

Dear R. Mansour,

I am writing you regarding your daily halacha in which you mention tekhelet (<http://www.dailyhalacha.com/displayRead.asp?readID=785>) as follows:

Some people include in their Sisit a string colored with a bluish dye, which they identify as the original Techelet dye with which the Torah requires dyeing one of the Sisit strings. Hacham Ben Sion writes (listen to audio recording for precise citation) that a person whose father and grandfather did not wear a dyed Sisit string should not follow this practice. Doing so gives the appearance of belittling one's forebears, and claiming to know more about Misva observance than previous generations. This is particularly so in light of the fact that the Torah leaders of today do not wear Techelet strings. It is unclear altogether whether the dye worn by some people today is indeed the original Techelet dye, as this issue is subject to controversy. In any event, it is disrespectful to today's Torah sages to wear this dye and give the appearance of thinking that one knows more than them. There are some Hassidic sects, specifically the followers of the Radzhiner Rebbe, who have a tradition dating back several generations to wear a certain kind of dye. But while for them it is legitimate to follow their predecessors' custom, for the rest of us it would be inappropriate to wear Sisit in a way that our fathers and grandfathers never did.

God willing, Mashiah will soon arrive and show us the authentic Techelet, so that we can all perform the Misva in the most preferred manner.

First permit me to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and admiration for your daily halacha – I have referenced it on more than one occasion and it has helped to clarify halacha l'maaseh as well as taamei ha'halacha – hazak u'baruch. Now, regarding the points you raised:

Tradition

You wrote that a person who does not have a tradition for wearing tekhelet should not do so. This would seem reasonable enough, as there is an accepted general principle that one should follow the traditions of his forebears. This principle, however, breaks down when the "tradition" is not one *accepted* upon our forebears but *forced* upon them due to negative circumstance. For example, no one would say that all the Russians who were prevented for generations from performing brit mila now have a tradition to not have brit mila. As such, tekhelet, which was quit by force of exile, must surely be reinstated at the first opportunity.

Respect

You emphasized that wearing tekhelet portends of arrogance toward our forebears as well as towards today's Torah leadership. Regarding our forebears, as mentioned, their "tradition" was one borne of duress, forced upon them due to the exigencies of exile. Consequently, our wearing it now does not a serve to "belittle" our forebears but rather serves to extol them by virtue of our fulfilling the mitzvah they transmitted to us in part, but now in its complete form. Regarding the Torah leaders today, as you mentioned,

“the issue is the subject of controversy.” This means that there are two sides to the issue, and in a mahloket l’shem shamayim no one side can claim the other is acting in “disrespect” to the other. And it is important to note that there are a great many Torah leaders who have come out openly saying that one should wear tekhelet, not to speak of the Torah leaders who wear tekhelet but choose not to make public their decision.

D’Oraita

You concluded: “God willing, Mashiah will soon arrive and show us the authentic Techelet, so that we can all perform the Misva in the most preferred manner.” Though we all pray for the Mashiach’s arrival, there is no mitzvah in the Torah that is dependant on his arrival. In fact the opposite is true - we are obligated to do our utmost to perform every mitzvah as best we can in the hopes that our perfecting the world will bring his advent.

Also, it is important to note here that we are not talking about a “hiddur” which could be understood in your words: “the most preferred manner.” Rather, the element of tekhelet is an integral part of the mitzvah d’oraita. Rambam explains that the one mitzvah of tzitzit is composed of “shtei tziviot” - two “commandments” (white and blue). Rashi explains that one who performs the mitzvah of tzitzit without tekhelet has not performed a complete mitzvah (“aino mitzvah sheleimah”). And the Ramban explains that the whole “remembrance” that the tzitzit are to effect are in the tekhelet string.

It is my hope that you find this response of sufficient interest that it inspires you to reconsider your position on this important mitzvah which we believe has been returned to our people after 1300 years.

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