

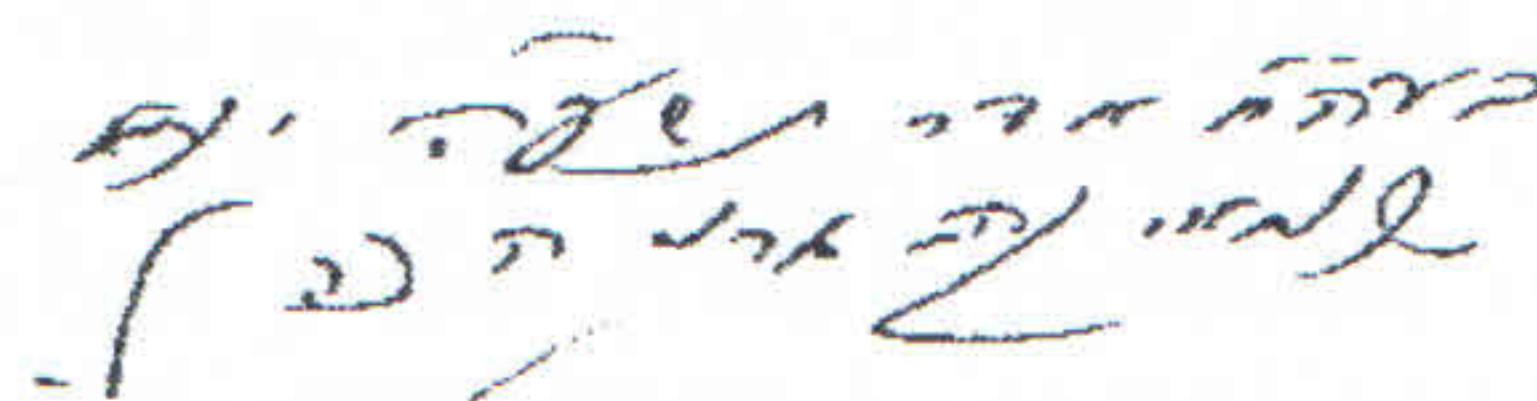


Inner Beauty

*A Brief Guide for Avreichim
to the Laws and Practice
of Tznius for Women*

Approbations

I have seen the *shiur* of HaRav HaGaon R' Gershon Meltzer *Shlita* on the *Dinim* of *Tznius HaLevush* for *Nashim*. I authorize that they are correct according to the Halachah and obligate all to follow them (this includes *Bnei Chutz La'aretz* who are currently staying in Eretz Yisroel). It is worthy for every *Avreich* to learn these Halachos.



Shamai Kehas Gross HaKohen

Hagaon HaRav Yisroel Ganz *Shlita* has given his *hascama* to the Hebrew version.

שאלה שנשאלה על ידי למרן ר' חיים קנייבסקי שליט"א
בכ"ז ניסן תשע"ה

וזה לשון השאלה: תקנות בי"ד משמר התורה שהוקם ע"י הגרי"ש אלישיב והגר"ש ווזנר לפסוק הלכות ולתקן תקנות בדיני צניעות ולבוש הנשים והגרי"ש אמר שזה בתוקף דת יהודית, האם זה מחייב כמנהג המקום גם את בני חו"ל הגרים או נמצאים בארץ ישראל?

תשובת מרן: כן, מחייב.

Rabbi Yitzchak Berkovits
Sanhedria HaMurchevet 113/27
Jerusalem, Israel 97707
02-5813847

יצחק שמואל הלוי ברקוביץ
ראש רשת הכוללים לינת הצדק
סנהדריה המורחבת 113/27
ירושלם ת"ו

בס"ד ירושלים ת"ו י"ט באב תשע"ב

Hagaon Rav Gershon Meltzer has compiled the halachos of tznius with the clarity and accuracy that he is famous for.

It is crucial for avreichim to understand that the inyanim of tznius are not mere hanhagos tovos or midos chassidus, but mandatory halacha for every bas yisroel, and they include issurim d'Oraisa and d'Rabbannan. This sefer makes that point with conviction and I am hopeful that the message will be well received.

It is of equal importance to note that the halachos of tznius are not a mere collection of rules. The principles of tznius are sensitivities and attitudes that Jewish women are expected to develop, appreciate and apply to the garb and situations of every society and generation. Much of what makes observing proper standards of tznius an issue for so many women is discomfort with the thought of conforming to regulations dictated to them without ample explanation appropriate for an intelligent, mature woman. That in addition to the fact that halacha is demanding of her to be different to so many frum women who out of ignorance keep different standards of dress and behavior. I would hope that husbands touched by this sefer will be inspired to use their skills of learning in depth to research the sugyos and reach a profound understanding of what tznius is, and share that with their wives. I would also hope that women themselves get together to discuss and develop the concepts of tznius and integrate them into their own lifestyles.

May HaShem grant us all a ruach tahara to restore the stature of Klal Yisroel as a Mamleches Cohanim v'Goy Kadosh.

בברכת כתיבה וחתימה טובה עפרה פאחבר שליט"א ועכ"פ בית ישראל

יצחק ברקוביץ

Please see the article "How to implement these guidelines at home" on page 26.

A Guide for *Avreichim* to the *Halachos* of *Tznius*

Based on a shiur by Hagaon Rav Gershon Meltzer shlita

The Importance of Studying the Laws of *Tznius* ~~~~~

The purpose of this text is to present the *halachos* of *tznius*, based on the relevant *sugyos* in the Gemara and the rulings of the *Poskim*, in a way that will make it possible for the readers to develop clear and precise knowledge of these *halachos*. Unfortunately, many people are unaware of these vital laws, and many *frum* women, even women whose husbands devote their lives to Torah study, dress in a way that violates these laws. Often, the failure to observe the laws of *tznius* properly is a result of the influence of society, and particularly the influence of close friends who are also unaware of the requirements of *halachah* on this subject. That is why it is crucial to be familiar with the sources and details of these laws; since many people practice leniencies that are *halachically* unacceptable, basing one's approach to *tznius* on the practices of others will undoubtedly lead to many such errors.

It is important to emphasize that the laws of *tznius* are just as much part of *halachah* as the laws of Shabbos, *kashrus*, and the like. We all appreciate the necessity of observing the laws of Shabbos with all of their details, and it is crucial to understand that we are equally bound by the *halachos* of *tznius*. Every detail of those laws stems from the Gemara, *Rishonim*, *Shulchan Aruch*, and other *Poskim*, and we must view all of these *halachos* as utterly inviolable. This text focuses on the actual *halachos* of *tznius*; we will not be discussing additional *chumros*.

The Gravity of the Laws of *Tznius* ~~~~~

Just how severe is the transgression of violating the laws of *tznius*? In the era of *Chazal*, if a woman violated these laws, she would be required to accept a divorce and would not be entitled to the payment of her *kesubah*.¹ (The *Poskim* debate whether a man is required to divorce

1. גמ' כתובות (ע"ב). שו"ע (אה"ע סי' קט"ו) ועיין סימן כ"א.

his wife for such an offense if he forgives her and wishes to remain married.²) Even though a woman who dresses immodestly would not suffer this fate today,³ this ruling of the Gemara serves as an indication of the severity that *Chazal* associated with a breach of *tznius*.

How to Teach these *Halachos* at Home

While married women must be taught the *halachos* of *tznius*, it is imperative for a husband to teach these laws to his wife in a gentle and compassionate way. The husband should make sure to praise his wife for her positive qualities and to reassure her that he appreciates her. He should stress that he is addressing this issue because the *Gedolim* have called for improved observance of the laws of *tznius*, and that although many people are unaware of it, the *halachah* prohibits certain ways of dressing, even some that are widely practiced. It is advisable for a husband and wife to study the laws of *tznius* together. The husband should also be encouraging and compliment his wife for every improvement she makes, however small it may be. A man who is unsuccessful in his efforts to improve the level of *tznius* in his home should seek *daas Torah* to determine how he can achieve that goal.

The Two Categories of *Halachos* of *Tznius*

The laws of *tznius* are divided into two categories: *Das Moshe* and *Das Yehudis*. The first category, *Das Moshe*, consists of the guidelines to *tznius* that are set forth in the Torah. The second category, *Das Yehudis*, encompasses all the laws of *tznius* formulated by *Chazal*, as well as the laws that are based on *minhag*. A married woman who violated *either* of these categories of *halachos*, in earlier generations, would have been subject to divorce and would not have been entitled to payment of her *kesubah*.⁴

Covering the Hair — Mandated by the Torah

The requirement for a married woman to cover her hair is an example of *Das Moshe*, since it is a law that emerges from a *pasuk* in the Torah. This is derived by the Gemara from the *pasuk* that states that when a *sotah*, a married woman suspected of adultery, is brought to the Beis Hamikdash, the *kohen* must “uncover her head.” According to the Gemara, this indicates

2. עי' תוס' בסוטה (דף כה.), ורשב"א (גיטין דף פט. ד"ה מה), ובפתי"ש (אה"ע סי' קטו ס"ק יג.).

3. Nowadays, in general, married women are not forced to accept a divorce (*Rema Even HaEzer* 119:6). Although the *Rema* maintains that a woman who is guilty of violating Jewish law may be divorced even against her will, Rav Moshe Feinstein rules that this does not apply in contemporary times, and a husband may not force a divorce on his wife even if she refuses to cover her hair (*Igros Moshe* 114); see his *teshuvah* for further discussion of the subject.

4. שו"ע (אה"ע"ז סימן קט"ו ס"א וס"ד).

Covering the Body

Uncovering Even Less than a *Tefach* Is Prohibited

The *Mishnah Berurah*¹³ and other *Poskim* rule that a woman is required to cover her entire body, with the exception of the parts of the body that it is the *minhag* to leave uncovered, such as the face, hands, and portions of the feet. It is forbidden for a woman to expose any portion of a body part that is required to be covered, even if less than a *tefach* (8 – 9.6 cm) is exposed.¹⁴ In fact, most *Poskim* maintain that in the era of *Chazal*, a woman would have been subject to divorce for such an offense.

As an example of this, the *Gemara*¹⁵ states that a man whose wife wears a garment that is torn on the sides, in such a way that her flesh is exposed, is required by the Torah to divorce her. The *Aruch*¹⁶ adds that this applies not only to a garment that is torn under the arm, but to any garment that is torn in a place where it is accepted that *halachah* dictates that a woman must cover herself. Any flesh that can be seen through such a garment has the status of *ervah*, and a woman who dresses in this fashion is deemed a *perutzah* (indecent woman).

As a result of this *halachah*, it is forbidden for a woman to wear short sleeves and thereby expose her elbows. This is prohibited even on an occasional basis.¹⁷ As noted above, since this is a law that was formulated by *Chazal*, it is included in the category of *Das Yehudis*.

A Garment with Buttons

The *Poskim* point out that garments that are fastened with buttons – such as certain house-coats, skirts, and the like – often lead to severe breaches of the laws of *tznius*, since a woman's flesh may become visible through the gaps between the buttons as she moves around. This would violate a law of the *Gemara*, which is a very grave offense. In order to avoid this, a woman should add snaps between the buttons on such garments.

Similarly, a woman should make sure to wear a shirt that is long enough to cover her back even when she bends forward.

13. מ"ב (סי' ע"ה סק"ב).

14. The *Gemara* states (*Berachos* 24a) that a *tefach* of a woman's flesh that is supposed to be covered has the halachic status of *ervah*. The *Rema* rules that if the exposed flesh is seen by a man other than the woman's husband, it has the status of *ervah* even if it measures less than a *tefach*. This ruling applies to Sephardim as well; see *Ben Ish Chai Parshas Bo* 8.

15. גיטין (דף צ:).

16. ערך פרם.

17. בית שמואל (סימן קט"ו ס"ק יא) וכמבואר לעיל הערה 6.

Covering the Knee

The *Poskim* agree unanimously that a woman's knee must always be covered, in any position. The *Mishnah Berurah*¹⁸ and other *Poskim* explain that the knee is considered halachically equivalent to the thigh, and a woman's thigh is considered an *ervah*.¹⁹

Rav Moshe Feinstein *zt"l*²⁰ wrote that it should be publicized that a *bas Yisrael* is required to wear proper garments that do not expose any part of her knees, even when she is walking or sitting. He added that a woman may not allow her knee to be exposed even if she is wearing opaque stockings, and certainly if she is wearing stockings through which her skin can be seen. This statement was echoed by both the Steipler Gaon and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach. Thus, the *Gedolim* unanimously prohibit a woman to expose any portion of her knee, even if it is covered by thick stockings, and even while she is sitting.

Unfortunately, a trend has recently developed for women to wear skirts that cover only a portion of their knees. As we have seen, this is absolutely forbidden; it is not merely a *chumra*, but an actual *halachah*. This prohibition should be treated with all the severity of any other prohibition, such as that of consuming nonkosher food.²¹

Covering the Entire Leg

The Gemara states that the "*shok*" of a woman is considered an *ervah*. The *Mishnah Berurah* and other *Poskim* understand this term as a reference to the thigh (including the knee, as in the previous section). Other *Poskim*, though, take a more stringent view. The Chazon Ish²² expresses concern that even the lower part of a woman's leg, until the ankle, may be considered an *ervah*, and Rav Shmuel Vosner *zt"l*²³ rules with certainty that it is. Rav Vosner challenges the *Mishnah Berurah's* understanding, and many *Poskim* agree with his position, noting that the *Mishnah Berurah's* ruling is based on the *Pri Megadim*, which itself expresses some hesitation regarding his understanding. In any event, the question of whether there is a requirement to cover the entire leg is the subject of a dispute among the *Poskim*.

18. מ"ב (סימן ע"ה ס"ק ב).

19. גמ' ברכות (דף כד.).

20. הובא בלבושה של תורה פמ"ד ומ"ה, ועוד ספרים.

21. In fact, this is an even more severe prohibition. A man is not required to divorce his wife if she sins by ingesting nonkosher food; he would be required to divorce her only if she actually fed the *treif* food to him (see *Shulchan Aruch Even HaEzer* 115:1 and in the *Chelkas MiChokek* there 1). A woman who dresses in garments that expose her knees, though, would be subject to divorce during the times of *Chazal*.

22. חזו"א (או"ח סימן ט"ז סק"ח ד"ה כ"ד).

23. שבט הלוי (ח"א סי' א').

The Required Length of a Skirt

Some *Poskim* estimate that it is adequate for a skirt to be long enough to reach at least ten centimeters (approximately four inches) below the knee. A skirt of that length, according to these *Poskim*, will cover the knees at all times, even when a woman is sitting, boarding a bus, and so forth. The *Beis Din* of Mishmar HaTorah and the Badatz Eidah Chareidis, however, have set stricter guidelines, requiring a woman's skirt to end no less than halfway from her knees to her ankles. The purpose of this rule is to guarantee that no woman will inadvertently allow her knees to be exposed, which is absolutely forbidden. As we have explained, these guidelines have the force of *Das Yehudis*, and a woman should therefore take care to dress in compliance with these regulations.

Some *Gedolim* require a skirt to be long enough to cover the calf as well. This is a *chumra* and is subject to dispute among the *Poskim*, and it is therefore not obligatory to follow this guideline. The requirement to cover the knee, though, is undisputed and must be followed.

Wearing Stockings

In the ultra-orthodox places in Eretz Yisrael, the *minhag* is for women to wear stockings and refrain from allowing their legs to be exposed, even below the knee. Thus, although there would be no prohibition to follow the *Mishnah Berurah's* leniency in a place where no such *minhag* exists, the principle of *Das Yehudis* obligates all women to abide by the existing custom and cover even their lower legs.

Unfortunately, a trend has developed amongst some women, in some neighborhoods in Eretz Yisrael, to ignore the local *minhag* and appear in public without stockings. I was told that it began in a certain neighborhood, where a few women who came to Eretz Yisrael from *Chutz L'Aretz* continued their practice of appearing in public without wearing stockings, whether to run to the grocery store or simply to take out the garbage. Although these women were justified in dressing in that fashion in *Chutz L'Aretz*, where there was no established *minhag* for a woman to cover her lower legs, in Eretz Yisrael a woman is absolutely obligated, based on *Das Yehudis*, to follow the accepted custom and wear stockings or knee socks. In addition, there is a *takkanah* of *Beis Din Mishmar Hatorah* that requires the lower leg to be covered. There can be no basis for leniency on this matter.

These women are undoubtedly unaware of the terrible repercussions of their actions. Many other women observed their behavior and felt justified in copying it. Of course, there is no justification for basing one's own behavior on the conduct of a friend, but many women made this mistake, and the practice spread from person to person and from neighborhood to neighborhood, to the point that there are women in neighborhoods (especially those populated by families that have come from *Chutz L'Aretz*) throughout Eretz Yisrael who dress in violation of the *minhag* of this country. By dressing in this fashion, these women violate a clear prohibition.

The Required Thickness of Stockings

In a place where the *minhag* is for women to wear stockings, the *Poskim* agree that the stockings must be thick enough to be clearly identifiable as such. Anyone looking at the woman should clearly see the stockings, rather than her legs. Transparent stockings, which allow the leg to be seen, do not fulfill the requirements of *tznius*.

How thick should stockings be? A man once brought a pair of stockings to Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach to ask him if they complied with the requirements of *halachah*. Rav Shlomo Zalman felt inside the stockings and said, "These are too thin." Nevertheless, Rav Shlomo Zalman never specified an exact measurement in "denier," since the required thickness of a pair of stockings varies between individuals. For a woman whose legs are thin, a thinner pair of stockings will obscure her legs, while a more heavysset woman, whose stockings become stretched when she wears them, would require a thicker pair. Rav Shlomo Zalman therefore offered a rule of thumb: A pair of stockings must be thick enough for it to be obvious to an observer that they are seeing stockings, rather than the woman's skin. Other *Gedolim* also make the same specification.

Stockings That Do Not Cover the Knee

Some women erroneously wear stockings that end below their knees. This can often be problematic, since the leg itself may be exposed if the skirt is lifted. Often, the women who make this mistake are also unaware of the requirement for the knees to be covered at all times; as a result, they tend to wear skirts that are too short, and their actual knees are then exposed. This, of course, is absolutely forbidden.

Necklines

The Borders of the Neck

Another area in which terrible mistakes are often made is the neckline of shirts, blouses, and the like.

The *Poskim* all agree that a woman is required to wear garments that cover the collarbone. This area, like the knee or elbow, is forbidden to be exposed. This is the ruling of both Rav Shmuel Vosner *zt"l* and, *yibadeil l'chaim*, Rav Nissim Karelitz *shlita*, and can be found in their published letters.²⁴ Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach likewise ruled in a letter²⁵ that "regarding the neck, one may be lenient and cover only until the collarbone, if that is the *minhag* of that place." Some women, though, make sure to wear garments with necklines even above the collarbone.

Because of this *halachah*, many women fasten the top button of their shirts or blouses. Some women and girls feel that this is awkward, though, and instead of fastening that button, they insert a safety pin just below it, to hold the sides of the garment closed. A woman who wishes to do this must take great care to ensure that the area of the collarbone is covered at all times, even when she bends forward or stretches. As we have seen, exposing this portion of the body is absolutely forbidden.

The Sides of the Neck

The sides of the neck need not be covered, but the shoulders must be covered. The "shoulder" is halachically defined as beginning at the point that the neck slopes to the side.²⁶ This portion of the body is required to be covered. Hence, a woman must close her blouse in such a way that it will cover both the collarbone in front and the shoulders on the sides.

It is sometimes difficult to determine exactly where the neck ends and the shoulders begin. *Rabbanim* have therefore advised that a woman determine this based on where a necklace lies on the sides of her neck. The entire area past the necklace on either side should be assumed to be considered part of the shoulders, which must be covered.

The Back of the Neck

There is a dispute among the *Poskim* regarding whether the first vertebra of the spine must

24. הובא בספר לבושה של תורה" עמוד ת"ל, ועעי"ש בעמ' שפ"ג, ועוד מקומות.

25. הובא בהליכות שלמה.

26. לבושה של תורה סימן ל"ו אות ה', ובסל"ה אות ד'. וכן הובא בספרים אחרים של פוסקי זמנינו.

be covered, or it is sufficient for the back of a blouse or shirt to reach the second vertebra. The *Beis Din* of Mishmar HaTorah maintains that even the first vertebra must be covered.

Garments with Buttons in the Back ~~~~~

A garment that closes with buttons in the back may be problematic, since skin may be exposed between the buttons when the wearer bends down or stretches. Even if the buttons are closed, since there are gaps between the buttons, such a garment may compromise the wearer's *tznius*.

Covering the Lower Arm ~~~~~

Some women wear only long sleeves that cover their entire arms, down to their wrists. This is a *chumra*, and the purpose of this guide is not to discuss added stringencies. As noted above, though, all *Poskim* agree that the upper arm, *including* the elbow, must always be covered.

Revealing the form

Tight-Fitting Garments

In the year 5767, a number of major gatherings were held in Eretz Yisrael, with the attendance of the *Gedolei Hador*, where it was announced that any garment that is tight-fitting and emphasizes the shape of a woman's body **even slightly** is considered in the category of *abizrai hu d'giluy arayos* (encompassed by the prohibition of *giluy arayos*).²⁷ This statement was made in writing many times by both Rav Elyashiv and Rav Wosner. (In fact, the *sefer Ko Somar L'Beis Yaakov*, authored by the Belzer Rebbe zt"l, is quoted by Rav Moshe Sternbuch *shlita*²⁸ as stating that any exposure of hair or skin that should be covered, or any other form of immodesty in general, is deemed *abizrai hu d'giluy arayos*.) Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach²⁹ also ruled that such garments may not be worn.

The prohibition to emphasize the shape of the body can be seen in the Gemara's statement,³⁰ which is quoted by the *Shulchan Aruch*,³¹ that it is forbidden for a man to walk behind a woman. The *Radvaz* explains that it is prohibited to walk behind a woman even if she is dressed modestly, since a woman's movements while she is walking tend to cause the form of her body to be revealed even through her garments. Of course, a woman is permitted to walk in the street, and it is the responsibility of men to refrain from walking behind women. But a woman is prohibited to wear a garment that will *draw* the attention of men; this would be a violation of *lifnei iveir*, in addition to violating the rulings of many *Gedolim*.

The prohibition to wear tight-fitting garments applies to any portion of the body that is required to be covered. Unfortunately, some women make the mistake of wearing garments made out of tricot, lycra, and other thin or clingy materials that tend to reveal the shape of the body. This is forbidden. Likewise, sleeves that cling to the upper arms are forbidden.

Regardless of whether a garment reveals the shape of the body because of the material or style or because of its size, it is prohibited to wear it.

27. ועי' ברמ"א יור"ד קנ"ז ס"א, ובש"ך שם ס"ק י'. וב"ש באהע"ז סימן כ' סק"א. ובדגול מרבבה בסוף יור"ד סימן קצ"ה.

28. תשובות והנהגות ח"א סימן קל"ו.

29. מנחת שלמה (ח"ג סק"ג אות טו).

30. קידושין דף פא.

31. שו"ע אהע"ז סכ"א ס"א.

Transparent Garments

It is absolutely forbidden to wear a garment that is transparent.³² The *Ben Ish Chai* states³³ that this prohibition applies even if only an inner garment is visible through it.

(This ruling is based on a *halachah* cited in the laws of *aveilus*. The *Shulchan Aruch* rules that a woman may not tear *keriah* in the presence of men, since she will thereby expose the garment beneath her outer garment.³⁴ The *Shach*³⁵ and *Bach* both explain that even though the woman's flesh will not be exposed, it is considered immodest for her to merely expose the garment beneath.)

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach adds that even a garment that is transparent only when exposed to sunlight may not be worn.

Garments Made of Thin or Lacy Material

Some women's garments are designed to attract attention by being made of either a lacy material, with small openings through which one can see what is beneath the garment, or a very thin material, such as chiffon. The designers of these garments intend for them to be eye-catching; sometimes, these styles make the casual observer tempted to look at the wearer more closely in order to get a better idea of what he is seeing. The *halachah* prohibits such garments, unless a different garment is worn underneath them, and they do not attract undue attention.

If a woman owns a garment of this sort, she may sell it to a non-Jewish woman, provided that she knows that the non-Jew will keep it for herself. It is forbidden, though, to enable another Jewish woman to wear such a garment (unless it is worn over a different garment and does not attract undue attention); therefore, it may not be sold to a Jew, even if the Jew could purchase the same garment elsewhere.³⁶

32. מג"א סימן ע"ה ומשנה ברורה שם, וכל הפוסקים.

33. חוקי הנשים (פרק יז).

34. שו"ע (יו"ד סי' ש"מ).

35. ש"ך (ס"ק כ"ב).

36. If such a garment cannot be obtained elsewhere, it is prohibited *mid'oraisa* to sell it to a Jew. If it is available elsewhere, it is still prohibited *miderabanan*, since selling it to a Jew constitutes an act of assisting others to violate prohibitions (*Tosafos, Rash and Ran* in *Shabbos* 3a, and in the *Mishnah Berurah* 347:7, and in the *Bach*).

Covering the Hair

It is prohibited *mid'oraisa* for a married woman to appear in public with her hair uncovered. *Baruch Hashem*, it is uncommon today for women to appear in public without a hair covering.

Hair that Protrudes from Beneath a Head Covering

The *Rema*³⁷ rules leniently that hair that protrudes from beneath a woman's head covering may be left that way, since it is often very difficult to keep all of the hair tucked beneath the head covering. The *Mishnah Berurah* and *Magen Avraham* both state that although one may rely on the *Rema*'s ruling, it is advisable for a woman to make the extra effort to tuck all of her hair into her head covering. They quote the *Zohar Hakadosh* on *Parshas Nasso*, which states that a woman should prevent hair from protruding from her head covering even while she is in her own home. The *Zohar* warns if a woman allows her hair to be seen, even in her own home, it may cause the family to experience financial difficulties, as well as difficulties with their children. In the words of the *Zohar*, quoted by the *Mishnah Berurah*, "the *sitra achara* will reign in the home."

The *Zohar* adds that if a woman takes care to keep all of her hair covered, even in her own home, she will be blessed with the fulfillment of the *pasuk*, "Your sons will be like olive shoots around your table"; she will have extraordinary *nachas* from her children, and her husband, too, will be blessed.

There was once an *avreich* in the Mirrer Yeshiva who was childless for a number of years. I told him about the *Zohar*'s statement, and his wife began taking great care to keep her hair fully covered at all times, even in their home. Three weeks later, he informed me that his wife was expecting. They have been blessed with more children since that time.

A woman who covers her hair with a kerchief should be particularly vigilant about this, since it is common for hair to protrude from beneath a kerchief.

Hairs on the Neck or Face

A woman is not required to shave or cover hairs that grow on her face or neck.³⁸ The requirement to cover her hair applies only to the hair on the front, sides, or back of the head.

37. סימן ע"ה באו"ח ס"ב ובמ"ב שם בס"ק י"ד, ובה"ל סוד"ה שרגילים.

38. חוט השני נדה (סימן קצ"ה ס"ז, אות ג').

Wearing a Double Covering — The Stringency of the Chasam Sofer

The Chasam Sofer maintains that a woman must wear a double head covering to cover her hair outside her home: She should wear one covering to keep the hair in place, and a second covering to prevent it from being visible to others.³⁹

Rav Moshe Feinstein,⁴⁰ however, maintains that the essential *halachah* does not follow the Chasam Sofer's view, and that a double covering is unnecessary if the hair is completely covered. While he disagrees with the Chasam Sofer, he does maintain that the stringency should be followed *lechatchilah*; nevertheless, it is not required by the strict *halachah*.

Sheitels

Many of us are aware that some authorities maintain that it is not correct for a woman to wear a *sheitel*. Nevertheless, many *Poskim*,⁴¹ following the view of *Shiltei Gibborim*,⁴² maintain that it is permissible. Hence, the basic *halachah* permits wearing a *sheitel*. The wives of many *Gedolim* wore *sheitels*, and most women today have this custom.

It is important to note, however, that many *sheitels* are in fact prohibited to wear. Before wearing a *sheitel*, a woman must determine whether that particular *sheitel* meets the halachic criteria for permissibility, as we will explain in the following sections.

Unkempt Hair and Long Sheitels

The *Magen Avraham*⁴³ states that even an unmarried woman, who is not required to cover her hair, should not appear in public with her hair unkempt.⁴⁴ Based on the *Magen Avraham's* ruling, a *sheitel* that appears unkempt is considered immodest, and it is prohibited to wear such a *sheitel*.

Rashi⁴⁵ states that if a woman's hair rests on her shoulders, it is considered unkempt. From this, the *Poskim* derive that a *sheitel* that is long enough for the hair to rest on the shoulders may not be worn. Hence, a *sheitel* should be shorter than this length.⁴⁶

39. (וכן עי' ברמב"ם אישות כ"ד י"ד, ושו"ע אהע"ז קט"ו ס"ב, והביאור הלכה הנ"ל הביאם).

40. אג"מ (אהע"ז ח"א סי' נח).

41. בספר משבצות זהב (עמ' קנא-קנה) מסוכם בקצרה כל השיטות והטעמים.

42. שבת בפרק במה אשה, על המשנה יוצאת אשה וכו' ובפאה נכרית לחצר.

43. מ"ב (סימן עה סק"יב).

44. וכפירוש רש"י שם במדבר פ"ה פי"ח.

45. ריש פרק שני דכתובות (ד"ה וראשה פרוע).

46. A *sheitel* that is as short as a man's hair, however, may not be worn, due to the prohibition for a woman to wear men's garments.

Moshe maintains that the issue of *maris ayin* does not apply to *sheitels*, he does not disagree with the premise of the *Pri Megadim*⁵² that a *sheitel* is permitted because it does not arouse improper thoughts. The fact that it is at all permissible to wear a *sheitel*, according to the *Mishnah Berurah*, is based on this *Pri Megadim*, and it therefore stands to reason that a *sheitel* is permitted only if it conforms to this specification. Today, unfortunately, many *sheitels* are styled in a manner that attracts attention and may cause others to have inappropriate thoughts, and there is no basis for assuming that Rav Moshe would have permitted any such *sheitel*.

In addition, we have already seen that in a community where the local *rabbanim* rule that a particular stringency must be practiced, their ruling obligates all the local residents to follow that stringency. Hence, in Eretz Yisrael, where the *Gedolim* forbid wearing *sheitels* that appear natural, and the *Beis Din* of Mishmar HaTorah has issued a ruling to this effect, such *sheitels* are absolutely, unquestionably forbidden.

Unfortunately, *sheitel* manufacturers today tend to invest great effort in producing *sheitels* that appear more and more realistic, and their *sheitels* are often impossible to distinguish from real hair. Being ignorant of the *halachah*, many people are willing to pay thousands of dollars to purchase these *sheitels*, which are completely forbidden. Moreover, the *sheitels* are often styled in a way that attracts attention, which runs completely counter to the intent of the *halachah* requiring a woman to cover her hair. This is yet another reason for these *sheitels* to be considered absolutely prohibited.

52. או"ח סי' ע"ה בא"א סק"ה.

Attracting Attention

Unbefitting Conduct

It is a violation of *Das Yehudis* for a woman to conduct herself in a lowly fashion typical of the culture of the street. An example of this would be the case of a woman who sits outdoors, eating a *falafel* with one hand while laughing into a cell phone held in her other hand, and speaks in such a loud voice that every word can be heard on the other side of the street. This type of behavior, or anything like it, is unbefitting for a Jewish woman.

The Gemara⁵³ cites a *Tannaic* dispute regarding whether a husband must divorce his wife⁵⁴ if she eats in the marketplace. The *Rashba* and other *meforshim* explain that this dispute is only regarding whether the husband is *obligated* to divorce her, but there is no question that such behavior is immodest and improper. Any behavior that cheapens the woman or conforms to the lowly styles of the street is a violation of the principles of *tznius*.

The Message of “Please Look at Me”

Some women, unfortunately, suffer from an inner need to dress, wear makeup, and put on *sheitels* in a fashion that will attract the attention and admiration of those who see them. With their attire and appearance, they broadcast the message, “Please look at me!” This is a terribly degrading way for a woman to dress, and when a woman endeavors to attract attention in this fashion, it actually stems from a feeling of worthlessness. One should pity a Jewish woman who feels the need to demean her own holy, precious soul in this fashion.

The *Navi*⁵⁵ teaches us, in fact, that this type of behavior was the cause of the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*. The *Radak* explains that in the years prior to the *Churban*, women wore shoes with bells, which made noise when they walked, in order to attract the attention of others. Even such a small tinkling sound, when it was made with the intent of attracting attention, was considered a severe enough offense to warrant the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*.

Chukos Hagoyim

The *Rema* rules,⁵⁶ in accordance with the opinion of the *Maharik*, that the prohibition of *chukos hagoyim* (observing non-Jewish customs) makes it prohibited to wear a garment or other item that there is no logical reason to wear, if one’s intent in wearing it is to emulate the

53. גיטין דף פ”ט.

54. As noted above, this applied only during the times of *Chazal*.

55. ישעיה פרק ג’.

56. רמ”א (יו”ד סימן קע”ח ס”א).

Gentiles who dress in that fashion. According to the *Maharik*, if a garment is generally not worn by Jewish women because it is slightly immodest or it gives off a slight air of haughtiness, it is a violation of the prohibition of *chukos hagoyim* for a woman to wear it.⁵⁷ Consequently, a woman may not wear an item that does not have a *frum* "look," even if it is not actually immodest, since it is considered a violation of *chukos hagoyim*.

I was once astonished to see an *avreich* whom I know, who is a dedicated *masmid*, walking in the street with a woman who appeared to be irreligious. When someone informed me that the woman was his wife, I was even *more* shocked. This woman was dressed in a lowly fashion that was demeaning to her, which is not at all befitting for a Jewish woman. *Das Yehudis* requires a Jewish woman to dress in the same manner as other modest *bnos Yisrael*; copying the lowly trends of the street is forbidden.

The Color Red and Other Conspicuous Colors

The *Shach*⁵⁸ rules that red garments are prohibited by the law of *chukos hagoyim*. The *Poskim* add⁵⁹ that the same prohibition applies to other bright, conspicuous colors. Rav Wosner rules⁶⁰ that the color maroon is permissible, unless *bnos Yisrael* have a tendency to avoid it.

Perfume

A woman who wears perfume should not wear such a great quantity that the fragrance will be detectable from afar; this is forbidden, since the fragrance of the perfume might attract attention. In addition to the prohibition of *chukos hagoyim*, as was explained above, a woman who wears perfume in this way also transgresses the prohibition of *lifnei iveir*, since the *Mishnah Berurah* rules⁶¹ that a man is forbidden to smell a woman's perfume. Just as a woman cannot excuse herself for dressing immodestly by arguing that a man has the responsibility not to look at her, it is also not a valid argument that a man should avoid inhaling her perfume.

See *Igros Moshe* (*Yoreh Dayah chelek 1, siman 81*) regarding the exact parameters of this *halachah*. .57

.58 ש"ך (יו"ד סימן קע"ח).

This ruling appears in *TeShuvos VeHanhagos* (*chelek 1, 136*, and see also *Shevet HaLaivy chelek 6, 24:2*) .59 and in *Halichos Shlomo*, and in letters of other *Gedolim*.

.60 שה"ל (ח"ו כ"ד ב').

.61 מ"ב (סימן רי"ז ס"ק ט"ז).

A Brief Review: Guidelines for Purchasing Modest Clothing

Based on what we have learned, the following guidelines should be kept in mind when purchasing clothing, in order to make sure that the garments adhere to the laws of *tznius*:

- **The flesh should not be exposed.** A woman must wear garments that close sufficiently around the neck, that cover her knees at all times, and that do not expose her elbows or upper arms. If a garment has buttons, she should make sure that no skin will be exposed through the gaps between the buttons.
- **The garment should not reveal the shape of the body.** She should make sure that the garment is not too tight or clingy, whether because of its size, its design, or the material from which it is made.
- **The garment should not attract attention.** It should not be a garment that is reminiscent of “the street,” and it should not be transparent.

Many women innocently rely on the sales staff in stores to tell them whether a garment is appropriate; however, salesladies are often unaware of these *halachos* or are biased by the desire to make a sale. In general, a customer should *not* trust a saleslady to confirm that a garment conforms to all the standards of *tznius*. (This is especially true regarding the tightness of a garment; one should not rely on a saleswoman’s judgment that a garment is not excessively tight-fitting.)

Teaching Modesty to Girls

The Age at Which Girls Should Be Trained

Parents are obligated to train their daughters to observe the laws of *tznius*. The *Beiur Halachah* states⁶² that the *halachos* regarding the proper covering of the body apply to a girl as soon as she reaches the age of three. This was also the ruling of Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, who was the *av beis din* of Yerushalayim.⁶³ The Chazon Ish⁶⁴ disagrees with the *Beiur Halachah* and maintains that the *halachos* apply only when a girl reaches the stage of physical maturity at which her appearance might arouse improper thoughts in men.⁶⁵ This occurs at the point that a man will perceive a difference between the girl and a male child. According to some authorities, this stage begins when a girl is about six or seven years old (depending on her height).

This discussion has bearing on the question of when parents should begin training their daughters to cover themselves properly, and at what age girls must begin wearing tights or knee socks. It is best to follow the view of the *Poskim* who require this for a three-year-old girl, but at the very least, one should begin training a girl at the age of six or seven.

Unfortunately, many parents tend to neglect this important area of *chinuch* at times. Many girls jump rope while wearing short skirts, exposing their entire legs with each jump, while their parents do not reprove them. A parent has a responsibility to train his daughters not to transgress prohibitions.

Rav Vosner writes⁶⁶ that the obligation to train a girl not to wear red garments is just as significant as the obligation to train her to keep Shabbos, or the requirement to send her to a good school. In fact, the most important part of a girl's *chinuch* is for her to learn *tznius*!

.62 באה"ל (סימן ע"ה).

.63 שו"ת שלמת חיים (ח"ד סי' א').

.64 חזו"א (טז, ח).

.65 Some maintain, though, that the Chazon Ish actually agrees with the *Beiur Halachah* that a girl must be trained to dress modestly beginning at age three, and that he merely maintains that the prohibition

to recite sacred texts in the presence of an immodestly dressed girl does not apply at that age.

According to the *Beiur Halachah*, it seems that in addition to the issue of the girl's appearance arousing inappropriate thoughts, the requirements of *tznius* are also set in place in order to prevent improper actions. Hence, these laws take effect at the age of three, when a girl develops the physiological capacity for

intimacy.

.66 שו"ל ח"ו כ"ד

Pride, Not Pressure

The way to teach a child *tznius* is not to pressure her to be modest. Many people make the mistake of trying to inculcate these values through pressure, but the proper way to cultivate *tznius* is to teach a girl to take *pride* in her modesty. Some families celebrate their daughters' third birthdays with a party, at which the girl is given candies to distribute to her siblings and is told that she is celebrating becoming a "big girl," who is old enough to wear tights. That is a wonderful way to convey this attitude to a child at the very outset.

The Torah's ways are "*darkei noam*" ("ways of pleasantness"), and it is crucial for a husband and father to teach his family the laws of *tznius* in this fashion. Girls should learn that the Torah is sweeter than honey and that modesty is a source of pride; they should not submit to the guidelines of *tznius* out of intimidation or fear. In the merit of observing these *halachos* properly, may we experience the final redemption soon.

This segment was written on the request of Rabbi Yitzchok Berkowitz

How to Implement These Guidelines at Home

I have been asked to offer some advice as to how an *avreich* can implement these *halachos* in his home.

The truth is that the *rav* himself addresses this question, in his terse style, in the pages of this work. Here are some basic guidelines:

The ideal, of course, is for everyone to begin observing all the *halachos* immediately. However, since the observance of *tznius* is unfortunately not as it should be, many women will not be convinced upon learning these *halachos* to take on their observance right away. Therefore, a husband will need *siyata d'shmaya* in order to promote the observance of these laws, and must be very cautious in how he does so.

Let us begin by focusing on what should *not* be done:

1. A woman must never feel that her husband is dissatisfied with her. Such a feeling may be damaging to the couple's *shalom bayis*. Any desire that the husband has to improve the observance of *tznius* must be expressed as a desire for his wife's benefit, and as part of an effort to strengthen the bond of affection between them.
2. It is very important for a woman to feel that her husband understands her challenges. If she feels that he does not understand the difficulty she faces in taking on these *halachos*, he will have very little influence on her, and anything he says on the subject will fall on deaf ears. She will feel that his expectations are not suited to her abilities, and that he doesn't truly understand her.
3. Any suggestion the husband makes for an improvement in this area must take his wife's true abilities into consideration. Therefore, a young married man who is not completely familiar with his wife's strengths and difficulties would be well advised to consult with a *talmid chacham* on every detail, rather than take the chance of causing even the slightest damage. This is especially true considering that a wife will listen to her husband only if she feels that he truly cares about her and is interested in her benefit, rather than merely seeking to impose his will on her. (This is of particular concern if the husband *has* imposed his will on her in the past in the area of *tznius*). Often, a young wife at the beginning of her marriage doesn't yet fully sense this.

A husband who wishes to improve the observance of *tznius* in his home must recognize that *tznius* is not simply a collection of laws. On the contrary, *tzinus* is something that must become part of his wife's personality. Hashem made it part of a woman's nature, but our

modern world has managed, to a certain extent, to erode this natural trait. Nevertheless, this erosion is solely superficial; inwardly, every woman still has a natural tendency to be *tzanua*. The female personality resists standing out, whether through her appearance or through her conduct, and every woman is naturally averse to exposing those parts of the body that should remain concealed.

Strengthening the observance of *tznius* in the home must go hand in hand with cultivating the attribute of *tznius* as one of the wife's character traits. With this approach, she will not feel that she is being forced to observe rules that are foreign to her; instead, she will feel that the rules are truly in keeping with her personality and feelings.

If a woman is interested, she can learn the *halachos* of *tznius* together with her husband. If it is feasible, the girls in the family can also be included.

When a person is asked to make a change that is difficult for him, his *yetzer hara* will often try to convince him that the change isn't actually required. It is much easier for a person to make a change if he feels that it is truly required of him. Therefore, a husband must make it clear, both to himself and to his wife, that observing these guidelines of *tznius* is a true necessity. It must be made clear that one cannot assume, simply because everyone else dresses a certain way, that there are *rabbanim* who permit that mode of dress, and that one cannot rely on rumors that a particular *rav* ruled that something is permitted.

The purpose of this *shiur* from Rav Gershon Meltzer *shlita* is to set forth the fundamental halachic requirements of *tznius*, including the sources in the Gemara and *poskim* for every detail of the laws, and to make it clear that these guidelines are agreed upon unanimously by all the *gedolei hador*.

Nevertheless, we must recognize the tremendous social discomfort that a woman is likely to experience from adhering to these guidelines, no matter how much she desires to do so. Imagine how we would feel if someone were to prove to us, based on indisputable evidence from the Gemara and *poskim*, that we are required to wear *shtreimels* even on a weekday. Even if we were absolutely convinced that it was necessary, we would find it very difficult to do so, since we would be the only ones doing it. Sadly, the subject of *tznius* is often neglected or belittled, and a woman seeking to improve her own *tznius* may sometimes feel that dressing properly makes her look strange. It is therefore recommended that a woman make these changes gradually, in stages, first taking on the things that are easier for her.

There are also certain times when it is easier to make changes. These times can be a good opportunity for progress in this area.

I once heard a suggestion from an *adam gadol* regarding how to institute changes in the home when there is likely to be opposition. He suggested that the husband should begin by mentioning the subject several times and speaking positively of the idea of an improvement in *tznius*, *without* advocating actual change. At first, the husband's objective should be merely for his wife to get used to hearing the idea. After a while, she will have grown acclimated to the concept, and it will be much easier to make an actual change.

A husband should show appreciation of every change that his wife makes, even the smallest change. This will give her the strength and conviction she needs to continue growing.

I also once heard from one of the *gedolei hador* that a woman's natural inclination is to dress in the style that she thinks her husband truly desires, but she will not follow his lead if she feels that he is telling her to dress in a certain way only because the *rabbanim* have said so.

It is extremely difficult to find clothes that conform to all the rules of *tznius*, and a husband must be understanding of this difficulty and show his appreciation for his wife's efforts. Sometimes, a husband can influence his wife indirectly by encouraging his daughters to dress more modestly. In this way, his wife will not feel that his words are directed specifically at her.

Of course, none of the above can provide exact guidance for any specific situation. In every individual case, it is proper for the husband to consult with a *talmid chacham* who fears Hashem and is experienced in dealing with *shalom bayis*, who can guide him in the best way to make progress while maintaining an atmosphere in the home of mutual understanding and respect, along with a shared desire to come close to Hashem.

For comments, please contact Meir Weinstock at Rechov Birchas Avraham 22, Yerushalayim.