

B"H

THE MECHITZA [PARTITION] ACCORDING TO THE HALACHA

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch ha Rav

Chapter 16 [Kedushat Beit Haknesset], halacha 8

One has to be very particular that the mechitzah of the Beit Hakeneset will separate men and women. And according to many poskim, there is an issur midoraita on a mixed tefillah. The Mechitzah has to be made in a way that men will not be able to look at women. Therefore, the measure of the height has to be the minimum of the height of a man (6 feet). And if the place of the women is elevated, it is possible to be a little lenient in the height of the Mechitzah. And also, in every gathering of men and women, (even if it is not in the Beit Haknesset), it is forbidden for men and women to mix together. But, there has to be a Mechitzah that separates between them.

(See further Rosh ha Shana Page 21, Rambam Hilchot Maamarim Perek Beit) See also the Rama Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat Siman 14 who wrote thus: "He who says that he cares not for the decrees of the Bet Din or the Sages even if he presents himself to the Bet Din we place him on Niddui and this is considered Apikorsus. See Siman 334"

**LEGAL DECISION OF 71 GREAT RABBONIM 140
YEARS AGO REGARDING THE MECHITZA**

71 Gedole Israel Rabbanim and Tzaddikim wrote regarding the Mechitza 140 years ago as brought in the Psak Din Year 5626 in the city of Miholowitz and among them were:

The Divre Chayim ha Kaddosh mi Tzanzt

Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried, Baal Kitzur Shulchan Aruch

The Tzaddik and Mekubal Itzik Isaac mi Tzedechov

These are a few of the things they decreed:

- a- It is forbidden to enter to pray in a synagogue where there is not a full Mechitza so that men are able to look at women.
- b- If the Mechitza is not good it is forbidden to enter and pray there even if there are no women.
- c- It is better to pray alone than to pray in such place even in Rosh ha Shana and Yom Kippur.
- d- It is forbidden to pray in a synagogue if the Bimah is not in the middle of the synagogue.
- e- It is forbidden to neither introduce innovations nor change anything as regards to the way synagogues are built.

And as the Divre Chayim wrote: "All the things already mentioned are forbidden according to the Poskim and the Shulchan Aruch and it is forbidden to change any tradition and Minhag of Israel regarding the construction of the Bet ha Kneset or any other tradition we have received from our forefathers and from prior generations".

**RESPONSA MAHARAM SHICK
HUNGARY 1878**

**THE CASE OF A MECHITZA THAT PERMITS
PEOPLE TO SEE AND BE SEEN**

Now this is your inquiry: Brazen members of a certain congregation have had their shops closed on the sacred Shabbat; now certain wicked men have dared to set hand to the partition which divides the women's section from the men's [in the synagogue], so

that there will no longer be a complete separation by boards but only by slats, permitting people to see and be seen. Many say that, with the blessed Lord's help, I can battle them with a strong hand, but the wicked ones threaten to secede from the community and begin at once to have their shops open on the Shabbat too, which may easily lead others as well to violate the sacred Shabbat. Hence you know not what plan to devise, how to act in accord with the Law: to battle them and let them go to the devil--give the wicked rope and let him hang himself--or perhaps, since others will emulate them and be ensnared by their influence, it were better to keep silent.

IT IS A SACRILEGE TO KEEP SILENT WHEN THE BRAZEN ONES BREACH THE LAW

It would be sacrilege for you righteous men to keep silent on this insolent breach by the brazen ones! for it is by law that we are required to separate the men's section from the women's, as it was in the Sanctuary, each section apart. In those days, when they had the Festivity of Water for Libation, a "great amendment" was instituted [i.e., a balcony for the women] as we read in the Talmud, Sukkah 51b:

it is there derived from a Scriptural verse that an amendment was needed so that the men should not see the women, since they could thus be led to a state of levity and further transgressions.

These brazen violators also transgress the Bible's admonition, You shall not do so unto the Lord your G-d (Deuteronomy 12:4), since the synagogue is a sanctuary- a "sanctuary-in-miniature." There is a duty to protest such action, and to chastise the transgressors. Those righteous men who have it in their power to object strenuously [and do not] are disobeying the positive command, You shall surely rebuke your neighbor (Leviticus 19:17); indeed this applies to anyone in whose power it lies to protest. Further, we have it as law in Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De'ah 157 that when such people fail to protest it is as if they committed the crime themselves, and they are caught in the guilt. Granting even that these wicked men speak truth, that for the sake of the change in the partition they will not open their places of business on the Shabbat, it is nevertheless an established rule that we may not say to a man, "Sin so that your fellow will win merit," where it means willful transgression; this is clarified in Magen Abraham 306, 28-9.

TO BE SILENT IS A DESECRATION OF HASHEM

How much more does this apply in our case, where it might be said, "Since the rabbis were silent we may conclude that it was acceptable to them"; this would be a desecration of His Name, especially in our generation, when the insolent transgressors are determined about this violation. This might well be likened to the Jewish custom about a shoelace, for which one is obligated to sacrifice his life if need be (Sanhedrin 74b). Yet more than this: it is an established decision, since most authorities agree with R. Moses Isserles in Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 334, 1, that if one has incurred excommunication he is to be excommunicated, even if there is reason to fear that as a result he may leave the faith. Had we the authority to excommunicate these insolent transgressors, we would be

obligated to do so, as is clear from the source cited (ibid. 43): one of the twenty-four crimes which warrant excommunication is contemning even the words of the Sages. But we most certainly have no right to accede to their demands, since silence is tantamount to consent; and if they secede, let them secede. I have written thus far according to the view of the esteemed questioner.

ONE SIN DRAWS ANOTHER IN ITS WAKE

But in truth we well know that this would be but the beginning of their breach of the Torah's word; one sin draws another in its wake (Aboth 4, 2). As our Sages (of blessed memory) said, "This is the way of the Evil Tempter: today he tells one, Do this; tomorrow he bids him, Do that- until he says to him, Go and worship idols" (Shabbath 105b) or, Desecrate the Shabbat, which is equivalent to idolatry. [Of them] is it written, Whose mouths speaks falsehood, and their right hand is a right hand of lying (Psalms 144:11). If they separate from the congregation, it will be a fine departure for them and for all. And should the income of the community stand to be diminished as a result, nothing impedes the Lord from helping, through many or a few. The Lord will give blessing to those who uphold His Torah, as is His desire....

RESPONSA OF RABBI HILLEL LICHTENSTEIN MI KOLOMEA ZTK"L

CAN ONE ENTER A SYNAGOGUE WITH A FAULTY PARTITION?

Friday, New Moon Day, Adar 1873, Kolomea, Austria; to my dear, beloved friend, the reverent scholar R. Wolf Leb ... peace:

You ask with your very soul, if it is permitted to enter a synagogue where the partition (mechitzah) dividing the women's section from the men's is so thin that the men can see the women -i.e., if one is not of the defiant transgressors, but wishes to submit to the verdict of the Bet din (religious court). I do not know what there is to question here. It has already been clearly stated that it is forbidden to make the partition in such a way that the men can regard the women, and if the partition has already been so made, one should not enter there. This applies all the more strongly in your instance, for originally the division there was thick and well made, and people changed it with the intention of (thus] joining the violators and innovators...

Moreover, even if there is not a single woman in the synagogue, it is forbidden to enter and pray there: for on account of this willful violation it has become desecrated and is no longer a "sanctuary in miniature (Mikdash Meat)."

Since I find your words so appealing, I will answer insofar as my poor hand is able. Now you are stirred by the question: Why were curtains not put up at the Festivity of the Water for Libation, in the Temple, so that the men could not gaze at the women? The answer seems to me to lie in Maimonides' comment to the Mishnah (Sukkah 5, 2): "A great amendment- i.e., of great value, because the people used to prepare a location for men and another for women; and the place for the women was above the one for the men, in order that the men should not gaze at the women." If we note his language carefully, we see that he could have said simply, "the place for the women was above, in order that the men" etc.; why state, "the place for the women was above the one for the men"? It therefore seems to me that Maimonides means just this: it was arranged for the men to sit precisely underneath the balconies, but not beyond them, for if the latter the men could still have stared upward. He therefore is intentionally specific (to intimate that the] location for the men was only the space underneath the balconies.... Hence there was no need for a partition....

Do not take it to heart or take it ill that you will pray alone; for the Writings say: Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith (Proverbs 15:17).

G-d grant us the merit to see Him fulfill His word for all: that the Lord thy G-d will circumcise thy heart ... to love the Lord thy G-d with all thy heart (Deuteronomy 30:6).

RESPONSA OF RABBI ELIYAHU GUTTMACHER ZTK'L

**THE PARTITION IS ONLY EIGHTEEN CUBITS HIGH SO
THAT THE WOMEN'S HAIR CAN BE SEEN
THEREFORE THE PARTITION IS INVALID**

I was further asked: In the synagogue there, a mechitzah was erected to partition the men's section from the women's; however, it was to be but eighteen cubits high (about five and one half feet] so that from the shoulders up the women would be easily visible from the men's section. Now you are in some doubt on this, insofar as opinion (on related matters] is divided in Shulchan Aruch Orach Hayyim 75. Now, first let me convey that by the views you hold this can in no way be permissible, since the exposed women's hair would legally constitute an indecency. If R. Moses Isserles expresses a lenient view in this regard because women's hair is wont to extend beyond the bounds of the head-covering, this offers but scant permission: for such is not the way of reverent, wholly observant

women, but rather of the brazen. Perhaps, though, in his locality such permission became widespread. Yet, granting for the moment that his view can be stretched to somehow sanction our case, what can we say when women go about with bared backs? And as regards the wife of one's fellow, even if less than a handbreadth is improperly exposed, it legally constitutes indecency. Magen Abraham (Shulchan Aruch, loc. cit.) writes that even under thick covering, if part of a women's body is visible, a ban exists. In paragraph 6 there the Shulchan Aruch states that with closed eyes it is permissible to pray under such circumstances; but Ture Zahav, Magen Abraham and Eliyahu Rabbah (loc. cit.), by whose words we live, differ decisively with this view; Peri Hadash (ibid.) adduces proofs aplenty that shutting the eyes does not bring permission [to recite the shema' and pray].... So much can be said, then, on behalf of a lenient view, based on Shulchan Aruch Orach Hayyim 75.

TO INVITE THE YETZER HA RA INTO A SACRED PLACE, THIS IS CERTAINLY FORBIDDEN

But alack and alas if permission is thus extracted from this source. Were the Shulchan Aruch to grant full, unequivocal permission, it would yet not cover our case: for that Code treats only of an instance where it happens, by chance that a man must recite the shema' [under such circumstances; then the question is] shall he recite it or not. But to establish such a situation in the synagogue to begin with, as a fixed state of affairs--to invite the Evil Inclination into a sacred place--this is certainly forbidden. There are parallel instances in the laws of kashrut involving meat and milk, where if something has happened, the food may yet be eaten, but to deliberately make this happen remains forbidden.

Our case is even more severe, for the Talmud states explicitly: R. Isaac said, A handbreadth of a woman's body constitutes an indecency [if exposed; and it is asked] To what does he refer? Shall we say, staring at a woman? but R. Shesheth has already declared ... Scripture tells you that whoever stares even at a woman's little finger, it is as if he stares licentiously. Rather, then, he refers to one's own wife when one must recite the shema' (Berachoth 24a).

If such a sight sullies the eyes: Can there be a greater desecration than to regard women in a gathering for the sake of Heaven? Oh, the Heavens be confounded at this (Jeremiah 2:12).

See what the Talmud says: You shall keep yourself from every evil thing (Deuteronomy 23:10)-[this means] that a man should not regard a beautiful woman though she be single, nor a married woman though she be ugly, nor yet the colored raiments of a woman; said R. Judah in Samuel's name: even if these last are hung on the wall, if he but recognizes

their owner (Abodah Zarah 20a). Maimonides (Hilchoth 'Issure Bi'ah 21) and the Shulchan Aruch ('Eben ha-Ezer 21) cite these rules as normative law. What argument can yet be advanced when in such a case women will be in view bedecked with hats and jewelry- in the synagogue, in the House of the Lord?

Can it be right for a man to go up and take a Torah scroll from the Ark, and then turn around, and standing elevated before the sacred Ark, have women in his vision and come to entertain alien thoughts, all the while holding the Torah which writes of capital punishments by Heaven and beth din (Jewish religious court) for immorality?

Shall kohanim (priests) go up to give the priestly blessing and have their vision encounter defiling immodesty? And if they are supposed to close their eyes and not dare to look up, lest they see the women, the enormity of the snare is only too plain: for this very action will arouse within them impure thoughts at a time when extra holiness is needed, when they should fulfill the written injunction, Sanctify yourselves and be holy (Leviticus 11:44, 20:7); as the Sages interpreted it: If a man sanctifies himself slightly, he becomes greatly hallowed; if he sanctifies himself here, below, he is hallowed from above; if he sanctifies himself in the present world he will be hallowed in the future world' (Yoma 39).

If eyes must be shut against the sight of women and their raiments all about the kohanim, there will rather be fulfilled Scripture's admonition, Neither shall ye make yourselves unclean with them, that ye should be defiled thereby (Leviticus 11:43), (which is interpreted:] If a man defiles himself somewhat, he will become very unclean; if he defiles himself here, below, he will become impure from above; if he defiles himself in the present world, he will be defiled in the future world.

What more need we than to ponder this Talmudic passage: They [the Sages] came across a verse and interpreted it: And the land shall mourn, every family apart: the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart (Zechariah 12:12). Said they: Can we not reason from the lesser to the greater? If in the [Messianic] future when they will be occupied with mourning, and the Evil Inclination will have no sway over them, the Torah says that men and women shall be separate, now that people are engaged in festivity, and they are subject to the Evil Inclination, how much more certainly must they be separate (Sukkah 52a). If our Sages spoke thus when the women did not go with heads or backs bared, what is there for us to say? Is it not the purpose of present-day women to thus attract men's glances?

The synagogue would then become a place of which the Lord might well say, Who has required this of your hand, to trample My courts?

Your new moons and your appointed seasons My soul hates.... And when ye spread forth your hands [to give the priestly benediction]-I will hide Mine eyes from you (Isaiah 1: 12, 14, 15). As the kohanim shut their eyes on such sights, so will the Lord shut His eyes [so to speak] to their blessing.

Many years ago I was asked by a G-d fearing man to write to his rabbi (of blessed memory) because of this very question: a short partition-but a huge breach of the Law-was to be installed in the synagogue, to separate the women's section. I gladly complied with the request; but the rabbi consulted his wife, and she frightened him against opposing the innovation. In the end the Lord visited upon him the iniquities of all the congregation; as our Sages say, "the righteous man is seized for the sin of the generation"; those close about Him are judged most critically, to a hair (Psalms 50:3) for he would not wage the battle of the Lord.

The very season in which the new synagogue building was completed, standing before the Ark on the Shabbat of Repentance to preach, a sudden and strange death seized him (may we be spared), and he was taken lifeless from the pulpit. His great righteousness merited this much, that he should not preach in such a synagogue.

Therefore, O my brethren, do not commit evil; betray not the Lord. Let your ears hear what you utter, as the Law requires of you, when you say, And You shall love the Lord your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul (Deuteronomy 6:5). Do you then fear that the women can decrease your earnings or your esteem? Cry out to them that they should take care, and not go at all to such a synagogue.

The women will heed if you but appeal to them out of heartfelt distress, as though they were going to deprive you of a livelihood; and you will find that the Lord is with you. It is incumbent on me to inform you, and all your congregation equally-men, women and children-that I am of greater authority for your community than other rabbis.

The matter cannot remain as it is; let poles be set up at the ends, and a beam be put on them; a lattice is to go in the middle, and let curtains hang over all. If for our many iniquities one breach has been made in our sacred tradition, and the center has been abolished from many synagogues-something most strictly prohibited, for which the guilty congregations will have no answer at judgment- nevertheless, whatever can be repaired to return the synagogue to its original state of grace, we are required to repair.

Our definitive latter-day authority, R. Israel Meir ha-Kohen (the Hafetz Hayyim) notes in another connection (Mishnah Berurah 151, 1b): "...iniquity becomes so much more heinous in a sacred place.... There is no comparison between sinning in private and

sinning in the royal palace, in the king's very presence"; these words recall what another authority wrote, in a similar vein, several centuries earlier: in his Bible commentary *Akedath Yitzhak*, R. Isaac Arama also stressed that a public sin by a group is so much more serious a crime as to be of a different degree or quality from the private sin of the individual. These points apply with peculiar cogency and force to the question of *mechitzah*.

RESPONSA RABBI AHARON KOTLER ZTK'L

It is expressly stated in Talmud, Berachot (24a) and in all Rabbinical codes, that the uncovered hair of a married woman is considered indecent [ERVA], and it is forbidden to pray or read the Shema in the presence of such hair even if it belongs to one's own wife or mother, let alone if it belongs to someone else's wife or other forbidden relatives (sister-in-law, aunt, etc.). According to many Rabbinical authorities, this prohibition is included in the Biblical injunction, that He see no unseemly thing among you (Deuteronomy 23:15). It is stated in *Orach Hayyim* (75, 2) that the basic reason for this prohibition is that uncovered hair can induce indecent thoughts. It is also stated (*ibid.*) that one who has transgressed this prohibition and has prayed or read the Shema in front of uncovered hair has not fulfilled his obligation of prayer and of reciting the Shema. If while praying or reciting the Shema, a person should even gaze on a woman and thereby come to have evil thoughts, it would also be included in this rule. And when you have men and women not separated by a proper partition, it is impossible to guard against this.

IMPOSSIBLE TO AVOID LOOKING AT WOMEN WHEN NOT PROPERLY SEPARATED

It is expressly stated in Talmud, *Avodah Zarah* (20b) that a man is forbidden to gaze upon the fancy clothes of a woman whom he knows, even if she is not wearing them at the time. It is surely proscribed if the woman is wearing the clothes. The reason, as explained by Maimonides (*Yad ha Chazakah, Hilchot Issure Bi'ah* 21, 2) and in *Shulchan Aruch Eben ha-Ezer* (21:1) is that such gazing would bring one to have indecent thoughts. Therefore it is expressly forbidden during prayers, and is included under the commandment, that He see no unseemly thing among you. It is impossible to avoid gazing on women's clothes during prayer when there are many people present and the sexes are not properly separated. In his *Commentary on the Mishnah, Succah* 5, 2, Maimonides states that the balcony was built in the Temple so that the men "would not gaze" upon the women (see also the *Tosafoth Yom Tob ad loc.*). And the *Mordechai* (*Sanhedrin, Chap. 2*) questions the custom that had the women lead funeral processions. "How were the women permitted to march before the men? The men would come to gaze upon them?" He further quotes the *Riba* (*ibid.*) who explains that women walked behind the men in a funeral procession to the cemetery, but were first to leave the cemetery on the way back, so that the men should not have to pass the women on the way back.

HASHEM HAS NO JOY WHEN THE YETZER HA RA IS PRESENT

It is expressly stated in the Commentaries Bayith Hadash Beth Shmu'el on Shulchan Aruch Eben ha-Ezer 62, that the formula, "We will bless our G-d in whose abode is joy," is not to be recited at the Grace after a wedding feast [as it usually would be], if men and women are found together in one room-because there is no joy in G-d's dwelling when the yetzer hara' (Evil Impulse) is present. In Berachot (45a) the Mishnah states that women are not counted with men to make up the necessary quorum of three or ten to say Grace after meals as a group, although according to some authorities (e.g., R. Asher, R. Nissim ad loc.) women are obligated to say the special Grace among themselves as a group, when there is the necessary quorum made up solely of women.

NOTHING IS AS DISTURBING TO PRAYERS AS INDECENT THOUGHTS

It is generally known that the most important part of prayer is sincerity and purity of thought, as it is expressed in Sifre and the Gemara (Taanith 2a): on the verse, to serve Him with all your heart (Deuteronomy 10: 12) they comment that this means prayer; and according to Maimonides it is a positive commandment of the Torah. Now, with all your heart denotes that all one's powers and desires should be subordinated to the prayer; the Sages interpret with all your heart to mean "with both your wills"-both the will to do good and the will to do evil should be subordinated to the service of the Lord.

INDECENT THOUGHTS RENDER THE PRAYERS IMPURE AND UNACCEPTABLE BEFORE HASHEM

This is expressly stated in numerous places in the writings of our early Sages. Nothing is as disturbing to prayer as indecent thoughts, which render the prayers impure and unacceptable before the Lord. And how much more unacceptable is prayer when the people incite their evil desires by deliberately seating men and women together, in contradiction to the Laws and traditions of our Nation. This is pure willfulness, which must bring about improper sights and improper thoughts. Beside the fact that this is in itself a serious transgression, it is even more contemptible when it takes place in the Palace of the King of Kings, the holy synagogue.

According to the Law such people are not fulfilling their obligations in praying or in the reading of the Shema; all is voided and unacceptable before the Lord. In addition, whenever the name of G-d is uttered at such services, it is uttered in vain. The Yalkut Shim'oni (1, 934 3 cites the Seder Eliyahu: "A man should not pray among women" because as the commentary there explains, he may be distracted by them. It has been stated by the foremost rabbinical authorities that a person should pray alone at home even on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur rather than pray in a synagogue where men and women are not separated by a proper partition. Even if he must miss hearing the shofar,

or the reading of the megillah on Purim, he should still pray at home rather than attend a synagogue that is not conducted according to law.

WE HAVE TO MAINTAIN THE CUSTOMS OF OUR FOREFATHERS

Since our ancestors instituted the custom of separating men and women in order to prevent improper thoughts and levity, and have maintained it through all generations, then even if the basic law required no such separation, we are yet obligated to follow in their footsteps, for it is written, Forsake not the teaching of thy mother (Proverbs 1: 8), and the Gemara (Pesachim 50b) interprets it that we must maintain the prohibitions which our ancestors instituted as a defense against committing other transgressions. No Bet din (court of Jewish law) may remove such prohibitions. This is expressly shown in the Gemara (Ibid.) in the case of the family of Baishan whose forefathers had instituted the custom in the family not to travel to market on Friday, so as not to interfere with the preparation for the Shabbat. The children of Baishan came before R. Yohanan and asked to be absolved of this prohibition, and be allowed to travel to market on Friday. He told them, "I cannot absolve you, because your forefathers instituted this custom, and you are duty-bound to follow it-as the Torah commands, Forsake not the teaching of thy mother." Such prohibitions, -accepted as custom, are binding on all generations.

In our case, not only is it forbidden per se, according to the Law, to mingle the sexes, but it is also prohibited by the age-old custom, not of one family alone, or even one city alone, but of all Jews the world over, in order to guard against committing other sins (improper thoughts, etc.). Surely the Biblical injunction of Forsake not, etc., applies here, and no absolution in the world can avail.

THE SANCTITY OF THE SYNAGOGUE IS PROFANED

Beside the prayers, the sanctity of the synagogue itself is profaned by the mingling of the sexes, for this sanctuary is turned into a place expressly designed to induce a number of serious transgressions such as improper thoughts, etc. There is no need to dwell at length on the fact that it is impossible to guard against such transgressions where many men are brought together with women for a long period of time. To so profane a holy place is the greatest ignominy.

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A HANDBREADTH OF A WOMAN'S BODY IS AN INDECENCY

1. SAID R. ISAAC: A handbreadth of a woman's body [if exposed] constitutes an indecency. In regards to what? If we say in regard to gazing at her, R. Shesheth has already stated: Why did the Torah list outer jewelry together with intimate jewelry [in Numbers 31:50]? To inform you that whoever gazes at [even] the little finger of a woman, it is as if he stared licentiously. Rather this applies to one's own wife, in regards to reciting the shema'. R. Hisda said: The leg of a woman [if exposed] constitutes an

indecenty, for it is written, uncover the leg, pass through the rivers (Isaiah 47:2), and Scripture continues, Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen (ibid. 3). Samuel said: A woman's voice [singing]' is sensually arousing, for it is stated, sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely (Song of Songs 2:14)." R. Shesheth said: A woman's hair is sensually arousing [if visible], for it is stated, thy hair is as a flock of goats (ibid. 4: 1; Berachoth 24a).

IT IS FORBIDDEN TO RECITE THE SHEMA IN FRONT OF THE EXPOSED PART OF A WOMAN'S BODY

2. If a handbreadth of a woman's body [is revealed] in a part which is usually covered, even if she is one's own wife, it is forbidden to recite the Shema' in her presence. If the hair of a woman's head which is usually covered [is visible], it is forbidden to recite the Shema' in her presence (even if she is one's own wife).' ... One should beware of hearing a woman singing while he recites the Shema' (Shulchan 'Aruch 'Orach Hayyim 75, 1-3).

IT IS FORBIDDEN TO GAZE AT WOMEN WHETHER SINGLE OR MARRIED

3. . . . You shall guard yourself from every evil thing (Deuteronomy 23:11)-[this indicates] that a man should gaze neither at a beautiful woman, even if she be unmarried, nor at a married woman, even if she be ugly, nor yet at the colorful clothes of a woman [for he will remember the woman as she looks in them, how they beautify her, and his thoughts will dwell on her]." ... R. Judah quoted Samuel: Even if they are hung on the wall (Abodah Zarah 20a).

SEPARATION BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

SEPARATION AT CELEBRATIONS

1. What is the law about having men and women intermingled at a celebration? It is forbidden to do so; rather must the men be apart and the women apart: for if at a time of mourning, when there is lamentation and weeping, it is written, the land shall mourn, every family apart (Zechariah 12:12), at a time of festivity and feasting, when there is happiness and the Evil Impulse is rampant, how much more certainly must each group be by itself, so that their inclination shall not contemplate sinning, at the joy of the feast (Maasim li-Bene Eretz Yisra'el, ge'onic work, MS fragment in Tarbitz, 1, 1, p. 97).

IF AT TIMES OF MOURNING MEN AND WOMEN MUST BE APART THEN HOW MUCH MORE SO AT CELEBRATIONS

2. It is forbidden for women to mingle among the men, either at a ritual meal or at any other occasion; rather must women be apart and men apart, for we reason from the lesser

to the greater: if for a time of mourning it is written that the House of Israel shall lament every family apart, the House of David apart and their wives apart, how much more is separation necessary at feasting and rejoicing, for then the Evil Impulse is provocative (Sefer ha-Pardes, 19b).

MEN WITH MEN AND WOMEN WITH WOMEN

3. Do not mingle sons amid daughters, lest they sin. [We read:] Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance alone; but the young men and the old together (Jeremiah 31:13). So also, boys and girls playing in its broad places (Zechariah 8:5)- boys apart and girls apart. And again toward the end of Psalms (148:12), 'Young men and also maidens,' it does not read, "Young men with maidens," like [the continuation], old men with children (ibid.). [The extra word] also signifies that, in addition, women should also be separate (Sefer Hasidim, ed. Mektize Nirdamim, 60).

WE MUST FOLLOW THE VERSE REJOICE WITH TREMBLING (PSALMS 2:11)

4. Whoever would recite [before the Grace to a wedding meal] the benediction ["Let us bless our G-d] in whose dwelling is joy," must ascertain if Scripture's dictum, rejoice with trembling (Psalms 2: 11), has been observed: if there is "trembling" [awe] in the place of rejoicing. But if he [the bridegroom] is marrying an unsuitable woman . . . or if women are sitting among the men, where there would be illicit thoughts, it is not fitting to say, "in whose dwelling is joy." Concerning people such as these is it said, I sat not in the assembly of them that make merry, nor rejoiced (Jeremiah 15:17); and again, For all tables are filled with filthy disgorgement, and no place is clean (Isaiah 28:8) ... (Sefer Hasidim, ed. Mektize Nirdamim, 1176).

THE UNCOVERING OF THE WOMAN'S HAIR AND THE SYNAGOGUE FROM THE HOLY ZOHAR

TWO SUBJECTS APPEAR ONE AFTER THE OTHER IN THE ZOHAR (PARASHAT NASSO 125-126) ONE IS WOMEN UNCOVERING THEIR HEADS SO THAT THEIR HAIR CAN BE SEEN AND THE OTHER ONE IS THE JOY OF THE SHECHINA WHEN JEWS GO EARLY TO PRAY IN THE SYNAGOGUES. THE CONNECTION OF THESE TWO SUBJECTS IS A GREAT REMINDER TO LISTEN TO THE WORDS OF G-D WHEN COMBINING THESE TWO EVENTS, MAINLY THAT NO WOMEN SHOULD BE SEEN IN THE SYNAGOGUES LEST MEN LOOK AT THEM, FOR THEN THE DAMAGE IS DOUBLE BY BRINGING INDECENCY TO THE HOUSE OF HASHEM.

R. Hizkiah further said: 'Cursed be the man who allows his wife to let the hair of her head be seen. This is one of the rules of modesty in the house. A woman who exposes her hair for self-adornment brings poverty to her household, renders her children of no

account in their generation, and causes an evil spirit to abide on her house. If this is so when the woman does this in the house, how much more is it when in the open road; and ever so much more so does all this result from another kind of shamelessness.' Said R. Judah: 'The hair of the head of a woman being exposed leads to Hair of another kind being exposed and impaired. Hence a woman should not let her hair be seen, even by the beams of her house, much less in the open. Observe that as the rule is most strict in the case of a man's hair, so is it with a woman's.

THE WOMAN CAN BRING CURSES ON HER HUSBAND, G-D FORBID

Consider the harm a woman's hair brings about. It brings a curse on her husband, it causes poverty, it causes something besides to happen to her household, it causes the inferiority of her children. May the Merciful One deliver us from their impudence. A woman thus should cover her hair in the four corners of her house. When she does this, then "thy children like olive plants" (Ps. 128). As the olive does not shed its leaves either in winter or summer, but ever retains its superiority over other trees, so her children will excel all other children; her husband, moreover, will receive blessings from above and from below, will be blessed with riches, with children and children's children. So the Psalm continues: "Behold, surely, thus shall the man be blessed. . . . And see thy children's children. Peace be upon Israel" (Ibid. 4-6).'

WHEN EITHER MAN OR WOMAN SHALL CLEARLY UTTER A VOW, ETC. R. Eleazar began a discourse on the verse: "Wherefore, when I came, was there no man?" etc. (Isa. L, 2). 'How beloved', he said, 'are Israel before the Holy One, blessed be He, in that wherever they dwell He is found among them, for He never withdraws His love from them. We find it written: "And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 25, 8). That is, any sanctuary whatever, inasmuch as any Synagogue, wherever situated, is called sanctuary, and the Shechinah hastens to the Synagogue.

Happy is the man who is of the first ten to enter Synagogue, since they form something complete, and are the first to be sanctified by the Shechinah. But it is necessary that the ten should come together at the same time and not in sections, so as not to delay the completion of the body in its members.

THE PERSON WHO IS TRULY STRONG IS NOT ASHAMED NOT TO LOOK AT WOMEN

The true strength of a person's piety is demonstrated under the following circumstances: a devout person does not cast off his piety even when people ridicule him; whatever he does is for the sake of heaven; he does not look at women. His piety is put to the test especially when he is in the company of other men in a situation where women are usually around—for example, in a wedding hall where women are dressed in elegant gowns, and all are gazing at the women, and he does not stare. For that, he will be rewarded with abundant good. Therefore, when a man meets a woman, whether she is single or married, gentile or Jewish, an adult or a minor, it is best for him to turn his face

aside and not to look at her. And so do we read in Job, "I made a Covenant with my eyes not to gaze on a maiden" (Job 3 1: 1). The verse "He shuts his eyes against looking at evil" (Isaiah 33:15) refers to the person who does not look at women when they are doing their washing.' When they wash their clothes, they lift their skirts so as not to soil them and thus uncover their legs; and we know that a woman's leg is a sexual excitement. And so said the Sage, "There is no greater barrier to sexual arousal than closing one's eyes.

(Sefer Chassidim 9)

There are desires that are very difficult to control unless one has been taught from childhood like for example refraining from looking at women. Therefore, must a man teach and educate his sons on the right path so when they grow old they will not abandon it.

(Sefer Chassidim 10)

THE FIRST GATE LEADING TO HOLINESS IS TO GUARD YOUR EYES FROM LOOKING AT FORBIDDEN THINGS

(DIBRE SHMUEL, CHAYE SARAH)

"There is no greater barrier to sexual arousal than closing one's eyes"

(Sefer Chassidim 9)

IF A RABBI DEVIATES AN INCH FROM THE SHULCHAN ARUCH IT IS FORBIDDEN TO FOLLOW HIM

The holy Sefer ha Brit (Part 1, Chapter 3) states: "Be wary of all new customs and groups that do not follow the ways our forefathers knew. Even if these people are Torah scholars and doers of acts of kindness, if they deviate even an inch from the Shulchan Aruch do not follow them. If they conduct themselves contrary to the Shulchan Aruch, distance yourselves from their ways and don't go near their homes. Because also among the followers of Shabetai Tzvi [may his name be blotted out] there were many Torah scholars with great Torah knowledge. And there is nothing new that will be good and won't bring sin in its wake. Therefore, be very careful about new things. And this rule should always be in front of you: "The one who turns his face away from the Shulchan Aruch, even a little has no portion in the G-d of Yaakov and in his congregation." [See also Chovot ha Levavot, Shaar ha Yichud ha Maase, chapter 5 – See also Likute Amarim Tanya, Chapter 1 and 24 - Talmud Eruvin 21b]

DAMAGE DONE TO THE SOUL

He who looks at women and forbidden places even if he doesn't think of committing a transgression G-d forbid, anyway that image is engraved in his mind and he ends up damaging his soul. (Chessed le Abraham, Nahar 33)

WHEN YOU DAMAGE YOUR EYES YOU FILL WITH FILTH THE HOLY OF HOLIES

It is known that all the world is found in the eye as it is written in the Zohar II, 222b: "Now, the earth's expansion round the central point was completed in three concentric rings, each of a different hue and texture. The first ring, the nearest to the Point, is of the purest and most refined earth-material; the second expansion, surrounding the first, is of a less polished, less refined earth-material than the first, but is superior to the one surrounding it; the third expansion consists of the darkest and coarsest earth-material of all. Then, surrounding that expansion, come the waters of the ocean that surrounds the whole world. Thus the point is in the center, and the various expansions encircle it. The first expansion embraces the Sanctuary and all its courts and enclosures and all its appurtenances, as well as the whole city of Jerusalem bounded by the wall; the second expansion embraces the whole of the Land of Israel, the Land which was declared holy; the third expansion comprehends the rest of the earth, the dwelling-place of all the other nations. Then comes the great ocean which surrounds the whole. The whole arrangement is symbolized by the structure of the human eye. For just as in the human eye there are three concentric layers surrounding a central point, which forms the focus of vision, so is the world's vision focused in the central point, consisting of the Holy of Holies and the Ark and the Mercy Seat." Therefore when a person damages his eyes he infects with filth the holy of holies and damages all the creation, G-d save us. (Based on Sifre Yereim)

NO LENIENCY OR PERMISSION TO TRANSGRESS THIS PROHIBITION

See dear friends how far this thing reaches that even when a person knows that he will not transgress by looking at women, even so when his heart desires to look, from that moment he is transgressing the words of the Torah and the word of the Sages, and if he indeed looks G-d forbid, then his sin is too great to bear. And the wise will have this in front of him always, that it is strictly forbidden to look at women and that there is no permission or leniency to transgress this prohibition. (Sefer Tikkun ha Brit)

WOE TO HIM WHO LEADS OTHERS TO SIN

He who leads others to sin and particularly on this sin of mingling men and women or in leading men to look at women, this person is not given the chance to do Teshuvah and he is worse than the one who kills his fellow for he takes the life of those he leads to sin

not only the life of this world but also the life of the world to Come. And this person that brings many to sin has no share in the world to Come (See Rambam Hil. Teshuva, Chap. 3) And if he is the cause of mixing men and women in one place he transgresses also the prohibition of Not to walk in the ways of the gentiles.

(Sefer Tikkun ha Brit)

HE WHO LOOKS AT WOMEN WILL HAVE HIS CHILDREN TURN TO IDOLATRY, G-D FORBID

In the book Etz ha Daat Tov ve Ra of the holy Rabbi Chayim Vital, zt'l on the verse "Do not turn to the idols and do not make for yourselves molten gods" he says: Do not turn to the idols means do not turn to look at women as they said in the Holy Zohar that when men look at them, afterwards will be born to them even from their own wives children that will turn to idolatry. And this is why the verse continues "And do not make for yourselves molten gods" (that is if you turn to look at idols – women, then you will make for yourselves molten gods, meaning children that will serve idolatry)

LOOKING AT WOMEN IS LIKE WORSHIPPING IDOLS

"You fill their belly with tzefuncha (that which is hidden with you) ... [they leave their yeter (abundance; remainder) to their babes.]" (Psalms 117:14) Avoid gazing at material things that are attractive. How much more so avoid gazing at the beauty of women to indulge your desire. For that sort of looking is self worship, which is like worshipping idolatry. Moreover that thought leads, Heaven forbid, to nocturnal sin. Thus you will add strength to kelipah (husks, the forces or realm of evil), impregnating it.

(Tzaavat ha Rivash of the Baal Shem Tov, 90)

LOOKING AT WOMEN INCREASES THE STRENGTH OF THE KELIPOT

This is the meaning of tzefuncha, i.e., that which you tzofeh (observe) for your sake, such as the beauty of a woman. By looking for self-indulgence you add power to [kelipah]. Moreover, if you do so before giving birth to a child, your child will be rooted in the power [of the kelipot]. R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, thus explained [the ruling] that "Honor your father," (Exodus 20:12) includes [the obligation to honor] your elder brother (Ketuvot 103a): The older brother is like the major branch of a tree. As another branch grows from that major branch, it draws vitality from the major branch. So, too, the younger brother draws vitality from the older one. Thus it follows that when first infusing strength into kelipah and then begetting a child, that child will be like the smaller branch. The principal strength is [given] into [the forces of evil], and the child is like yitron, something additional. This is the meaning of 'they left their yitron to their babes.'" (Psalms 17:14)

(Tzaavat ha Rivash of the Baal Shem Tov, 90)

IT IS MORE PLEASURABLE LOOKING AT WOMEN THAN THE ACT ITSELF

“Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the soul” (Kohelet 6:9) Resh Lakish said it is more pleasant the sight of the eyes than the actual act of sexual transgression (Talmud Yoma 74b) The Maharam Ben Chaviv wrote that the intention of Resh Lakish said was to warn men, that since there is more pleasure in looking at a woman than in the act itself, therefore a man must separate in order to be holy and modest and not look at women.

(Tov Ayn)

He who looks even at the small finger of a woman in order to derive pleasure from looking, is like one who looks at her private place and even to listen to her voice (Which is considered as looking at her nakedness) or to look at her hair is forbidden.

(The Rambam Chapter 21, Hilchot Issure Biah)

A man must distance himself from women a great deal

(Even haEzer 21, a)

Rabbi Nachman said: “The thoughts of sin are worse than the sin itself” because he will do Teshuva for his actions but for his thoughts he will forget about them and not repent for them

Rava said: We have a tradition that the Yetzer haRa dwells only on what the eyes behold. Samson went after his eyes and therefore the Pelishtim went took out his eyes. (Talmud Sotah 8)

Rabbi Ami said: “He who brings himself to sinful thoughts will not enter into the place of the Holy one Blessed be He (Talmud Nidda 13)

LOOKING AT WOMEN MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO DO TESHUVAH

And there are five things that the one who does it finds no strength to do Teshuvah for them because these things are taken lightly by most people and the person transgresses them and he thinks that it is no sin...The one who looks at women thinks that there is no sin involved in this and he says: Have I had sexual relations with her or did I get close to her?” And he doesn’t know that the sight of his eyes is a great sin that leads to the sin of forbidden relations.

(The Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah 4, 4)

LOOKING AT WOMEN IS A GRAVE PROHIBITION FROM THE TORAH

My dear friend you should know that a majority of people think that this prohibition is only words of Chassidut and are not careful to refrain from looking at women, You should know my friend that this is a grave prohibition from the Torah, and the ones who treat lightly this prohibition woe to their souls because they cause great evil for themselves. We have a verse that we repeat three times a day: “And do not go astray after your hearts and after your eyes” And it is written in the Talmud: “Why is it written (Kohelet 6:9) “Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the soul” Because it is more pleasurable looking at a woman than the actual sexual act. And Rashi commented: For the Yetzer ha Ra it is better to make a person sin through the sight of his eyes than to make him sin through the actual sin.

(Derech Pikudecha)

THE EXILE AMONG THE SEVENTY NATIONS WAS CAUSED BY THE SIN OF DAMAGING THE EYES

The Beit haMikdash and the exile of the Jews among the 70 nations (Gematria of the letter AYIN which means eye in Hebrew) came only through the sin of damaging the eyes as it is written in the prophet Yeshayahu (3, 16) “Moreover the Lord said, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched out necks and wanton eyes...” Therefore the punishment in Yeshayahu 29:10: “For the Lord has poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes”. And the consolation is through the correction of the eyes as it is written in (Yeshayahu 52:8): “The voice of your watchmen is heard; together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord returns to Zion.” (Tov Ayin)

Even when one has the need to talk to a woman, his eyes should look down and not look at her for any reason, because the life of a person depends on this, and this will be good for him in this world and in the World to Come.

(Tochachot Chayim, R.Chayim Pallagi, Vaetchanan)

The majority thinks that the prohibition to look at women is only for pious or saintly people. It is forbidden to listen to their words (Derech Pikudecha, 35 Lo Taase)

IT IS FORBIDDEN TO GAZE AT WOMEN

Regarding one who gazes at women who are forbidden to him, even if he is like Moshe, who was given the Torah from G-d's hand to his own, he will not be free of the judgment of Gehinomm.

Eventually, he will sin in matters of forbidden relations. He provokes the evil impulse against himself. He will come to the wasting of semen, which is a grave sin (Shaare Kedushah, Part 2, Section 5)

SEXUAL IMAGES BECOME FIXED IN THE MIND

When a person takes to heart the sins of his youth, he should be terrified and tremble for gazing at forbidden women causes those images to become fixed in his mind. The Accuser and the evil inclination bring them before his eyes continually, causing him to destroy his seed, which is a terrible sin. Do you not see? Eir and Onan were eight years old, sons of the righteous Yehudah, grandsons of our father Yaakov, peace be upon him, the choicest of the patriarchs. Yet they were cut off, even though they were from elevated souls. This was also one of the sins of the generation of the Flood. Any man with a heart must consider how many times he has come to that, as a result of improper thoughts. The evil inclination deceives him by trying to make him think that it happened involuntarily. But his words are wrong; he is absolutely a sinner, for gazing at forbidden women led him to improper thoughts, and as a result of this, he further destroyed [seed, thus] killing his children, defiling the seal [of circumcision] of the King. But His mercies prevailed in being slow to anger, perhaps this person will return in repentance and will mourn bitterly in confession and regret, and will return and be healed.

(Anthologized from Ethical books, Chok le Israel)

G-D KNOWS WHEN ONE DERIVES ENJOYMENT FROM LOOKING AT WOMEN

A man, quite unexpectedly, crossed the path of a beautiful woman, and, noticing her beauty, enjoyed her looks. He should not think that since he did not plan to be captivated by her charms, he has not sinned. It is written, "For G-d will judge every deed-even everything hidden" (Ecclesiastes 12:14), and the sensual pleasure derived from a chance encounter is a sin. Rather than deriving pleasure from seeing the beautiful woman, he should consider the very fact that she came his way as punishment for a transgression. Conversely, if unexpectedly an opportunity for a mitzvah presents itself to you, you should be happy and thank G-d for sending it your way. (Sefer Chassidim 177)

IF YOU CAN'T AVOID LOOKING AT WOMEN DON'T GO DO THE MITZVAH OF ATTENDING A WEDDING

The Gemara says: A mitzvah that brings a wrongful act in its wake is better left undone (Talmud Yerushalmi, Challah 1:5) For example, it is a mitzvah to gladden a groom and his bride. But if a person knows that there will be brazen people present at the wedding who will do vulgar things, and he cannot avoid gazing at women, then he should not attend that wedding.

(Sefer Chassidim 393)

THE EYES THEMSELVES WILL REGRET THEIR EVIL ACTIONS

It is written Psalms (119:136) “Rivers of water run down my eyes, because they did not keep your Torah”. And it doesn’t say: “Because I did not keep your Torah but it says for they (the eyes) did not keep your Torah. The eyes will let tears because they stumbled through seeing forbidden things. The eyes see and the heart warms and all bad actions are caused by the agency of the eyes, and they bring man to spilling his semen in vain (KERI). And the correction for this sin of spilling semen is through tears, because the semen originates from the brain and also tears come from the brain. Therefore man must pray with tears when lamenting the destruction of the Bet ha Mikdash [TIKKUN CHATZOT] or the passing away of a Tzaddik. (Kav Ha Yashar ch. 68)

THE TREE OF LIFE IS ATTAINED ONLY BY THOSE WHO GUARD THEIR EYES FROM LOOKING AT FORBIDDEN THINGS

Tree of Life in Hebrew is ETZ [AYIN TZADDI] CHAYIM, therefore we can say that he who guards his eyes [AYN] merits to be considered a Tzaddik [TZADDI] and attains the ETZ [Tree of Life] (Sefer Tikkun ha Brit)

THE YETZER HA RAH WILL FOOL YOU AND TELL YOU YOU’RE ONLY LOOKING TO SEE IF YOU KNOW HER

It is written in the book Rechev Eliyahu that the Yetzer ha Rah tells the person: “Hey, you’re not doing anything wrong by looking at women, because your intention is not to enjoy through your eyes, but only to check out if you know this particular woman, and many other things will the Yetzer ha Rah tell him. Therefore a man should build up fences and barriers and he should think that even the strongest of men, like Samson, the most pious man, namely David and the wisest Salomon, stumbled through women and furthermore our Rabbis said: “Better to go after a Lion and not after a woman” and the person should think: isn’t she full of impurity and her mouth full of blood and the man who fixes his eyes on her makes to himself molten g-ds and causes a spirit of Tumah to enter within him.

THE ONE WHO CONQUERS HIS EYES MERITS TO SEE THE SHECHINA

Our Sages said: “He who conquers his eyes from looking at forbidden women merits and sees the face of the Shechina”...and young men should guard themselves from bad thoughts so that they not be considered among those who don’t wear Tefillin as it is written in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 38:4): “He who wears Tefillin must take great care not to have thoughts of desiring women” and the Rama zt’l in the name of the Kol Bo: “ And if it is impossible for the person not to have these thoughts, it is better for him not to wear them”.

RABBI SHIMON BAR YOCHAI WOULD PROTECT HIS COMPANIONS SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT LOOK AT FORBIDDEN PLACES

We have learnt that it is forbidden for man to gaze at the beauty of a woman lest evil thoughts be aroused in him and lead him to something worse. When R. Shimon went through the town, followed by the Companions, if he saw a beautiful woman he used to lower his eyes and say to the Companions, Do not turn. Whoever gazes at the beauty of a woman by day will have lustful thoughts at night, and if these gain the better of him he will transgress the precept, "Ye shall not make to yourselves molten g-ds". And if he has intercourse with his wife while under the influence of those images, the children born from such union are called "molten g-ds". R. Abba said: 'It is forbidden to a man to fix his gaze upon heathen idols and upon gentile women, or to receive benefit or healing from them.' (The Holy Zohar, Kedoshim)

HE WHO GUARDS HIS EYES FROM LOOKING AT FORBIDDEN PLACES, THE YETZER HA RAH HAS NO POWER OVER HIM

AN AWESOME STORY

THE FOLLOWING STORY HAPPENED TO RABBI MATYA BEN CHERESH WHO WOULD ALWAYS BE SITTING IN THE BET HA MIDRASH ENGAGED IN TORAH STUDY AND THE BRILLIANCE OF HIS FACE RESEMBLED THE SUN AND THE APPEARANCE OF HIS FACE RESEMBLED THAT OF THE MINISTERING ANGELS, BECAUSE HE HAD NEVER RAISED HIS EYES TO LOOK AT WOMEN

Once the Satan fixed his sight on this Tzaddik and said to himself: "Is it possible that this man does not sin?" Then the Satan went and asked G-d: "How do you consider Rabbi Matya Ben Cheresh?" And G-d replied: "He is a perfect Tzaddik" The Satan said to G-d: "Give me permission to put him to the test" but G-d told him that no permission could be given to the Satan to do thus. But anyway G-d told the Satan: "Go".

THE SATAN APPEARED TO THE RABBI AS A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN AND HE PREFERRED BEING BLIND THAN SINNING BEFORE HASHEM

The Satan appeared to the Rabbi as a beautiful woman the like of which there had never been in the world. When the Tzaddik saw he immediately turned his face away from the woman. Then the woman quickly moved to the side where Rabbi Matya had turned his face to and he quickly again turned his face away from that woman. Then the Tzaddik said: "I am afraid that my Yetzer ha Ra will overpower me and will cause me to sin" What did the Tzaddik do? He called a student that was there with him and ordered him to bring him fire with nails. The student brought him nails and the Tzaddik put them to his eyes and became blind. When the Satan saw this he trembled and fell on his back.

HASHEM ORDERED THE ANGEL RAPHAEL TO CURE THE TZADDIK

At that time The Holy One Blessed be He called the angel Raphael for he is in charge of healing and told him: "Go and heal Rabbi Matya Ben Cheresh" Then Raphael came in front of the Rabbi and he asked: "Who are you" and he replied: "I am Raphael the angel, I came for G-d sent me to

cure your eyes” and Rabbi Matya replied: “Leave me alone, what is already done is what will be” Raphael returned before the Holy One Blessed be He and said: “Master of the World thus spoke Matya” G-d said to him: “Go back to him and tell him that I will personally guarantee that the Yetzer ha Ra will have no power over him” Immediately Raphael went and cured Matya. From here Our Sages said: “All those that are careful not to look at women, The Yetzer ha Ra has no power over them” (Yalkut Shimoni, Vayechi)

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch ha Rav

Chapter 16 [Kedushat Beit Haknesset], halacha 8

One has to be very particular that the mechitzah of the Beit Hakeneset will separate men and women. And according to many poskim, there is an issur mdoraita on a mixed tefillah. The Mechitzah has to be made in a way that men will not be able to look at women. Therefore, the measure of the height has to be minimum the minimum of the height of a man (6 feet). And if the place of the women is elevated, it is possible to be a little lenient in the height of the Mechitzah. And also, in every gathering of men and women, (even if it is not in the Beit Haknesset), it is forbidden for men and women to mix together. But, there has to be a Mechitzah that separates between them.

(See further Rosh ha Shana Page 21, Rambam Hilchot Maamarim Perek Beit)

See also the Rama Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat Siman14 who wrote thus: “He who says that he cares not for the decrees of the Bet Din or the Sages even if he presents himself to the Bet Din we place him on Niddui and this is considered Apikorsus. See Siman 334”