

THE SANCTITY OF THE SYNAGOGUE AND THE AMEN RESPONSE # 18

אמן

DOES YOUR SYNAGOGUE HAVE A KOSHER MECHITZA?

IN THOSE SYNAGOGUES WHERE YOU CAN SEE WOMEN THE YETZER HARA RULES IN THE SYNAGOGUE. THE KRIAT SHEMA THAT YOU SAY IN A SYNAGOGUE WHERE YOU CAN SEE WOMEN IS NULL AND VOID

SELECTIONS FROM RESPONSA OF THE SAGES

(Responsa Rav Aaron Kotler ZTK"l).

It is expressly stated in Talmud, Berachoth (24a) and in all Rabbinical codes, that the uncovered hair of a married woman is considered indecent [ERVAH], 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 before uncovered hair has not fulfilled his obligation of prayer or 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 ...

...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.....No Bet din (court of Jewish law) may remove such prohibitions...

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)

And even if everybody ridicules him and shame him and say things to cause him anguish and remind him of his evil deeds, he should not abandon his piety because of the jesters, and he should think that this will constitute a great merit for him and it will be considered for him as Tzeddaka from being ashamed, and through this the Fear of G-d which is pure enters his heart and purifies his heart and body of all evil things, and he is helped from heaven to strengthen his fear of G-d and arrange things for him to do a complete Teshuvah. (Sefer Chassidim, Siman 7)

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