

Tznius and the Jewish Woman

The Pursuit of Modesty, Purity and Sanctity

Foreword

In the merit of Jewish daughters and women, more and more Jewish homes are presently being built with great attention placed on performing *mitzvos* in the most beautiful, careful and joyous manner possible. The dedication to Jewish ideals and the rigorous applications of Jewish law in the lives of Jewish daughters and women covers the entire spectrum of Jewish life, be it adhering to the highest standards of *kashrus*, scrupulous observance of the laws of *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*, and countless other areas. Similarly, but even more importantly, Jewish daughters and women have the *zechus* to meticulously observe the laws of *tznius* with all their practical applications and ramifications.

We hereby present a compilation of a number of the core themes relating to the laws of *tznius*, about which there may well be insufficient knowledge, although they are so germane to living our daily lives in the true spirit of *chassidische* daughters and women.

We also present in question-and-answer form, the laws of modesty in dress that apply to a Jewish daughter and woman.

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Tzefas, Eretz Yisrael

14th of Kislev, 5774

Introduction

It goes without saying, that G-dfearing Jews scrupulously observe all the laws of the *Shulchan Aruch*. How much more so does the above apply to those who follow in the paths that were paved by *Rabboseinu Nisi'einu*. Our generation – the final generation of *Galus* and the first of *Geulah* – has merited to be roused to perform *mitzvos* in the most beautiful manner possible, *mehadrin min hamehadrin*. Standing at the forefront of this trend are our righteous Jewish women and daughters. Indeed, the Rebbe indicated on numerous occasions that just as the women who were subject to the Egyptian exile merited to rear the generation of *geulah*, so too, present day Jewish women will merit to raise the generation that will most speedily greet our Righteous *Moshiach*.

Nevertheless, as a result of unawareness – at times as a consequence of lack of knowledge, or a lack of attention to detail – there are crucial lapses in the course of daily life regarding a number of these matters. Since lack of knowledge is not a valid excuse, it is vital that each and every one of us study and know the practical applications of these laws in one's daily life.

In the course of fulfilling my Rabbinic duties, I have come across many incidents where individuals transgressed in matters of *tznius* – Torah laws or Rabbinic laws – predominantly because of a simple lack of proper knowledge. I have therefore prepared a compilation of the main themes and aspects of the laws of *tznius*, which though they are so common and applicable, are all too often simply not known.

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In 5741, Rabbi Moshe N. Weiner published a book titled “*Kvuda Bas Melech*” dealing with the topic of *tznius*. When he delivered the book's galleys to the Rebbe, he received the following response on Wednesday, the Fourth of Kislev, 5741:

After indicating that the reply was urgent, the Rebbe wrote: “As I have already answered on so many occasions, each day that [the ability to] read and study this book is delayed, is indeed unfortunate (which necessitates its **actual** printing and binding – and so should you **actually** do, and the sooner the better).”

The Rebbe also participated in the book's publication, adding verbally: “**When I wrote ‘the sooner the better,’ I mean to imply, neither a week nor a month, but sixty minutes ... so as not to allow those from the “other side” to engulf him, as they seek all types of machinations in order to prevent the book's publication.**”

The above responses clearly indicate the great importance the Rebbe ascribed to this subject, and the utter necessity to disseminate these laws in a clear and approachable manner to the general public.

The Rebbe, in one of his letters, (*Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 26, p. 325) offers the following additional insight: “There are those whose **lack of knowledge** (emphasis added) of Torah in general and the subject of *tznius* in particular, leads them to think that the laws, enactments and customs surrounding *tznius*, serve to “limit” the Jewish woman and serve to deprive her of her communal rights, or dishonor her, and the like.

“This is totally false. The opposite is entirely true: Our sacred Torah and our Sages, of blessed memory, in countless instances stress the honor and the glory of the Jewish daughter and woman. Many enactments were established for the express purpose of **protecting and guarding** (emphasis added) their honor and importance.”

Much thought and effort has gone into writing this monograph, so as to best integrate and instill the proper *halachic* knowledge of these laws, together with making patently clear the personal responsibility we all carry in learning to successfully contend with the struggles against the modern modes of fashion.

My thanks go out to all the worthy *Rabbonim* who reviewed this monograph and offered their important comments and insights. My thanks go out as well to Rabbi Asaf C. Frumer, who worked diligently in preparing this monograph for publication.

The monograph is composed of the following subjects:

Chapter 1 – General definitions: *Das Yehudis* and laws of *tznius*.

Chapter 2 – The length and color of the hair and *sheitel*.

Chapter 3 – Covering one’s neck, upper arm and foot

Chapter 4 – The age that a girl should commence conducting herself with *tznius*

Chapter 5 – Red garments

Chapter 6 – Tight-fitting garments

Chapter 7 – The responsibility

Chapter 8 – Summary

Chapter 1 – General definitions: *Das Yehudis* and laws of *tznius*.

In the chapters to follow many fundamental definitions will be oft repeated. In order to better understand them, we will briefly review them:

A) *Das Yehudis*:

The *Mishnah* states that women's obligations come under two headings: a) *Das Moshe*, i.e., those matters that are actual Torah commands, and b) *Das Yehudis*, Jewish manners of conduct that have all the strictures of Rabbinic Law. The statement of the *Mishnah* has been codified into actual law [*Kesuvos* 7:6; *Even HaEzer* 115:5].

For example: According to Torah law a married woman must go out with a covering on the hair of her head; it is only prohibited to go out with completely uncovered hair. However, according to *Das Yehudis* all the hair on her head must be covered.

In the chapters that will follow, we will indicate many important details that are prohibited as a result of *Das Yehudis*. [It is worth noting that those matters that are prohibited as a result of *Das Yehudis* do not have a specific measure, so that even less than a *tefach*, a handbreadth, is also prohibited.]

B) The law of *mekomos hamechusim* – those parts of the body that are normally concealed

The place of the *erva* – one's most intimate parts – [which is a place that is normally concealed], are to be covered both on a man and a woman. The *Shema* or prayers may not be recited in front of them when they are uncovered. However, the *Gemara* and the codifiers state that there are additional areas on a woman's body that are considered *erva*, as they lead a male who gazes at them to have improper thoughts. In general terms, all of a woman's bodily parts that are generally covered are considered *erva* when uncovered. One may not pray in front of these revealed parts and they are to be covered in accordance with Jewish law.

C) Proper dress that avoids causing a man to gaze and have improper thoughts

It is **forbidden for a man to gaze** even at those places of the body that are generally **revealed**, if he does so for pleasure's sake. It is likewise prohibited for a man to gaze at a woman's jewelry, if he does so for pleasure's sake. This is why the codifiers have cited various laws regarding *tznius* of a woman's garments (**in addition** to that which is expressly forbidden as a result of *Das Yehudis* or revealing parts of the body that are considered *erva*). These laws were enacted in

order to prevent a male from forbidden gazing and indulging in improper thoughts. There are varying degrees and gradations to the above; in certain instances the prohibition is actually considered as transgressing *Das Yehudis*.

D) General principles of the laws of *tznius*

So, too, it is obligatory (for males as well) to conduct themselves in a general manner of *tznius*, abstaining from revealing normally concealed parts of the body, even in one's most private chambers. By conducting oneself thusly, one honors G-d, Who is found everywhere.

Those matters that are forbidden for the reasons cited in sections "c" and "d" come under the heading of **Laws of *Tznius***.

All of the above applies **both to married women, as well as to women who have yet to marry**. The exception: covering one's hair, where different laws apply to a *besulah* (a virgin) and a married woman. (This will be further discussed in chapter 3.)

Chapter 2 – The length and color of the hair and *sheitel*

***Tznius* regarding hair style**

The hair style and coiffure have a strong effect on one's general appearance. It is therefore important that the hair-do be muted and reserved as befits a fine and upstanding *Chassidic* girl and not – Heaven forbid – flamboyant and ostentatious.

Proper hair length and whether a girl's hair and a woman's *sheitel* must be drawn together

The hair of a *besulah* who never married, as well as the hair of a *sheitel*, is not subject to the law of "a place of *ervah*," nor do the laws of having the "head uncovered" apply.

However, just as a garment that **covers** a place of *erva* may be **prohibited** solely as a result of its being fashioned in a manner that intends to **draw attention** to the woman and incite the evil inclination (as mentioned in the previous chapter, and will be mentioned later as well,) so, too, with regard to hair.

Even when the classification of *erva* does not apply, this does not make it permissible to coif one's hair in a flamboyant and ostentatious manner.

Thus, just as one may not wear garments with brazen colors, nor may one wear tight clothing, as it may lead to gazing at them in a forbidden manner, **so too is a *besulah* not to go with overly long and sprawling hair, and so too should one not wear an overly long and sprawling *sheitel*, wearing it in a manner that has not been accepted by *tznius'dig* Jewish women and daughters.** This is so, although from a strict point of law the above is not forbidden. This is also in accord with the enactments of many institutions where girls are educated *al taharas hakodesh*. Rabbi Sholom B. Hecht relates: During one of the occasions that his entire family – parents, brothers and sisters – were in *yechidus* by the Rebbe, the Rebbe noticed that the hair of one of the girls was not drawn together. The Rebbe noted: “A Jewish daughter does not go with sprawling hair; the hair is to be drawn together in a *tznius'dig* manner.” [Printed in *Hatznei'a Leches*, p. 147.]

In an instance where the hair is *extremely* long, or *specifically arranged* in a manner that it will catch the eye, for example, extremely sprawling hair, exaggerated curly hair, hair that looks wet and shiny, then this is surely forbidden as a transgression of *Das Yehudis*.

It must be emphasized that each individual carries personal responsibility in this matter. When in doubt, the woman should utilize her common sense without succumbing to the blandishments of the *Yetzer HaRa*. If she is unable to do so, she should consult with her *mashpiah* before she invests a fortune in purchasing a *sheitel*.

May a woman go out in the street for a brief period wearing a kerchief (and not a *sheitel*)?

In accordance with the Rebbe's directives about specifically covering one's hair with a *sheitel*, it is incumbent on all to be scrupulous in this matter and not go out to a public place, e.g., a store, another dwelling, a kindergarten, a short trip in the car, not even doing so for the briefest period of time, wearing a kerchief and not a *sheitel*. It is therefore laudable that one conduct oneself in this manner even in one's home when there are guests in the house. [*Leket Shikchas HaPeiah*, p. 88.]

As a preventive measure, it has become a rather widespread custom in Chassidic homes for the woman to always wear a *sheitel* in her home, even when only close family members are in the house.

Chapter 3 – Covering one’s neck, upper arm and foot

Covering one’s neck

According to the letter of the law, the neck need not be covered, although everything below the neck must be covered. One must be most vigilant regarding this matter, as there are so many pitfalls with regard to garments that are made in the following manner:

1 – Garments without a neckline

2 – Buttoned blouses with a wide neckline

3 – With regard to an outfit composed of a basic blouse upon which there is an upper vest-like garment, one needs to make sure that the inner garment was not pulled down with the passage of time, thereby ensuring that a place that needs to be covered was not uncovered.

The dimensions of the neckline:

The inner part of the neck – the indentation in the neck corresponding to the point between the nostrils.

The side parts of the neck – from the area that the neck begins to slope in the direction of the shoulders.

The back part of the neck – from the first vertebra of the back (*etzem luz*), which is felt when one’s head is fully bent forward.

Covering one’s upper arm

How long should the sleeves be?

The *Gemara* in *Kesuvos* [72b] states: “A woman who weaves in the marketplace and reveals her upper arm to passers-by” transgresses *Das Yehudis*. The codifiers explain that the reason for the transgression is because the upper portion of the arm (between the shoulder and elbow) is a powerful drawer of attention. It is therefore necessary that the upper arm always be covered by wearing sleeves that reach slightly below the elbows. [See *Levusha Shel Torah*, chapter 41, for many more details.]

It is also important to see to it that the upper arm not be revealed even when the arm is bent, or lifted up, or when performing a labor that necessitates slightly rolling up one's sleeves (such as kneading dough, washing dishes and the like).

This is why a woman should not wear a wide-sleeved garment (although it covers the entire arm), because the sleeves slide down when she lifts her arm and it will reveal the upper arm. For example, while travelling on a bus or in the subway the woman lifts her arm to hold on to the hand-strap, which will result in the sleeve sliding down. So, too, when she lifts her arm, when – unaware to her – the width of the sleeve makes it possible for others to gaze at places on her body that are otherwise concealed, and moreover, she, herself does not desire that they be seen.

Covering the foot

Why is it forbidden to wear a short skirt; what is the source of the prohibition?

The *Gemara* states in *Berachos* [24a]: R. Chisda says, “The *shoik* of a woman is *erva*.”

This has been codified in *Halacha* that a woman may not reveal her *shoik*. This prohibition against revealing the *shoik* is **more stringent** than revealing other parts of the body that are forbidden to be revealed.

We will mention but two details regarding the added stringency against revealing the *shoik*:

A – The Alter Rebbe rules that we should take into serious consideration that revealing even **less than a tefach** is considered *erva* – to the extent that even with regard to one's wife, one may not pray opposite her revealed *shoik*.

B – The *shoik* is a body-part that much more strongly causes improper thoughts in a man, for which reason it is to be covered in all instances. [See at length in *Kvuda Bas Melech*, p. 116ff.]

Most of the most prominent codifiers explain that *shoik* refers to the **lower part** of the foot, i.e., from the knee downward, and so, too rules the Alter Rebbe [75:1]. This is to say, that the **entire foot** is to be covered.

According to a minority of the codifiers, the *shoik* refers to the thigh, i.e., from the **knee upwards**. However, even according to their opinion, **this includes the knees themselves – they too must be covered**. Thus, according to all opinions, revealing one's knees constitutes “The *shoik* of a woman is *erva*.” [*Mishnah Berurah* 75:2.]

(Even according to the more lenient opinions, the core law also obligates covering the lower part of the foot. This will be explained in the chapter that follows. See sources at length in *Kvuda Bas Melech*, 2:12 and fn. *28.)

Accordingly, what must the dress or skirt length be according to Jewish law?

It is necessary to assure that the skirt covers the knee **even while sitting**, so as not to reveal the knees that are considered **actual *erva*** according to all opinions. So, too, the skirt should cover the knees in all common situations, such as entering a car, walking (and surely running), going up steps, etc. For if the knees were to be revealed, one transgresses a Torah prohibition.

[Particularly, since even according to the more **lenient** opinion, the knee must remain covered, as it also comes under the heading of *shoik*.]

What is the Rebbe's opinion in this matter?

The Rebbe writes in a letter: “My opinion is known, that the proper length that applies equally to all Jewish daughters and in all places is that the [length of the garment be such that the] knees be covered even while sitting. As already stated, that which I mentioned above is the **minimum amount** that applies equally to all...” [*Shaarei Halacha U'Minhag*, Vol. 4, section 145.]

From the Rebbe's words, quoted above, it is clear that keeping the knees covered in any and all instances is **the basic standard of the core law**; it does not come under the heading of being extremely scrupulous or performing the law *b'hidur*. To the contrary, it is “the **minimum amount** that applies equally to all.” Understandably, the Rebbe's holy desire was that those who act “beyond the letter of the law” and conduct themselves in the manner of *Chassidus*, should be *mehadeir* to not limit the skirt or dress to this minimum length, but to extend it further.

Why is it necessary for the skirt to cover the knees even while sitting, when the knees can be covered by the stockings?

There is a prohibition against wearing a garment that accentuates the shape of a woman's body; she who wears such a garment in order to draw attention to herself is acting immorally. Thus, even when a woman wears opaque stockings that entirely cover her feet, she must nevertheless wear a skirt (or dress) that covers the knees – even while sitting, as explained above.

The reason:

A – Since stockings closely fit the feet, such a covering is not efficacious, since it serves to accentuate the woman’s shape. Therefore, in addition to stockings, she must also cover herself with a skirt.

B – A short skirt draws men’s attention – their eyes are drawn to it. It is forbidden for a woman to trip a man up by wearing such garments. This comes under the heading of transgressing *Das Yehudis*.

In the Responsa *Igros Moshe*, of R. Moshe Feinstein, of blessed memory [*Even HaEzer*, Vol. 5, section 17] there is a sharp letter, unusual in the severity of its tone, where he writes the following:

“In recent times a laxness has arisen in many observant households with regard to wearing **short clothes**, Heaven forbid. **We hereby desire to make known to all that this constitutes one of the harshest prohibitions**, whose punishment is great both in this world and the next. We hereby also serve notice that it is the obligation of a Jewish daughter to wear “kosher” garments, **that do not reveal – G-d forbid – even the smallest part of the knees**, both when they are walking, as well as when they are sitting. Dressing in this manner is prohibited even if **they are wearing thick stockings**, as this constitutes debauched conduct. This is the case even when the flesh is not visible. How much more so with regard to stockings through which the flesh is as visible as if they were glass; they are not considered a covering at all.”

Since the ruling that “The *shoik* of a woman is *erva*” refers even to the part of the foot below the knee, why is there the following difference in Jewish law – the upper part of the foot (above the knee) cannot be covered with stockings and must be covered by a dress or skirt, while stockings are a sufficient covering below the knee?

There are parts of the body that not only the skin of the body part itself is to be covered, but that its shape as well should not be visible, e.g., the upper part of the foot. This is because the upper part of the foot is viewed in Jewish law as a limb that draws the eye of the beholder. Merely covering the skin but allowing the shape to be seen therefore does not suffice; it is necessary to cover up its **shape** as well.

On the other hand, there are parts of the body (such as the upper part of the arm and the hair of the head) where though they are to be **covered**, there is, however, no obligation that their **shape** also not be visible. This applies to the lower part of the foot as well; although it is to be covered in a manner that the **actual foot** is not visible, there is, however, no obligation that its **shape** also not be visible. The rationale for this is: this part of the body is not considered in Jewish law as a body part that draws in the eye of the beholder. Therefore, it suffices to merely cover it, but its shape need not be concealed.

This, then, is the reason why the dress or skirt need not be so long that it will cover the foot below the knee, and opaque stockings suffice as a covering. This, of course, is not the case with the upper part of the foot. [See at length in *Levusha Shel Torah*, chapter 40.]

Is it permissible to wear a long skirt with a slit?

As mentioned earlier, it is considered immoral for a woman or girl to wear a garment that accentuates the body so that she is gazed at. Therefore, (even if she is wearing a long skirt) it is prohibited to wear a skirt with a slit; the size of the slit **makes absolutely no difference**, since the slit itself is designed to draw attention to the concealed parts of the body, which, as stated above, is prurient behavior.

Do not shorten your garments

During a *Sicha* delivered in the year 5728, the Rebbe said the following: “Jewish women and daughters of our present era must guard their purity and holiness, particularly with regard to *tznius* and their garments. They are not to be fazed by that which transpires around them, and they should not desire to emulate the gentile styles... They are to pay particularly close attention and be meticulous that their clothing be in accordance with the *Shulchan Aruch*, and not shorten them, etc., etc. The Rebbe emphasized **that this be publicized**. [From a *Sicha* to *Neshei u’Bnos Chabad*, 28 Iyar, 5728.]

Earlier in that year, during the *Yud Tes Kislev farbrengen* [section 27] the Rebbe said: “... **So, too, ‘A daughter shall rise up against her mother’ – in a positive sense. The daughter comes along and says, ‘I am not embarrassed that there is a goy or goya in Paris! ... There is a goy who declares that the dress should be shortened – what possible difference does this make for me?! I have the words of Moshe Rabbeinu, lehavdil.**”

Covering the soles of the feet outside the home

According to all opinions (even those who maintain that the *shoik* is from the knee and upwards), **in those locations where it is customary to cover** the soles of the feet, they are considered *erva*. One may not go barefoot (nor may a man pray, etc., opposite them). Many of the codifiers write, and so too rules the Alter Rebbe [*MaHadura Tinyana* 2:2], that “in our countries” the custom is not

to go barefoot, not even during the summer. It is therefore forbidden to reveal the soles of the feet.

This is surely so when one finds herself outside the home, in a place of strangers, where going barefoot causes them to stumble by looking at the soles of her feet. Going unshod in public is then so much graver.

In addition to the *Halachic* prohibition, there is also the confidential letter that was lately publicized, in which Rabbi Chodakov, of blessed memory, writes to the administration of the summer camp in Kfar Chabad: “Some shocking news has come to my attention regarding last year’s summer camp for girls. To wit, that although the general conduct of the camp was thoroughly satisfactory and left a fine impression on the campers, still, not enough attention was paid to educate them with regard to *tznius*. For example, it was reported that the girls did not refrain from going barefoot, and not only in the immediate environs of the camp, but also while walking in the *kfar*.”

Must the soles of the feet be covered inside the home?

According to the **Alter Rebbe** [75:1], the obligation to cover one’s foot extends not only to the *shoik*, (between the knees and the soles of the feet,) but to the soles as well. One should therefore wear socks even while one is in the home.

Therefore it is **forbidden according to Halacha** to recite sacred passages opposite one’s wife who is not wearing stockings and her feet are revealed [even when she a *tehorah*].

[See *Leket Tziyonim v’Ha’aros* to the Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, 75:1; *Taharah k’Halacha*, 14:21 and fn. 49. See at length in *Kvuda Bas Melech*, chapter 2, fn. 33.]

Are there limitations with regard to the type of stockings or pantyhose?

The *Gemara* in *Berachos* [25a] states: “It is forbidden to recite *Kerias Shema* opposite *erva* that is seen through a lamp [whose glass is transparent], for the verse states, ‘*Ervas davar* should not be seen by you.’” Therefore, any thin or transparent garment which can be seen through is not considered as a concealing garment.

As mentioned above, according to the **Alter Rebbe and the majority of codifiers**, even the parts of the foot below the knee are considered actual *erva*, for which reason it is forbidden to wear transparent stockings.

Examination of the later codifiers who accept the ruling of the *Mishnah Berurah* who maintains that *shoik* is from the knee and upwards, will find that they, too, lean towards the view – because of a variety of reasons, and according to them as well **it is prohibited to wear stockings that are totally transparent**; at the most, the stockings may be skin-colored and the like. [See *Kovetz Milu'im to Kvuda Bas Melech*, chapter 2, fn. *28.]

However, as stated above, according to the Alter Rebbe one must clearly act stringently in this matter [See *Milu'im to Kvuda Bas Melech*, chapter 2, fn. 19, p. 95].

An important note: Each woman must pay particular attention whether the stockings she wears truly covers, as that which will sufficiently cover for one woman will not necessarily cover for the next. This is because the decisive factor is not the **thickness** of the stockings (the denier), but their color: Stockings made of dense material, but the legs can still be seen through them are prohibited, while a less dense material that **conceals** the body is permissible.

Chapter 4 – The age that a girl should commence conducting herself with *tznius*

At what age should a girl be meticulous about matters of *tznius*?

The Rebbe writes in one of his letters: “According to the *Shulchan Aruch*, when a girl reaches the age of three years and a day, she should already conduct herself in a manner of *tznius*. Surely this applies to a girl who is ten years and older ... But not to be oppressive about this ... and to speak [to her] in a pleasant manner. [*Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 18, p. 448.]

In one of the Rebbe's *Sichos* he notes that the obligations to dress in a manner of *tznius* from the age of three years and a day, is **in accordance with the majority of codifiers**. [*Sicha, Shabbos Parshal Terumah*, 5741, section 4 (*Sichos Kodesh* 5741, Vol. 2, p. 419). We can adduce from the above, that the Rebbe's statement in his letter, “Surely this applies to a girl who is ten years and older” (aside from the fact that it seems that the letter was speaking about a girl of that age), implies that even according to the **minority** of codifiers who are lenient with regard to the age of three, they as well, would agree that from the age of ten and above she is without a doubt **obligated** to dress in a manner of *tznius*. This is clearly seen when one examines their words, for they base it upon the age when the girl's body begins to develop, etc. See *Kvuda Bas Melech*, chapter 2, section 5 and fn. 8 at length.]

Chapter 5 – Red garments

The *Gemara* relates [*Berachos* 20a] how one of the *Amora'im* forbade a woman to wear a garment that was red “as a rooster’s comb,” as it leads to sin.

The *Rema* codifies this, stating [*Yoreh Dei'ah*, 178:16,] that it is prohibited to wear “a garment worn by the gentiles for the sake of lasciviousness, for example, their custom of wearing red garments.”

Thus, wearing a red garment is problematical for two reasons:

A – It comes under the heading of “*Chukas HaGoyim*,” the “Customs of the Gentiles,” (if their custom in a particular point of time is to wear such colored clothing).

B – Because it is salacious and lacking in *tznius*.

With regard to the first aspect, *Darkei Teshuvah* writes [*Yoreh Dei'ah*, 178:1] that since presently it is not the custom of gentiles to specifically wear red clothing, this does not come under the heading of “*Chukas HaGoyim*.”

However, many of the codifiers write that in any event a red garment is considered salacious, as it is meant to draw the eye of its beholder, **and one who wears such a garment transgresses “*Das Yehudis*.”** Even with regard to “*Chukas HaGoyim*,” there are codifiers who – in the name of the *Chasam Sofer* – sharply admonish against wearing red garments in present times – even with regard to stockings or a hair ribbon. [*Be'eir Moshe* (Stern) Vol. 4, 147:13.]

It is worth noting the Rebbe’s words in one of his *Sichos*, that women should wear garments that do not draw undue attention and arouse men [the husband and brothers] and bring about the opposite of *tznius*. Rather, they should dress in a manner of “The entire glory of the king’s daughter is within.” [*Toras Menachem* 5751, Vol. 1, p. 142.]

To summarize: According to many opinions wearing red garments during present times does not come under the heading of “*Chukas HaGoyim*.” However, **it is forbidden to wear a red garment, or for that matter, a garment of any other color** that is salacious and particularly draws the eye because of “*Das Yehudis*.”

In actual practice: We are only scrupulous **in avoiding wearing garments that are actually red**. Similar hues, (such as pink or bourdeaux (claret)) are permitted if they are not particularly loud or dazzling. Moreover, the prohibition only relates to a garment, but not to red lipstick.

Is a garment with a red pattern – but the garment itself is not red – included in the above prohibition?

According to the opinion of R. Shlomo Z. Auerbach, of blessed memory, if the red pattern covers most of the garment, the garment should not be worn. One should also refrain from wearing garments containing writing or images, as they draw undue attention.

Chapter 6 – Tight-fitting garments

Is it permitted to wear tight-fitting garments?

A tight-fitting blouse, skirt, or dress that accentuate one's shape, whether this is a result of their tight form, or whether this is a result of their tight fabric, contradicts the very foundations of *tznius* and are forbidden to be worn **according to Jewish law**.

Halacha provides many reasons for their prohibition – among the foremost ones:

- A. Since the purpose of wearing such clothing is to accentuate the shape of the person's body, so that people will gaze at the wearer, this is considered licentious. It is forbidden because of the principle of Jewish law that wearing such clothing violates *Das Yehudis*.
- B. A garment that emphasizes specific limbs or parts of the body is considered according to *Halacha* as making that limb or body part noticeable and visible, and is thus not *tzniusdig*.

Chapter 7 – The responsibility

What is the husband's degree of responsibility in seeing that these laws are maintained?

In a letter written by the Rebbe's secretary, Rabbi Yehudah L. Groner, he describes what transpired during the festival of Shavuous 5728 by the Rebbe. Among the various details, he writes: "The Rebbe went on at length about matters of *tznius*, adding, that the *tznius* of one's wife and daughters are dependent on the husband and father, in line with that which is stated in *Kuntres HoAvodah* with regard to guarding one's eyes, ears, etc." [*M'Shivchei Rebbe*, p. 60.]

The husband has a particular responsibility to assure that his wife and daughters dress in a Chassidic manner and in a manner of *tznius*. This duty also is communal in nature, that others

use the proper mode of dress of his household as a guide to how their own families should properly dress. His responsibility also extends to all his children, as they observe the family's mode of dress and construe that this is a proper manner of conduct, and thus, they too will dress in this manner when they are grown. Moreover, it can – Heaven forbid – lead to even more dire consequences. The husband must therefore constantly be on guard regarding the above, understandably, doing so in an honorable, pleasant and peaceful manner.

It goes without saying that this duty extends to the husband **himself** being meticulous in dressing in a Chassidic manner and in a manner of *tznius*. As the Rebbe has noted on a number of occasions with regard to men as well [among them: *Toras Menachem*, Vol. 37, p. 77, *Sichas Parshas Terumah* 5741,] that there are those who are lax in their manner of dress during the summer and the like (for instance, wearing short pants), something that should never occur. Assuredly, the father's living example is ever more effective than mere words.

The wife and mother's great degree of responsibility

The Rebbe states in one of his sacred *Sichos*: “Kimchis had seven sons, all of whom merited to serve as *Kohanim Gedolim*, High Priests. The Sages asked her, 'What have you done to merit this?' She answered them: ‘The rafters of my house have never seen the plaits of my hair.’” This is a must for every Jewish woman to know: The *chinuch* and the manner that children grow up is dependent on her, the Jewish mother, to a greater extent than on the father.

“What is required of her,” the Rebbe asked. He went on to elucidate: “It is not required that the house be meticulously and sparkling clean; what is required is that ‘The rafters of my house have never seen the plaits of my hair,’ i.e., matters of *tznius* in the plainest sense of the word.

“They must know that their children's fate lies in their hands ... It is possible that it was decreed from Above that this person's child can attain the spiritual level of a **High** priest. However, when her conduct lacks the aspect of ‘The rafters of my house have never seen the plaits of my hair,’ she **prevents** her son from achieving a level that he could have attained!

The Rebbe concluded: “One cannot fulfill their obligation with sighs and laments – this has to actually be done. Doing so will merit both physically and spiritually healthy children. [*Toras Menachem*, Vol. 16, *Parshas Shmini*, sections 13-15.]

Although the laws of *tznius* apply both to men and women, nevertheless – explains the Rebbe – (in another *Sicha*) this primarily applies to women. This is a result of **their special qualities**. It is precisely because women were blessed with beauty, (something that is connected with the inner self of a woman, as explained in Kabbalah and Chassidus,) that they are to be especially meticulous regarding *tznius*.

This is why our Sages emphasized Kimchis' quality of *tznius*, although her husband was surely *tzanua* as well, for that which merited her children [to serve as *Kohanim Gedolim*,] was specifically her *tznius*.

Since this is **demande**d to a greater degree from the woman, she is surely granted **additional and unique strength**, which enables her to withstand and be **victorious** in her battle with the *Yetzer HaRa*. She will thus succeed in her efforts and implement the conduct of "The entire glory of the king's daughter is within," in her entire household, affecting as well, her husband, brothers, sons and daughters. [*Toras Menachem*, Vol. 37, p. 154.]

"Do not place a stumbling block before the blind"

The verse states, [*Vayikra* 15:14,] "Do not place a stumbling block before the blind." When someone entices another to sin, or prepares the path for him to sin, one transgresses the above command. The *Gemara* explains [*Pesachim* 22b] that the above applies even when that other person sins knowingly and of his own volition.

Each and every Jewish woman thus bears a particular responsibility to observe the bounds of *tznius* as delineated in the *Shulchan Aruch*, thereby assuring that others will not be led to sin, as well as assuring that **she, herself** will not commit a sin that is a Torah prohibition.

In the book, *Hachinuch v'HaMichaneich* [directives in *chinuch* from the Rebbe's principal secretary, Rabbi Chodakov, of blessed memory, p. 49,] it states the following: "When a student conducts herself in a non-*tznius* manner – dressing in a non-*tznius* manner, dressing in a way that draws attention to herself and sometimes even by her walk – she entices and arouses the observer and it leads him to various illicit thoughts; who knows where this can lead him? His sin is because of her. Although she had no intention to do so and she isn't even aware of what she did, it is still classified as one who caused the multitude to sin, for which the opportunity is not granted for her to do *teshuvah*, since many who sinner because of her do not repent. This point should be emphasized when the subject of *tznius* is explained."

The obligation of the staff in Chabad girl schools – even those that cater to the very young

It is most appropriate here to emphasize the unique importance of the following: Every woman who works in an *Anash* educational institution for girls – even those for the very young – must serve as a personal example in all the above with regard to *tznius* and following in the pathways of Chassidus. This applies even to matters that while possibly permissible according Jewish law, are inconsistent with the path of Chassidus.

To make doubly sure that the above is truly put into practice, the following is a letter of the Rebbe, printed in *Igros Kodesh* [Volume 9, p. 216]:

“ ... Regarding that which you write about the matters that were not included in evaluating the male and female teachers: The manner of [proper] dress of the female teachers is of crucial importance, as is readily understood, and not only in the upper classes, but even in the lower classes. A very great deal of attention should be given to this matter. Particularly so, in light of the narrative that in the times of the *Tzemach Tzedek* a certain *shochet/bodek* was removed from his post because he wore overshoes. Surely, there is no prohibition against wearing overshoes, but this served as an outward sign about that which was transpiring “inward,” *v'da”l* (“this is sufficient explanation for the understanding”). ...

What caused the Rebbe to utter the severe expression, “I will be forced to oust her from my ‘four cubits’”

Rabbi Shmuel Chefer tells about a *yechidus* that he had with the Rebbe:

During the time when short dresses and skirts were very much in vogue, the Rebbe brought up this subject in *yechidus* and commented sharply about it. The Rebbe said that he heard that a gentile in Paris is about to come out with an opposite style – long dresses and skirts. However, said the Rebbe, woe and alas if the girls will change their dress style simply because of the upcoming new fashion dictates, doing so only because a gentile in Paris decided that it be so, and not because it is so stated in *Shulchan Aruch*. [On another occasion during a *yechidus*, the Rebbe used the expression, “An idea of an insane Parisian gentile.”]

Afterwards, the Rebbe asked me to assemble the students and their mother’s, without revealing to the girl’s parents that I was doing so in his name. The Rebbe then explained his reason: **For if they will know about this [i.e., that it comes from me] and nevertheless not listen, Heaven forbend, I will be forced to oust them from my “four cubits,”** [i.e., he would be forced to not allow them to be in close proximity to him, heaven forbid].

What was the unique *segulah* that the Rebbe gave to a young *kallah*?

A *kallah* once turned to the Rebbe and asked for his blessing and for a *segulah* for her upcoming marriage. The Rebbe responded:

Regarding your question, which *mitzvah* carries with it a unique *segulah*, etc. – Understandably, matters of *Taharas HaMishpacha* and matters of *tznius* (covering one’s hair, garments, etc), and see *Zohar* III, (126a): “It is necessary for a woman ... and the great reward for doing so.

The Rebbe was referring to the *Zohar* that he often quoted: “A woman must cover herself in the corners of her home (and in one place, the Rebbe adds: “From which we understand how much more so outside the home!”), and if she does so her children will be honored, she will be blessed with all blessings, blessings of above and blessings here, below, with wealth, with children and grandchildren.”

Chapter 8 – Summary

1. It has been codified in *Halacha*, that “The *shoik* of a woman is *erva*.” Therefore, one is to be extremely meticulous in assuring **that the knees be covered** even while sitting, walking, entering a car and the like.

2. Opaque stockings do not suffice as a covering for the upper part of the foot (from the knee upwards); they must be covered with a skirt or dress that conceal the shape of the foot.

3. According to the Alter Rebbe and also most of the other prominent codifiers, the *shoik* refers to the **lower part** of the foot, i.e., from the knee downward. Therefore, one must be meticulous in wearing only non-transparent stockings.

4. Even if one wears a dress or skirt that covers the knees, one must wear stockings that cover the knees as well, since sometimes the skirt rises a little and that area of the foot – an area that is required to be concealed – is revealed if it is not covered by stockings.

5. According to *Halacha*, one is required to wear stockings even in one’s home. It is forbidden to recite sacred passages facing a revealed foot (not even one’s wife, and even when she a *tehorah*).

6. According to most codifiers – and the Rebbe states this explicitly as well – when a girl reaches the age of three years and a day, she should already conduct herself in a manner of *tznius*.

7. One should not wear red garments, nor garments containing writing or images, as they draw undue attention.

8. One should not wear tight-fitting blouses, skirts, or dresses that accentuate one’s shape. It is likewise forbidden to wear blouses with wide necklines, where one can see below the clavicle.

9. One should not wear stockings or pantyhose with fancy patterns, as they are meant to draw attention to concealed locations of the body. However, delicate patterns that are the same color of the stockings and are not eye-catching are permitted.

10. A married women should not wear a *sheitel*, nor a girl her hair, overly long and sprawling, or specifically coiffed in a manner meant to catch the eye, as this is forbidden as a transgression of *Das Yehudis*.

11. In accordance with the Rebbe's directives about specifically covering one's hair with a *sheitel*, it is incumbent on all to be scrupulous in this matter and not go out to a public place, e.g., a store, another dwelling, a kindergarten, a short trip in the car, and the like, wearing a kerchief and not a *sheitel*. [If possible, a *sheitel* should be worn in the home as well.]

12. It is incumbent on all to study and know the laws that are connected to *tznius* and to scrupulously observe them. This knowledge will empower the individual when faced with the *Yetzer HaRa* strongly tempting the person to sin. The trials and temptations become so much greater when it is necessary to swim against the tide, i.e., in those environs where the magnitude of conducting oneself in a holy and pure manner is not at all appreciated.

13. Beyond the simple *Halachic* aspect, every Chassidic woman and daughter has the distinct privilege and obligation to dress in a manner that befits Chassidic conduct – as the Rebbe demanded both in writing and orally in the clearest possible manner – from every Chassidic woman and daughter.

14. When one's wife has a *laissez-faire* attitude to some detail with regard to *tznius*, the *Halachic* responsibility devolves to her husband that he see to it that she dress in a manner that is permissible according to the *Shulchan Aruch*, as well as in keeping with proper Chassidic behavior. Surely, an upstanding woman will react with understanding to her husband's comments. Particularly so, when her husband sets a living example, by himself scrupulously observing the laws of *tznius* and dressing in a Chassidic manner.

15. Undoubtedly women and daughters of Chassidic households, who are truly dedicated to the various strictures, such as the most minute strictures regarding Pesach, will – with proper dedication and effort – succeed in overcoming the blandishments of the *Yetzer HaRa* and conduct themselves most properly in all aspects of *tznius*.

16. We are all charged with the task of acting as *shluchim* and *shluchos* of the Rebbe – “One's agent being as person himself” – to disseminate Judaism and Chassidus in our environs, thereby causing the entire world to properly serve G-d. This task must encompass our entire beings, including our *Yetzer Tov* and *Yetzer HaRa*. There is absolutely no room for keeping a small part of ourselves isolated from conducting ourselves in a holy manner. Rather, we must give our all to Torah and *mitzvos* and to most speedily bring about the arrival of our Righteous *Moshiach*.

לע"נ אמ"ר הרב לוי בן הרה"ח יהודה ליב ז"ל, וזקני הרה"ח ח יהודה ליב ב"ר מרדכי ז"ל.