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HALICHOS BAS YISRAEL
A Woman's Guide to Jewish Observance

the English edition of
הליךות בSİ ישראל

prepared by
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in collaboration with the author

From the Hebrew edition,
Chapters 1–13

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in discussing the motions of catching this as a thief. The Gemara because the motions of exposing her upper arms as a violation of Dath Yehudith restriction is a transgression against the discussion is the direct laws of modest dress.

The Gemara Da’ath, Vol. 3 states that a woman to dress in modest dress, a woman herself, but causes others who see her to transgress. Jewish Law not only prohibits a woman from dressing immodestly, but also forbids men to look at someone who is so dressed.5

Parts of the Body Which Must be Covered

4. Jewish Law requires that the following parts of a married or unmarried woman’s body be covered in public:

a) The neck (below and including the collarbone6)

b) The arms (the upper arms,7 including the elbow8)

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5. Shulchan Arukh, Evven HaEzer 21:1; Mishnah Berurah 75:7; Iggeroth Moshe, Orach Chayim, No. 40, and Evven HaEzer, No. 56. This prohibition applies even where no sexual desire is involved.

6. The Mishnah Berurah 75:2, clearly states that the area above the collarbone may be exposed. Also see Kuntres Malbushey Nashim, p. 12.

7. Mishnah Berurah 75:2 and 75:7; Chaye Adam 7:2; Kaf HaChayim 75:2 and 75:3.

The Gemara, Kethuboth 72b, explains that the Mishnah confirms the Dath Yehudith prohibition against a woman weaving in the marketplace because she will invariably expose her z’roah (arm) in public. The Mishnah, Ohaloth 1:5, defines z’roah as the bone extending from the shoulder to the elbow.

The Chazon Ish, Orach Chayim 16:8, raises the possibility that the lower arm may also be considered z’roah. He concludes that it is possible that the entire arm should be covered to the wrist. The Ben Ish Chai, Shanah Rishonah, Parshath Bo 11, and the Kaf HaChayim 75:2 cite the Zohar, which states that only the hands should be exposed, but most later authorities accept the view of the Mishnah Berurah that only the upper arm and elbow need be covered. Also see Yabiah Omer, Vol. 6, Orach Chayim 14:3.

It should be noted that in a community where the accepted practice of observant Jewish women is to dress in a more stringent manner, a visitor should adopt the prevailing custom so as not to appear conspicuous.

8. The elbows are covered because, if they were not, the upper arms would often be exposed as the woman raised her arms. See Kuntres
c) The legs (the thighs, including the knees)

A woman is required to wear a dress or skirt which is long enough to cover her knees whether she is standing or sitting, and this is necessary even if she wears non-transparent stockings. Some authorities maintain that the dress must be ankle-length, but this is not the generally-accepted practice. It is, however, the general practice of women in many Jewish communities to wear stockings.

Malbushey Nashim, p. 8-9, which explains that the prohibition against exposing the upper arms applies even if it is done occasionally or unintentionally.

9. Mishnah Berurah 75:2, quoting Tractate Berakhoth 24a: “The exposed shoke (thigh) of a woman constitutes ervah (an erotic stimulus).”

10. Kuntres Malbushey Nashim, p. 10, suggests that, in order to ensure that the thigh will always be covered, a dress should reach approximately ten centimeters (four inches) below the knee.

11. HaGaon Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and HaGaon Rav Yosef Sholom Eliaishiv write in the journal Bam’silah (5730, p. 97): “The shoke must be covered when the woman is sitting or standing. Under no circumstances should one rely on stockings as a covering.” In Kuntres Malbushey Nashim, p. 11, HaRav Binyamin Zilber writes that covering the knee with non-transparent stockings might satisfy the Dath Moshe requirement of covering the shoke, but the traditionally-accepted practice of Jewish women, Dath Yehudith, mandates that the dress itself cover the knees.

12. Shulchan Arukh HaRav 75:1; Orukh HaShulchan 75:3; Chaye Adam 14:2; Ben Ish Chai, Shanah Rishonah, Parshath Bo 11-12; Kaf HaChayim 75:2.

The two opinions cited in the text on the required length of a woman’s dress are based on different definitions of shoke. The Mishnah Berurah 75:2 states that the area below the knee is not shoke, consequently, the obligation to cover this area is not Dath Moshe, but depends on the accepted practice of observant Jewish women in a particular community. The Chaye Adam, however, maintains that only the feet are excluded from Dath Moshe and that the calf is part of the shoke. This view reflects the definition of

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Minchath Yitzchak, p. 43, writes, “According to the requirement to wear stockings, who wears the of modesty.” According to who wears an ankle-length.

In spite of the beliefs of communities today, the Mishnah Berurah, that non-transparent stockings cover community which finds

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HaGaon Rav Yissachar Shem Tov, where it is the accepted view that is forbidden in the presence of his wife. The principle that a man is not present of any woman part of her body is even paragraphs 6-11.

13. Iggereth Moshe, Ein Chayim 75:1. This is the discussion of the amulets.
5. Some women mistakenly believe that they may expose up to a _tefach_ (four inches) of parts of the body which require covering. This is not correct; they must be completely covered.\(^{13}\)

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shoke in the Mishnah, _Ohaloth_ 1:8. _Shevet HaLevi, Orach Chayim_, Vol. 1, No. 1, brings additional support from a Responsa of Rabbi Akiva Eiger. HaRav Yehoshua Neuwirth, writing in the journal _Sh'maitin_, No. 11, says that this opinion is the same as the Bach, _Shu'tchan Arukh HaRav_ and the _Orukh HaShulchan_. The Chazon Ish, _Orach Chayim_ 16:8, also finds it difficult to agree with the Mishnah Berurah. HaGaon Rav Binyamin Zilber, in _Kuntres Malbushey Nashim_, p. 10, writes that after corresponding with the Chazon Ish, he, too, is unable to agree with the Mishnah Berurah on this question. Clearly, many opinions require a woman's dress to be ankle-length.

In spite of the weight of so many contrary views, most Jewish communities today have adopted the more lenient definition of the Mishnah Berurah. It is, however, a widely accepted practice to wear non-transparent stockings, and a woman is obligated to do so in a community which follows this practice.

_Minchath Yitzchak_, Vol. 6, No. 10, rules that a woman should wear stockings at home because strangers or visitors may come at any time. Nevertheless, HaGaon Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach writes, “According to the letter of the Law, a woman is not required to wear stockings in her husband’s presence, yet she is still required to wear a dress that accords with the minimum standards of modesty.” According to _Shevet HaLevi_, Vol. 5, No. 77, a woman who wears an ankle-length dress need not wear stockings.

HaGaon Rav Yosef Sholom Eliashiv rules that in communities where it is the accepted practice for women to wear stockings, a man is forbidden to recite _Shema_, blessings or study Torah in the presence of his wife if she is not wearing them. This is based on the principle that a man may not recite prayers or study Torah in the presence of any woman, including his wife, if any normally-covered part of her body is exposed. This principle is discussed at length in paragraphs 6-11.

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13. _Iggeroth Moshe, Evven HaEzer_, No. 58, based on the Remah, _Orach Chayim_ 75:1. This ruling concerns areas of flesh, not the hair. For a discussion of the amount of hair that a married woman may leave