

Good Shabbos Everyone. The Torah obligates a Jewish woman who was ever married to cover her hair when she is in public or amongst a large number of people. (Mishnah Berurah, 74:11, cited by Modesty - An Adornment for Life, Rabbi Pesach Falk, p.228) This obligation is derived from the verse in this week's parsha, Parshas Nasso, as it states, "*The Kohen shall uncover the hair of the sotah.*" (Ibid., citing Bamidbar 5:18)

A woman's head covering is the source of great holiness for the woman and all those who are around her. As the Sages tell us, "The head is king over all the limbs." (Ibid., citing Shabbos 61a) Thus, metaphorically speaking, a kosher head covering cause holiness to permeate her entire being. Let us now tell an inspirational story on the topic of head coverings.

Josh and Ruthie are ba'ale teshuvah who were married a few years ago. While they were considering the shidduch (the match), Josh and Ruthie discussed a wide range of practical matters, such as where they would live, how they would run their home and what they would expect from each other. And of course, they spent many hours discussing religious views.

They disagreed on one issue, however, and it eventually became a point of contention between them. Josh had always expected that his future wife would cover her hair, as is required according to Jewish law. Just as he always wore a yarmulke, he practically took it for granted that his wife would wear a wig or a headscarf after marriage.

Ruthie, on the other hand, was not at all comfortable with the idea of covering her hair after marriage. Every new mitzvah she accepted, as she was becoming religious, was a major struggle for her. Even if she had come to terms with almost all of the halachos (Jewish law) of an Orthodox lifestyle, the mitzvah of covering her hair was something which Ruthie just could not accept. Ruthie felt that to cover her hair would be too confining and restrictive. In addition, she felt it would compromise her appearance too much. Finally, she felt that covering her hair would be "making a statement" that she was more stringent than she really saw herself to be. So when Josh brought up the subject for the first time just before they got engaged, she made it clear to him that it was one mitzvah she was not ready to accept upon herself.

Josh was not fazed by Ruthie's resistance. He hoped in his mind that she would probably change her mind as the wedding approached. To his dismay and disappointment, however, she did not budge. Josh was deeply committed to marrying Ruthie, in spite of her refusal to accept upon herself the mitzvah of covering her hair.

When the *Sheva Brachos* week was over, they each went back to work. The evening following that first day back at work, Ruthie greeted Josh with the surprising news that she had decided to cover her hair! Josh was so thrilled that he wanted to laugh and cry at the same time. He was speechless.

Ruthie then told him what had happened to her on the way to work, earlier that morning. In the elevator on her way up to her job, Ruthie met Sabrina, a non-Jewish co-worker. Sabrina candidly said to Ruthie, "I see you are not wearing anything on your head. I thought all Orthodox married women cover their heads - am I mistaken about this?"

Ruthie was put on the spot. She responded, "Uh, well, most Orthodox married women do wear some head covering, but not all. Anyway, I don't plan on doing it myself."

"Really? I always thought it was required and not optional..." Said Sabrina. Ruthie took a deep breath and said: "Look, Sabrina, let me explain something to you. The reason Orthodox married women wear something over their hair is because a woman's hair could be attractive to men. Once a woman is married, it is considered immodest for a woman to have her hair uncovered in front of any man other than her husband." Ruthie reached up and ran her fingers through her hair to demonstrate her point. Then she continued. "Now I ask you, Sabrina, look at my hair. It's so oily, drab, and unmanageable. What man could possibly find my hair appealing? So, you see, since my hair looks like this, it really isn't necessary for me to cover it."

At the 17th floor, the elevator doors opened and in walked a young man in a finely tailored, pinstriped suit. The man was unfamiliar to both Sabrina and Ruthie. As soon as he entered, the young man began to stare at Ruthie.

Ruthie pretended that she did not notice that the man in the pinstriped suit was staring at her. She deliberately looked in the other direction. Nevertheless, she kept checking with her peripheral vision to see if he was still staring at her... and he was. At the 20th floor, the man in the pinstriped suit was the only other person in the elevator besides Ruthie and Sabrina. At that point he furrowed his brow and began to apologize. "Please excuse me for staring at you," he began, looking straight at Ruthie. "I really didn't intend to make you feel uncomfortable. But it's just that you have the most beautiful hair I've ever seen." With those words, the man picked up his briefcase and got off the elevator at the 21st floor.

Neither Ruthie nor Sabrina had ever seen that man before. Ruthie was speechless. Her face turned red and she felt her mouth go dry. She avoided eye contact with Sabrina and barely managed to mumble. All day long, Ruthie kept replaying the elevator episode over in her mind. How could the man have possibly known what she had said to Sabrina just before he entered the elevator? As the day progressed, Ruthie realized that the comment made to her by the man in the elevator could not be dismissed as merely a coincidence. It was a message from Heaven. How else could she explain the uncanny timing of the comment? Thus, she accepted upon herself the mitzvah of covering her hair. (Adapted from "Zorei'a Tzedakos," by Dr. Meir Wikler, p. 181)

Every Jew is a member of the Royal Jewish Nation. Just as Jewish men crown themselves with a yarmulke, so too do Jewish woman crown themselves with a head covering. Let us all be encouraged and let us encourage those around us to cover their heads properly, thereby demonstrating membership in the Royal Jewish Nation. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**