

Q&A From the Bais HaVaad Halacha Hotline

Service Elevator

Dayan Yehoshua Grunwald

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Q Our daughter is engaged, and her *chassan* is coming this Shabbos for the meals. May she serve him his food?

A Until they marry, the *chassan* and *kallah* are *arayos* to one another just like strangers, so the halachos of *arayos* apply. The Bais Shmuel (E.H. 21:9) explains the Rama to hold that a woman that is an *ervah* to a man may not place his food directly in front of him, and vice versa. The Eretz Tzvi, cited by Otzar Haposkim (ibid.), understands the Rama differently and permits it. The *poskim* appear to side with the Bais Shmuel.

How then, you may wonder, may a housewife serve any guest? Numerous answers are offered. One, cited by the Eizer Mikodesh, is that this prohibition, like *yichud*, is inapplicable when others are present. Others say that the primary basis to permit this practice is the argument of the Aruch Hashulchan that since the housewife is obligated to serve her guests, the activity is like *avdus* and will not lead to *aveirah*. (Notably, the Aruch Hashulchan also permits it in the case of *ishto nidah* for the same reason, but common custom doesn't follow that ruling.) Another view cited by the Eizer Mikodesh is that it is in fact permitted only when the guest's wife is with him, just as the *issur yichud* doesn't apply under those circumstances. In your case, the *kallah* would not be serving her *chassan* simply because he is a guest in the home, and the *chassan* doesn't yet have a wife, so only the first view would permit her to serve him. Additionally, the Eizer Mikodesh writes that even when a *heteir* is applicable, it is probably still a *midas chassidus* to serve the food with a *shinui*, such as not placing it directly in front of him or using one's left hand. (See also Chut Shani Shabbos Vol. 3 pg. 276 and Om Ani Chomah Vol. 1 p. 109.)

