



Glancing vs. Gazing

2. There are two ways that a person can look at an object. Take, for example, a hand. One can either **gaze** at the hand with the intent to analyze it, e.g., to see what each finger looks like, to know the hand's dimensions, etc. Alternatively, one can merely **glance** at the hand, without concentrating on the details.

The *poskim* write that the prohibition against looking at a woman only applies when one **gazes** at her, i.e., while concentrating and analyzing her features. However, if one merely **glances** at a woman superficially, without analyzing details or focusing on what she looks like, this is permitted according to the letter of the law. (It is important to note that it is possible for one to know of the other person's details after glancing at

them many times. However, in this case, knowing the details is the result of glancing, rather than gazing.)

(*Yam Shel Shlomo, Kesubos perek 2; Pri Megadim MZ 75:1; Mishnah Berurah ibid:7; Igros Moshe OC 1:40; see Chut Shani EH p. 42*)

(See following emails for exceptions to this leniency.)

Practical Difference Between Glancing and Gazing

- Occasionally, while on a trip, one walks into a store to purchase something, and when paying, looks at the cashier and says a few words to them. If you were to ask the buyer a few minutes later, “What did the cashier look like? Was his hair black or brown?” he will not remember. The reason for that is because he did not concentrate when looking at the person to whom he was speaking; he merely **glanced** at him. (If one regularly patronizes a specific store, he will often eventually know details about the appearance of people who work there, since he has seen them on multiple occasions.)