

B"H

Tznius Questions and Answers

Shvat 5779

1) Are men allowed to look at women? (Not talking about family of course) and in what setting are men allowed to look at women?

The Torah says, "...and you shall not stray after your eyes...". The simple meaning of this prohibition is staring at a woman (for her beauty) who is *Ervah* (forbidden to marry, for example a *Niddah* who is not one's wife or a different woman one is forbidden to marry). Rabbinically it is forbidden to stare even at an unmarried non-*Niddah* woman, this is derived from the verse in *Iyov* 31:1, "I made a covenant with my eyes, and why should I gaze upon a virgin?".

The *Beis Shmuel* 21:2 writes that to think of the beauty of such a woman, however, is Biblically forbidden.

The *Shulchan Aruch Even Haezer* 21:1 rules "One may not stare at a woman's beauty... it is similarly forbidden to stare at colored clothes of a woman he knows even when she is not wearing them, lest it might bring him to have thoughts about her..."

Many authorities maintain that one may look – but not gaze – at a woman while talking to her. However, one may not talk with her when on non-necessary matters. [1]

The *Pirkei Avos* 1:5 also warns one should not have excessive talk with a woman for by doing so it causes negative things to the man.

Similarly one may look at a non-married woman to see if he would want to marry her, the *Shulchan Aruch Even Haezer 21:3* even endorses this, however, adds that it is forbidden to look at her in a way of Z'nus (promiscuity). This is derived from the verse in *Iyov 31:1*, "I made a covenant with my eyes, and why should I gaze upon a virgin?"

[1] *Sefer Chassidim 1000*. See however *Kaf HaChayim (Orach Chayim 75:7)* and *Igros Moshe (Orach Chayim 1:40)*.

2) Are men and women allowed to sit together? (At a concert, event, etc.)

Mixed seating for men and women at Jewish events is forbidden and is a breach in Tznius laws.

See some of the following sources: *Tractate Sukkos 52a* where in the Beis Hamikdash they built a special women's section so that men and women would not mix during Simchas Beis Hashoeiva. The Alter Rebbe in his *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 529:13)* in the laws of Yom Tov also records the ruling that men and women are not allowed to sit together for eating and drinking (in particular when there is alcohol) for this brings to sin.

The Rebbe writes in *Likkutei Sichos vol. 9 pg. 333* that by a wedding there must be a Mechitza up, this is even during the eating and bentching and not just for the dancing. The Rebbe also quotes the view of the *Beis Shmuel (Even Haezer 62:11)* that one may not say "Shehasimcha Bemoano" at a Chasuna when there is mixed seating. [1]

See at length the excellent book *Toras Hemechitzah* for details.

In order to avoid all problems, a Mechitza would need to be affixed between the men and women. [2] When the crowd is not-religious, and there is concern that by having a

Mechitza this will prevent people from coming to a **Torah class**, one should consult with a Rav. [3]

[1] The reason for this is as explained in the *Beis Shmuelis* that the Yetzer Hara works when men and women are together in mixed seating. The Rebbe brings that despite the view of the *Levush* is to be lenient on this matter, nonetheless the Rebbe concludes that today unfortunately we see that one may not be lenient in this matter.

[2] See: *Rambam Hilchos Beis Habechira* 5:9; *Igros Moshe (Orach Chayim vol. 1 siman 39-44)*; *Igros Kodesh vol. 7 pg. 309*.

[3] See *Sharei Halacha U'Minhag Vol. 3 pg. 243*. The following letter referred to people who are not religious and there is possible concern of intermarriage Heaven forbid.

#2806 (2)

3) Are women allowed to be in the public's eye? As in: social media star, make videos for the public men and women's eye, etc.

This is not fitting with the rules of Tznius. Even if a woman will dress and speak in a Tznius way, nonetheless there is the concern that a woman taking a public eye brings bad thoughts to men. [1] This conduct is forbidden as it says, "One shall not place a stumbling block in front of the blind." [2]

As a general principle, the Torah tells us that the beauty of women is when she is “Pnimah” – inward, not out in the limelight. The aim of a Jewish woman is to seek to be “Pnimah”, and not to look to be in the public eye.

[1] See *Kesubos 46a*; *Shulchan Aruch (Even Haezer 23:3)* where it warns a person not to bring himself to improper thoughts.

[2] See *Vayikra 19:14*.

#2806 (3)

4) Can you give me some examples where the Torah treats women as special, precious, and where it says that men need to unconditionally respect their wives, etc.

The Torah commands a man to make his new wife who he married happy, [1] thus he may not travel in the first year of marriage without her permission. ([see here](#)).

We also find that marital intimate relations besides for the obvious reason of having children, a man is to intend only for his wife’s sake and not for his own needs. [2]

Rambam, in his *Mishna Torah*, [3] writes: “Similarly, our Sages commanded that a man honor his wife more than his own body, and love her as he loves his own body. If he has financial resources, he should offer her benefits in accordance with his resources.

He should not cast a superfluous measure of fear over her. He should talk with her gently, being neither sad nor angry.”

The Alter Rebbe writes in his *Shulchan Aruch* [4]: “One must be very careful not to oppress his wife, not to cause her pain with words. For since she is easily brought to tears, G-dly retribution for oppressing one’s wife is quick to come. A person is to be very careful with his wife’s honor as the blessing of the home of a man is only found due to the wife. Chazal stated to their generation “Respect your wives in order to become wealthy.”

[1] *Devarim* 24:5.

[2] See *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 240:1)*.

[3] *Hilchos Ishus* 15:19.

[4] *Hilchos Onah Ugneivas Da’as* 32 based on *Bava Metzia* 59a.

#2806 (4)

5) Is lesbian (gay) by women allowed? Is it forbidden?

Lesbian sexual relations are forbidden, at the very least Rabbinically. [1] The discussion is in *Yevamos* 76a. This is also an explicit ruling in the *Shulchan Aruch (Even Haezer 20:2)* “women who play and hug each other [in sexual context] is forbidden as it is the

act of the land of Mitzrayim that we are warned against, and it is fitting to give Rabbinical lashes over it since it is prohibited...”

The reference of “the acts of the land of Mitzrayim” refer to *Vayikra 18:3* “Like the practice of the land of Mitzrayim [Egypt], in which you dwelled, you shall not do, and like the practice of the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you, you shall not do, and you shall not follow their statutes.”

Therefore all forms of lesbianism is strictly prohibited. Nonetheless, a woman who performed such acts would not become forbidden to her husband nor be prohibited from marrying a Kohen. [2]

[1] *Otzar Haposkim* in the name of the *Tzafnas Paneach* holds that this act is forbidden from the Torah. However the view of the *Kiryas Melech Rav* (brought in the *Otzar Haposkim*) is that the Biblical prohibition is only if the two women “marry” on a set basis however if their acts are only random then it is considered only promiscuous behavior which is only Rabbinically forbidden.

[2] *Beis Shmuel* (20:7).

#2806 (5)

6) Is a random get together of people for comedy purposes allowed? (Comedy show)

Yes, if the comedy is clean and there is separate seating between men and women with a Mechitza as explained in [question #2806 \(2\)](#).

#2806 (6)

7) Are women allowed to give a speech when their audience is 50% men as well?

This is not proper for a religious crowd. [1] Poskim advise against this. Some even forbid it outright. [2]

However, if the crowd is not religious, and the purpose is to teach them Torah, there could be some room for leniency in very specific scenarios, and one should seek guidance from a Rav. [3]

[1] Men need to look at the speaker, and to have men looking at a woman speak for a long period of time is not Tznius. We find in the Poskim that by the age of 9, it is important to have only male teachers.

[2] See *Shaarei Yosher* III: 21. *Shevet Halevi* 3:14. *Mishnah Halachos* 5:218. 11: 58. *L'horos Nasan* 1 EH 60:5. *Igros Moshe* OC 5: 12. See also *ibid.* 2:36.

[3] See also the end of [question #2806 \(2\)](#).

#2806 (7)

8) This might be answered by previous questions but: Are women's faces allowed to be printed on newspapers (or websites)?

There are differing views in this matter, in general, Charedi newspapers are very stringent on this matter.

The below is only a brief outlook of what seems to be the Rebbe's view:

See *Hishkashrus* [#582](#) where it brings three points we find by the Rebbe.

1) After the Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka passed away, they put out an album of her where there was also her picture in black and white. The *Nitei Gavriel* asked how it is proper to put a picture of the Rebbetzin in the book and at the very least one could be stringent in this matter. The Rebbe answered (in a letter of 11th of Adar 5748) that when one does not know her personally and one does not intend to stare at the picture and also it is not in color there is no problem.

Regarding the final point that the *Nitei Gavriel* claimed that one should at the very least be stringent in this matter, the Rebbe responded that to be stringent here would cause that one is lacking in fulfillment of the verse, "and one shall place the living to heart" as is seen clearly.

2) The Rebbe instructed to Tzivos Hashem when they made publications intended for non-religious children like "*The Moshiach Times*" that there should also be a design on the front cover of a girl in addition to of a boy so that girls will know that the publication is also intended for them. Also, the fact that the boys and girl stand separately on the cover will highlight the needs for separation of the genders.

3) The printing of *Sefer Hashluchim* [1] albums which have pictures of a whole family seems to be more difficult in fitting with #1, since the pictures are in color, albeit of the entire family wedged in one picture. However, the purpose of this book was for each family to see themselves as part of the Shluchim team and not for others to look at the pictures of other women.

What comes out from the above is that a picture of a woman's face needs to have a specific and justified reason why it should be publicized. If there is a justified reason to place a woman's face, it should be done in a Tznius way, for example in black and white and only the face or on the corner of the page and not too big. As mentioned earlier, the Tznius character of a Jewish women is such that she strives to be Pnimah, and naturally wouldn't want her picture made public.

[1] It is well known that the Rebbe took interest in these Sefarim.

#2806 (8)

9) Are there clothing colors that women are not allowed to wear according to halacha? (Red, white, etc.)

A garment which is all red or majority red is forbidden for a woman to wear since this color portrays a feeling of "Pritzus" (free-ness or promiscuity) and it brings to sin. By

wearing this color, one transgresses on the Torah prohibition “one shall not go in the statutes of the goyim” for this is how the goyishe officers and women would dress. [1] *Shavet Halevi* (6:24, 2) explains that all clothes that the color stands out in particular with bright or strong colors where the intention is to attract men to pay notice to them – this is not tznius to wear and it should not be worn.

It goes without saying that it is not only the color of the garment which decides if it is tznius or not but also the style and fit of the garment.

[1] *Rema (Yoreh Deah 178:1)* in the name of the *Maharik*. See also the *Shach 178:3*, who mentions that the color black is Tznius and brings nullification to the Yetzer. (Of course only if the garment is also Tznius in nature.)

#2806 (9)

10) Halachically – how long is a wig allowed to be? Since the whole point of a wig is it shouldn't look like hair, but nowadays they look even better than hair.

The main idea is that the wig should be Tznius in nature that is, that the hair should not be long and wavy. Rabbi Mordechai Ashkanzi Z"l put out a letter to the Beis Rivka seminary in Kfar Chabad in 16th of Shevat 5773 in which he expressed the position that

the wigs should not go past the shoulder length and that the hair of the wig should not be made to look identical to a woman's real hair.

It is worthy to mention that a wig may be made from real hair as recorded in the *Shaltei Giburim* on the *Rif* to *Tractate Shabbos* and recorded in *Poskim* to the *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim* 75. See also *Likkutei Sichos vol. 13 p. 189* where the Rebbe explains the importance of wearing a wig is even if it looks nicer than real hair, with that said, it must be Tznius in style as mentioned.

#2806 (10)

11) What is the Tafkid of a Jewish woman in this world according to the Torah?

In a talk by the Rebbe in honor of the 4th yartzeit of the Rebbetzin on the 22nd of Shevat 5752, the Rebbe said that the role of Jewish women of our generation is to make the world a **beautiful dwelling** for Hashem.

This role is mainly accomplished through their three main Mitzvahs: Kashrus, Shabbos candles, and family purity laws.

This is in addition to their role to worry that there should be by every child a Chumash, Siddur and Tzedakah Pushke and a small Tanya.

Women should also use their great qualities to effect and improve the Chinuch on Bnei and Bnos Yisrael starting from the very young that it should be exemplified with Torah, Avodah and Gemilus Chassadim. This should all prepare the world for the Geulah Shleima.

#2806 (11)