



נדרי דף ע"ט

English Halacha Topics

Dedicated by Mr. and Mrs. Mayer and Chaya Rivka Fischl

Rambam's Opinion on Nedarim and Tzitzis

We begin the new perek with the guidelines of which nedarim can be nullified with hafarah. Who are we talking about? The Ran says it's talking about both a husband to his wife, and a father to his daughter.

However, the Rambam argues. He writes that the limitations apply only to a husband; a father can do hafarah on all nedarim his daughter makes (Hilchos Nedarim 12:1).

The problem is that a Sifri explicitly states that a father can nullify only those which a husband can? This question was posed to the Rambam himself, by the Chachmei Lunil. The Rambam responded that he was aware of that Sifrei, but he did not believe it was the accepted halacha, as this comparison between husband and father is not brought in any Gemara. It must be, concluded the Rambam, that the Sifrei reflects the minority opinion of Rabbi Shimon (the author of the Sifrei), and we do not follow it.

Interestingly, Rabbi Akiva Eiger (on that Rambam) directs us to a parallel sugya. The Rambam in Hilchos Tzitzis (1:10) holds that tzitzis strings do not need to be interwoven together (שזירה). Once again, the Chachmei Lunil asked on him from a Sifrei which states that they must be. And again, the Rambam defended his opinion based on the absence of the halacha in Shas, and maintained that the Sifrei is a minority view.

The halacha by tzitzis is not like the Rambam. The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 11:2) rules that the strings must be intertwined, and that it must be done lishmah, with intent for the mitzvah.

If it was not done lishmah, is it still kosher? It's a machlokes, and the Mishnah Berurah says we cannot rely on the lenient opinion. If the initial spinning was done lishmah, though, we can assume that the twisting following it was also done properly.

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How many times must the strings be twisted? The Mishnah Berurah (14) says twice is enough; “and if each string is folded over to get eight, there’s nothing wrong with it.” This implies that it’s preferably not to have eight strands. As Shaarei Teshuvah puts it, “we don’t protest.” However, Biyur Halacha cites the Artzos Hachaim that the most laudable mitzvah is eight! As a compromise, the custom today is to fulfill both opinions. First strings are made with four strands, and then two of such strings are twisted together to get a total of eight (Piskei Teshuvos 11).

There is another benefit from using more strands. In the next Seif, the Shulchan Aruch states that if the strings unravel, it’s kosher only if at least a minimum length of the strings remains twisted. (Piskei Teshuvos 13, note 76, brings either 4 or 4.8 cm.) Now, with our practice of using numerous strands, there’s greater chance of them staying kosher. Because even if several of the strands unravel, as long as two are still intact, it’s enough!

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