

*THE SANCTITY OF THE SYNAGOGUE
AND THE AMEN RESPONSE # 22*

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**DOES YOUR SYNAGOGUE HAVE
A KOSHER MECHITZA?**

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.

**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]

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)

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