

TZNIUT - MODESTY BULLETIN # 5

**“THE WOMAN WHO FEARS HASHEM, SHE
SHALL BE PRAISED” (MISHLE 31:30)**

WORLD JEWISH TZNIUT AND KEDDUSHA COMMITTEE

RAMBAM, LAWS OF MARRIAGE, CHAPTER 15 THE MODESTY REQUIRED OF WOMEN

The Sages commanded that a woman be modest even within her own home. She must not act jokingly or lightheaded in front of her husband. She may not demand relations outright nor speak about this matter. She may not refuse her husband in order to trouble him, so that he will love her more. Rather, she should consent to have relations with him, whenever he wants. She must be careful of his relatives and the members of his household so that he does not become jealous. She must distance herself both from that which is improper and from anything that resembles it...

A WOMAN MUST ALSO HONOR HER HUSBAND

They also commanded that a woman honor her husband very much, that his fear be upon her, and that she conduct herself as he tells her. He should be in her eyes like a prince or a king. She should obey his wishes and avoid anything that he dislikes. This is the way of the holy, pure women and men of Israel in their marriage, and in these ways, their dwelling will be proper and praiseworthy.

SEFER MAALOT HA MIDDOT THE TRAIT OF MODESTY: ONE OF THE THREE MOST DESIRED BY G-D

My sons, come and I will teach you the trait of modesty. Know, my sons, that modesty is one of the most eminent of the traits, being one of the three that the Holy One Blessed be He requires of Israel, viz. (Michah 6:8): "And what does the L-rd ask of you: but to do judgment, to love loving kindness, and to walk modestly with the L-rd your G-d?" What is more, it defends a man against the evil eye and rescues him from sin and transgression. For thus do we find with Yoseph the tzaddik, may peace be upon him, that because he deported himself with modesty, he was rescued from [the advances of] his mistress, the wife of Potiphar, and did not go astray through her, viz. (Genesis 39:7): "And the wife of his master raised her eyes to Yoseph." She raised her eyes to gaze at him, but he did not raise his eyes to gaze at her. For thus did our sages of blessed memory say in the aggadah (Bereshith Rabbah 87:11): She put an iron brace under his chin to make him raise his eyes and gaze at her, in spite of which he did not do so, viz. (Psalms 105:18): "They forced his feet into fetters; iron came upon him." (Sefer Maale ha Middot)

MODESTY IS EVEN MORE REQUIRED OF WOMEN

If modesty is desirable in a man, how much more so in a woman. Women must deport themselves with great modesty, viz. (Psalms 45:14): "All the glory of the king's daughter is within; of checkered gold is her garment." Concerning this our sages have said (Shabbat 57a): A woman should not go out on the Shabbat with "a golden city" [a gold ornament with an emblem of Jerusalem], nor with a signet ring, nor with a pin without a hole [i.e., a hair-pin]. And if she does go out with them to the public thoroughfare, she must bring a sin-offering; but in her own courtyard, she is not liable. How aptly has the Talmud Yerushalmi stated that she may not do so even on a weekday, for this leads people to gaze at her; and it is demeaning for a woman to be stared at, for it leads people to suspect her. Ornaments were given to a woman only to adorn herself in her own home before her husband, so that she be pleasing and not unsightly to him. Therefore, a woman should sit in her "glory" in her home and not flit here and there, so that she not lead herself astray and that she not lead men astray by bringing them to gaze at a married woman. For this mode of behavior characterizes the harlots, viz. (Proverbs 7:12): "At one time she is in the street; at another, in the open places; and near every corner does she lurk." At the very least, she brings suspicion upon herself when she walks here and there. And thus do we find with Dinah, the daughter of our father Jacob, may peace be upon him - that because she did not sit in modesty at home, but went out (Genesis 34:1): "to see the daughters of the land," she brought misfortune upon herself [she was raped by Shechem].

WOMAN WAS CREATED ONLY TO BE MODEST

Know that in the very beginning of the creation of woman she was created only for modesty, viz. (Genesis 2:22): "VAYIVEN the L-rd G-d the the rib, etc.", concerning which our sages of blessed memory have said in the aggadah (Bereshit Rabbah 18:3): What is the intent of "VAYIVEN" [built up]? Read it "VAYAVEN" ["He reflected"]. The Holy One Blessed be He reflected where to create her from. He said: I shall not create her from the head, lest she be a "head-raiser" [i.e., supercilious]; nor from the eye, lest she be a "peeper"; nor from the ear, lest she be a "snooper"; nor from the mouth, lest she be a "prattler"; nor from the heart [the seat of the passions], lest she be a "termagant"; nor from the hand, lest she be a "toucher"; nor from the foot, lest she be a "gadabout." But He created her from a hidden place in man (i.e., the rib), which, even when he stands naked, is concealed. And with each limb that He created in her, He said: "Be a modest woman! Be a modest woman!" - in spite of which (Proverbs 1:25): "You have set all My counsel to naught!": I did not create her from the head, and she is a "head-raiser," viz. (Isaiah 3:16): "And they walk with outstretched necks." Nor from the eye, and she is a "peeper," viz. (ibid.): "and they blink their eyes." Nor from the

ear, yet she is a snooper," viz. (Genesis 18:10): "And Sarah heard" ["eavesdropping" at the door of the tent). [Nor from the mouth, lest she be a prattler," viz. (Numbers 12:1): "And Miriam ... spoke against Moses, etc."]. Nor from the heart, yet she is a "termagant," viz. (Genesis 30:1): "And Rachel envied her sister." Nor from the hand, yet she is a "toucher," viz. ([bid. 31:19): "And Rachel stole the images, etc." Nor from the foot, yet she is a "gadabout," viz. ([bid. 30:16): "And Leah went out towards him, etc."

A MODEST WOMAN MERITS KINGSHIP AND THE PRIESTHOOD

My sons, go out and see how great is modesty in a woman. For our sages of blessed memory said (Megillah 10b): Every daughter-in-law that is modest in her father-in-law's house merits that kings and prophets descend from her. Whence is this derived? From the instance of Tamar, viz. (Genesis 38:15): "And Judah saw her and thought her to be a harlot because she covered her face." Because she had covered her face in Judah's house, he did not recognize her later and thought her to be a harlot. And she merited that kings and prophets descend from her: kings from David; prophets from Amotz. And our sages of blessed memory have said (Yerushalmi Yoma 4:2): A woman who "secretes" herself at home merits marrying a high-priest and being the mother of [a line of] high-priests, it being written (Psalms 45:14): "All the glory of the king's daughter is within; of checkered gold is her garment." That is, if she maintains her honor within, with modesty, she merits wedding a high-priest, in respect to whom it is written (Exodus 28:39): "And you shall make the coat [of the high-priest] of checkered linen."

GREAT IS MODESTY IN WOMEN ALSO WHEN AT HOME

Great is modesty in women, even within their homes. For thus did our sages of blessed memory say (Yerushalmi Yoma 4:2): Kimchit had seven sons, and they all officiated in the high-priesthood. The sages came in to her and asked her: "Tell us, what [especially] worthy deeds do you have to your credit whereby you merited this great distinction?" She answered: "I swear, the beams of my house never saw the hairs of my head" [i.e., My hair was always covered] - whereupon they said: "All flour [kimchiya] is Dust [plain] flour, but the flour of Kimchit is the finest flour!" And they pronounced over her: "All the glory of the king's daughter is within; of checkered gold is her garment."

THE GREAT MODESTY OF RUTH THE MOAVITESS

And thus do we find with Ruth the Moavite, that because of the modesty that Boaz beheld in her, he married her. (Bereshit Rabbah 5:6) And what modesty did he behold in her? All of the other women bent over and picked [the sheaves], and she knelt and picked them. All of the other women lifted their skirts, and she lowered them. All of the

other women fraternized with the [male] harvesters, and she kept apart from them. All of the other women picked between the sheaves, and she picked only hefker (ownerless sheaves). And, another instance of her modesty: Naomi said to her (Ruth 3:3): "And wash yourself, and anoint yourself, and place your raiment upon you, and go down to the threshing floor." But she did not do so. Rather (Ibid. 6): "And she went down to the threshing floor" -first, so as not to walk upon the road in her adornment; and, only afterward, (Ibid. 6): "And she did as all that her mother-in-law had told her." When Boaz saw all this modesty, he said: "Of a certainty, this one is worthy of kingdom," viz. (Ibid. 2:14): "And Boaz said to her at meal-time: 'Draw hither, etc... hither" connoting "kingdom," viz. (11 Samuel 7:18): "Who am I [David], 0 L-rd G-d, and what is my house that You have brought me hither [to kingdom]?" (Ruth, Ibid.): "And he reached her parched corn": It is not written: "And he gave her," but: "And he reached her." Because he had said: "Draw hither," and she, out of shame had not done so, he 'reached' her kali." What is connoted by "kali"? "kalil, kalil" ["lightly, lightly"] with his two fingers - in spite of which it is written (ibid.): "And she ate, and she was sated, and she left over," her eating being modest and not gluttonous. When Boaz saw all these signs of modesty, he took her as a wife and established with her [a line of] kings and prophets.

A MODEST WOMAN, LIKE THE ALTAR ATONES FOR THE PEOPLE OF HER HOME

And our sages of blessed memory have said in the aggadah (Tanchuma Vayishlach 6): When a woman is modest within her home, just as the altar atones for Israel, so she atones for her home, viz. (Psalms 128:3): "Your wife is like a fruitful vine in the recesses of [yarkethei] your house; your sons are like olive plants around your table," "yarkethei" alluding to the altar, viz. (Leviticus 1: 11): "And he shall slaughter it on the yerech of the altar northward." (Tanna dbei Eliyahu 18:16): "Your wife is like a fruitful vine" - like a vine that produces fruit, and not like a vine that does not produce fruit. As long as your wife is in the "recesses" of your house, your sons will be like olive plants. Just as the olive tree produces olives for eating, olives for drying, olives for oil, olives for preserving, and its oil is lit in all lamps - so, as long as your wife is in the recesses of your house, she is like this vine that never moves from its place. And her sons issue forth - some, scholars in Scripture; some, in Mishnah; some, men of affairs; some, sages; some, men of understanding; some, "knowers of a thing in its time." Thus: "your wife is like a fruitful vine."

IMMODEST WOMEN DAMAGE THEMSELVES AND ALL THEIR FAMILY

In contrast to her is the woman who weaves in the market place, who speaks with all men, who gazes at all men, who causes evil for herself, and who causes injury to herself

and to her children - whence they said: A woman causes herself and her children to be blemished. How so? If she vaunts herself over her husband, she causes herself and her children to be blemished. If she curses his begetters in his presence, she causes herself and her children to be blemished. "At one time, in the streets; at another, in the open places" (Proverbs 7:12), she causes herself and her children to be blemished. If she does not separate challah in purity; if she vows and does not fulfill, she causes herself and her children to be blemished, and she finds no pleasure in the world. And because of her misdeeds her children are - one of them, lame; another, blind; another, a fool and an evildoer. Therefore, women must conduct themselves with great modesty in all things: both in their houses, even before their husbands (How much more so outside of their houses), both in sitting, walking, eating, or drinking; both in speech, in dress, in adornment. [They must conduct themselves modestly] in everything that they do, so that no ill name or suspicion be imputed to them. Therefore, my sons, be extremely circumspect in the trait of modesty, so that you inherit a good name in your world. May G-d, in His great mercies, direct us in it.

OBSCENITY IS GREATLY DESPISED BY G-D

Having thus far spoken in praise of modesty and of those who exemplify it, we shall now speak in derogation of wantonness and obscenity and of their perpetrators, in order to direct them to the trait of modesty, with the help of G-d. Know, my sons, that immodesty and obscenity are among the traits most despised and abhorred by the Holy One Blessed be He. For thus have our sages of blessed memory stated (Shabbat 33a): If one sullies his mouth, even if a propitious decree of seventy years has been sealed for him, it is transformed to evil, as it is written (Isaiah 9:16): "Therefore, in his youths the L-rd will not rejoice and his orphans and widows, He shall not pity. For all is flattery and wickedness, and every mouth speaks obscenity. For all this His wrath does not turn back, and His hand is stretched out forevermore." All know why a bride goes to the bridal canopy, but if one dirties his mouth [in that regard], even if a propitious decree of seventy years [(the "forevermore" [i.e., average life span] of a human being)] has been sealed for him, it is transformed to evil.

GEHINOMM IS DEEPENED FOR THOSE WHO USE OBSCENE LANGUAGE

And our sages of blessed memory said further (Shabbat 33a): If one sullies his mouth, Gehinomm is deepened for him, viz. (Proverbs 22:15): "A deep pit is the mouth of obscenity." And, what is more, [this applies] even to one who listens and remains silent, the verse continuing: "The abhorred of the L-rd shall abide there" [next to the speaker of obscenity]. And thus is it written (Amos 4:13): "For, behold, He forms the mountains

and creates the wind, and He tells a man what his converse is": "A servant, whose master tells him what his converse is - is there any hope for him?" And our sages of blessed memory said (Chagigah 5b): "Even casual immodest converse between a man and his wife is recounted to him at the time of his death."

THE PERSON WHO TALKS TOO MUCH TO A WOMAN INHERITS GEHINOMM

It is great immodesty in a man to speak overmuch with a woman. For thus have our sages of blessed memory said (Avoth 1:5): If a man speaks overmuch with a woman, he causes evil to himself, he neglects Torah study, and, in the end, he inherits Gehinomm. And do not say that only words of licentiousness or words that lead to it are forbidden; for it is even forbidden to converse overmuch with her in "neutral" talk. And if there is some need for him to speak with her on some mundane matter, he should do so as succinctly as possible in order to part from her quickly, so that he not be suspect with her.

OUR SAGES ERECTED BARRIERS SO THAT WE AVOID SINNING THROUGH IMMODEST BEHAVIOR

My sons, come and see how much our rabbis of blessed memory exhorted us against immodesty, so that we not come to desire the [main] transgression itself. They forbade listening to a woman singing, saying (Berachot 24a): A woman's voice constitutes ervah ["nakedness"], viz. (Song of Songs 2:14): "For your voice is sweet, and your appearance is comely." And why all this? That he not come to desire her. And our sages of blessed memory exhorted further that men and women not sing together so that they not come to act immodestly. For thus have our sages of blessed memory said (Sotah 48a): Men singing and women answering - immodest; women singing and men answering - "like flame on flax." And if casual converse with a woman with the intent of hearing her voice is forbidden and regarded as immodesty, how much more so gazing at her.

A MAN MUST NOT WALK BEHIND A WOMAN ON THE ROAD

And our sages of blessed memory have said (Berachot 61a): A man must not walk behind a woman on the road, even if she is his wife. If he encounters a woman [walking ahead of him] on a bridge, he must keep to the side [until he passes her], and all who follow a woman in a stream [where she must lift her skirts] have no share in the world to come. And similarly, (Bava Batra 57b): (Isaiah 33:15): "And he that closes his eyes against gazing upon evil [is saintly]": This is one who does not gaze at women when

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they are standing over their washing. And our sages of blessed memory have said (Berachot 61a): One who counts out money into a woman's hand as a pretext for gazing at her - though he be like Moses our teacher, who received Torah from the hand of the Holy One Blessed be He to his hand, he will not be clean of the judgment of Gehinomm, viz. (Proverbs 11:21): "Hand to hand will not be cleansed of RA" ["evil" (the judgment of Gehinomm)]. And they said further (Berachoth 61a): If one gazes even upon the little finger of a woman, it is as if he gazes upon her private parts.

AVOIDING NAKEDNESS AND THE NEED TO HAVE MODESTY IN MARITAL RELATIONS

It is great immodesty in a man to go about naked, even in his own home. For whoever does so demeans himself and is reckoned as a beast, without shame. Our sages of blessed memory have said in the aggadah (Tosefta Berachot 2:14): It is not to man's dignity to stand naked. For when the Holy One Blessed be He created man, He did not create him naked, viz. (Job 38:9): "When I made the cloud his garment, and the mist, his swaddling cloth." When I made the cloud his garment" - the fetal sac; and the mist, his swaddling cloth" - the placenta. And (Yevamoth 63b): (Psalms 14:1): "The base one says in his heart: 'There is no G-d.'" In a baraita it was taught: These are the men of Barbaria and of Martania, who go naked in the marketplace, there being nothing more revolting and despicable to the Holy One Blessed be He than going naked in the marketplace. From here it is seen that all who do so are regarded as base and arrogant.

COHABITATION DURING THE DAYTIME IS FORBIDDEN

And included within "immodesty and baseness" is cohabiting in the daytime, our sages of blessed memory having said (Niddah 17a): One is forbidden to cohabit with his wife in the daytime, it being written (Leviticus 19:18): "And you shall love your neighbor as yourself." For he might notice something unsightly in her, which would render her repulsive to him. Likewise, cohabiting in the presence of any others is deemed base and shameless.

IMMODESTY IN WOMEN IS REPUGNANT

And if immodesty and baseness is so demeaning in men, how much more must women remove themselves from it (not to speak of coarse speech) to the farthest extreme. It is great immodesty in a woman to speak constantly with men. What is more, she casts suspicion upon herself. Included in the class of the immodest is the woman who adorns herself even in her own home; for when she goes out to the marketplace, men are likely to enter into conversation with her.

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IT IS IMMODESTY AND NAKEDNESS FOR WOMEN TO GO WITH THEIR HEADS UNCOVERED

My sons, go out and see how repugnant is immodesty in women, for of women who are given to any form of immodesty (such as walking in the marketplace with hair uncovered) our sages of blessed memory have said (Ketuvot 72a) that they are to be divorced without [the provisions of] the marriage contract. This accounts for what is written in respect to a sotah [a woman suspected of infidelity] (Numbers 5:18): "And he [the priest] shall uncover the head of the woman" [to demean her], concerning which our sages of blessed memory have said (Ketuvot 72a): From here it is derived that the [married] daughters of Israel are not to go out with uncovered head. For this is regarded as immodest and as ervah ["nakedness"], bringing men to [erotic] thoughts and desire, viz. (Ezekiel 16:7): "... with breasts developed and hair full grown." Similarly, it is immodest for a woman to weave in the marketplace. For she thereby exposes her arms, and men, seeing her, might desire her and be brought to transgression. Likewise, for a woman to play with young men is immodest. And for a woman to curse her in-laws in her husband's presence is shameless and audacious. Also [considered immodest is] a loud woman, whose neighbors can hear her when she speaks in her house, and a woman whose voice is heard in [the context of] marital relations. All of these, our sages of blessed memory said, are to be divorced without a marriage contract because they deport themselves immodestly. It is base and immodest in a woman to be a "guzzler," and to drink more than the amount of wine appropriate for her.

IMMODESTY AND BASENESS ARE THE AGENTS OF HARLOTRY

And it is deemed extremely immodest in a woman to speak of conjugal matters, even with her husband. She must be modest and shame-faced, even with her husband. And know, my sons, that immodesty and baseness are the agents of harlotry, its inception and its entrance. Because of this our sages of blessed memory exhorted both men and women to keep at the farthest remove from these repugnant traits. Therefore, my sons, take care to remove yourself from these vile traits, to sanctify yourselves before the L-rd and to draw close to Him. And our G-d, in the abundance of His mercies, will sanctify us with His mitzvoth and draw us close to Him.

UNTIL HERE FROM SEFER MAALOT HA MIDDOT

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