

*THE SANCTITY OF THE SYNAGOGUE
AND THE AMEN RESPONSE # 14*

אמן

DOES YOUR SYNAGOGUE HAVE A KOSHER MECHITZA?

**IN THOSE SYNAGOGUES WHERE YOU CAN SEE WOMEN
THE YETZER HARA RULES IN THE SYNAGOGUE**

Responsa Rabbi Hillel Lichtenstein mi Kolomai 1873

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

Rabbenu Yonah writes in Iggeret ha Teshuvah

11) And it is forbidden for a man to look at a married woman from the Torah as it is written: (Bamidbar 15:39) "And you shall not go astray after your hearts and after your eyes...". And our Sages have said (Tanchuma Shelach 15) The heart and the eyes are the two agents of sin. And it is forbidden even to look at a single woman: "I have made a covenant with my eyes, and how should I think about a virgin?" (Iyov 31:1)

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)

NOW THERE ARE FOOLS WHO ALLOW THEIR SYNAGOGUES TO HAVE A MECHITZA WHERE YOU CAN SEE WOMEN! NOT ONLY ARE THEY NOT DOING A MITZVAH BUT ON THE CONTRARY THEY CAUSE MANY PEOPLE TO STUMBLE IN SIN

MAYBE YOU NEVER HEARD YOUR RABBI TALKING ABOUT THESE THINGS FOR IT MAY NOT BE IN HIS BEST INTEREST TO TELL YOU. SO EVEN IF YOUR RABBI RIDICULES YOU FOR KEEPING THE SHULCHAN ARUCH YOU SHOULD BE STRONG AND GO AHEAD FOR IT MAY BE THAT YOUR RABBI BELONGS TO THE EREV RAV AND HE JUST DOES NOT WANT YOU TO KEEP THE TORAH AS IT SHOULD BE FOR MAYBE HE WOULD BE EXPOSED AS A FAKE IN THE EYES OF THE OTHER CONGREGANTS WHEN THEY SEE THAT A COMMON PERSON KEEPS THE SHULCHAN ARUCH TO A GREATER EXTENT THAN THE RABBI. AND WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT PIOUS PRACTICES BUT WE ARE TALKING HERE ABOUT KEEPING THE SHULCHAN ARUCH, SPECIFICALLY CONCERNING THOSE AREAS WHERE THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF OUR TIME ARE LAX ABOUT. FOR EXAMPLE, TALKING IN THE SYNAGOGUE IN THE MIDDLE OF PRAYERS, DURING THE KADDISH, GIVING TORAH LESSONS TO MEN AND WOMEN WITHOUT A MECHITZA, HAVING A DEFICIENT MECHITZA IN SHUL, LOOKING AT WOMEN WHICH IS SOMETHING FORBIDDEN, ETC