholeness of heart within the confines of my house" (Tehillim 101:2), but do not wear them out.

It is also forbidden to act with "yuhara" – religious arrogance – before the great Rabbis of our generation. The Gemara in Baba Kamma (81) discusses that Yehoshua bin Nun made the inheritance of Eretz Yisrael conditional on the ten laws. One of them is that people may walk on the side of the road (on the border of others' property) to avoid hardened clumps of dirt on the road. Rav and Rabbi Chiya were once walking on the road, and they veered off to the side of the road to avoid the clumps of dirt. Rav Yehudah bar Kenosa was ahead of them, and walked in the middle, taking big steps to avoid the obstacles. Rav said: "Who is that? It is 'yehura' not to rely on Yehoshua's enactment!" Rabbi Chiya said: "Perhaps it is my student, Rav Yehudah bar Kenosa. All his actions are for the sake of Heaven." It is haughty to act strictly in front of one's Rabbi. Rav Yehudah bar Kenosa was different, however, as he always acted strictly. If someone wears Techelet, we disparage him, he has on whom to rely. But if someone comes and asks, we say to him: "do not display 'yuhara.'" The Torah scholars of our generation wore and wear white Tzitzit and we are going to act strictly in front of them? Do we know more about Techelet than Ha-Rav Avraham Shapira ztz"l?! Do we know more about Techelet than Ha-Rav Mordechai Eliyahu Shilt"a?!

In sum: We need to continue to research the matter, and it is a long journey. Although the heart aches, we wait. In the meanwhile, we wear white, "it has completely turned white, it is pure" (a play on Vayikra 13:13).

[MF – It is worth noting what Rav Aviner once answered in regard to the question. What was Maran Ha-Rav Kook's attitude regarding Techelet?

Answer: When a Torah scholar, who wore Techelet on his Tzitzit, asked Maran Ha-Rav if he should also put Techelet on his Talit, he responded: "It is sufficient for you to have the Tzitzit with Techelet. Techelet on your Talit will be seen as casting dispersion on the earlier ones who did not put Techelet on their Tzitzit" (brought in "Sefer Ha-Techelet of Rav M. Bornstein, p. 192). "When Maran Ha-Rav saw that Ha-Rav David Cohain, Ha-Nazir, put Techelet on his Tzitzit, he asked him: Do you feel the lack of the Techelet on your Tzitzit and

that you have a need for it? Ha-Nazir took this as a criticism and ceased putting on the Techelet. After a short time, Maran Ha-Rav came in a second time and said to him: Nu, nu, continue putting the Techelet on your Talit. Ha-Nazir however held fast to the first comment and refrained from doing so, and only put on the Techelet in private after the death of Maran Ha-Rav" (ibid., p. 188). I – the lowly one – heard the story in the following version: "When Maran Ha-Rav saw Ha-Nazir wearing Techelet on his Tzitzit, he rebuked him that he should not follow a path about which almost all the great Rabbis of Israel had reservations. Ha-Rav then entered his room and after a few minutes came out again and said to Ha-Nazir that there is nonetheless a place for this. Despite that this is not the path to be followed by the community, unique individuals may follow it, and since Ha-Nazir is unique and special, he could follow this special path."]

Nighttime Shema in a different room

Q: Is it permissible to say the Nighttime Shema in one room and sleep in another room?

A: Yes, there is no problem of an interruption, unlike a blessing over benefiting from the world (Birchot Nehenin). For example, if I recite the blessing over an apple, I have to eat the apple right away and not walk around. But this is a blessing of praise, which does not require the same alacrity.

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