

# HALACHICALLY SPEAKING

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{ TOPIC }

## Covering Head with a *Tallis*



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# HALACHICALLY SPEAKING

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► Halachically Speaking is a monthly publication compiled by Rabbi Moishe Dovid Lebovits, a former *chaver kollel* of *Yeshiva Torah Vodaath* and a *musmach* of *Harav Yisroel Belsky Shlita*. Rabbi Lebovits currently works as the Rabbinical Administrator for the KOF-K Kosher Supervision.

► Each issue reviews a different area of contemporary *halacha* with an emphasis on practical applications of the principles discussed. Significant time is spent ensuring the inclusion of all relevant *shittos* on each topic, as well as the *psak* of *Harav Yisroel Belsky, Shlita* on current issues.

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# Covering Head with a *Tallis*

In shul many men place their *tallis* over their head for the entire davening. Some do so only after *Barchu*, while others do not cover their head with a *tallis* at all. What is the reasoning behind covering one's head with a *tallis*, and is one required to do so? Is it a custom or halachah? Should a *tallis* cover the head for the entire davening or only during certain parts?

## The Lenient Approach

The opinion of the *Baal Ha'itur*<sup>1</sup> is that as long as one is wearing a yarmulke so that his head is covered while making the *brachah* on the *tallis*, this is enough and there is no requirement to place a *tallis* on his head as well.<sup>2</sup>

## The Stricter Opinion

The *Beis Yosef*<sup>3</sup> mentions that it is the practice of those who are “modest” to cover their heads with a *tallis*, even if they are already wearing a head covering. This is quoted in the Bach,<sup>4</sup> as well as others.<sup>5</sup>

1 This is cited in the Tur, O.C. 8. See *Beis Yosef*.

2 See *Shaarei Teshuvah* 3; *Taz* 3; *Aruch Hashulchan* 6. Some mention that according to the *Baal Ha'itur*, when putting on a *tallis* and making the *brachah* one does not have to cover his head with the *tallis* (*Aruch Hashulchan* 5). For more on this, see *Imrei Shalom* 4:3.

3 8.

4 8.

5 *Olos Tamid* 8; *Chesed Lalafim* 8:3; *Kaf Hachaim* 11. See *Aruch Hashulchan* 8:6.

כל השנה הלכות בכל יום מובטח להשתדל בן עולם הזה... (מדה עב)

## The Rema

*Darchei Moshe*,<sup>6</sup> the Rema's commentary on the *Beis Yosef*, mentions that although it's a mitzvah to listen to the *Beis Yosef*, in this situation the halachah follows the *Baal Ha'itur* mentioned above.

## Shulchan Aruch

When discussing covering one's head with a *tallis*, the Shulchan Aruch<sup>7</sup> mentions that "it is proper" to do so.<sup>8</sup> Based on this, even if one does cover his head it's a proper thing to do and not an obligation.<sup>9</sup>

## Entire Davening

The opinion of the Bach<sup>10</sup> is that one should leave his head covered with his *tallis* throughout the entire davening. This is quoted by others as well.<sup>11</sup> Some mention that this means from the beginning of davening until the end, and not just for *Shemoneh Esrei*. Even if one is lenient and only covers his head for certain parts of davening, he should cover it for *Shemoneh Esrei* and *Chazaras Hashatz*.<sup>12</sup>

## After Barchu

Many have the custom to cover their head from after *Barchu* until after *Shemoneh Esrei*.<sup>13</sup>

6 8:4. See *Prishah* 5.

7 8:2.

8 Refer to *Yechaveh Daas* 5:1.

9 *Yalkut Yosef* 8, footnote 28. *Biurei Ha'Gra* 8:6 mentions that one should cover his head "mi'tzad hamussar." Refer to *Radvaz* 1:343.

10 8:5.

11 *Mishnah Berurah* 8:4.

12 Harav Yisroel Belsky *zt"l*.

13 *Imrei Shalom* 4:3.





## Purpose of the Tallis Covering

Covering one's head with a *tallis*, in addition to one's regular head covering, brings one to humility and *yiras Shamayim*.<sup>14</sup>

## Other Opinions

The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*<sup>15</sup> mentions that after one makes the *brachah* on the *tallis* and covers his head, he may remove the *tallis* from his head.<sup>16</sup>

Elya Rabbah<sup>17</sup> mentions that one's *tallis* should cover his head from the beginning of davening until the end. One shouldn't be like those who take their *tallis* off their head and place it on their shoulders.

## Unlearned Person

The *Magen Avraham*<sup>18</sup> mentions that if one is not a learned person, even if he is married he should not cover his head with a *tallis*.<sup>19</sup>

## Chazzan Covering His Head

A *chazzan* should always keep his head covered during *davening*.<sup>20</sup> Some are lenient when it is hot, but he should keep his head covered during *Krias Shema*, *Shemoneh Esrei*, *Krias HaTorah*, and *Chazaras Hashatz*.<sup>21</sup>

14 *Beis Yosef; Be'er Heitiv* 3; *Ateres Tzvi* 8:3.

15 9:8.

16 See *Chayei Adam* 12:3.

17 8:4.

18 8:3.

19 Refer to *Kaf Hachaim* 8:11. See *Magen Avos*, O.C., pages 58-59.

20 *Aruch Hashulchan* 53:18; *Mishneh Halachos* 15:23.

21 *Olas Yitzchak* 2:12:2. Some did not approve of one wearing a straw hat for *davening* unless he would stand like that in front of a *gadol* (*Teshuvos Avigdor Halevi*, pages 127-128, 65).



איך ללמוד להלכה של אמותי... (ברכות ה')

## ***Ein K'Elokeinu***

Before reciting *Ein K'Elokeinu*, some have the custom (based on Kabbalah) to remove the *tallis* from their head.<sup>22</sup>

## ***Aleinu***

The *Machzik Brachah*<sup>23</sup> mentions that the *tefillah* of *Aleinu* is more praiseworthy than any other *tefillah*, and it should be said with a *tallis* on his head or a hat.<sup>24</sup>

## **Single Boy**

A single boy should not cover his head with a *tallis* (if his custom is to wear one).<sup>25</sup>

## **Yom Kippur**

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, many men are accustomed to covering their head more often with their *tallis*, especially during *Neilah*. Some have the practice to recite *Ashrei* and *Uva L'tzion* without a *tallis* on the head.<sup>26</sup>

## ***Krias HaTorah***

In Chassidic circles the custom is that the *tallis* is not kept on the head for *krias haTorah*, but the Rebbe wears his *shtreimel* during *krias haTorah*.<sup>27</sup>

Harav Chaim Kanievsky, *shlita*, mentions that if by keeping a *tallis* on one's head he will not be able to hear *krias haTorah* properly, then he does not have to keep his head covered with a *tallis*. However, otherwise he should keep it

22 *Otzar Minhagei Chabad, Elul-Tishrei*, page 235:251.

23 132:2.

24 Also see *Orach Ne'eman* 132:10.

25 *Magen Avraham* 8:3; *Mishnah Berurah* 4. See *Mor U'ketziah* 8 on this.

26 *Otzar Minhagei Chabad, Elul-Tishrei*, pages 235-236:252.

27 *Imrei Shalom* 4:3.

כל השנה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא... (תדה עב.)

on his head.<sup>28</sup> Even if one can hear the *leining* the custom is that one does not cover his head during it, since *krias haTorah* is considered learning Torah and not davening.<sup>29</sup>

## During the Heat

Although it is proper to cover one's head during davening, as mentioned above, in the summer when it is hot and hard to concentrate during davening some say that one can be lenient.<sup>30</sup>

## Other Customs

The *Keser Shem Tov*<sup>31</sup> says that in London, the custom was that people did not cover their heads with a *tallis* when reciting any *brachah* or during davening. Only the chazzan and the *baal tokei'a* did so on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Hoshanah Rabbah. In Amsterdam, the custom was that the Rav and Dayan would cover their head during davening.

In South Africa, the custom is that most people do not cover their heads with a *tallis* during davening, and it is only the learned people who do so. One who is not a Rav and covers his head with a *tallis* is regarded as a show-off.<sup>32</sup>

## The Opinion of Harav Yosef Ber Soloveitchik, *zt"l*

The opinion of Harav Yosef Ber Soloveitchik, *zt"l*, as mentioned by Harav Hershel Shachter, *shlita*, in *Nefesh*

28 *Daas Noteh* 1, page 284, footnote 107.

29 Harav Yisrael Belsky, *zt"l*.

30 Harav Yisrael Belsky, *zt"l*; *Olas Yitzchak* 2:12:2. See *Yalkut Yosef* 8, footnote 28, which mentions Harav Ovadia Yosef, *zt"l*, who was not so careful to always keep his head covered with his *tallis* since it was possible that keeping it covered may have had an effect on his concentration during *davening*. For more on this, see *Otzros Yosef* 1:22. Refer to *Od Yosef Chai*, *Bereishis* 6; *Sdei Chemed*, *Mareches Hagimmel* 71.

31 1, pages 4-5:1.

32 *Divrei Shalom V'emes* 3, page 193:3.

*Harav*,<sup>33</sup> is that one should cover his head for “*devarim sh’bekedushah* (such as *Kaddish* and *Barchu*), as well as *Shemoneh Esrei*, but one should remove it from his head during *Birkas Krias Shema* (author’s note: although one doesn’t see this being done too often).<sup>34</sup>

### The Sharp Words of the Be’er Moshe

The following is paraphrased from the Be’er Moshe’s<sup>35</sup> response to those who do not cover their head with a *tallis*:

“Now I would like to talk about the ‘bad’ custom in America; G-d forbid to call it a *minhag*, but a bad act. It is bad in my eyes that people take off their *tallis* from their heads during davening and only daven with a yarmulke on their heads. One, their head should be covered during davening, and second, it is not *derech erez* and respectful to stand in front of the *Shechinah* as one does when he is talking to his friend. It is a great wonder in my eyes that this bad custom of davening with only a yarmulke has developed in certain Chassidish shuls as well and they are not embarrassed. One should do what he can to rectify this.”

33 Page 104.

34 For a discussion on this opinion, see *Beis Yosef Shaul* 5754, pages 104-108.

35 5:2.

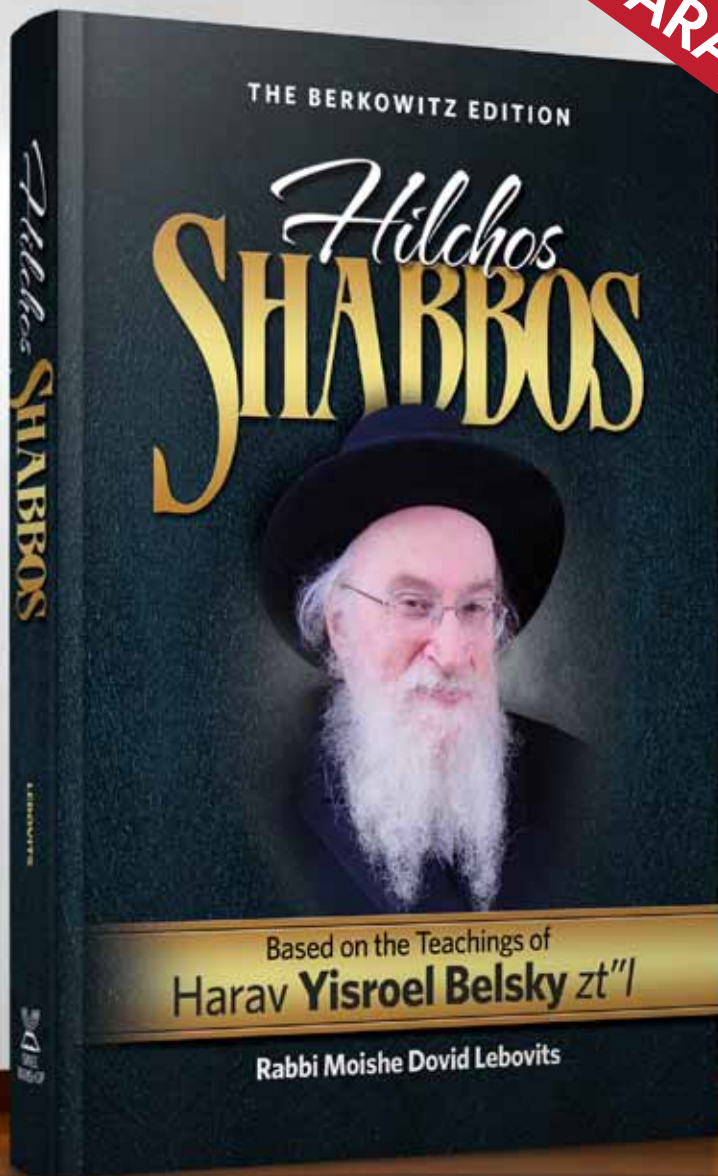
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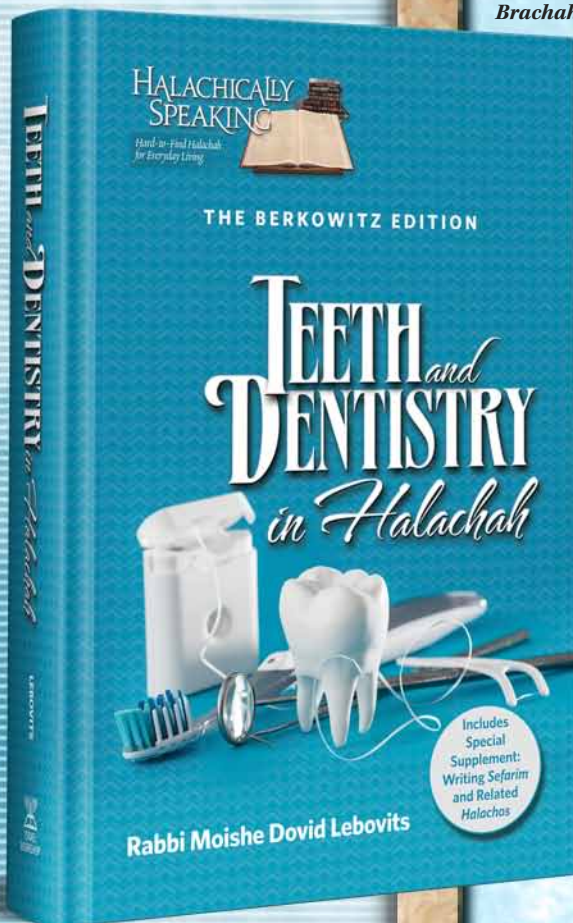


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*Shabbos* Carrying  
*Shabbos* – *Muktzeh*  
Brushing Teeth on *Shabbos*  
Dental Emergencies on *Shabbos*  
*Moadim* – General  
*Pesach* – General  
*Pesach* - *Kashering* Teeth  
*Pesach* – *Matzah*  
Waiting Between Meat and Dairy  
*Kashrus* of Mouthwash / Toothpaste / Listerine  
Pocket Packs and Dental Floss  
*Niddah*  
Day of *Mikvah* and Teeth  
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*Yoreh Deah* Miscellaneous  
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