

**Appendix I: Beware of Strangers**

The following are not, strictly speaking, matters of *Halakhah* and as such, were not discussed in the main body of this work. Because they are “issues” which are so often witnessed or discussed, they are addressed separately in this appendix:

**Calligraphical Kesubos:**

One needs only to go to any Jewish museum to see that for generations *kesubos* were treated artistically. The practice of hanging one’s *Kesubah* on the wall, however, appears to have no basis in primary sources and is instead a relatively new practice that is in vogue in some American communities but remains unheard of in others. The *Kesubah*, is in essence a contract. This marriage contract is the property of the wife and should remain under her control throughout her marriage.<sup>346</sup> While there is most probably nothing technically wrong with hanging one’s *Kesubah* on the wall, there is no basis for it in *Halakhah*.

**Untying Neckties, Shoelaces etc.:**

The practice of the *chasan* to untie his shoelaces, necktie etc., before entering the *chupah* seems to have originally been popular among Chasidim and has now found acceptance in some non-Chasidic circles. The reasons given for this practice are based on concerns of *kishuf* (lit.

<sup>346</sup> כתובות פב ע"ב, לבושי מרדכי אבה"ע קמא ס' מט, אגרות משה אבן העזר ח"ג סימן כ"ו.

magic) and are, at best, very difficult to understand.<sup>347</sup> According to some, these practices actually stem from non-Jewish cultures and may involve the prohibition of *chukas ha-goyim* (emulating the religious practices of the gentiles).<sup>348</sup>

### Praying Under The Chupah:

To be sure, the day of one's wedding is certainly to be a day of introspection and prayer. Recently, however, many have extended this idea to mean that the physical place of the *chupah* (wedding canopy) itself is particularly efficacious for offering prayer. It has become quite common for *chasanim* and *kalahs* to march to their *chupah* armed with lists of names of individuals on whose behalf they have been asked to pray (for *shiduchim* or to recover from illness). This too, appears to be a new practice and one which needs to be approached very carefully. Equally new is the practice of single girls to congregate under a *chupah* after a *chasuna* to pray for a *shiduch* (mate) and the practice of single men and women lining up to receive blessings from the *chasan* and *kalah*.

Throughout our history, our leaders were very careful not to give religious significance to things that did not deserve that level of importance. Indeed, our Sages have explained that the reason *Moshe Rabbenu's* place of burial is unknown to us until this very day (Devarim 34:6) is specifically to

<sup>347</sup> עיין למשל ספר טעמי המנהגים דף תיו סימן תתקנ"א וכן בספר מנהג ישראל תורה ח"ד דף קנ"ד ובפירוש יונתן פרשת כי תצא כ"ד: ו: ס.

<sup>348</sup> עי"ו מש"כ בזה במנהגי ישראל ח"ח דף עא הערה יא.

prevent his grave from becoming a place of idolatry.<sup>349</sup> Similarly, we are told that Yaakov Avinu instructed his children not to allow his body to be buried in Egypt for the very same reason.<sup>350</sup> In the same way, the copper snake which *Hashem* had commanded Moshe to make (*Bamidbar* 21:8) to save those who had been dying in the desert was eventually destroyed by King Chizkiyahu (*Malachim* 2:18:4) when it became an object of idolatry.<sup>351</sup>

A similar attitude must be taken with regard to objects of *mitzvah*. These items are certainly important and are to be treated with respect but they must be related to properly as well. The (*chupah*) canopy is one method of satisfying the requirement for "*chupah*". It, like the *badekin*, *yichud*, etc., is symbolic of the home into which the *chasan* brings the *kalah*. No other special spiritual significance need be ascribed to this structure, *chazal* were very clear as to its role. If a *chasan* or *kalah* feels strongly about praying for others on this special day, this is certainly proper but perhaps best done before or after the *chupah*.

<sup>349</sup> עיין חזקוני שם וכן במסכת סוטה י"ג ע"א.

<sup>350</sup> בראשית רבה צו:ה.

<sup>351</sup> רד"ק שם.

### Singing Eishes Chayil:

While the series of verses in the book of *Mishlei* (31:10-31) which praise the *Eishes Chayil* or Woman of Valor, overtly seem to refer to a righteous woman, Rashi<sup>352</sup> explains that they in fact allegorically refer to the Torah. Similarly, Ralbag, Malbim<sup>353</sup> and Metzudos Dovid suggest the verses refer to the need for the use of the mind or *sechel* in order to achieve spiritual perfection or *shlaimus*. Because of this and the prohibition against singing verses from Tanach (discussed earlier), the propriety of a *chasan* singing *Eishes Chayil* to his *kalah* appears to be highly questionable. It goes without saying, however, that to do so while kneeling or otherwise emulating gentile practices, would be absolutely forbidden.

### Maypole Dances:

Although it is hard to believe, in some circles it is common for the *kalah* and her friends to dance around a parasol decorated with ribbons. It should be noted that this is merely a variation on the maypole dance which is of pagan origin and has no place at a *chasuna* or anywhere else within Judaism.



<sup>352</sup>וכן בפירוש עץ יוסף אשר בסידור אוצר התפילות ע"ש באריכות.

<sup>353</sup>בדרך המושכל שם.