

THE BEAUTY OF MODESTY

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לימוד הדבר תורה לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שני בן רבקה לגאולה קרובה מן המיצר אל המרחב

THE POWER OF MODESTY

At one point during his chase to kill Dovid Hamelech, Shaul Hamelech entered a cave to take care of his needs, unaware that this was where Dovid and his men were hiding. To ensure that no one see him, Shaul Hamelech went deep inside the cave, and he concealed himself even more by using his cloak as a covering. Dovid Hamelech, who was allowed to kill Shaul to save his own life, was urged by his men to do so, but despite the opportunity, he felt unable to kill him and only cut off part of Shaul's cloak. He later told Shaul that his tznus had protected him from being killed. The Maharal explains that because he concealed himself, he was rewarded, by being hidden and protected.

(שמואל א' כד, ד, ברכות ס"ב ע"ב, ג, נתיבות עולם נתיב הצניעות פ"א)

The Medrash says that there is nothing Hashem loves more dearly than tznus.

When the malochim came to Avraham and asked, "Where is Sara your wife?" they were inquiring about what zechus she, a barren women of ninety years, would merit having a child. Avraham replied, "She is in her tent," implying that in the zechus of her tznus, she is worthy of Hashem's promise that 'Kings will come from you.'

(פסיקתא רבתי מו, א, כלי יקר, בראשית י"ח, ט')

The Torah says that when Bilam wanted to curse the Yidden, he noticed the entrances of their tents were not facing one another for reasons of tznus, and therefore bentched them instead. The Rebbe notes that we see from here how one should not focus only on the main points of tznus, disregarding the finer points, for even a minute aspect of tznus has the power to transform a curse to a bracha.

(במדבר כ"ד, ה', לקו"ש חי"ג ע' 83)

In the year תרי"ד, a decree was enacted in Russia, forbidding women to wear head coverings. Twenty years later, a draft was placed, requiring all men to join the army (unlike previous years, when only a specific sum of soldiers had to be provided from each city). The Rebbe Maharash recalled that the sons of those women who had kept their head covering despite the decree, were able to evade the draft, and who knows what troubles befell the women who had not withstood the trial...

(שמועות וסיפורים ח"א ע' 74, וראה סה"ש תו"ש ע' 188)

The Torah tells us that the true beauty of a Yiddishe woman is not expressed in external appearance, but rather within, in her inner qualities.

At a farbrengen (שמחת תורה תש"ל), the Rebbe said that young girls should be told what their lack in tznus implies. When uncovering a part of themselves to impress others, it is as if they are carrying a poster

announcing that they have nothing else to show for themselves: no intelligence or emotions, and even that their face is disgusting... Now, why would someone want to proclaim this publicly?! The truth is that each one has innate qualities, and once they understand this, the test of dressing tzniusdik will become easier.

(תהלים מו, יד; שיחו"ק תש"ל ח"א ע' 122)

The Rebbe Maharash was not present at the wedding of his son the Rebbe Rashab, which took place in Avrutch, the city of the kallah. After the wedding, the Rebbe Rashab and his kalla Rebbetzin Shterna Sara traveled to Lubavitch. The chosson asked his kalla to request from her father-in-law the brachos she deserves, for had he been at the wedding, he would have bentched them under the chuppa. Agreeing, Rebbetzin Shterna Sara went to the Rebbe Maharash and asked for a bracha, to which the Rebbe replied, "I agree to give you my bracha on condition that you cut off the feather from your hat." She had come to Lubavitch wearing a hat with a prominent feather on it, as was the style then. She cut it off, and the Rebbe bentched her.

(שמועות וסיפורים ח"א ע' 78)

The Frierdiker Rebbe related: The city Frankfurt, although it had previously been inhabited by maskilim (freethinkers), now was populated with very frum Yidden, whose Yiras Shomayim was legendary throughout Germany. All this came about in the zechus of three women who were firm in their resolve to wear a sheitel, observe halachos of the home and provide their children with a proper chinuch. This had an effect on the men, on other women as well, and eventually changed the entire community of Frankfurt for the better.

(תו"מ חי"ב ע' 188)

In a sicha to women, the Rebbe explained that the main aspect of tznus is "Modesty", the quiet and tzniusdik behavior at home, and from this follows the proper behavior outside.

(שיחו"ק תשכ"ח ח"ב ע' 159)

THE IMPACT ON THE CHILDREN

In the Gemara it is written about Kimchis, a women who merited having seven sons become Kohanim Gedolim. When the chachomim asked her why she merited this great zechus, she replied, "Because I was careful that even the beams of my home should never see my hair."

The Rebbe highlights how this impacted the avodah of the Kohen Gadol in the Kodesh Kodoshim on Yom Kippur for many future generations, because the position of Kohen Gadol is hereditary and stays within the family.

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לע"נ שרה רבקה בת ר' יוסף ע"ה



(יומא מ"ז ע"א, התועדויות תשמ"ב ח"ד ע' 2190)

On his way to Eretz Yisroel, the Baal Shem Tov passed through Istanbul, Turkey and saw young men who had neshamos of the Tana'im. The Baal Shem Tov said that their mothers' merited having these neshamos because of their tznius and added that in their merit, the teflois davened in that city are accepted above.

(שו"ת הגרש"א אלפנדר, סוף ח"ב)

In one letter the Rebbe wrote: Soon after my father-in-law the Frierdiker Rebbe arrived in America in the year ת"ת, he revealed that his shlichus in this land was to transform it into a place of Torah and Yiras Shomayim. There were those who asked him, "But this is, after all, America, not like the 'old home'?" The Rebbe replied, "America is no different; with regard to Torah and mitzvos, America is no exception!" Yiddishe women must know that the very same Torah and mitzvos, and the very same principle of "כל כבודה בת מלך פנימה", the entire glory of the king's daughter is within" that applied in the 'old home', applies in America as well.

(לקו"ש ח"ו ע' 364)

In a letter to a girls' school in Eretz Yisroel, the Rebbe writes: The manner in which a teacher dresses is extremely important, even in the lower grades. Especially in light of the story that occurred in the times of the Tzemach Tzedek, when a Shochet was removed from his post because he wore galoshes. Surely, there is no prohibition against wearing galoshes; however, it served as an external sign and manifestation of what was transpiring inside.

The Chasam Sofer was once visited by a Yid who had begun dressing more modernly, but he insisted that nothing has changed and he is still the same good Yid. The Chasam Sofer pointed to the clock on the wall and said, "If the hands of the clock would stop working, surely everyone would know that there is something wrong inside as well..."

(אגרות קודש ח"ט ע' 216)

The Zohar uses strong terms to describe the importance of married women completely covering the hair at all times, and promises tremendous brachos to the woman who does so and to her family as well. Based on this, the Rebbe gave many brachos including: health, parnoso, having children, nachas from children and grandchildren and finding a shidduch (when accepting to fulfill this mitzvah after marriage). The Rebbe contrasts the temporary discomfort involved in covering the hair to the everlasting brachos she will receive for generations to come, deeming it "irresponsible" to act otherwise.

In the earlier years of the Rebbe's nesius, the Rebbe held a strong campaign for women to cover their hair with a sheitel, which would properly cover the hair. Regarding this, the Rebbe said that he would "succeed with Mesiras Nefesh." On another occasion, after giving a long bracha to one of the Chassidim, the Rebbe added, "On the condition that she will wear a sheitel, otherwise it is unrelated to me." Covering the hair with a sheitel was set by the Rebbe as a condition to have him be Mesader Kiddushin at one's chuppah.

Mrs. Zelda Nemes told: "I was born in Russia, moved to Eretz Yisroel, where I married, and then traveled to America. At that point, I was wearing a hat and a half sheitel to cover my hair. At the end of my first Yechidus, the Rebbe asked my husband to leave the room and then told me that one should wear a sheitel. I stipulated that my hair is completely covered, as I wear a half sheitel, covering the back, and a hat which completely covers my hair in the front. The Rebbe said that wearing a half sheitel is like having half one's health. These words deeply concerned me, and the Rebbe smiled broadly and said, 'If one wears a sheitel, one is promised gezunt, parnossah

and nachas from the children and grandchildren.' Then with a broad smile, the Rebbe asked me what else I would like, and I said that this is enough. He then called in my husband and told him to buy me the nicest sheitel so that others would also want to wear one."

(זוהר פ' נשא, מקדש ישראל ע' לב, עלון נשי חב"ד)

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF TZNIUS

Rebbi Yochanan said: "We have learned true fear of sin from a young lady who was heard davening, 'Ribbono Shel Olam! May it be your will that no man stumble because of me.'"

Rabbeinu Yonah writes: A women must be tzniusdik and cautious, for people who look at her face are punished, and she receives punishment for every person who sinned because of her.

(סוטה כ"ב ע"א, אגרת התשובה לרבינו יונה אות נח)

When the mother of Reb Elimelech and Reb Zusia was a young girl, she worked in her father's inn, and being that most of the visitors were men, she made sure to speak in a heavy voice, to prevent herself from finding favor in their eyes.

Every week, she would travel to town to distribute money to the poor, always using the same wagon driver. Years later, he could still not identify her, for she actively made sure not to attract attention.

(סיפורים למעשה ח"א ע' תלה)

The Chasam Sofer's daughter Gittel was exceptionally good looking and therefore kept herself away from the public. She once went to the market to take care of something important, and noticed a man looking intently at her. Gittel quickly ran home, took out the Tehillim that her father would use in a time of trouble, and began saying Tehillim, sobbing strongly. When her father saw her, he asked what was wrong, and she explained that she was davening to Hashem that He take away her beauty, to enable her to live in the way of tznius. Hearing this, he replied, "Because you are willing to give up your beauty לשם שמים, you will merit having a son who will light up the world." Sometime later, Gittel fell ill and her beauty lessened considerably as a result. She later gave birth to a holy child, who became known as the Chasan Sofer.

(סיפורים למעשה ח"א ע' תלט)

The Gemara relates that Rav Ada bar Ahava was once walking in the market when he noticed a woman wearing a red cloak. Thinking that she was a Yiddishe woman who was acting untznusdik, Rav Ada immediately tore the cloak off of her. He later found out that she was a goyishe woman and was therefore obligated to pay her four hundred zuz for what he had done. The Rebbe derives from this the importance of acting immediately to protect the tznius of Yidden.

(ברכות כ ע"א, שיחוי"ק תשל"ח ח"א ע' 59)

A girl, who was not frum at the time, went by the Rebbe for dollars dressed in her usual untznusdik way. When she received a dollar, the Rebbe told her that if she would be dressed properly on her next visit, he would give her two dollars. The girl asked her parents to buy her new clothing, but they brushed her off; however, when they saw that this was affecting her health, they agreed. The following Sunday, she once again went to receive a dollar from the Rebbe, this time dressed in tzniusdik fashion. When she passed by the Rebbe, she was disappointed to be given only one dollar. She continued walking, when she was suddenly summoned back. The Rebbe said, "I was sure you would remind me about what I had said, but seeing that you had not, I had to remind you myself, and here is your extra dollar!"

(החן החסידי ע' 129)