



# Intention when Tying *Tzitzit*

לעילוי נשמת  
 יואל אפרים בן אברהם עו"אל זלצמן ז"ל

**Question:** I am involved with a branch of the broad efforts to make *tzitzit* for IDF soldiers. We always have people say before tying that they are doing so for the *mitzva* of *tzitzit*. However, we received a *p'sak* that if someone forgets to make the declaration, the *tzitzit* are kosher, because coming to a center for tying *tzitzit* shows it is for the *mitzva*. Once, a man took the *tzitzit* to work on at home and then forgot to make the declaration. Can I assume the *tzitzit* are kosher?

**Answer:** There are a few halachic questions to deal with, including the extent to which *lishma* (intent for the *mitzva*) is needed. The *gemara* (Menachot 42b) says that the spinning of *tzitzit* strings must be done *lishma*, as the Shulchan Aruch rules (Orach Chayim 11:1). There is a *machloket* whether there is a *lishma* requirement for the attachment/tying of the *tzitzit* strings. The Rambam (Tzitzit 1:12) says that *lishma* is not required for that. He implies (see Beit

Yosef, OC 14) that the proof is from the fact that a *pasuk* is needed to disqualify a non-Jew from attaching them (Menachot 42a), even though generally a non-Jew's action relating to *mitzvot* is not considered *lishma*. The Rosh (Tzitzit 14) rules that the *tzitzit* must also be attached/tied *lishma*. Indeed, intuitively, this would be expected because tying is a more integral part of making the *tzitzit* and maybe even a major part of the *mitzva* (see Tosafot, Yevamot 90b) and should thus definitely require *lishma*. The Rambam may reason that it is not situationally clear that the spinning is for *mitzva* strings, so one needs positive *lishma*, whereas attaching the *tzitzit* to the garment is situationally clear that it is for the *mitzva* (Shut K'tav Sofer, OC 2). The bottom line is unclear. The Shulchan Aruch (OC 14:2) rules that if one attached the *tzitzit* without proper intention, he can rely on the Rambam to wear the garment, but that there is enough doubt about it that he should not recite a *beracha* on the *mitzva*.

Another area of doubt is what is needed to ensure things were done *lishma*. In the context of spinning, the Shulchan Aruch (OC 11:1) requires that one "say in the beginning of the spinning that he is doing it for the purpose of *tzitzit* or that he tell the woman 'spin for me *tzitzit* for a *tallit*.'" The Mishna Berura (ad loc. 4) stresses that this entails explicit speech, not sufficing with clear thought, and

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leaves it as an unsolved question whether, after the fact, if there was correct thought but no statement, the *tzitzit* could be used.

Putting the two matters together, the Be'ur Halacha (to 14:2) says that when there was proper intention without a statement of intent when attaching the *tzitzit*, one can assume the *tzitzit* are valid and make a *beracha* on them. He adds an additional reason for leniency – the standard assumption that the action was done for the *mitzva* is stronger for attaching the *tzitzit* than for spinning the strings. You spoke in your questions of a *p'sak* received, that going to a *tzitzit* making center may be even better than the Be'ur Halacha's case, as the surroundings bolster the logical assumption of *lishma*.

Your question comes down to whether your case is like the Be'ur Halacha's or is even better. It is likely better for the following reason. He received instruction that it should be done *lishma*, which we saw in the Shulchan Aruch (11:1) is equivalent to making the statement yourself. What is not

fully clear is whether the break in time and place between the instruction and the performance breaks the transference of *lishma*. It is very possible that the formal impact of the declaration passed (see Moadim U'zmanim 59), but the logic of it being on one's mind would remain. (If he had started right away and continued at home, it would be somewhat simpler (see Chazon Ish, OC 6:10).).

In short, the *kashrut* of the *tzitzit* stands on very strong ground. It still would be respectful and prudent to inform/ask the people in charge of these operations, who are in touch with the IDF rabbinate, to see if they agree that it meets their standards. ■

## Having a dispute?



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