

CARRYING GARMENTS ON SHABBOS

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

The following is a discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

Moshe commanded that they proclaim throughout the camp...(36:6) From here we derive the prohibition of carrying on Shabbos (Shabbos 96b)

QUESTION: In an area where it is forbidden to carry on Shabbos, is it permitted to wear a jacket over the shoulders with the sleeves hanging free?

DISCUSSION: There are two reasons why it may be forbidden to wear a jacket in this manner: 1) Wearing a jacket over the shoulders may not be considered "wearing" at all, but rather "carrying," since the normal way of wearing a jacket is by inserting the arms into the sleeves; 2) The jacket may slip off and inadvertently be picked up and carried a distance of four amos, thus possibly violating a prohibition of the Torah.

There are conflicting opinions among the poskim regarding the validity of these concerns: Many poskim maintain that neither concern is valid and that one is permitted to wear a jacket over his shoulders(1). Harav M. Feinstein is quoted(2), however, as forbidding it under any circumstances. There are poskim(3) who permit wearing a jacket over the shoulders, but nevertheless advise that it not be worn over the shoulders in a public domain (reshus ha-rabim min ha-Torah).

QUESTION: In an area where it is forbidden to carry on Shabbos, is it permitted to wear a garment that has extra (reserve) buttons sewn onto it?

DISCUSSION: Most poskim allow one to wear garments with extra (reserve) buttons sewn onto them(4). There are several reasons given for this leniency: 1) The buttons have no importance in and of themselves and are, therefore, secondary to the garment; 2) Garments are normally manufactured with extra buttons sewn onto them; 3) Since the buttons are sewn onto the garment they are considered an extension of the garment(5).

QUESTION: In an area where it is forbidden to carry on Shabbos, is it permitted to wear a garment which has a price tag or a cleaning tag attached to it?

DISCUSSION: If the owner of the garment is not planning to remove the tag from the garment, it is definitely permitted to wear the garment on Shabbos(6). This is because the tag is of no consequence to the wearer and thus becomes secondary to the garment.

If the owner of the garment plans to remove the tag, however, some poskim rule that the garment may not be worn in an area where carrying is prohibited(7). In their view, the tag cannot be considered to be of no consequence since it is of sufficient consequence that one cares to remove it. Other poskim, however, permit the garment to be worn with the tag on it. In their view, only expensive objects are important in and of themselves and do not become secondary to the garment(8). Ideally, however, cleaning and price tags should be removed before Shabbos(9).

QUESTION: In an area where it is forbidden to carry on Shabbos, is it permitted to wear a garment whose belt is looped through the back loops but hangs loose (unfastened) in the front?

DISCUSSION: If the belt is sewn onto the garment, it is permitted(10). If the belt is not sewn onto the garment, there is a difference of opinion among the poskim as to whether the garment may be worn with the belt unfastened(11).

QUESTION: Is it permitted to pull plastic bags over shoes in order to ease the shoes into boots?

DISCUSSION: Parents often put plastic bags over their children's feet or shoes to enable them to pull their boots on more easily. These plastic bags are not considered garments, and it is therefore forbidden to wear them if one will be walking in an area where one may not carry(12).

FOOTNOTES

1. Tzitz Eliezer 13:33; Az Nidberu 14:14; Orchos Rabbeinu 1:137 quoting the Chazon Ish who permitted doing so and even did so himself; Harav P.E. Falk (Zachor v'Shamor, sec. 39, pg. 43).
2. The Shabbos Home, pg. 107. His reason, however, is not specified.
3. Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah, pg. 204. See also Be'er Moshe 3:63.
4. Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in Rivevos Efrayim 4:87 and in l'Torah v'Hora'ah 1:8); Harav S. Z. Auerbach (quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah, pg. 215); Harav S. Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Machazeh Eliyahu, pg. 126); Az Nidberu 2:40.
5. The various reasons for leniency are presented in Machazeh Eliyahu 43. For a dissenting, more stringent opinion, see Be'er Moshe 3:67.
6. Shevet ha-Levi 2:61.
7. Az Nidberu 2:45; Harav M. Shternbuch in Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 1:240.

8. Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in l'Torah v'Hora'ah 1:8); Minchas Yitzchak 3:36. Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah, pg. 220.
9. Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in l'Torah v'Hora'ah 1:8).
10. Mishnah Berurah 301:135.
11. Chelkas Yaakov 2:130; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah, pg. 215; Harav C.P. Scheinberg (quoted in The Shabbos Home, pg. 118) are lenient. Az Nidberu 13:15 and Be'er Moshe 3:62 forbid it.
12. Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in The Shabbos Home, pg. 121).

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