

כיסוי ראש

SOURCES OF HALACHOS AND LETTERS ON HAIR COVERING

1

בענין אשה סוטה – במדבר ה, יח

“ופרע את ראש האשה”

‘and he revealed the hair of the woman.’

ותנא דבי רבי ישמעאל: אזהרה מכאן לבנות ישראל שלא יצאו בפירוע הראש (כתובות עב.).

2

גמרא כתובות עב.

ואיזוהי דת יהודית? יוצאה וראשה פרוע. ראשה פרוע דאורייתא היא! דכתיב: ופרע את ראש האשה (במדבר ה', י"ח), ותנא דבי רבי ישמעאל: אזהרה לבנות ישראל שלא יצאו בפרוע ראש! דאורייתא - קלתה שפיר דמי, דת יהודית - אפילו קלתה נמי אסור.

3

ספרי פ' נשא

לימד על בנות ישראל שהן מכסות ראשיהן. ואע"פ שאין ראי'ה לדבר זכר לדבר

יותקח תמר אפר על ראשה' שמואל ב' יג, יט

4

“מבעד לצמתך שערך כעדר העיזים שגלשו מהר גלעד” (שיר השירים ד, א)

‘Behind your veil, your hair is like a flock of goats, streaming down

The אמר רב ששת: שער באשה ערוה, שנא' “שערך כעדר העיזים” (ברכות כד.). גמרא

5

שולחן ערוך אורח חיים עה, ב

שער של אשה שדרכה לכסותו, אסור לקרות כנגדו

‘The hair of a woman that the custom is to cover it, it is forbidden to read (שמע) in front of her’

6

אבן העזר כא, ב

“לא תלכנה בנות ישראל פרועות ראש בשוק אחת פנויה ואחת אשת איש”

This mitzvah applies to a married woman, and a woman who was once married. Unmarried girls are not required to cover their hair.

7

שו"ע אבן העזר קטו,ד

איזוהי דת יהודית, הוא מנהג הצניעות שנהגו בנות ישראל. ואלו הם הדברים שאם עשתה אחת מהם עברה על דת יהודית: יוצאת לשוק או למבוי מפלש או בחצר שהרבים בוקעים בו וראשה פרוע ואין עליה רדיד ככל הנשים אע"פ ששערה מכוסה במטפחת

'What is considered דת יהודית? The modest mode of behavior conducted by the daughters of Israel. These are the things that if one violated, she transgressed דת יהודית: She goes out to the marketplace or in a narrow alley open to the public or in a public courtyard with her hair exposed, without a רדיד, like all women, even if her hair is covered by a kerchief'

8

מגן אברהם עה, ד

ועיין באבן העזר שם (פ"ד), משמע דוקא בשוק אסור, אבל בחצר שאין אנשים מצויים שם מותרים לילך בגילוי הראש... אבל בזהר פרשת נשא עמוד רל"ט (ח"ג קכה, ב) החמיר מאוד שלא יראה שום שער מאשה, וכן ראוי לנהוג

'In אבן העזר it's clear that the איסור is davka in the marketplace (public setting,) but in a (private) courtyard where there aren't other people, it's permissible to go without a head covering. But, the Zohar החמיר מאד is very strict that not hair of a woman should be seen, and this is the proper mode of conduct.'

דין לבישת בגדים

9

שו"ע הרב אורח חיים סימן ב סעיף א

מדת הצניעות שיבח הכתוב במקומות רבות וחכמים צוו בה לכל אדם להיות צנוע בכל אורחותיו ולא להתנהג בפריצות אפילו שלא בפני הבריות אלא בינו לבין עצמו כמו שיתבאר בהלכות צניעות ואפילו כשהוא יחיד בלילה ובחדרי חדרים צריך לנהוג בצניעות ובושת לפני הקב"ה אשר מלא כל הארץ כבודו וכחשכה כאורה לפניו ית' ולכן לא יגלה את בשרו ואפילו מעט כל מה שדרכו להיות מכוסה בבגדים לעולם ואפילו כשישן על מטתו בלילה יכסה כל בשרו וסדין ואפילו כשנכנס לבית הכסא לעשות צרכיו שצריך

*The Torah praises the attribute of modesty in many sources. **Our Sages command that one be modest in all his ways** and not conduct himself in a shameless manner, not only while he is in company but even while alone, as will be explained in the laws relating to modesty. **Even when he is alone at night, in his private chambers, he should conduct himself modestly and bashfully in the presence of the Holy One, blessed be He, for "the entire world is filled with His glory"; in His sight, "darkness is as light."** Therefore, one should not uncover even the slightest part of his person that is usually covered by clothes. Even while sleeping in bed at night he should cover himself entirely with a sheet. Even when he enters a lavatory to relieve himself, he should uncover himself only to the extent that is necessary, and nothing at all beyond that, as will be explained.*

שולחן ערוך הרב

הלכות ק"ש עה, ד

10

שיער של אשה שדרכה לכסותה ערוה היא מפני שמביא לידי הרהור ואסור לקרות או להתפלל כנגדה על דרך שנתבאר אפילו היא אשתו אבל בתולות שדרכן לילך פרועות ראש וכן שערות של נשים שרגילין לצאת מחוץ לצמתן בקצת ארצות מותר לקרות כנגדן שכיון שרגילין בהן אינן מביא לידי הרהור ופאה נכרית אפילו דרכה לכסותה מותר לקרות כנגדה וגם מותר לגלותה ואין בה משום יוצאה וראשה פרועה שהוא אסור מן התורה באשת איש

A woman's hair, which is customarily covered, is considered erva since it leads to inappropriate thoughts. Therefore it is forbidden to recite שמע or daven in view of it as explained, and this even applies to one's own wife. In contrast, it is permissible to recite שמע in view of unmarried girls who generally go with uncovered hair, and so too in view of small hairs that protrude from the tresses of women in certain countries since this is their custom and it therefore does not lead to thoughts.

הערה לח

ובשו"ת צמח צדק חאה"ע סי' קלט ס"ב חילק בזה בין אשתו לאשה אחרת. וכן משמע בארחות חיים הלכות קריאת שמע סי' לו

שאלות ותשובות הצמח צדק

סימן קלט, ב

11

מ"מ משרש הדין לגבי בעלה לבד אין איסור ביציאת שיערה חוץ לצמתה כיון עיקר שער הראש הוא מכוסה. ע"כ לגבי בעלה דוקא חשיב שיערה שחוץ לצמתה כמו פניה וידיה ושירי לקרות ק"ש אף ברואה דלא מיטריד כלל. אבל לגבי איש אחר שאינו בעלה הא לא מיירי מזה הרשב"א כלל ובודאי לגביה חשיב זה שער באשה ערוה (ומנהג כזה הוא אותיות גיהנם כמ"ש כב"ג בשל"ה)

Privately in the presence of her husband, a woman is permitted to expose 'side hairs' which extend beyond her tichel (i.e. her 'peyos' - the hair growing in the front of the upper ear.) While other men are present, however, there is no heter at all to do so.

אג"ק חלק ט' דף שכה

12

You ask my opinion regarding kissui harosh. I was perplexed by the very question as this is an explicit law in Shulchan Aruch and there is no room for any questions or doubt. I am particularly perplexed by the manner in which you present your question: You state that the kallah will wear a sheitel in a manner that all the hair will be covered except for "two fingers" in front" that will remain revealed. I'm not sure whom you are trying to fool. One cannot fool G-d and one cannot even fool the entire world - one can only fool oneself. What possible benefit can be derived from this? I am sure that with due diligence and repeatedly discussing this issue with a kindly approach you will be able to influence the kallah that she conduct herself with regard to kissui harosh in the appropriate manner. (Igras Kodesh, Vol. IX, p. 325)

אג"ק חלק י דף צב

The necessity of a sheitel surely is not in need of explanation, particularly as we readily observe that young women who fulfill their obligation of kissui harosh with a scarf or kerchief, do so for only a short period of time. This is in addition to the fact that even during this brief period of time, they commonly breach and violate this matter.
(Igros Kodesh, Vol. X, p. 92)

13

משנה שבת סד.

יוצאה אשה (בשבת) בחוטי שער בין משלה (תלושין רש"י) בין משל חברתה..ובפאה נכרית (קליעת שער תלושה, וצוברתה על שערה עם קליעתה, שתראה בעלת שער – רש"י)

14

The mishna here discusses various items which may be worn outside on שבת by a woman without being an issue of carrying. One of the items mentioned is a wig. In discussing this שבת, the גמרא says that the reason it is permissible for a woman to wear a wig outside on שבת is in order for her to appear attractive to her husband. This shows that already in the times of the משנה, wearing a wig as a means of hair covering was accepted practice by married women. Unmarried girls are not required to cover their hair.

שלטי הגבורים על הריף, שבת סד:

only applies when hair is connected to the scalp, not to natural wigs.

15

ישכיל עבדי אבן העזר טו

only rules on something that is directly attached to the body of the woman herself because these things have life. This is not true if separated from the body – the איסור of ערוה separated itself from it, and it's like a corpse over which the יצה"ר has no control.

Thus the Gemara relates that *"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.'"*

In other words, her profound conduct of צניעות – to the extent that even when she was alone in the house "the rafters of her house never saw the plaits of her hair" – affected her sons to such an extent that they all merited to become כהנים גדולים. Her behavior thus had an effect many, many years after she conducted herself in this manner – after her children had already become bar mitzvah and after they had reached the age of twenty, when they became fit to become Kohanim Gedolim. Moreover, her conduct also had an influence on her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, for the son of a Kohen Gadol inherits his father's position.

Since this tale is related to us by the Oral Torah, it follows that this is not just a story of something that transpired in the past, for "that which has passed is past." Rather, it comes to teach every Jewish daughter how much she is to scrupulously observe tznius, even when there is no one else in the house, etc.

(The reason for this is: Since repeatedly acting in a certain manner causes it to become second nature, it is possible to forget oneself and act in this manner even when someone else is in the house, etc.)

By behaving in this ultimate manner of tznius, one affects for the good one's children and grandchildren, as we glean from the above tale of the גמרא. (*Hisvaaduyos 5742, pp. 2190-2191*)

16

כתב יד קודש

17

מיוסד על דברי כ"ק מו"ח אדמו"ר בכיו"ב - שהצרות ר"ל שיש עתה מנוער בני"י - בא (כנראה מכ"מ) בספרים מהקולות בעניני טהמ"פ ובצניעות, ומכלל הן אתה שומע לאו - מה"הן" דצניעות דקמחית הביאו ז' כה"ג אתה שומע כו'

אגרת קודש חלק כג דף שמה-שמו

18

In response to your question, quoting your words, about "the problem of kissui harosh, and what this custom is based upon":

It is an explicit law – and not only a custom – of the Torah that a (married) woman is to cover her hair, kissui harosh. Moreover, from the great reward received for performing this law, one can apprehend that there is great import to fulfilling this law....

As the Zohar states in Parshas Nasso, [quoted in Mishnah Berurah, Laws of Kerias Shema, chapter 75) and I choose to quote only the blessings mentioned there, omitting the negative aspects resulting from failure to comply with this law:

"Her children will be superior to other children; moreover, her husband will be blessed with all blessings, blessings of above and blessings of below, with wealth, with children and grandchildren, etc."

I would also add to the above that it boggles the mind that this should be a "problem" for anyone who has a spark of faith in her heart and desires that her married life be truly fortunate and blessed – these blessings and good fortune extending to the husband and wife as well as the future children that G-d will bless them with.

Can there be any comparison whatsoever of the unpleasantness (even if you wish to say that there is unpleasantness) that exists in kissui harosh in comparison to G-d's blessings, the blessings of He who formed man and created and conducts the world?!

Such an attitude is exceedingly irreverent, even if there were to be but a scintilla of doubt about the necessity of this requirement, and how much more so when this matter [of kissui harosh] is stated explicitly.

It is self-understood that I am aware of the objection to the above, to the effect that there are many who do not observe this law. But this question already exists for thousands of years, for "Jews are a minority among the nations," and "our laws differ from all other nations."

Consequently, it is unfortunate but true that within the Jewish people there were and still are individuals who for the time being publicly desecrate the Shabbos and even intermarry, Heaven forbid.

Surely this does not at all affect in the very least, G-d forbid, the vital aspects of our Torah, the Torah of Life and its mitzvos, concerning which Scripture states, "You shall live by them," just as the making of the Golden Calf in its time (close to the time of receiving the Torah) did not diminish one iota from the importance of the Ten Commandments, and subsequently the entire Torah and all its commandments up to the present day.

Finding ourselves just several days before Purim – objections such as the above [that "our laws differ from all other nations," etc.] was the complaint of Haman, whose conclusion was not only the spiritual destruction of the Jewish people, but "to annihilate all the Jewish people, from young to old, children and women."

For the existence of the Jewish people in all places is exclusively through performance of the Torah and its mitzvos, that were given by the One G-d to the "one nation on earth."

(Igras Kodosh, Vol. XXIII, pp. 345-346)

With regard to your writing about covering your hair – there is absolutely no question regarding [the vital importance of] this matter:

*Since G-d clearly said that for the benefit of the wife, her husband, and their children her hair should not be revealed, surely it is so. Thus **it is impossible that by keeping G-d's commandments your head should hurt, etc.***

For example, when you write that wearing a sheitel makes your head hurt, it is possible that:

a) This is a falsehood of the evil inclination who does not want mitzvos to be performed and does not want Jews to be showered with blessings.

b) If this is indeed true – then this demonstrates that [your hair is too long and] you should cut it so that it be shorter. When you do so, your head surely won't hurt when wearing a sheitel. (Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XXXIII, p. 264)

19 Cheshvan 5715

Blessing and Greeting:

I was very pleased to receive your letter of Nov. 3rd, in which you write the good news that you have ordered a Shaitel during your recent visit in New York.

The Almighty will surely fulfill His promise, as it is written in the holy Zohar, that it will bring Hatzlocho to you, your husband and children in good health and prosperity, especially in your case, where in addition to the deed itself there is also a Kiddush Hashem. I am sure you will wear it with joy, and as the Baal Shem Tov emphasized the importance of serving the Almighty with joy, and G-d's blessings will be even greater.

I want to add my prayerful wishes that the Almighty grant you the Zechus to be instrumental in making your friends and acquaintances follow your good example, which you will support also by other forms of influence.

Not only does the Shaitel show the true Jewish spirit of adherence to our laws and customs, but it also shows strength of character and will and the power of conviction, not being swayed by external influences and the opinions of people who are rather devoid of content inwardly and even outwardly are of no consequence.

With blessing,
M. Schneerson

Additional letter from the Rebbe on this topic

By the Grace of G-d
20th of Tishrei 5718
Brooklyn N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

This is in reply to your several questions:

(1) You asked, how long is it since I assumed my present office?

This was after the year of aveilus (mourning) from the day my father-in-law of saintly memory passed on, on the tenth of Shevat, 5710.

(2) You asked, why do Jewish women wear a sheitel?

You should bear in mind, first of all, that when it comes to any one of the many Mitzvos which G-d has given us, no man can understand all the reasons for it, because a man's understanding is limited, while G-d's wisdom is without end. For example: A small child could not understand the wisdom of a big professor, even if the professor tried to explain it to the child. Remember, both of them are human beings, and the only difference between the professor and the child is in the number of years each one of them has been learning things: The baby has been learning for a number of days only, and the professor has been studying for many years. Yet it would be silly for the baby or child to ask to understand a deep and difficult theory of the professor.

Much, very much greater is the difference between a man, who was created by G-d, and the Creator Himself, Who is eternal, and Whose Wisdom can in no way be compared to that of man, even the wisest of men, who has been learning even to 120 years. Therefore, the wise man and the smart child will not question or worry about all the reasons of a mitzvah, but will do it willingly and joyfully.

However, there are Mitzvos where G-d in His kindness has disclosed a reason, only one or two of the infinite number of reasons. In connection with the sheitel, one of the reasons (but by no means the only one) is that it makes the marriage between a man and his wife a holy union, and the two of them become like one. This brings them G-d's additional blessings making it a happy marriage, and that the children should also be well and happy, and well provided for in all their needs.

(3) You asked, finally, why isn't a lady a Rabbi?

You surely know that there were Jewish women who were leaders of all our people, such as the prophetess Deborah, and others. But these were exceptional cases. For, when G-d created the world, He gave each creature something special to do, and to the woman he gave the most wonderful of all things – to be a mother and raise children, and bring them up in the true Jewish way, so that among these children many will grow up to be leaders of our people Israel. This is a full-time and life-time responsibility, and it leaves no room for other responsibilities which take up all one's time for the rest of one's life.

In conclusion, it should be remembered that in trying to increase one's knowledge one should have one's mind on such things that will help him, or her, in daily conduct to serve G-d all the better. Things of immediate importance should come first, and things which are not of immediate importance should come later, at their proper time. The thing which is of immediate importance to you, is to try to improve your daily conduct, for there is always room for improvement, and to show a good example to your friends by devoting yourself to your studies and conduct, and G-d will surely bless you with success.

With blessing, (signature)