

TZITZIS: IN OR OUT?

The Zohar tells the following episode:

Rebbi Chiyah and Rebbi Yosi were traveling and on their journey they noticed a man wrapped in tzitzis and armed with weapons.

Rebbi Yosi turned to Rebbi Chiyah and said, "This man is either wholly righteous or a fraud."

Rebbi Chiyah replied, "Our sages have taught to judge a man favorably."

"A man who travels, we are taught, should be equipped for prayer, be bearing gifts, and be prepared for battle. We know this from Yaakov, who readied himself to meet Esav with prayer, gifts, and battle. This man has two out of three," said Rebbi Chiyah. "He is wearing tzitzis for prayer and has weapons for battle; if he came this far you don't need to investigate anymore about the third item, gifts."

When the man neared them, they greeted him with "Shalom" but he did not respond.

Rebbi Chiya said, "He is missing one of three, because responding with 'Shalom' is a form of gift."

Rebbi Yosi replied, "Maybe he was in the middle of davening, or reviewing his study."

They continued walking silently in the same direction, until Rebbi Chiya and Rebbi Yosi parted

from the man. Once apart they began talking in learning.

The man then approached them and said, "Shalom."

"What did you think when I did not answer your greeting?" he challenged.

Rebbi Yosi answered, "We thought you were busy with either prayer or study."

The man said, "Hashem should judge you with mercy. I always used to greet people before they greeted me but once it backfired. The man I greeted was a bandit and he attacked me, and I barely escaped. Since then I have vowed never to greet a man unless I am certain of his character.

"When you greeted me, I could not attest to your stature because I did not see any sign of a mitzvah [i.e. I didn't see your tzitzis from the outside]. Only when you began discussing Torah did the road open for me to approach."

The man then delivered a discourse on the verse, "Mizmor l'Asaf, ach tov l'Yisroel."

Harav Levi Yitzchok, in his notes to the Zohar, explains the multiple levels of "shalom" mentioned here (the one of Rebbi Chiya, the one of Rebbi Yosi, and the one they expected to hear from the other traveler).



**A LOOK AT THE TORAH OF
HARAV LEVI YITZCHOK
THROUGH THE REBBE'S SICHOS**

CUSTOM VS. PRINCIPLE

This story teaches us a lesson regarding the Chabad custom to wear our tzitzis hanging out rather than tucked in.

There are two conflicting viewpoints and practices regarding the origin of this custom. My father-in-law, the Rebbe, conducted himself in two different ways at different occasions.

In Kisvei HaArizal, it says tzitzis should be worn inside.

Neither practice is the only absolute correct one, because there are *gedolei Yisroel* on either side of the argument.

There are those who are of the opinion that tzitzis worn outside gives a false pretence of greatness, while others claim that “*ure'isem oso*” means tzitzis need to always be visible.

This story is about *tana'im* and it is proof that even in their time there were already two modes of conduct and both were equally correct. It is only a matter of the situation and conditions that determine the actual behaviour.

DEPENDS ON CONTEXT

Rebbi Chiyah and Rebbi Yosi bore “no sign of a mitzvah” because they held that tzitzis should be inside, and that is why the man suspected them.

The man on the other hand was wrapped in tzitzis, visible to all.

Even when the man explained why he did not trust them, they felt no need to defend themselves for not wearing tzitzis out, like other stories in Zohar where, when challenged, the challenged party explains his position. This is because they did not feel guilty, and quite the opposite, they still maintained that their position was correct.

(Some commentaries say that this episode in Zohar is in conflict with the Arizal, but there is really no need to go that route, because as we explained, each mode of conduct is acceptable on its own. It is the time, place, and custom that causes the change.

The Arizal lived in an entirely different era than the story in Zohar and therefore he could have held differently than “the travelling man.” The time, place, and custom where he was, demanded wearing tzitzis tucked in.)

There is an opinion that Rebbi Chiyah and Rebbi Yosi weren't wearing any tzitzis at all, because they weren't wearing any clothing that had four corners on it.

This would still mean that Rebbi Chiyah and Rebbi Yosi did not subscribe to the opinion that tzitzis must always be seen, because they did not have tzitzis at all, and if you are not wearing them, they are certainly

not visible. Therefore they must have held that tzitzis, when worn, should be tucked inside.

HOW WAS IT DONE IN LUBAVITCH?

An illustrative example of how certain practices are encouraged or discouraged depending on circumstances:

There was a *shochet* in Lubavitch who started wearing *kaloshin* (Russian style boots) and was ousted from his position due to the modernity of these boots. We find however that years later the Rebbeim themselves wore *kaloshin*!

The reason is that in the time when the *shochet* wore the *kaloshin*, no G-d fearing Jews wore them. Years later, however, it became the practice of the G-d fearing Jews to wear them and henceforth it became appropriate.

The same thing can be said about how tzitzis should be worn. Everything we mentioned before was only to stimulate Torah discussion, but from a practical perspective, since G-d fearing Jews today wear their tzitzis out, it is not debatable what should be done. In fact one who leaves his tzitzis tucked in, demonstrates that he does not want to be included among the G-d fearing Jews of today. Today Tzitzis should be worn for everyone to see. **T**

לזכות
הת' לוי יצחק שיחי'
דרגל הגיעו לעול מצוות י' טבת ה'תש"פ
נדפס ע"י הוריו
הרה"ת ר' דובער וזוגתו מרת רחל
ומשפחתם שיחי'
גרינבערג
שלוחי כ"ק אדמו"ר,
אוניברסיטת סטנפורד, קאליפורניא