



Purify Yourself

“You shall not contaminate your camp, which I dwell among you” (Bamidbar 5:3). The Jewish people were commanded to send all people who had become *tomei* (impure) out of the camp. The encampment would then become purified. A camp that was pure, was then ready for the next step – holiness. “Your camp shall be holy” (Devarim 23:15). Hashem can dwell in a camp that is holy.

The Shelah HaKadosh compares the purity of the camp to the purity of the individual Jew. There were three divisions in the encampment in the desert, the section of the Kohanim, the Leviim, and the other tribes. Similarly, there are three sections of the person. The mind must be purified of improper thoughts. The heart must be cleansed of bad feelings. A person must have a pure and good heart. The stomach and intestines must not eat or digest impure food. In this way, a person will be purified, and be able to accept the *Shechina* (Divine Presence).

Kinderlach . . .

Purifying ourselves is a very high madrayga (spiritual level). It can be the work of a lifetime. Let us begin when we are young, and it will be much easier. Try not to let stray thoughts come into your heads when you are learning or praying. Keep your eyes away from things that you should not see. Try not to think badly of anyone. The next step is your hearts. Have good feelings toward every Jew. We are all brothers, descended from the same father – Yaakov Avinu. Love your fellow Jews. Love yourself. Lastly, do not eat anything that is not kosher. Even among kosher foods, only eat food that will keep you strong and healthy. Overeating is bad for you both physically and spiritually. These are lofty goals, but we Jews are a lofty people. We can succeed.

The Dignified Soul

The Kohen shall have the woman stand before Hashem and let the hair of the woman’s head go loose” (Bamidbar 5:18). Rav Shmuel Hominer zt”l, in his sefer Eved HaMelech, cites this verse as the source of the prohibition for a Jewish woman (married or once married) to leave her hair uncovered. Rashi’s commentary on the Gemora (Kesuvos 72a) elaborates that the Kohen uncovered her hair at that particular point of the Sota process. Therefore, we conclude that until that time, her hair was covered. We learn from this that the Daughters of Israel do not leave their hair uncovered.

The head covering is the crowning touch of the *tsnuah* woman. It rests upon a servant of Hashem, whose entire essence is

humility and before the Creator. The principle of *tsnius* is the expression of the Godliness of the Jewish *neshama* (soul). We are most familiar with this subject in reference to clothing. However, it goes far, far deeper than that.

The Creator sent us down to this world with a holy *neshama*. Our job is to guard its purity and to sanctify His Holy Name. How? By being a representative of Hashem and His Holiness in this world. Our quiet unassuming dignity reveals our refinement of character and identifies us as members of Hashem’s chosen nation. The sefer “Oz ViHadar Livusha” details several attributes that are inherent to the *tsnuah* personality. *Tsnus* is a modest and refined way of life. It is far more than not dressing like the general public. It is a positive nobility



of character, truly refined behavior, and an appreciation for the graceful, dignified, and modest forms of dress that so beautifully compliment the personality of a Bas Yisrael.

Kimchis was a woman who merited having seven sons serve as Kohanim Gedolim within her lifetime. When asked by the Sages what she had done to deserve such children, she answered, “The beams of my house never saw the hairs of my head.” On hearing her response, the Sages said, “The flour of most people is ‘kemach,’ while the flour of Kimchis is ‘soles’” (Vayikra Rabba 20:11). “Soles” is the most refined type of wheat flour. Kimchis’ achievements in the area of *tsnius* are compared to “soles.” Whereas other people would be satisfied with abstaining from wearing forbidden clothing, Kimchis went far beyond that. To her, *tsnius* was a positive attribute involving total refinement of character and purity of conduct. It is a form of *kedusha* – a sanctification of her whole being. To her,

dignity before the Creator.

tsnius was to be practiced everywhere, even in the privacy of her home where no one was present.

Someone who sets out to improve her *tsnius* begins with external things. Outward actions arouse inner thoughts and feelings (Mesillas Yesharim, chapter seven). Wearing the appropriate garments awakens and strengthens the inherent *tsnius* in the Jewish *neshama*. She can then begin to refine her behavior. Laughing loudly in public or private is not befitting a cultured person. Similarly, shouting or talking loudly in public is also out of character for a Bas Yisrael. *Tsnus* guides our choice of words. Our everyday speech should contain only pure words. We learn this from the Gemora (Pesachim 3a), where the Torah (Parashas Noach) adds extra words in order to avoid saying a tainted word. “*Loshon nekiyah*” – purity of speech is closely related to purity of the soul, and is of paramount importance to the *tsnuah* person. The word *tsnius* means hidden and concealed. Keeping secrets and not revealing private affairs is an integral part of *tsnius*. Even a person’s own secrets should be kept to himself. How much more so should he not pry into the affairs of others. Bilaam himself noticed this when he said, “How goodly are your tents, O Yaakov” (Bamidbar 24:5). No two entrances faced each other, therefore preventing neighbors from peering into each other’s tents. *Tsnus* people go even farther, and protect the privacy of others. Rachel did not tell anyone that she gave the secret signs to Leah to save her humiliation at the wedding. *Tsnus* in dress, conduct, laughter, speech, attitude, and privacy are the hallmark of our nation. Guard them carefully and preserve your identity as a member of the chosen people.

Kinderlach . . .

“How inappropriate!” This is a fitting description of non-*tsnius* dress and behavior. Why would a pure, holy, dignified soul want to garb itself in such lowly clothing? It is not befitting of her. Why would someone who was created in Hashem’s image, and is a member of His chosen nation engage in such undignified behavior? It is far beneath him. This is our inner attitude toward ourselves, and our lofty status. This is our realization of our spiritual greatness. When we think this way, *tsnius* becomes automatic. It is a part of our essence – the true Jewish *neshama*.

Parasha Questions:

- Which grape products are forbidden to the nazir? (6:3,4)
- What were the names of the twelve princes who brought korbonos? (7:12-78)
- To whom did Moshe give the wagons that the princes brought? (7:6)