

THE YESHIVA PIRCHEI SHOSHANIM SHULCHAN ARUCH PROJECT

Hilchos Shatnez Lesson 1

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Prohibition of Kilayim: Wool and Linen

Simon 298, Seif 1

SIMAN 298:1

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

SOURCE

In Devarim. 22:11 The Torah states as follows:

“Do not wear Shaatnez, wool and linen together”

The *Mishna* in *Kilayim* 9:1 writes:

That the Torah’s specification of wool and linen teaches us that only these materials are included in the *Kilayim* prohibition.

Wool – From Sheep or Rams?

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

The *Yerushalmi* (*Kilayim* 9:1) writes in the name of **Rebbi Yehoshua Ben Levi**,

That the source for this is Melachim 2:3.

“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 *Tosafos Yom Tov (Kilayim 9:1)* states:

The *Yerushalmi* does not mean to exclude sheep’s wool. The *Yerushalmi* understands the term wool as referring to rams and sheep wool. Since sheep and rams are one family (rams are male and sheep are female), the *Yerushalmi* found it unnecessary to be explicit.

Lambs Wool

The *Derech Emunah (Kilayim 10: Seif Katan 2)* says the term wool refers even to lambs wool.

Question: The *Tiferes Yisroel (Menachos 13: Seif Katan # 41)* says “When lambs reach thirteen months and one day, males are called rams and females are called sheep.” The scriptural term “wool” refers specifically to the hair of rams. Rams according to the *Tiferes Yisroel*, must be thirteen months old and one day, therefore how does the *Derech Emunah* know the term wool refers even to lamb’s wool?

Answer: The *Gemora* in *Baba Kama 65b* quotes in the name of **Rava** – a male sheep of 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!!! – This teaches us the scriptural term rams refers to rams that are even one day old.” The scriptural term “Wool,” which also refers to rams, also includes hair of rams of one day old.

However, *Tosafos* in *Baba Kama* says, “Rams”, referring to sacrifices, are thirteen months and one day old. The *Tiferes Yisroel* also refers to scriptural terms regarding sacrifices.

Linen

What is linen? 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 – 20 to 40 inches) is pulled out by its roots and is not cut in order to preserve the full length of the fibers.

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

Source

The *Yerushalmi* (*Kilayim* 9:1) says “one would include in the prohibition, even “linen of the sea...” the Torah is juxtaposing the terms “wool” and “linen”. The *Yerushalmi* infers from the juxtaposition that linen has to be understood in a similar manner as wool; sheep’s or ram’s wool is termed simply “wool”, so too “linen” refers to what is termed “linen” and not “linen of the sea...” which are not termed “linen” by itself.

SIMAN 298:1

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.

I would like to illustrate the fibers mentioned by the **Mechaber**.

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 Asia, from the Arabian Sea to Siberia, Turkistan, Tibet, Mongolia, Manchuria, and all 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. Camels are never sheared or clipped like a sheep; rather, during certain seasons, when the warmth of the body expands the skin, the animal sheds its hair. The hair is gathered from the ground. The camel is plucked only when the soft under fibers or down is desired.

One of the most common uses of camel hair is in men’s and women’s coats, because camel hair 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 hair is permitted with linen. Therefore, if I purchase a coat made from camel hair and linen am I permitted to wear it?

Answer Wool is often added to camel hair for various reasons

1. Wool is often added to camel hair to give it strength in spinning into yarn. However, the more wool that is 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 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, one should therefore not wear the coat unless a certified Shatnez laboratory tested it.

Rabbit's fur:

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

The Angoras rabbit's fur has proved very popular for knitting. Such cloth feels 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 rabbit fur hats commonly 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": Commonly used goats hair is **Mohair** and **Cashmere**.

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 and kids 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 region. 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 Do I have to be concerned that a tie made of cashmere and linen is Shatnez?

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 are therefore 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 so longer fibers are more expensive but they make stronger yarn and they last longer and resist piling. When manufactures are pressed to make a less expensive garment they do one of two things:

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

Conclusion: Since cashmere is often blended with wool and the wool may not be listed on the content label, one should not wear it unless a certified Shatnez laboratory tested it.

SIMAN 298

SEIF 1

CONTINUED

And so too hemp, cotton, and all other types of vegetables fibers are permitted even with wool from sheep and rams.

The first part of the **Mechaber** discusses animal fibers, now he discusses vegetable Fibers

Plants that resemble linen and produce fibers, which can be spun and woven, for example: 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. It can be harvested up to six times a year, and requires a high rainfall and rich soil. Ramie is white, lustrous, and dyes well, but it is non-elastic and lacks cohesion making it difficult to produce into a smooth yarn. It is used mainly in sewing threads, fishing nets and heavy industrial fabrics. It is also useful for upholstery fabrics; more recently it has been mixed with other fibers, such as cotton and rayon for clothing materials. For the hand spinner today it is available only in the form of tops or noils (waste from the machines, the fibers are very short).

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. Jute fibers are weaker than those of linen. Because jute is affected by chemical bleaches, it can never be made pure white. Jute is used chiefly for gunny sacks, burlap bags, cordage, and binding and backing threads for rugs and carpets.

SIMAN 298

SEIF 1

CONTINUED

And so too Kanbus i.e. hemp..... are permitted even with wool from sheep and rams.

Source that Kanbus is Hemp

The Tiferes Yisroel(Kilayim 9:1#6) translates Kanbus as Hemp.

What is Hemp?

Hemp (**cannabis satvia**) is a plant structurally much the same as flax and is processed in much the same way. Since 1965 the Dangerous Drug Act made it an offense to knowingly cultivate any plant of the Cannabis genus. It is therefore seldom available to hand spinners.

Hemp cloth was made for all kinds of farm uses: sacking, cleaning cloths, and wagon covers and so on. The fiber was also used for poor people’s clothes and sheets. Because of its strength, hemp was also commonly used for ropes and twine. Hemp, in its many varieties, requires a rich soil but does not exhaust the soil in the same way as flax. The plant grows, according to the species, from 2 meters up to 5 meters (5 ft up to 20 ft) high.

Because of its deep roots hemp is cut, not pulled up. It is then retted, broken, scratched, and hackled. It can also be dried and stripped to get the fiber, which is strong and durable and needs to be softened by pounding. In color it is darker than flax, and difficult to bleach and dye; so it is usually used in its natural state.

SIMAN 298

SEIF 1

CONTINUED

And so to Kanbus i.e. hemp..... are permitted even with wool from sheep and rams.

Source:

The *Yerushalmi* (*Kilayim* 9:1) “Canvas” is not included in the scriptural term “linen”.

Question: The plant 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 premise of this question is that hemp is a plant structurally much the same as flax. The Gemara in *Zevachim* 18b asks:

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 manner similar to linen (one stalk from each seed).

The proof he brings to his opinion is that if the Gemara held hemp in not linen then the Gemara should have 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 *Pischei HaTosefos* (*Zevachim* #9) says the *Rabbeinu Tam* also argues with the *Rabbeinu Ephraim*.

The *Tzon Kodashim* (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 in much the same way that linen weakens the ground and it is also a plant that is structurally much the same as linen. They both grow in the same manner.

The *Mishna* in *Baba Metz'ia* 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, he may plant linen in the first year. He may not plant for the next six years so that the ground will return to its original strength; so that it will be returned to its owner in the same manner it was originally leased.

Concludes the *T'zon Kodashim* that we find all these characteristics in the hemp plant and therefore, hemp should be considered linen.

The *Obr Zar'ua Hagadol* (*Kilayim* Simon 266) supports the view of the *Rabbeinu Ephraim* and brings proof from the *Pasuk* in *Yehoshua* “Yehoshua 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... Rahab. But the woman took the two men and hid them with the stalks of flax...”

Says the *Obr Zur'ua* – the linen which we are familiar with are straw-like not stalks – hemp is more like a stalk and therefore hemp is what the Torah forbade with wools.

The *Bais Shlomo* in *Yora Deah* Volume 2 Siman 179 discusses the opinion of the *Rabbeinu Ephraim* at great length he concludes; all the *Rishonim*, the *Tur*, the *Shulchan Aruch* and the *Acharonim* disagree with the *Rabbeinu Ephraim* 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 in that they both grow the same way, this isn't enough of a reason to prohibit the hemp plant. The *Bais Shlomo* quotes the *Mareb Ponim* (*Yerushalmi Baba Metz'ia* 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 Shlomo*: Even if we discover the hemp plant produces only one stalk per seed, which is the characteristic 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 behaves 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 behaves like linen, would this override the *pesak* 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; this plant has already been established by *Chazal* as being permitted and merely because it changes its behavior, it doesn’t change into being a different plant i.e. linen.

Final conclusion of the *Bais Shlomo*:

It is permitted to mix hemp with wool. However the *Bais Shlomo* says a blessing will come on the individual who wishes to follow the opinion of the *Rabbeinu 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 wither and drop from the plant after about 3 days, 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, appearance, performance and, above all, its natural comfort; from all types of apparel, sheets, towels, tarpaulins, tents etc...

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the fabrics prohibited together are 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.”

At that, 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 (Hagigah 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 “ג-צ-ה” (298) which makes the word רצה which means ‘murder’ and ends with the Halachos of Shatnez with Siman “ש”ד which is an acronym for “דמים שפיכת”, which means killing (lit. spilling blood).