

B'H

On External Importance

Excerpts from a Shiur by Rabbi M.M. Gluckowsky,
delivered in Kollel Menachem - Isru Chag Shavuos 5768.



Be the Last in on Fashion

The Rebbe once said that in matters of Kedusha we should be the first to jump, like Nachshon Ben Aminadav, however, when it comes to fashion etc. we should be the last ones in (within the realms of Halacha).

Beauty is Important to Women

Midrash: When Vashti made a seuda for the women, the emphasis was placed on the external décor, since for women external beauty is more cherished than food and drink.

The Midrash relates that when Hashem created every limb of Chava, He commanded each limb "Be modest, be modest" since the strong tendency is for women to want to look beautiful at all costs.

Only the Hands and Face

In Hilchos Krias Shma (siman 75) the Alter Rebbe prohibits Davening before an uncovered handbreadth in any place that should ordinarily be covered. Only a women's face and hands which are ordinarily seen is not problematic.

Arms & Elbows

In Shulchan Aruch (Even Haezer 115) it lists one who transgresses "Das Yehudis", (halchic modesty standard) one of the scenarios mentioned is one who weaves clothing in public because when she lifts her arms to weave, her arm is uncovered. However, the Poskim write that if she wears short-sleeves it might infringe upon the much more severe transgression of "Das Moshe". (An Isur of the Torah).

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Aurbach maintained that not only the elbows should be covered, but even more - in such a way that the elbows can never be seen. (because even one second is asur)

Hair

The Zohar in Parsha Nasso writes "uncovering ones hair causes poverty in the home, impure sprits to dwell in the home, causes her children not to become important in their generation and a curse upon her husband." The Rebbe normally quotes the more positive Zohar that it brings riches, nachas from kids and health.

In Shulchan Aruch (ibid), the Alter Rebbe writes that it is forbidden to daven in front of a woman's hair that is normally covered except for sideburns and that of unmarried girls.

The Magen Avraham quotes the Zohar that is particular about even one hair and writes that this is the practiced custom.

The Rebbe emphasized the importance of wearing a sheitel since it doesn't leave any hair uncovered, whereas a tichel or hat leave hair hanging out even if it is for a very short time and gives many Brochos to people that are careful about this.

The Rebbe quotes the Gemorah about Kimchis that merited that seven children became Kohanim Gedolim because she was careful that her hair was covered to the extent that the walls of her house never saw her hair. The Rebbe points out how this affected many generations to come, since the position of Kohen Gadol is passed down from one generation to the next and stays within the same family.

The Rebbe writes in a letter "That which you ask about covering hair, I am shocked by the question, particularly that which you ask 'is it good enough to wear a sheitel that covers everything except for 2 fingerbreaths?' who are you trying to fool with this?"

Tznius Fashion

The Rebbe suggested to N'shei Chabad that they try to infiltrate into the fashion designers that they should try to design clothes that are suitable according to the rules of Tznius.

Tight Fit

Nowadays, clothing is designed to attract not to cover. Clothing should not be tight in a way that it reveals ones figure (one can change because of weight and pregnancy in a way that ones clothes become too tight and not Tznius). In the Gemara it clearly indicates that tight clothing is not Tzniusdik.

No Transparency

One must be careful about the distance between buttons so that they shouldn't leave an opening. Similarly, any form of slightly transparent material is forbidden.

A Tznius Mentor

A woman should find someone that she respects to ask for an opinion about particular questions that arise regarding Tznius.

Legs & Knees

According to the Gemara, "Shoik" (the thigh) is the worst form of "Eruva". The Pri Megadim maintains that "Shoik" includes the whole leg until the knee. A skirt should extend lower than the knee. The Rebbe writes that ones knees should be covered in a way that it stays covered even while sitting. Poskim write that this means four inches below the knee.

Slits

Poskim forbid wearing a skirt that has a slit since it is made to attract, this applies even to a very long skirt, since once one permits it in a long skirt people will permit in a short skirt as well.

Socks

The Alter Rebbe quotes poskim who extend "Shoik" all the way down to the ankle and writes that one should follow these poskim. Since even if it's not considered "Shoik" it is the Minhag to cover the legs with stockings or socks (and a minhag in this area never changes l'kulah because of what people do - only l'chumra). Some also wear thicker stockings due to the above reason.

The Neck

The neck and only the neck can show, no shoulder chest or back. The collarbone is the end of the neck. Even in the back the neckline should not extend lower than where a necklace goes.

From Age 3

According to the Tzemach Tzedek from the age of three, girls are responsible to be careful about this. Even the Poskim who disagree with the Tzemach Tzedek and extend the age to slightly older girls, do so in interpreting the letter of the law but encourage one to start being careful about Tznius from the age of three.

Goyishe Fashion

The Rebbe said in a Sich'a to Nshei Chabad: Chazal write that Jews merited Geulas Mitzrayim because "they did not change their names or their clothing." Why use the negative "because they did not" instead of saying simply and in the positive: "In the merit of tznius the Jews were redeemed from Mitzrayim"? Answer: the merit is not that they wore tznius clothing, since Egyptian dress was Tznius. The merit was that they didn't wear even the Tznius Egyptian dress; they kept to traditional Jewish dress!

The dress code for Beis Rivka in Israel included that skirts must be 5-7 centimeters from the floor. This caused uproar. The logic behind the ruling was that "longer" is the fashion, the "rubbers" and the "Egyptian dress" of this generation. There are Jewish clothes and there are Goyishe clothes.

This is a message that we must make clear to our Children – that there is a way a Jew dresses.

The Kids Have Eyes Too

These Halachos apply even during the heat of summer, even within the four walls of a bungalow. According to the Zohar, what we do affects the Yiras Shomaim of our kids. What kids see in the home has a lasting impression on them.

When Shopping

The first thing to look at when shopping is to check that it fits the bill of Tznius, before even how it looks.

Pnimitiyus, But Forget Not Chitzoniyus!

The Friediker Rebbe or Rebbe Rashab once said that although Chabad demands Pnimitiyus, we have a lot to learn from the Chitzoniyus of other Chassidic groups.

We Are What We Wear

The Chasam Sofer writes that Rivkah needed to dress Yaakov in Esav's clothing in order that he will be able to lie to Yaakov (to receive the blessings), since clothes have an influence on who we are (Esav's clothes helped Yaakov to lie.)

Potifar's wife caught hold of Yosef's clothing. The Amshinover translates this to mean that she caught him because of his weakness – the way he dressed, in Egyptian dress.

People ask, why are we making such a big issue out of an inch one way or another? We have become so low that we have lost our sensitivity to the importance of Tznius. We've become so blind that people no longer see the problem.

We need to take a firm stand, without compromise, but in a soft, sensitive and effective manner, not to give up on what we stand for.

Prepared for Yagdil Torah



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