

PIRCHEI SHOSHANIM SHULCHAN ARUCH LEARNING PROJECT

Hilchos Shaatnez Shiur 6

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Prohibition of Kilayim: Wool and Linen

Simon 298

SEIF 298

THE MECHABER SAYS

No fabric is prohibited because of Kilayim, other than, wool from sheep or rams together with linen.

Source:

In Deut. 22:11 the Torah says as follow:

“Do not wear Shaatnez, wool and linen together.”

The *Mishna* in *Kilayim* 9:1 says the Torah’s specification of wool and linen teaches us that only these materials are included in Kilayim prohibition.

Wool – From Sheep or Rams

The scriptural term wool refers exclusively to sheep’s wool and does not include fabrics made of hairs of any other animal.

The *Yerushalmi* (*Kilayim* 9:1) says in the name of *Rebbi Yeboshua Ben Levi*. The source for this is Kings 2:3. **“and the King of Moab paid the king of Israel 100,000 sheep and 100,000 rams wool”**. Since it does not say wool of 100,000 rams, this teaches us the term wool refers to rams’ wool only.

The *Tosefos Yom Tov* (*Kilayim* 9:1) says the *Yerushalmi* does not mean to exclude sheep’s wool – The *Yerushalmi* means the term wool refers to ram’s and sheep’s wool. Since sheep and rams are one family, rams are the males and sheep are the females, therefore the *Yerushalmi* found it unnecessary to be explicit.

Lambs wool.

The *Derech Emunah* (*Kilayim* 10:SK2) Says the term wool refers even to lamb's wool.

Question: The *Tiferes Yisroel* (*Menachos* 13: seif koton # 41) says “When lambs reach thirteen months and one day males are called rams and females are called sheep. Therefore the scriptural term “wool”, which explained above refers to sheep or rams, so it must be referring to sheep which are thirteen months old!?”

The *Gemora* in *Baba Kama* 65b quotes in the name of *Rava* – a ram who even one day old is called a ram. We learn this from Yaakov who said to Lavan (Genesis 31:38) “**Not once did I ever take a ram from your flocks as food.**” Says *Rava* does this imply that Yaakov took lambs? From here we see that the scriptural term rams refers to rams that are even one day old.

Tosefos in *Baba Kama* speaks out; the scriptural term “Ram” referring to sacrifices which are rams which are thirteen months old.

Linen

The scriptural term linen refers only to the authentic flax plant.

Linen is made from fibers found in the stem of the flax plant. The stem is made up of an inner woody core and an outer straw-like covering. In between, lying lengthwise, from the top to the bottom of the plant, are little groups of long fibers from which linen is produced. A gluey substance, called pectin, binds the fibers to each other and to the outer covering and to the woody inner core of the stem. The complete plant (50 to 100 cm high) is pulled out by its roots, and not cut in order to preserve the full length of the fibers.

The *Yerushalmi* (*Kilayim* 9:1) says “I would have said, even “linen of the sea”..... is included – since the Torah says “wool and linen” we therefore compare linen to wool – sheep's or ram's wool is termed simply “wool” so to linen refers to what is termed “linen” not “linen of the sea”.... Which are not termed “linen” by itself.

No fabrics are prohibited because of Kilayim, other than wool from sheep or rams together with linen.

But camel's hair, rabbit fur, Goat's hair and all other types of animal fiber's are permitted with linen. And so to hemp, cotton, and all other types of vegetables fibers are permitted even with wool from sheep and rams.

Camel's Hair

There are two types of camels: the dromedary, which is not heavy enough to produce usable fiber for cloth manufacture, and the Bactrian, the heavier, two humped, pack carrying species whose hair is suitable for cloth. This animal lives in all parts of Asia, from the Arabian Sea to Siberia, Turkistan, Tibet, Mongolia, Manchuria, and to all parts of China.

The camel has a fleece with an outer layer of coarse hair and an inner layer of finer hair like a Cashmere goat. The inner fibers, called down, run 1 to 5 inches, whereas the outer fibers range up to 15 inches. Down is used for clothing. The camel is never sheared or clipped like a sheep. At certain seasons, when the warmth of the body expands the skin, the animal sheds its hair. The hair is gathered from the ground. Only when soft underfibers or down is desired must the camel be plucked.

One of the most common uses of camel's hair is in men's and women's coats, because it has a high insulation quality and wears satisfactorily. It may also be found in Oriental rugs, blankets, and sweaters.

Question: The *Shulchan Aruch* paskens that camel's hair is permitted with linen. Therefore, if I purchase a coat today made from camel's hair and linen is it permitted to be worn?

Answer: Wool is often added to camel's hair for various reasons

1. Wool is often added to camel's hair to give it strength in spinning into yarn. However, the more wool added, the coarser the fabric becomes.
2. The camel's natural pale tan hair is sometimes blended with other wools for the purpose of obtaining light-colored fabrics.
3. Camel's hair can also be blended with cheaper grades of fibers to bring down the cost.

Conclusion: Since camel's hair is often blended with wool and the wool may not be listed on the content label, therefore one should not wear the coat unless it was tested by a certified *Shatnez* laboratory.

Rabbit's Fur

Common rabbit's hair is also used in the clothing industry. It is mostly used for felt hats.

The Angoras rabbit's fur has proved very popular for knitting. Such cloth will feel soft and luxurious.

Question: I went to U.S.S.R. and purchased a Russian fur hat made of 100% rabbit fur, can I wear it?

Answer: The content label is only required to list the content of the outside shell. It will never list the inner components. Russian hats of rabbit fur are commonly found to contain linen and wool in its inner linings.

A sweater made of Angoras rabbit fur can also be blended with wool and the wool may not be listed on the content label.

Goat's Hair

Wool from goat's hair is known as "specialty fibers":

Mohair:

Mohair is obtained from the Angora goat, which is raised in the Southwestern United States, South Africa and Turkey.

Mohair comes in different grades. Adult's and Kid's hairs are the broad classifications. Kid hair is the finest grade; adult hair, very strong and resilient, is the lowest grade. While the top grade is very expensive, it is one of the softest and the most luxurious of the wool and hair fibers widely used.

Cashmere:

The fleece is grown on the Kashmir goat, a small short-legged animal that resides in the high plateaus of Central Asia, in Chinese Mongolia, Soviet Outer Mongolia, Iran and Afghanistan.

The finest and most expensive fibers come from the Mongolia regions. These fibers are used mostly in sweaters. The coarser fibers from Iran and Afghanistan are used in woven cloth for coats and sports jackets. Cashmere is naturally gray, brown or white (white is very rare). Fleece of the animal is never shorn but is plucked out by hand.

Question: Regarding a tie made of cashmere and linen, do I have to be concerned with the probability of it being *Sbatnez*?

Answer: The amount of fibers from a single animal is very small: a male produces about 4 ounces and a female about 2 ounces per year. It is estimated that fleece from four to six animals would be needed for a sweater, or it takes one goat up to four years to make enough cashmere for one woman's sweater.

Articles made of 100% cashmere must therefore be high in price.

Today many department stores, are selling 100% Cashmere scarves, hats and sweaters at prices more suited for synthetic blends, at very reasonably low prices. How are they able to sell at such a reasonable price?

Cashmere fibers are priced by the length, longer fibers are more expensive, but they make stronger yarn and they last longer and resist pilling.

When manufactures are pressed to make a less expensive garment they do one of two things

- Use cheaper cashmere – instead of buying fur from the belly of the goats, they shall bid on the coarser hair found higher on the goats sides. Though it is not nearly as soft, it can still be labeled 100% cashmere.
- Some times they will lie, labeling sweaters that include wool blends that sag and don't last as long as pure cashmere.

Vegetable Fibers

Plants, which resemble linen and produce fibers, which can be spun and woven such as Ramie and Jute, are not included in the prohibition

Ramie

Ramie, known also as 'China grass' or 'Rhea' is cultivated mainly in China. It is a plant that grows to a height of 1-2m (4-6 ft) or more.

Jute

Jute is a bast fiber that comes chiefly from India, because the plant grows well in rich land, especially along tidal basins. The jute plant grows to a height of about 12 feet. It is cut off close to the ground when it is in flower.

Hemp

The *Yerushalmi* (*Kilayim* 9:1) and the *Shulchan Aruch* says "Canvas" is not included in the scriptural term "linen".

Question: The plant which is known to us as "hemp" is this the "canvas" which the *Yerushalmi* says is not included in linen or this is another type of linen and would therefore be prohibited to mix hemp and wool?

The basis of this question is because hemp is a plant structurally much the same as flax. The *Gemara* in *Zevachim* 18b says – How do we know that the scriptural term “B-D” refers to linen? Says *Rebbe Yossi the son of Rebbe Chanina* the term “B-D” means ‘singular’ we are referring to a plant which produces only one stalk from each seed.

Rabbeinu Ephraim (mentioned in *Tosefos*) says hemp which is also called (cannabis) is a type of linen, and would be prohibited to mix with wool – since hemp also grows in a singular manner similar to linen.

He brings proof to his opinion, because if the *Gemara* held hemp in not linen then the *Gemara* should of asked “who says “B-D” is referring to linen maybe it is referring to the hemp plant.

Rabbeinu Chaim Cohen (*Tosefos*) responded – linen (according to *Rashi*) grows, one stalk from every seed, hemp many stalks grow from every seed. Therefore hemp is not included in the scriptural term ‘linen’.

The *Piskei HaTosefos* in *Zevachim* #9 says the *Rabeinu Tam* also argues with the *Rabbeinu Ephraim*.

The *Tzon Kodashim* (a sefer found in the *Asifas Zekeinim*) says one has to be very concerned with the opinion of the *Rabbeinu Ephraim* because the hemp plant weakens the ground the same way linen weakens the ground and it is a plant structurally much the same as linen. They both grow in the same manner.

The *Mishna* in *Baba Metzija* 109a says

“One who leases a field from his friend for a few years – one should not plant linen because the linen plant weakens the ground, but if one leased the field for seven years one may plant linen”.

The linen plant weakens the ground so much that it takes six years for the ground to replenish its strength. Therefore, if one leased the ground for seven years the first year he may plant linen and not for the next six years, this way the ground will get back to it’s original strength and it will be returned to its owner in the same manner it was originally leased.

Concludes the *Tzon Kodashim* all these characteristics we also find in the hemp plant and, therefore, hemp should be considered linen.

The *Ohr Zarua Hagadol* (*Kilayim* Simon 266) supports the view of the *Rabeinu Ephraim* and brings proof from the Pasuk in *Yeboshua* “**Joshua the son of Nun sent two spies secretly from Shitim saying “go view the land, especially Jericho” and they went, and came to the house of... named Rehab. But the woman took the two men and hid them with the stalks of flax...**”

Says the *Ohr Zuma* – the linen which we are familiar with are straw-like not stalks – hemp is more like a stalk therefore hems is what the Torah forbade with wools.

The *Bais Sholomo* in *Yora Deah* Volume 2 Simon 179 discusses the opinion of the *Rabeinu Ephraim* at great length and he concludes that all the *Rishonim*, the *Tur*, the *Shulchan Aruch* and the *Achronim* disagree with the *Rabeinu Ephraim* and they do not consider hemp to be linen and therefore it is permitted to blend hemp with linen.

Even though the hemp plant is much the same as linen and they both grow the same way, this isn't enough of a reason to prohibit the hemp plant. The *Bais Sholomo* quotes the *Mareb Ponim* (*Yerushalmi Baba Metzjya* 9:7) who writes that the nature of the produce of each country depends on its climate, for this reason the same orange grown in California will not be the same as the one grown in Morocco. Concludes the *Bais Sholomo* that even if we discover the hemp plant is producing only one stalk per seed, which is the characteristics of linen mentioned by the *Gemara*, this will not override the psak of the *Shulchan Aruch* because hemp grown in this particular part of the world is behaving like linen due to the climate. However, in Eretz Yisroel it will produce many stalks per seed. The Halacha is based on how it grows in Eretz Yisroel.

If in Eretz Yisroel hemp is behaving like linen, would this override the psak of the *Shulchan Aruch*?

If "hemp" today has changed its characteristics from what it was in the times of the *Gemara* it will not become prohibited because this plant has already been established by *Chazal* as being permitted. The fact that it changes its behavior doesn't change it into being a different plant i.e. linen.

The final conclusion of the *Bais Sholomo*: "It is permitted to mix hemp with wool". However the *Bais Sholomo* says "a blessing will come on the fellow who wishes to follow the opinion of the *Rabeinu Ephraim*".

Cotton:

Cotton fibers come from a plant that ranges in height from 2 feet to 20 feet, depending upon the variety.

The plant requires a warm climate with about six months of summer weather for full development.

It blossoms and produces bolls, or pods, of cotton fibers. The cotton plant first buds, and about 21 days thereafter, creamy white to yellow flowers appear. These later turn red, and after about 3 days, wither and drop from the plant, leaving the ovary on the plant.

When the ovary ripens, a large pod, known as the cotton boll, is formed. Moist fibers growing inside the boll expand it until it is about 1 1/2 inches long and 1 inch in diameter. The boll opens approximately 1 1/2 to 2 months after the flowering stage.

The seeds are attached to these white fibers.

Cotton is noted for its versatility, its appearance and its performance and above all its natural comfort. From all types of apparel, sheets, towels, tarpaulins, tents, etc...

CONCLUSION

In conclusion –the fabrics prohibited together is nothing other than wool and linen.

One of the various reasons which partially explain to us why we are not allowed to wear Shatnez is found in the *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* chapter 21 who explains as follows:

On the fourteenth of Nissan, Adam announced to his sons, “On this day, the Jews will bring Pesach offerings to the Almighty and consume them at night. It is therefore proper that you should sacrifice on this day too.”

Thus, they both offered Karbanos. Cain “brought from the fruit of the earth an offering” (*Bereshis* 4:3) meaning that he brought various products of the earth, among them flax.

“And Hevel also brought from the first born of his flock” (*Bereshis* 4:4). Hevel’s offering included the wool on the sheep, (for the law of Hefshet i.e.: skinning the korban i.e. the burnt offering was commanded only after the giving of the torah (*Chagiga* 6B)).

Cain’s offering was not accepted by the almighty. Hevel’s offering was accepted. Cain was very jealous. His jealousy caused him to kill his brother Hevel.

The *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* states: “The offering of Cain and Hevel must not mingle, even in the weave of a garment”. The offering of Cain, the first to shed a man’s blood, must not mingle with the offering of Hevel.

Some say, the *Mechaber* hinted at this reason by beginning the halachos of Shaatnez with simon “ר-צ-ה” (298) which makes the word רצה which means ‘murder’, and ends with the halachos of *Shaatnez* with simon “ש”ר which is an acronym for “שפיכת דמים”, which means killing [lit. spilling of blood].