

Q&A from the Bais HaVaad Halacha Hotline

Keeping Watch

April 27, 2023

Q May I keep my watch on my wrist while wearing tefillin?



A The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 27:4) writes, "There must not be any *chatzitzah* (obstruction) between the tefillin and one's skin, whether the *shel yad* or the *shel rosh*." The Rama comments, "This applies only to the actual tefillin, not to the *retzuos*." Accordingly, one may wear a watch. But the Magein Avraham (ibid. 5) is hesitant about this leniency, and the Biur HaGra and Pri Megadim (ibid. M.Z. 4) concur. The Mishnah Brurah (ibid. 14) only forbids a *chatzitzah* under the *retzuah* at the first coil, above the elbow. Contemporary *poskim* write that the custom is to follow the stringent view and not wear a watch (Teshuvos Vehanhagos 2:26). Some suggest that a watch with a leather band should be permitted under the principle of *min bemino eino chotzeitz* (an object of the same material is not a *chatzitzah*). But various *poskim* contend that that principle is inapplicable here (see Cheishev Ha'eifod 1:21 and Doveiv Meisharim 2:37). The Yabia Omer (O.C. 2:2) writes that a watch may be worn *lechat'chilah* under the seventh coil of the *retzuah*.

An insignificant *chatzitzah*, like a small amount of dirt, is treated more leniently than a watch, and all agree that it is not considered a *chatzitzah* for *retzuos* (Teshuvos Vehanhagos ibid.). Likewise, if one has a Band-Aid on his arm, it may be left in place to avoid irritation. But a Band-Aid on the upper arm, under the first coil of the *retzuah* or under the *bayis*, must be removed. If doing so will cause pain, a *rav* should be consulted.