



From the desk of
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Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

Religious Court of Elad * Batei Hora'ah * Religious Services * Marriage Licensing * Kashrut * Mikvaot * Eiruvim

TORAT

Parashat Beshalach

HAMELECH

Sing a Song

In this week's *parashah*, Hashem split the sea and the Jewish People went across on dry land! This was amazing! It evoked a Divinely inspired reaction on behalf of all present. The Jewish People spontaneously united and sang Oz Yashir – the Song of the Sea. When the men concluded, Miriam HaNevia took the women aside and sang with them.

Hashem values melodious responses to His miracles. Had Chizkiyahu sung a nice song at his salvation, well, perhaps he would have been Moshiach! But he didn't, so he wasn't (Sanhedrin 94a).

How Women Are to Sing

Now although Hashem Yitbarach appreciates our singing of His praise, there are rules and regulations. It is not a free for all. Miriam Haneviya wanted to sing with the women, but she knew that she had to do so in a way which would not contradict matters of *tzniut*.

Men may not listen to women singing, even praise of Hashem. So what did Miriam do? For one, she made sure to keep it short. Bnei Yisrael sang a lengthy song. The song of the women was but half a verse, quite terse.

Additionally, Miriam took them to the side, out of earshot of the men. On top of that, she made sure to have the women play music on their tambourines and drums, drowning out their voices. So many precautions this pious woman

took, for she knew that the end does not justify the means.

From Toe to Head

On the topic of *tzniut*, let us mention certain areas which need strengthening in our times. Let us begin with the feet. Yes, feet. While any self-respecting woman makes sure to leave home fully covered with proper non-see-through hosiery, in the home, there is sometimes laxity. Sometimes it is just more comfortable to go around barefoot, without stockings or socks and the robe does not exactly reach the floor. And sometimes, non-family males are visiting and the women in the house do not even realize what is on display, *chas veshalom*.

Tzniut begins at home (but does not end there). Women who are *tzanua* even in the confines of their home will merit offspring who will serve in the *Beit Hamikdash* (Tanchuma to Vayishlach). Mrs. Kimchit was exceptionally cautious, not allowing her rafters to see nary a strand of her hair. For this behavior, she was rewarded handsomely. Seven of her sons functioned in the capacity of Kohen Gadol (each one when the other was temporarily unavailable) (Yoma 47a).

Zohar HaKadosh reveals that revealing hair is asking for trouble! It breeds poverty. It causes a woman's children to be not so great. It invites destructive forces into the home.

Zohar insists that a woman cover her hair even in the confines of her own abode. A woman who is



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careful in this matter will have children like olive trees – quite respected. Her husband will receive all blessings, physical and spiritual. They will have affluence and *nachat* from their children and grandchildren.

What's a Jew Going to do with Egyptian Clothing?

Upon leaving Mitzrayim, the Jews were told to ask their Egyptian neighbors for their valuables, including clothing. Moshe tells the Yidden to ask for clothing so that they can put them on their sons and daughters. What about the adults?

Explains R' Ezra Attiah: The Egyptians were not modest. Their clothing was much too short and tight to fit their Jewish counterparts modestly. The only thing that you could do with Egyptian clothing is to take that which was worn by Egyptian adults and put it on Jewish children. Then, and only then, was there a chance that it could fit them and cover them adequately.

Engendering Kiruv

Here is another important point. The forerunner of all kiruv movements is none other than Avraham Avinu. He is the one who spread monotheism throughout the world. Did he give classes to women, too? No. Sarah, his wife, did that. They were very careful about that. Avraham spoke to the men, Sarah to the women. That is how it went. (Bamidbar Raba 14:11)

Stay Away

And today? How often do we hear of Rabbis delivering lectures straight to women, even in

home settings. How abominable! How risky! The end certainly does not justify the means!

Believe me, I work in *Shalom Bayit* for decades, and I know of too many unfortunate occurrences! All well-meaning... but... You just can't trust yourself.

Yes, there was a woman in our community who arranged *shiurim* from a *mekubal*. Everyone knew how this man prayed fervently and fasted regularly. But... before long... this "*mekubal*" convinced the lady of the house, the organizer of the *shiur* that based on the secrets of the *Kaballah*, she is meant for him, so she should make every effort to get her husband to divorce her and he, too, will divorce his wife and then they'll marry each other! How disgusting! All of this began because this lady had a bit too much to do with him, calling him weekly and complimenting the *shiurim*, etc. Unknowingly, she was arousing unhealthy attention and desire, and under the guise of *Kaballah*...

But it is not only *shiurim*. It is also marriage "counseling". How often does marriage counseling only make things worse! The wife is encouraged to pour out her heart in private to the male counselor who thought of himself as a *Yarei Shamayim*, and maybe he even was; but once he got too much involved in the private life of someone else's wife in an "honest" attempt to alleviate some of her pain, his *yetzer horah* got the better of him, *chas veshalom*.

These are not things which I wish to speak about constantly, but the *tzibbur* must be aware of the



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dangers involved. I am speaking from years of experience.

Even Rabbis who deal with *sheilot* of *Taharat Hamishpacha* and answer questions posed by women, must exercise caution and only conduct hours for women when their own wife is around, entering the room freely, without notice. We must not underestimate the power of the evil inclination. We cannot trust ourselves. Are we any greater than R' Akiva, R' Meir and R' Amram the Pious?!

Rav Amram on Fire

What was the story with Rav Amram the Pious? Some Jewish girls had been taken captive. They were brought to the city of Nehardea and Rav Amram arranged for their ransom. In the meantime, he had them stay in his attic.

The way to get to the attic was to climb a ladder which led to a horizontal window. After the hostages were safely in the attic, Rav Amram had his students move the heavy ladder to the side of the room. Now, mind you, this ladder was so heavy, that it usually took ten able-bodied men to carry it.

Late at night, one of the female hostages passed by the window. Rav Amram caught a glimpse of her beauty and was overcome with desire. He felt a surge of adrenalin and moved that heavy ladder single-handedly. Halfway up the ladder, he was granted the ability to fight with his *yetzer hara*. Rav Amram spread his feet apart and began

screaming, "A fire in Amram's house! A fire in Amram's house!"

Soon enough, his *talmidim* who were not too far away, came to extinguish the flames. They saw their *rebbe* halfway up a ladder, with no fire in sight. They understood that it was an internal flame. They said, "Rebbe, you have embarrassed us."

He responded, "Better you should be embarrassed of Amram in this world and not in the next."

At that, he ordered the *yetzer hara* to depart. The *yetzer hara* left him in the form of a pillar of fire.

Rav Meir and the Narrow Bridge

Rav Meir used to poke fun at those who sinned in matters of immorality. The *yetzer hara* wanted to teach him a lesson. So he/she appeared as a beautiful woman on the other side of the river. There was no bridge, only a thin board and a rope to hold on to. Immediately, overcome with passion, Rabbi Meir started crossing the river. When he was halfway across, he was given the ability to withstand temptation. The Satan (a.k.a. *yetzer hara*) told him, "If not for the fact that in Heaven they speak highly of you, I would have made you into two cents."

Rabbi Akiva and the Palm Tree

A similar thing happened with Rabbi Akiva. He, too, made light of sinners. He said, "Why can't they just easily control their desires?"



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So the *yetzer hara* showed him that he, too, was susceptible. The *yetzer hara* appeared as a beautiful woman atop a nearby palm tree. Now, a palm tree is one of the hardest trees to climb. Nonetheless, overcome with desire, R' Akiva began climbing the tree. Halfway up, the *yetzer hara* left him alone. But not before telling him, "Had they not announced in Heaven, 'Watch out for R' Akiva and his Torah,' I would have made your blood worth two cents."

Be Careful

So here we have it. Great people are not immune from the *yetzer hara*. The Amora Abaya once followed two youngsters, male and female, who strolled alone together. After they innocently parted ways, Abaya said of himself, "Had it been me, I would not have been able to control myself." (Suka 52a)

The Gemara concludes, "Anyone who is greater than another, his *yetzer hara* is also greater."

We also know that David Hamelech is taken to task for his sin with Batsheva. True that, due to a technicality, she was not considered to be a married woman at that time. Nonetheless, on David Hamelech's level, it is considered a severe breach in matters of immorality.

As we have said, even with the best of intentions, such as imparting Torah teachings or restoring peace in the home, a man is not to meet with another man's wife in privacy. Certainly, when the intention is only leisure and recreation, married couples should not just sit around and

shmooze. I am sorry to say, but also in this area, I know of too many mishaps which began with "innocent" chatting and joking around.

Watch Where You Work

The workplace is another place where caution must be exercised. A male boss and female employee is a recipe for disaster. First, for "work" reasons, they sit alone together, discussing "business only," which then leads to other matters, which then leads to other matters, and then... it's too late. There is already an emotional attachment.

She went to work so that her husband can sit and learn. What happened? Her job opportunity was one with less than the appropriate *tzniut* distances. While it is wonderful for a woman to want to help bring in income to support her family, it must only be done if *tzniut* is not compromised in the slightest. We believe that all *parnasah* due to a person can come via permissible avenues.

Recipe for Success

In conclusion, let us learn from Miriam Haneviya how the end does not justify the means; how *tzniut* is to be guarded even while being involved in *Melechet HaKodesh*. Let us learn from Avraham Avinu and Sarah Imeinu how *kiruv* is to be done – men to men and women to women.

If we are careful in matters of *tzniut*, Hashem will protect us and shower us with blessing.

**Shabbat Shalom Umevorach,
Mordechai Malka**