

By the Grace of G-d
In the Days of Chanukah, 5721
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Miss
London, England.

Blessing and Greeting:

I have received your letter of November 20th. I was pleased to read in it that you are determined to live up to the Jewish way of life, and, when you get married, to set up a truly Jewish home on the foundations of the Torah and Mitzvos. Our Sages have assured us that when a person makes a little effort to sanctify himself, he receives a great deal of assistance from on High to carry out his determination, and in an easier and greater measure than anticipated.

With reference to the question of a Shaytel about which you write that you object to it on the grounds that it is old-fashioned, etc., let me say that the true approach to matters of the Torah and Mitzvos is not from the point of view of whether they are considered old-fashioned or new-fashioned. We observe the Torah and Mitzvos because they are directives from the Creator of the world and of man. It is self-understood that the Creator knows what is best for man and that He desires that man should be happy and not only in the world to come, but also in this life. This is the reason why the Torah is called Toras Chaim, meaning that it is a guide to the good life on this earth.

Specifically on the question of a Shaytel let me quote here the words of the holy Zohar (Part 111, Page 126a) which are quoted in the Mishnah Brura, and I will quote only the positive results mentioned there, omitting the negative aspects following from the non-fulfilment: "Her children will be superior... her husband will be blessed with spiritual and material blessings, with wealth, children and children's children."

Considering the great reward which is promised to the woman and mother who wears a Shaytel, it should surely be worthwhile to do so even if the wearing of a Shaytel would entail serious difficulties and conflicts. How much more so where the objection to it, as you write,

... is old fashioned". This is not a real objection, nor a valid one, and it is rather based on the "opinion" of others. Let me also add that even considering the general attitude towards this and other Mitzvos, there has been a radical change in recent years; one of respect and admiration for people who are consistent and live up to their convictions and ideals, and are not influenced by the mob. There may always be some individual who might make a joke about a person's convictions but where a person is sincerely dedicated to his faith, such a person can only call forth respect and admiration. Furthermore, if you will eventually settle in a Jewish Orthodox neighbourhood, you will find that other young women will wish to emulate your good example, and thus you will have the additional zechus of being instrumental in influencing others in the right way. The reverse is also true, for a Jew must always consider how his or her conduct affects others. This should be an additional consideration why you should overcome your superficial objection to wearing a Shaytel.

It is no less important to bear in mind that marriage is called "An everlasting edifice", meaning that it is an everlasting institution which is of vital importance not only for the husband and wife, but also for future generations. Every parent desires to ensure the happiness of children and will do everything possible to take out the utmost measure of such insurance.

Of course you might point to this one or that one who do not wear a Shaytel. However, it is surely unnecessary to point out that every person may have a particular weakness, and if one is to follow the principle "He is wise who learns from every person", he will be wise to learn from only the person's strong and positive qualities and not from his weak ones.

If you will let me know your Hebrew name and your mother's Hebrew name, also your Chosson's Hebrew name and his mother's Hebrew name, I will remember you in prayer that your marriage should take place in a happy and auspicious hour; and that you both make the necessary resolutions to set up your home on the foundations of the Torah, which is called Toras Chaim, as above, and the Mitzvos whereby Jews live, which is the only way to ensure a true and lasting happiness, materially and spiritually, which for Jews go hand in hand together.

As we are now in the auspicious days of Chanukah, which we celebrate, among other things, by kindling the Chanukah lights in growing numbers, may G-d bless you with a growing measure of light and success along the lines mentioned above.

With blessing

M. Schneerson