

HALOCHOSCOPE



Congregation Shaaray Teffillah, Pittsburgh, PA

This week's question:

May one recite *Krias Shma Al Hamita*, the Shma at bedtime, while only wearing very short pajamas?

The issues to discuss:

- (A) *Tznius*, modesty in dress.
- (B) Whether holy words may be said in the presence of an immodestly clad person.
- (C) Dressing respectfully for *Teffillah*, prayers.

(A) *Tznius*

The issue of *Tznius* is partly Halacha and partly an issue of sensitivity to the Jewish approach to human feelings. From the time that Hashem made clothing for Adam and Chava, it was understood that humans are clothed for two reasons: protection from the elements and embarrassment. This is besides the tendency to be aroused emotionally by the exposure of the human figure, which is a misuse of the *Tzelem Elokim*, the human body created in the form of Hashem. Accordingly, one who is unashamed to walk around or do his work unclothed is considered *Posul Le'edus*, unfit to act as a witness in all Jewish legal matters, because he has displayed a lack of self-respect and is suspected of being willing to violate Torah commandments and to testify falsely. [See *Sotah* 14a. *Maharal*. *Baba Kama* 86b. *Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat* 34:18 and commentaries.]

Halachically, the laws of *Tznius* are specified in the Torah and Navi with regard to women in particular. Scripturally, a married woman may not show her hair in public, and, it goes without saying, her legs and the more private parts of her body. Other areas, such as the arms, should also be covered, although this is not a Scriptural obligation, but was always practiced by Jewish women and became a Rabbinical obligation. Even in private, dressing modestly is praiseworthy. Additional stringencies are practiced by women in some communities; usually, they are obligatory in those circles because of *Minhag*, and because once people are accustomed to dressing this way, removing it is considered immodest. Scripturally, women may not dress in men's clothing and vice-versa. In addition, one should not dress in clothing that attract attention, such as bright red clothing. [See e.g. *Kesubos* 72a-b. *Rambam Hil. Isurei Biah* 21-22. *Sh. Ar. O.C.* 75, *Even Haezer* 21. commentaries: *Y.D.* 182, 178;1. *Shach Biur Hagra*. commentaries, *Poskim*.]

Although there are no direct references in the Torah to general *Tznius* for men, it is implicit in the terminology "*Giluy*" *Ervah*, revealing, that certain parts of the body should be covered at all times, except when one cannot perform

bodily functions without uncovering them. In addition, there are commandments of Tznius for specific situations, such as in the clothing of the Kohanim or in the instructions for the building of the Mizbeach. Generally, Tznius applies to men as well. However, the guidelines for what is called modest dress for men are much more dependent on the prevailing practices in a particular community. A *Talmid Chochom*, a Torah sage, should dress even more modestly than the average person. [See Parshas Noach 9:21-24. Yisro 20:23. Tetzaveh 28:42, etc. Commentaries. Sh. Ar. O.C. 1 & 2 and commentaries.]

Other laws of modesty include performing bodily functions in the most private manner possible and even in bath-houses, one should conduct himself in as modest a fashion as possible. A husband and wife should be careful not to show too much affection in public. [See Sh. Ar. O.C. 1,2,3,240-241. E.H. 21:5. Rema etc. and 25. commentaries. Parshas Ki Seitzei 23:10-15. Chinuch, Mitzvah 566. Eruvin 41b etc.]

(B) Holy Words in the Presence of an Improperly Clad Person

One may not recite Brachos or other Teffilos or Torah or utter a Name of Hashem with an *Ervah*, the most private parts of the body, in view. This means that even in private, where Tznius is not always absolutely obligatory, for example, in a bath-house where it is not possible to practice it fully, and people are undressed, one may not recite Brachos and other prayers or speak words of Torah. This is based on the Passuk, "Hashem walks in your camp... your camp shall be holy and He shall not see in you an *Ervah*..." which indicates that, when dealing with matters of Hashem, one should not see *Ervah*. [See Parshas Ki Seitzei 23:15. Berachos 24a. Shulchan Aruch Harav O.C. 74:1-2 etc.]

However, under certain circumstances, it is permissible to say some prayers with only minimal clothing covering only the *Ervah*. If an *Ervah* is present but one cannot see it, one may recite Holy words. A woman (when no-one else is present) who is seated and able to conceal her *Ervah*, may recite a Brocha. However, this does not work for a man. Furthermore, since the *Ervah* of a man is not hidden and is facing his heart (it is not parallel to it but within its "line of vision"), it must be concealed by covering it and also by separating it from his heart. This means that it is insufficient to cover one's body from the neck down with a gown. One must have an item of clothing that covers the lower half of the body, but does not cover the heart. A cloth around the loins is good enough for this, even if the top half of the body is still unclothed. Even water can sometimes serve as a separation, for example, if someone is bathing naked in a murky river he may keep his lower half submerged and say Shma. However, he should not resort to this unless he will be delayed past the latest time for Shma if he comes out and dresses. For this reason, one is obligated to gird oneself before reciting a Brocha if one was only wearing a gown. Today, our undergarments serve to separate between the heart and the *Ervah*. [See Berachos 22b, 24a-b. commentaries, Poskim. Rosh, Hagahos Ashri. Sh. Ar. O.C. 74 commentaries.]

Only the heart may not face the *ervah*; other parts of the body may face the *Ervah* but may not touch it, which is why it is recommended to wear an undergarment when wearing a gown. [See Berachos 25b, Tosafos. Sh. Ar. O.C. 74:5 commentaries]

The Talmud discusses being partly covered by ones bedsheet in a way that separates between the heart and the *Ervah* because one is too cold to get out

of bed. Accordingly, it is understood that all of this applies in a pressing situation, but ideally one should always cover one's top half as well for any Brocha or prayer. [See Shaarei Teshuva end of O.C. 75. Mishna Berura 74:22.]

In our particular case, the person is wearing pajamas covering the top half of his body and the *Ervah*, but exposing his legs. There appears to be a difference of opinion whether it is necessary to cover the whole bottom half of the body or whether it is sufficient to cover only the *Ervah*. According to the second opinion, one is allowed to recite Shma wearing only shorts or underpants. [See Aruch Hashulchan O.C. 74:7. Mishna Berura 74:21.]

(C) Dressing Respectfully for Teffillah

Although the Shma may be recited by someone partly undressed, for *Teffillah*, the Shemonah Esrei prayer, one must cover the heart too, even in a pressing situation. The reason for this difference is that *Teffillah* is a prayer directed to Hashem Himself; it is as if we are addressing a King. One must have special awe and fear for a king and so one must dress more respectfully. Because of this, some are accustomed to specially gird themselves (a garter) for *Teffillah* even if they do not need to separate between their hearts and their *Ervah* because they are wearing undergarments or pants. Others say this is unnecessary. [See Berachos 26a Shabbos 10a Tosafos.]

This special attention given to one's dress for *Teffillah* is based on the Passuk [Amos 4] "Prepare [or beautify yourselves (Rashi)] to meet your G-d! Yisrael." Actually, the Talmud relates two practices: one was to remove one's cloak and to plead, wringing one's hands in supplication during *Teffillah*. The other was to don one's fanciest garments for *Teffillah*. Some Poskim say that in a time of crisis, one should not wear one's best clothing but come pleading to Hashem as a servant does, while in a time of calm one should dress well for *Teffillah*. [See Shabbos 9b-10a. Sh. Ar. O.C. 91 commentaries etc.]

There are some manners of dress that are acceptable in certain countries even in the presence of a king, but are totally unacceptable in other countries. An example of this, cited in the Shulchan Aruch, is that in countries where it is not the custom to stand before important people without socks, one should wear socks for *Teffillah*. Others say one should wear good quality socks and also not wear sandals that reveal the heels. However, if one's clothing covers his feet anyway, there is no problem. By implication, in hot countries, where people do not necessarily wear socks, one may wear even shorter clothing that exposes the feet. [See Sh. Ar. O.C. 91:5, Magen Avraham, Mishna Berura, Shulchan Aruch Harav]

In our society, it is difficult to imagine what it means "to stand in awe before a king". The "king" meant here is one who is all-powerful and able to do as he wishes with his subjects, which is generally not the case with a president or a judge in today's world. Nonetheless, it is possible to imagine a situation where formal dress makes a difference. One could imagine presenting oneself at an important interview, or to one's most important client. One should try to picture the initial moments of the meeting where one is standing. If one is accustomed to wearing a hat or tie outside, he should wear them for *Teffillah*. One should certainly not wear pajamas or a bathrobe or daven in one's undergarments even if they are long. However, if one prayed in casual clothing, provided his heart and *Ervah* were both covered, he has fulfilled his obligation and need not repeat. [See

Sh. Ar. O.C. 91. Mishna Berura 11-12.]

Aside from Teffillah, for all prayers and Berachos, including Krias Shma Al Hamita, it is preferable to dress in a presentable way. One should wear a hat when saying Bircas Hamazon over a Kos Shel Brocha, a cup of wine, and some authorities recommend it at any time. [See Sh. Ar. O.C. 183. Magen Avraham 5. Machatzis Hashekel, Levushei Serad.]

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

SCHEDULE:

SHABBOS SHACHARIS	9:00 AM
SHABBOS MINCHA	7:25 PM
SHACHARIS SUNDAY	8:00 AM
SHACHARIS MONDAY - FRIDAY	7:00 AM
MINCHA SUNDAY - THURSDAY	7:30 PM
CANDLE-LIGHTING NITZAVIM-VAYELECH	7:19 PM
MINCHA EREV SHABBOS NITZAVIM-VAYELECH	7:00 PM

Kiddush is being sponsored by Norman Perer (in honor of Rabbi Silver)

SHIURIM:

GEMORO MAKOS	SUNDAY	7:15 AM
HALACHA B'IYUN	MONDAY	9:00 PM
HALACHOS OF BUSINESS	THURSDAY	4:30 PM
HILCHOS SHABBOS	SHABBOS	8:15 AM

DAF YOMI:

SHABBOS 6:00 PM; SUN 8:50 AM; MON-THURS 8:00 PM
SIYUM ON SOTA, TUES; BEGIN GITTIN WED.

The unveiling for the late Yankel Bernstein A'H will take place on Sunday September 5 at 11:30 at the Russian Cemetery, Beth Abraham.

This issue of HALOCHOSCOPE has been sponsored by Rabbi Silver in honor of the Yortzites of Sarah bas Shmuel on the 11th of Elul and Rochel Devorah bas Moshe on 24th of Elul.

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Comments and suggestions are welcome and can be addressed to :

Rabbi Shimon Silver

Congregation Shaaray Teffillah

5741 Bartlett Street

Pittsburgh, PA 15217 (412) 521-5419/9911