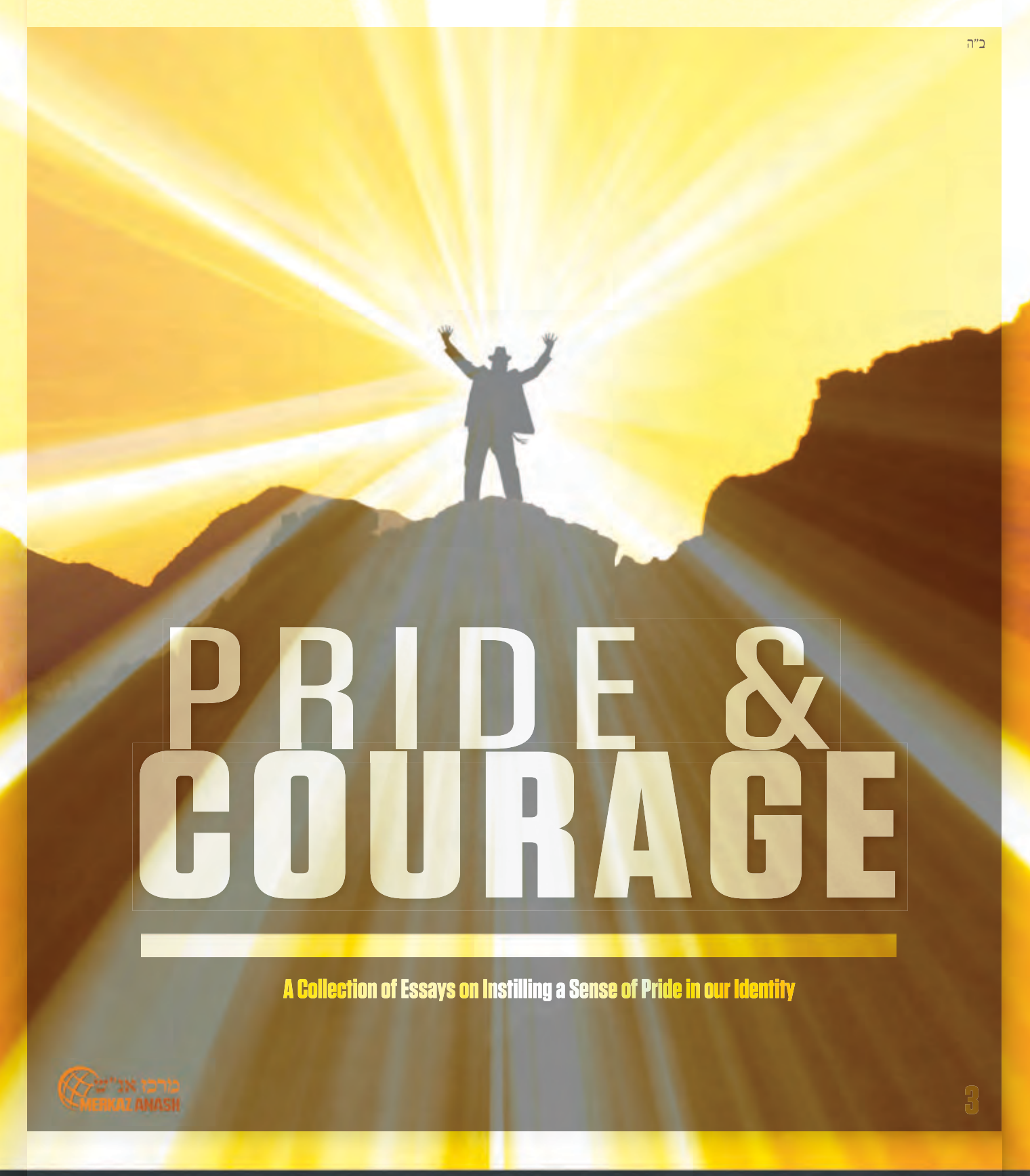




PRIDE & COURAGE

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As told by Rabbi Schneur Zalman Rabin and Rabbi Aharon Oster

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Preface

One of the greatest challenges to yiddishkeit today is, without a doubt, the lack of yiddishe pride. We no longer face the secular ideals which swept away thousands of youth; today, everyone believes that the true ideal is the torah and they yearn to follow its ways. In our times, it is primarily social pressure that impedes us from growing.

As humans, we are all strongly influenced by those around us. We want to be accepted and are hesitant to behave differently than what others expect of us. If we start a new shiur, improve our mode of dress or become more serious about davening, we can expect to be challenged: “I didn’t know you were ...” “When did you become so serious? ...”

If we have pride in what we do, this apprehension is diminished. When we recognize the value in what we do, we’re not bothered by what others think. We wouldn’t mind being wealthier than those around us, though we’d be considered slightly different and ‘out of place’. Nor would we feel left out if we would be assisting a group of challenged individuals because we aren’t the same as them.

Similarly, in areas of yiddishkeit, were we to appreciate our fortune as frum Yidden, we would not lower our standards to be like others. So all we need is to be happy with what we have merited, and spread that joy.

* * *

This issue has a unique relevance to us, chassidim of the Rebbe. As we come in contact with other Yidden, we make an effort to influence them and bring them closer to yiddishkeit. We reach out, and speak to them in a language they can understand.

However, at times, this can take on another dimension. In reaching out to others, we can become tempted to meet their expectations, to show them a yiddishkeit which they can appreciate. We may offer them yiddishe services which they find easier, instead of standing strong by what we hold.

Truthfully, not every aspect of shlichus is always popular. Many activities of a shliach are sometimes frowned upon, such as his encouragement of youth to keep kosher and Shabbos, against the will of their parents. The shliach is then seen as archaic and bothersome.

For many years, the Rebbe campaigned about subjects which were sore topics to many; *Mihu Yehudi* and *Mesiras Shtochim* made many American Yidden upset. But it didn’t matter; the shluchim represented the Rebbe’s message proudly, whether it was popular or not.

Today as well, living on shlichus or not, we must hold onto that pride. We must remember who we really are and what we stand for. While campaigning amongst other Yidden, to bring them close to yiddishkeit, we must remember where our allegiance lies. We must reach out to them, and bring them closer to us.

* * *

We thank all those who helped prepare this booklet: Rabbi Eli Simon for managing the entire project, Rabbi Mendy Browd for design and Rabbi Mendy Bronstein for his help. For help with the content we thank: Sichos in English, Rabbi Chaim Chazan and Rabbi Michoel Seligson.

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Rosh Chodesh Sivan 5771

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The following is a selection from **Lma'an Yishme'u** - a weekly publication geared to inspire *yiras shomayim* and *chassidishe middos* amongst the younger generation. The collection of stories and thoughts on a chosen subject inspires thousands of Shabbos tables worldwide, offering an excellent opportunity to educate children on many relevant topics.

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Feeling Proud

Proud to be Different

Though pride is usually a negative trait, when it concerns serving Hashem, it is praiseworthy. One should be proud of his achievements and aspire to further heights. Yehoshafat the king of the Yidden is praised for taking pride in the ways of Hashem, and Chazal say that one should thank Hashem for placing him amongst those who learn torah. This type of pride does not detract from humility, rather causes the person to rejoice in good virtues, while enjoying and caring for the honor of his peers.

This pride helps one stand strong in face of wrongdoings and evildoers. A person should act proudly even if he will be suspected of arrogance. However, in physical matters, he should concede to others, beyond the basic requirements.

Similarly, the Baal Shem Tov explained that Yidden should use their pride for torah matters and their humility for worldly matters.

(ארחות צדיקים שער הגאווה, כש"ט אות סח)

On numerous occasions, the Rebbe emphasized that the way a Yid gains respect in the eyes of others is by showing unwavering commitment to one's standards. There were some who thought that by bending their standards, they would be accepted and well liked, but the outcome was the opposite. When the others involved saw that the Yid felt inferior, they treated him as such.

The Rebbe pointed out this message from the words of the *meraglim*, "We were like

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grasshoppers in our own eyes, and so (*therefore*) we were in their eyes (of the goyim).”

(שיח"ק תשל"ח ח"ג ע' 215, לקו"ש חכ"ג ע' 479)

Living in communist Russia, the children of chassidim were distinct from their neighbors. Their clothes were refined and properly covered them, and their tzitzis showed from under their clothes, even in the summer heat. An expression of yiras shamayim and ‘eidelkiet’ could be seen on their faces, especially with their long peiyos which extended down their cheeks.

Even during play, the difference was noticeable. They would not take part in any wild activities and stood on the side with dignity. Their *derech erez* led the way. In shul, they would stand near their fathers, davening slowly from a siddur. Many were jealous that their children were different, and would wonder aloud: “How did these come to behave as such? These *kleineh yiddelach!*”

When the boys were ridiculed for their *peiyos* and *tzitzis*, they were not ashamed, nor did they respond, for they knew the vast difference between them, and they looked at others with pity and sympathy.

(דברי הימים גורקאוו ע' עה)

Exiting, after having Yechidus with the Rebbe Rashab, Reb Zalman Duchman met the Frierdiker Rebbe standing in the courtyard. Seeing him, the Frierdiker Rebbe called him and inquired what the Rebbe Rashab had told him. Reb Zalman related that he had been told to travel to Warsaw. At this point, the Frierdiker Rebbe had a long talk with Reb Zalman, encouraging him not to be influenced by his surroundings and to act just as he did when in Lubavitch. “Look at the Chinese,” said the Frierdiker Rebbe, “They walk around here the same way they do in their homeland, because they know that at home everyone dresses as they do...”

(לשמע אזון ע' 123)

Once upon entering yechidus, the chossid Reb Zalman Gurary found the Frierdiker Rebbe looking downcast. The Frierdiker Rebbe told him that he is upset because he does not see enough yiddishe pride amongst his chassidim. Reb Zalman responded, “How can that be? In all other circles, they speak highly of the pride of the Lubavitcher chassidim.” The Frierdiker Rebbe’s face lit up and he said, “Is that so?” Later Reb Zalman found out that this had greatly uplifted the Rebbe’s spirits.

(פסי השמועה)

During the communist regime, a group of American Rabbis traveled to Russia, to bring encouragement and support to Yidden living there. Arriving in Moscow, the delegates met the locals and prided themselves with their worldliness, such as their ability to play ball etc. The Russian Yidden were not impressed: “We have soccer players here as well, and for that, we do not need a group to come from America.”

Two years later, a group of Yidden from Eretz Yisroel traveled there, on a similar mission. They were dressed in the modern fashion, trying not to appear too yiddishe, and boasted of their sports and drama. The Russian Yidden were shocked, “We are here, going on *mesiras nefesh* to observe torah and mitzvos, and the yidden in *Eretz Hakodesh* are investing their efforts in worldly culture”. They parted, uninspired and rather discouraged.

In a disappointing letter to a member of the second group, the Rebbe laments the lack of Yiddishe pride amongst the general youth: “It is imperative that the youth walk the streets as noticeable Yidden, so that they are clearly recognized as very frum. When questioned how they spend their time, the obvious response should be, ‘With learning torah and keeping mitzvos, and a little work on the side to earn a parnoso.’ Their energy should be devoted towards that which is unique to the Yidden, and not such matters about which goyim are also excited about.”

(אגרות קודש ח"ט ע' קיח)

Not Ashamed

The Friediker Rebbe bemoaned: “In the past, one would be embarrassed to say that he is acting ‘worldly’ and following everyone else. Today, it has become an excuse. When questioned about a behavior, he justifies himself, ‘Everyone does it!’....”

On another occasion, he said: “Recently, people have begun feeling ashamed. From who is there to be ashamed? From some ‘clothing on a post’? This embarrassment has actually caused many to compromise their *yiddishkeit*, leaving ‘pieces’ by the barber and the tailor... We need not be ashamed of them; they should be ashamed of us.”

(סה"ש תש"ב ע' 92, 120, 126)

Once, while standing before Izgadar, the king of Persia, the Amora Huna bar Nassan, was wearing his gartel too high. Noticing this, the king reached over and personally moved it to its place and said to him, “You belong to a royal and holy nation, and you must look

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regal.” Huna bar Nassan shared this story with Ameimar, to which he replied, “With you, it was fulfilled that which is written, ‘Kings will be your servants.’”

The Rebbe explains that a Yid must feel strong with the torah and not be fazed by the nations around him, and then even kings will come to his aid.

(זבחים יט ע"א, לקו"ש חכ"ד ע' 175)

The Amora Rav Yehudah and Batti bar Tuvi were once sitting before the Persian king Shvur Malkah when a fruit was brought before them. The king grabbed an unkosher knife and cut a slice for Batti. Then, he took the knife and stabbed it in hard earth to kasher it, and cut another slice for Rav Yehudah. Surprised that the king didn't do so for him, Batti asked the king, “Am I not a Yid?!” The king responded, “With Rav Yehudah, I am sure that he will not eat from it, no matter the consequence. You will eat it, out of fear of me.”

The Rebbe explains that when a goy sees how a Yid is firm in his observance of mitzvos, he considers it an honor to personally serve the Yid with his needs.

(לקו"ש ח"י"ט ע' 31)

The Rebbe once told someone in Yechidus: “The fact that Rabbis in America do not have beards, and Yidden flee a community when goyim move nearby, and that land in Eretz Yisroel is being given away, are all rooted in the same problem: the inferiority complex the Yidden have to goyim. If only the yiddishe pride would be strong, all these issues would be resolved.

(משבחי רבי ע' 173)

In one letter, the Rebbe stressed that since Yidden are a minority and are in danger of being influenced by their surroundings, effort must always be made to retain the yiddishe character. This is done by emphasizing the positive yiddishe traits and overlooking the common ground with the goyim around us.

The Rebbe bemoans the behavior of some Rabbis, who use goyishe sources as proof of an idea, even when the idea exists in yiddishe sources. They imagine that this will impress the listeners, demonstrating that they are well versed in the secular literature and culture.

In a similar manner, at events supporting yiddishe organizations, emphasis should be placed on preserving yiddishe values, instead of bringing a goyishe personality as a speaker or honored guest.

(היכל מנחם ח"ג ע' צד)

The Rebbe said: “There are some who make every effort to hide their meticulousness of mitzvos out of fear that they will be dubbed a *‘farfrumter’* (one who is overly frum). Instead, one should do it publicly and disregard any scoffers.”

The Rebbe related: The chossid of the Alter Rebbe, Reb Mordechai Liepler, was firm in his observance of mitzvos, thanks to his pride. When his yetzer hora would try to incite him to do something wrong, he would stand up tall and shout, “I?! The chossid of the Alter Rebbe, the wealthy *lamdon* and *maskil* (learns chassidus in-depth) should perform an *aveira*?! That is not befitting for me!”

The Rebbe added that every Yid can have this pride. When a Yid thinks of his great ancestors, that he stood at Har Sinai and was given the torah, and that the entire world was created for him – he will feel that it is unbefitting for him to lower himself even a bit.

(תו"מ ח"ה ע' 231, ח"י ע' 58)

On one occasion, the Rebbe expressed surprise how a Yid could possibly feel inferior to goyishe lifestyle and culture: “You are from a nation that Hashem chose from all other nations, and are ashamed of them?! While their ancestors were cannibals, the Yidden had received the torah and were following its moral ways, and only later did the goyim begin following its way! Why should the Yid be ashamed to lead the rest of the world by the light of the torah?”

(שיח"ק תשל"ח ח"ג ע' 170)

Ignoring Scoffers

Yehudah ben Teima said: “Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and strong as a lion, to carry out the will of your Father in heaven.” ‘Bold as a leopard’ means not to be embarrassed by people who mock his service of Hashem. Yet, he should not respond to them with brazen words, so that he does acquire a brazen nature.

(אבות ה,ב, שווע"ר מהדו"ק ס"א ס"ג)

The Rebbe pointed out that the beginning of the entire *Shulchan Aruch* is, “*Al yeivosh mipnei hamal'igim,*” do not be embarrassed of scoffers, for this is the base for observing all of *Shulchan Aruch*. Being that it is recorded in *Shulchan Aruch*, it has the status of an obligatory *halacha*.

(אג"ק ח"ו ע' שמ ועוד, לקו"ש חכ"א ע' 287)

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The Frierdiker Rebbe writes: In the end of *galus*, before Moshiach comes, there are many who disturb and ridicule those who fear Hashem. This is very challenging, particularly when the scoffers are people whose only interest is to indulge in worldly pleasures, and they mock great chachomim. However, Hashem gives the power to prevail over them, even more than during the times of the *Beis Hamikdash*.

(סה"ט תש"ט ע' 118)

The Rebbe said: "Due to the weakness of the *neshamos* in our generation, Hashem has given us only one small test – to withstand ridicule. People today are afraid of being laughed at. Actually, what do you care if a fool will laugh at you? It should only confirm that whatever you've been doing is right, for they don't laugh at fools..."

On the other hand, the Rebbe noted that since it can be quite a challenge, it is prefaced at the very beginning of the entire *Shulchan Aruch*.

(שיח"ק תש"ל ח"א ע' 295, התוועדויות תשמ"ח ח"א ע' 246)

In the year תש"ב, one of the young chassidim served as a Rov in a small community. At his post, he strived to improve the yiddishkeit there, but he was met with resistance. Some of the Yidden there did not appreciate his efforts and constantly ridiculed him. This had a strong effect on the young chossid, and he even considered leaving his position.

When the Frierdiker Rebbe got word of this, he sent him a letter of encouragement in which he wrote: "I am surprised that you are being affected by the opinions of the people. You must bear in mind that 'there will always be poor amongst us', people who are 'poor' in torah and good *middos* and will brazenly try to disturb good things. You must not be affected by their words, just as one riding in a fancy carriage would ignore shouts of crazies. Take it as a sign that you are doing good work, and the truth will prevail." ■

(אג"ק רי"צ ח"ו ע' צה)

A Yid should not be ashamed to lead the rest of the world
by the light of the Torah.

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לע"נ הנערה התמימה והצנועה חנה ע"ה

בת יבלח"ט הרב יוסף שליט"א קאלאדני

Unwavering Pride

Excerpts from 'The Jewish Adolescent' by Rabbi Uriel Tzimmer OBM

Rabbi Uriel Tzimmer was a man of incredible talent who accomplished a lot during his short life. Rabbi Tzimmer had a PHD in languages and political science, and served as a translator for the U.N. He worked as a secretary for the Rebbe, translated parts of the Tanya and edited many of the Rebbe's talks, until his untimely passing in 5722 (1962).

From the introduction to the book by his wife:

"Introducing this final work of my late husband of blessed memory, is for me a painful task. He was in the midst of writing it when he was taken from us. Pride in his superhuman efforts and courage to bring this last Torah message to Jewish girls helps assuage our heartache.

"His sharp observation of the problems and dangers that face young girls in our modern culture spurred him on. The Lubavitcher Rebbe Shlita (Rabbi M. M. Schneerson) encouraged him greatly in this undertaking. My husband's physical strength was almost entirely gone by then – but thanks to this encouragement, he put every ounce of effort and work into this book.

"The cornerstone, the basic principle of my husband's whole life and its every individual facet was Truth – to see the truth in its entirety – without deceiving oneself or anyone else.

"This book appeals to womanly youth to recognize the whole truth, to see and understand its inherent beauty, and to do so with pride and courage."

ARGUMENTS AND EXCUSES

W

hile we tried, in the foregoing chapters, to give a faithful presentation of the view of the Torah, we are by no means unaware of present-day realities, and of the fact that they are very remote from the letter and spirit of the Torah, even among those who'd otherwise consider themselves strictly observant. This gap between theory and practice which - we have no illusions about it - will certainly have been realized by many readers, will most probably have evoked lots of arguments and excuses, varying with the individual character and position, but with one common trait: to justify the non-adherence, partial or total, to the requirements of the Torah.

Basically, the answer to all arguments or excuses is already contained in the foregoing chapters. The true answer - and remedy - lies in one word, "truth". As we have pointed out in the introduction to the chapter on "tznius", the main principle underlying all practical details is a twofold one: "tznius" for its own sake, i.e. awareness 'of G-d's Ever presence, evoking humility, and refraining from provoking the opposite gender.

WHAT IS EXTREMISM?

To many, the details mentioned in these chapters might have appeared "extreme". This deserves an explanation. The term "extreme" In general is a relative and not an absolute one.

The "Far East" is only far as seen from the West. It is very near to those who live there. Eretz Israel in our thought is always associated with the East, the "Mizrach", and the famous medieval poet Rabbi Yehuda Halevy coined his unforgettable verse: "My heart is in the East, but I am in the edge of the West" - because he lived in Spain and North Africa. Yet, in the language of the Babylonian Talmud, Eretz Yisroel is usually referred to as "Maarovo" - the West - because Babel is to the East of Eretz Yisroel.

By the same token, "extreme" is a very relative term, determined only by the standpoint of the person using it. To some, a person not picking up the phone on Shabbos is an "extremist". A certain Rabbi in the South several years ago published an article in an Atlanta Jewish paper in which he labeled "fanatics" and "extremists" all those Jews who still cling to the belief of a rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash and reinstitution of sacrifices. To others again, a

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woman covering her hair after her marriage, or even a woman observing the laws of family purity is an “extremist”.

However, as soon as one accepts as his criterion *not* one’s personal habits in comparison with which he tests and measures everything else, but the law - letter and spirit - of the Torah, the idea of “extremism” will become entirely different. How true is the comment of one of the greatest Polish leaders of Chassidism on the complaint of King David (Ps. 119: 51) “זדים הליצוני עד מאד מתורתך לא נסיתי” (“The wicked have held me very much in derision, yet I have not deviated from Thy law”), which he interpreted in the following manner: The wicked - King David complains, mock at me, claiming that I am “very much”, i.e., very extreme, etc. Yet, King David complains, this is not true, only “I have not deviated from Thy law”, I have not done more than required by the Law of the Torah. The law-obedient, the one who observes no more than the law requires, no more than necessary in order not to *transgress* - is already considered an “extremist”. From antiquity to our own day, the thundering reproach of Prophet Isaiah re-echoes: “ותהי האמת נעדרת וסר מרע משתולל” – “And the truth is lacking, and he that departs from evil is called insane” (59:15 - see Rashi a.l.)

“EVERYBODY DOES IT”

Why? What is the true source of this distorted view? Are people, are Jewish girls and women really so demoralized that they willfully dress and act in a manner bound to stir up evil desire, to provoke and incite? This is hardly believable. Why then do people fail to see and admit those simple truths? The answer to these questions leads us to the root, or at least to one of the main roots of the problem. Call it one name or another, it is “keeping up with the Jones’es”, doing the things that “everyone” does.

Needless to say that this attitude is the exact opposite of the view of the Torah, of the destination of the Jewish people and of every Jewish man and woman on earth, the pride and the reason of existence of the “klal Yisroel” as Moshe said to Hashem: “How then will it be known that I have found favor in Your eyes – I and Your people - is it not through Your going with us; *so that I and Your people are distinguished, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth?*” (Shemos 33: 16).

“I am Hashem your G-d, Who have *set you apart* from the peoples” (Vayikra 20:24). Being different from “all the peoples that are upon the face of the earth” is not just a phrase; every letter of the Torah is (as the literal meaning of the word “Torah” suggests)

... doing the things that “everyone” does. Needless to say that this attitude is the exact opposite of the view of the Torah ... and the pride and reason of existence of the “klal Yisroel”.

Even if “being like everybody” could actually be proved to be good, profitable and reasonable - it would still be wrong, since it is against the letter and spirit of the Torah

a *teaching*, a practical instruction, a commandment regulated and described in details in the Codes of Torah-law.

Thus, even if “being like everybody” could actually be proved to be good, profitable and reasonable - it would still be wrong, since it is against the letter and spirit of the Torah, which is the only everlasting, absolute truth.

Let us, however, for the sake of argument, go a little deeper into an analysis of the simple question: who is “everybody”? Is it the common girl in the subway, the professional model whose picture appears in journals or magazines, in a fashion in which no decent woman would show herself in public, and having a picture of this printed in millions of copies, or the shrewd businessman in Paris, Milano, or New York, the dictator of the fashion empire who accumulates millions of dollars by exploiting the vanity of snobbish women and the lewd instincts of men? Do these characters, the determining factors in creating “fashion”, indeed deserve priority in their dictates over the eternal Torah and its clear-cut commandments?

Looking at this whole market of fashion the Torah way, it constitutes one great abuse of the power given to man and woman by the Creator for the sublime task of procreation, to satisfy the commercial needs of some greedy businessmen. Shall Jewish girls and women really be part of this?

Again, let us not allow any beating around the bush. As repeatedly mentioned, the shamelessness of our age, deplorable as it is, has one advantage: it saves us the burden of proof. The hidden intentions are not hidden any more, and are openly admitted in every fashion journal, even in our everyday language. We have already made mention earlier of the fact that the term “attractive” is used by the average girl to describe a dress considered beautiful, or, in other words, that the beauty of a dress is determined by its “attractiveness”. Is it not worth pausing a little and reflecting on this single term alone: “attractive” - attracting whom? There can only be one truthful answer to this question. The fact that the dress will be liked or admired by other girls or women is not conveyed by the word “attractive”. Other girls or women may be stimulated by it, their envy or admiration may be evoked, but one can hardly say that women will be “attracted” by the dress. “Attractive” therefore, without self-deception, can mean only attractive to men - and this is exactly what the term means, and, what is more, the “attraction” which this one word expresses is certainly not a platonic one, but an attraction by means of which man’s animal instincts are provoked. Indeed, it is so true that words are often traitors!

“LENIENT” TORAH INTERPRETATIONS

Another argument frequently heard is the one mentioning “more lenient” opinions among Halacha authorities. What-ever the favorable achievement of the new practice of girls studying Torah, this sort of argument is certainly not one of them. Yet, it is a fact that it exists and therefore should not remain unanswered. On the other hand, this is certainly not the place to go into Halachic dispute with one or another opinion occasionally found - or believed to be found - here or there. It is rather the principle that should be clarified here. “More lenient interpretations” - to the degree that they actually do exist and actually do come from authoritative sources are here for emergency cases, not as a principle upon which to build one’s life. They are here, sometimes, in order to provide for a defense of others - not of one’s own actions. They are here - to the degree that they are - for those - of whom there are so many in our own day - who come from afar (spiritually speaking) and who sometimes must be brought closer to, true Yiddishkeit step by step - in order to secure that at least a minimum level is adhered to, for which there is at least some amount of justification.

How eloquent are the words of the Ramban in the beginning of the weekly portion of “Kedoshim” (Vayikra 19) where he explains that “Kedoshim tiyu” (be holy) which is an explicit commandment of the Torah (just as the observance of Holidays, eating Matzoh on Passover, etc.) cannot in practical terms refer to the abstention from eating impure food, or from indulging in immoral acts, because all these have already been separately forbidden by the Torah, but that it comes to rule out the type of “נבל ברשות התורה” - “base person with the permission of the Torah”. But for that commandment, the Ramban explains, one could be a glutton, eating only kosher meat, a drunkard, drinking only kosher wine, talk lewd and obscene language for which also no explicit prohibition is mention in the Torah. It is only the commandment of “be holy” that rules all that out.

Thus, not being a “lewd person with the permission of the Torah” is not only a purely moral question, but an explicit commandment of the Torah. It involves the *active duty* (not only the abstract “moral obligation”) to apply prudence and restraint also in those matters which are permitted as such by the Law of the Torah. *This* restrictive regulation, therefore, is part of the Torah *itself*, it constitutes a commandment by its own merit, and *is not* only a matter of “extra” precaution. It rules out and is diametrically opposed to the

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attitude so often met even among otherwise observant Jews under which “everything that is not explicitly forbidden may - or even should - be done”.

Thus, even if and when it can be proved (*which is in truth only rarely the case*) that a “more lenient attitude” in the matters of “tznius” does have a real foundation in the opinion of an authoritative source, i.e., could be classified as “permitted” according to certain opinions, the utilizing of such “leniency” and promoting it to the rank of a “rule” would still not remove the blame of being “a lewd person with the permission of the Torah”.

Torah is not a man-made law, and the ultimate, highest authority before whom each person has to answer is the Giver of the Torah, to whom all secrets are known.

Those “lenient opinions” in the Divine Law are not “loopholes” in man-made law through which an offender can escape judgment. They are here, as said, for certain purposes - and only for those purposes. Even a murderer, to bring an example not uncommon in our days - may win an acquittal from a human court, for “lack of evidence” - but there can never be “lack of evidence” before the Court of the Almighty.

A clever and shrewd businessman can manage to evade paying income-tax through a million legalistic gimmicks, with no Court able to punish him, since, by all sorts of tricks, he managed to remain this side of the law. He may, for instance, list as dependants people who are not really supported by him, but, earn their living from other, unverifiable sources. Is this person a law-abiding citizen? In terms of his Court or Police-record - yes, since these humanly operated institutions have no means at their disposal, or not enough facilities to put these means into operation for each case - to ascertain the absolute truth. Moreover, the absolute truth, in some cases may differ from falsehood only by some humanly invisible borderline. In terms of true faithfulness to one’s country, however, this man is not honest.

In the Divine law, it is absolute truth that counts. By using a “loophole” in a man-made law, one may be fooling the State authority, but by using an imaginary “loophole” in the Divine law - one cannot fool anyone but oneself.

These rules, of course, apply generally. As far as our topic is concerned, namely “tznius” in dress and behavior -these truths are all the more obvious.

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A person passing by a store of dynamite or other explosives and throwing a lit cigarette or match there will be responsible for the results, and will certainly thereby have committed an act of utmost carelessness; for even if the owner of the store complies with all safety measures as prescribed by law, yet the explosive merchandise is there, and there can always be moments where an explosion may be caused through a match or cigarette. Let us assume, the counsel for the defendant will develop a complex theory on “criminal intent” and “criminal neglect”, proving that the defendant is guilty of neither. In a human court, it may well be the case, under certain circumstances, that the judge or jury will have nothing to reject these arguments and will acquit the defendant. Yet, in terms of genuine truth, the defendant in such case will certainly be responsible for having caused the explosion, unless his act was *truly* an accident, beyond his control, such as, for instance, if a match fell out of his pocket without his noticing it, and he unknowingly stepped on it and thereby caused it to be lit, etc. The distinction between a truly accidental case and a case of neglect may sometimes be beyond human power to ascertain, but in terms of absolute truth the person is responsible for neglect, even undeliberate, all the more so in view of the rule of the Torah that “אדם מועד לעולם” (Baba Kama 3) - a human being, is always responsible for his deeds, even when asleep.

The Torah, as said, is the source and revelation of The Truth, and in its terms therefore - to come back to our topic - the girl or woman dressing or acting in a manner provoking instincts of others, is responsible for causing others to stumble even if she has nothing of that kind in mind, and even if she does so only for casualness or “ease”. Under the terms of the absolute truth of the Torah, even the reliance on “more lenient interpretations” - however valid they might otherwise be or from whatever authoritative sources they might otherwise come - is a lack of honesty, and an attempt at self-deception; a venture to hide - in the best case - one’s own comfort or folly - under the guise of “legalistic” excuses, in other words: lewdness with the (imaginary) “permission” of the Torah.

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The fact that other crimes are committed gives no one the right to be a criminal arguing: what does one criminal more or less change? Every person, of course, is in the first place responsible for his or her own actions.

WHAT CAN ONE GIRL CHANGE?

This consideration brings us to another favorite excuse or defense: if, it is argued, the main issue is to refrain from provoking the instincts of others, what is helped by one more girl observing the laws of “tznius”. In our day, every man walking in the street, riding buses and subways, going any place, is confronted with indecent sights at every step anyway. What harm then is caused, what good - on the other hand - can be achieved, by the one girl who will do the same - or, respectively, refrain from doing the same, as millions of others do. In the first place, of course, this argument is so illogical that it does not even have to be refuted. The fact that there are - in a country as large as the United States - many thousands of murderers, that, statistically speaking, a murder in certain parts of the country, is committed every few minutes does not give anyone the permission to be a murderer himself. The fact that other crimes are committed gives no one the right to be a criminal arguing: what does one criminal more or less change? Every person, of course, is in the first place responsible for his or her own actions. Moreover, as we explained in an earlier chapter, there is need for “tznius” also for its own sake, not *only* in consideration of its negative effect.

There is more to it, however. It is a well-known fact, psychologically and practically, that the attraction of one's own species is far greater than that of others. Animals are normally attracted only by members of their own species: cats by cats, dogs by dogs, etc. In the human race, man is primarily by nature attracted by members of his own race, nation, and even narrower group. In more intelligent humans in particular, the considerations of the brain will play an important role in controlling their lower instincts. In par-

ticular those men who are endeavoring to let mind rule over matter, will therefore, as a rule, have built a natural wall of defense against temptations coming from quarters completely out of their scope of interest. The average observant Jewish man, therefore, will, as a rule, have built in and around himself a protecting fence guarding *his* instincts against provocations by the sights of the thousands of non-Jewish passers-by. This wall, however, will not be as strong with regard to those women or girls who are part of his own natural environment. A manner of dressing or behavior by an observant Jewish girl, contradicting the spirit and law of “tznius” will therefore be far more dangerous

and condemnable as far as arousing evil thoughts go, than that of the thousands of non-Jewish or even non-observant passers-by.

OTHERS WHO FAIL

This brings us to another claim frequently voiced, particularly in our day: if the enforcement of the laws of “tznius” in their complete form, as described above, is truly so important, why then are there so many truly observant women or girls, such as X - the daughter of a great Rabbi, Y - the wife of a renowned scholar, Z - a girl fervently devoted to the performance of “Mitzvos” etc., who, when it comes to “tznius” are very different from the pattern set above?

The answer to this so frequently heard claim necessitates a somewhat broader explanation.

Our Sages teach us: “הוי דן את כל האדם לכף זכות” (judge every person favorably) (Avos 1: 6). It has already been remarked that what our Sages require us to do is judge the *person* favorably, but it does not say that every *deed* should be judged favorably. In other words, the judgment on the person doing the deed, and the judgment on the deed itself are two separate issues. If we see a Jew, say, eating on a fast-day, we should assume - unless there is proof to the contrary - that either his state of health does not permit him to fast or he forgot that that day was a fast day. This does not, however, mean that we must believe that eating on a fast-day is permitted or less forbidden than we had thought before.

To what degree one should go in seeking a favorable explanation for apparently unjust actions of a fellow-man, is best illustrated by the following episode related to us by our Sages (Shabbos 127b): “It once happened that one man wandered down from Upper Galilee and was hired for work by an employer in the South, for three years.

On Erev Yom Kippur, he asked his boss: “Pay me my salary, and I will go bring food to my wife and children.” The employer said he had no money, so the man requested to be paid in fruits. “I have none,” said the employer. The worker then asked for soil, but his boss said he does not have. “Give me cattle” – “I do not have”; “Give me cushions and blankets” – “I have none”.

The worker then took his belongings, put them on his back and went home in sadness. After the Yom Tov, the employer took the salary with three donkeys, one laden with food, one with drinks and the other with different types of delicacies, and went to his worker’s house. After they had eaten and drunk, he paid him his salary.

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He said to him: “When asked me for your payment, and I said I do not have money, of what did you suspect me?” – “I figured perhaps you have found some bargain merchandise and used the money up for it.”

“And when what did you think when you asked for cattle, and I said I didn’t have any?” – “I thought that you may have rented them out to others.”

“And when spoke to me about soil, and I said I don’t have, what did you infer?” – “I figured you’ve possibly leased it to others.”

“And when I denied having fruit, what did you suspect?” – “Perhaps maaser had not yet been taken.”

“And about the pillows and blankets?” – “I said to myself - perhaps he has dedicated all his belongings to the Beis Hamikdosh.”

The employer then said, “By Hashem’s name, this is in fact what had happened. I had dedicated (to the Beis Hamikdosh) all my belongings on account of Hyrkanos my son, because he had been involved with things other than the Torah. And when I came to my friends in the south, they annulled all my vows - and you, because you have judged me favorably, may Hashem judge you favorably.”

This episode, as said, shows us clearly to what degree one should go in defending and judging favorably one’s fellowman, but it also shows us another, equally important thing: As we see from the aforementioned episode, the employer was a Torah-scholar. We see that he was a man who had dedicated his entire - apparently huge - property to the Sanctuary for grief over the fact that his son did not learn Torah. Moreover, he refers to the Sages who are competent to annul a vow as “my friends”. Indeed, we know from other sources that he was a very great sage. Yet, in all the different levels of his apparently strange actions, his laborer makes every effort to find an explanation

under which these strange deeds could be understood and excused, but, in all that lengthy conversation back and forth, the man from Upper Galilee never says: “I figured that one is allowed to refuse payment of a laborer”, or (not forgetting that these questions were asked and answered one by one, so that, when he asked for his first and second type of remuneration, he did not know yet that the employer would refuse payment of *every* type) “one is allowed to refuse the payment in cash, real estate etc., or to deny the possession of this or that particular type”. *That* line of excuse or favorable judgment he did not even attempt to follow.

In other words: When seeing an otherwise observant person acting in a way which seems to be contrary to that of the Torah, the “favorable judgment” that is owed to him according to our Sages does *not* consist of the deduction or reasoning that such action is really not forbidden, but rather of the reasoning that the person might be finding himself in such circumstances and under such conditions under which no other way of action is possible, or: finding a justification for the *person* as to why he does an otherwise wrong thing, and *not* for the thing itself - and certainly not applying such justification to one’s own deeds.

Furthermore, finding a justification or defense for a fellow-human for doing an otherwise reproachable thing does not necessarily always mean, that even under the given circumstances in which the respective individual acts, he is *right* in doing what he does. There may also be an ameliorating circumstance, i.e., “he is not right, but he cannot be fully blamed”.

This is particularly true in our generation, and particularly true with regard to the topic that we are dealing with. The vast majority of today’s teenagers - particularly those who may become readers of this book - and, for that purpose, of today’s younger generation as a whole, consists of individuals who did not have the privilege of an uninterrupted line of ancestors all dwelling in relative peace and normalcy, as was the case with our grandparents or great-grandparents. The catastrophic events and conditions - physical and spiritual - which our people has suffered during the recent past, have left their marks one way or another everywhere. This and other factors which, as said, will later be discussed broadly, have resulted in a situation which, with all its sad and deeply tragic background, does not lack moments and elements of the grotesque or even funny. The essence of every joke is contradiction, and contradiction is a result of confusion. Just as we see Jews riding to synagogue on Sabbath, or even Jewish societies (including Congregations) celebrating “kosher Xmas parties” - by the same token we can find - to come back to our topic - girls who are not only Sabbath observers, but also strictly adhere to laws and customs not as essential as “tznus”, *yet* lag far behind the Torah established standards of “tznus” in their dressing and behavior.

The reasons under which these inconsistent practices were born are in very many if not the vast majority of cases not the fault of the persons directly involved. When defending those persons as individuals, the special circumstances can - and

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should - be brought forth. Yet, no circumstances, no occurrences can alter even one letter of the law of the Torah as such.

The Torah (Devarim 17: 16-17) decrees that a king should not multiply ("yarbe") horses, wives, gold and silver, and indicates the reasons for such restrictions. Shlomo, the wise king, said that, since he is aware of the reasons, he will possess these royal riches in excess, being careful at the same time not to interfere with the reasons which the Torah indicates for the restrictions.

Then the letter 'yud' of the word 'yarbe' came before Hashem and complained: "O, Master of the Universe, when part of a word is abolished, does not the entire word become void? King Shlomo wishes to eradicate my 'yud'" Then Hashem said to it: "Shlomo and a thousand of his like will perish, but not a single letter of the Torah will be abolished." (Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 2:6)

The law - and its absolute binding force upon each and every individual cannot be changed by one iota regardless of the ameliorating circumstances that should be advanced in defense of the transgressor.

Practically speaking, when you see an otherwise fine and even excellent person lag behind in one respect; or, in terms of our topic, when you see an otherwise fine and excellent girl wearing shorter sleeves, tighter clothes than necessary, loud and flashy clothing etc., - try to find a "limud zechus" for her, imitate her in those aspects of her behavior that *are* perfect, try, in a friendly, peaceful and loving manner to influence her, if possible, to correct this one imperfection, but never, never try to deduce the conclusion that "since she does it, it must be right - I do not have to be better

than she is" - because you *do* have to do your duty.

The teens are the formative years, the years when a person builds his or her life. The foundations for one's life must be as firm and as perfect as possible. Living up to the perfect standards of "tznius" - at least *endeavoring* to do so is every Jewish girl's fundamental duty.

INFLUENCING OTHERS - SACRED DUTY AND CHEAP EXCUSE

"Arvus", the responsibility of each Jew towards his fellow-Jew, is one of the most sacred principles of the Torah. It is not only a theoretical principle, but a practical

commandment, part and parcel of the commandment of “Ahavas Yisroel” which was defined by Hillel and other Sages as the essence of the entire Torah. In no generation, perhaps, as in our own, has this duty been as vital, as urgent and as - easily feasible.

It is not our intention here to go into the sometimes controversial problem of the relationship with non-observant Jews. There is no doubt, however, that while the attitude towards any ideology or movement not in full accordance with the Torah is and must be an absolutely negative - and, if necessary, even militant one - the attitude towards the individual, even the one who has been swept with the torrent of one of these movements is an entirely different problem.

BRINGING YIDDEN BACK TO YIDDISHKEIT

All the more so in this generation. The present-day non-observant Jew is very rarely the militant atheist (or, for that purpose, any “ist”) that he was a generation or even half a generation ago, particularly in the Western world. The average non-observant Jewish youngster of our day is an erring, confused and perplexed young person who has hardly seen anything better than what he now professes in his parents’ home, is ignorant of the basic meaning of Torah-Yiddishkeit, more often than not even of the fact of its existence. Of “Jewish religion” he hardly knows more than the soap-opera version - a sort of non-committant vague and dull social affair with inevitable fund raising - which he sees in his home congregation (whether Reform, Conservative or “Orthodox”). He is a very, very far cry from the “sheigetz”, “poshai yisroel” or stubborn assimilationist of yesteryear. Whether he admits it or not, his heart is instinctively longing for the type of Yiddishkeit which his parents or grandparents abandoned. He is - as a true member of this “beat generation” disgusted to the degree of nausea with all the phony phrases which he may have been fed. In his yearning for religion, since not satisfied by the “take-it easy” version usually known to him, it happens more than once that he deems to find satisfaction in the neighboring - church. Is there a more urgent and sacred duty than helping this perplexed youth find the path to the *true* faith of their ancestors? The sometimes amazing amount of success of practically all sincere efforts that have hitherto been made by sincere people or institutions constitutes an all the greater challenge.

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Moreover, it is a fact now recognized even in the political world that a very decisive, if not *the* decisive factor in influencing a group or class of people (such as, say, in underdeveloped countries) is the “Person to Person” approach. Thus, important and praiseworthy as the work done in this direction by the various Torah-true movements or institutions certainly is, the task cannot be *accomplished* only from the armchair of any office-director, however sincere and devoted. It can be accomplished only through *people*, through devoted individuals, whether in the framework of one of these institutions or independently.

It is equally obvious that a very vital part of this sacred task can and must be performed by girls and women, since the erring youth to be led back to Torah, of course, consists of both male and female youth.

That, particularly with regard to the female part of the great masses of today’s Jewish youth, the matters of “tznus” have to occupy a central position in such efforts, no less than kashrus, Sabbath etc., is equally obvious and needs no further explanation.

Neither is there any need for lengthy explanations about the fact that in the vast majority of cases, such bringing back to Torah observance must be effected step by step, and that the questions of what to begin with, how much and what for each step etc., largely depend upon the actual individual cases or types concerned. The

comparison of this type of activity to a hospital, which has repeatedly been made, is very accurate. The ultimate goal of every hospital treatment is to bring the patient back to normalcy, i.e., to being able to eat a regular diet, sleep regular hours, engage in a regular amount of activity etc. Before this goal is reached, it may be necessary to feed the patient only small, concentrated doses of vitamins, sometimes even only glucose through his veins, to give him injections of especially strong ingredients and to do with him many other things which are wrong and sometimes even highly dangerous for a healthy person. To engage in such activities, particularly those directly applied on the patient’s body, one must be a graduate and well-experienced doctor or nurse, otherwise he may do more harm than good.

It is true that in emergency situations, such as wars etc., it is advisable for every citizen to be familiar with the practices of first aid, but the essence of first aid is only to help the patient survive until he can be brought to an experienced doctor or a doctor can be summoned to him.

This example of the hospital-patient, one may think, so accurately represents the problem of this generation that its application in this respect need not be explained in all details. Briefly it means that in order to know what step-by-step or small, concentrated-doses to apply, training and experience is needed. Those who make this their aim in life have certainly chosen a very great mission (we shall come back to that in another chapter). Those who do it only occasionally, should regard their duty only as “first aid”, i.e., bringing the individual concerned in contact with an experienced worker in the field.

All this is very true. Influencing others, bringing the estranged sons and daughters of our people back to their original heritage, as said, is perhaps the most sacred mission of our generation - a mission in which our daughters can and must play a leading role.

MAINTAINING ONE'S OWN STANDARD

There is, however, another side to the story. In many phases of human life, the border not only between good and evil, but even between the highest degree of good and the lowest degree of evil is sometimes very narrow. Moreover, it is in those phases of the highest degree of good that the “yetzer hora”, the evil inclination makes a particular effort to worm his way in.

Let us continue applying the example of the doctor and the patients. One of the most fatal mistakes that a doctor or nurse could make is to apply the standard of living of the hospital-ward to himself. Living on a glucose diet, applying frequent morphine injections, consuming pills of all kinds, lying in bed round the clock, inhaling oxygen in a tent, having a rubber pipe led down through the esophagus into the stomach, walking on braces or crutches, - all this may be absolutely necessary for a patient, but it would be disastrous if done by a healthy doctor or nurse. Not only could it cause harm or even grave danger to the health and life of such doctor or nurse, as individuals but it would also disqualify and prevent them from healing others.

Applying those small-dose, step-by-step standards of Yiddishkeit to those who should influence others is none the less dangerous and foolish, not only for the person's own Yiddishkeit, but also for his or her ability to influence others.

This, of course, applies to all phases of Torah observance. It applies particularly to the field of “tznius”.

Influencing others, bringing the estranged sons and daughters of our people back to their original heritage, is THE sacred duty of our generation; but it can easily become a cheap excuse.

The argument that by giving in or making concessions with one's own standards of "tznius" for the sake of influencing others, is as foolish as the attempt of the doctor to live a patient's life.

The argument that by giving in or making concessions with one's own standards of "tznius" for the sake of influencing others to become stronger and better (and ultimately perhaps more "tznius" - conscious) girls, is as foolish as the attempt of the doctor to live a patient's life as depicted above.

It is highly reminiscent of an episode related by a famous Polish Chassidic Rebbe (Rabbi Sholom Joseph of Radzin). The episode or anecdote that he related, it is true, applied to a different field - that of Jewish communal and public life, but it holds true equally here.

In a small Polish village, the story goes, the old, retired "bat-lonim" (idlers) were sitting, in the custom of those days, behind the stove one winter day and discussing the events of the world. One of the old folks mentioned the amazing story that in far-away Vienna, then the Imperial residence of the Austro-Hungarian Kaiser, there was a church, on the wall of which the Divine Name ("shem") was engraved with all its four letters in the Holy tongue (incidentally, this is a fact). The poor Jews were shocked at the fact, and voiced various opinions as to what should be done about it. One suggestion was that a bomb should be secretly thrown over the place, whereupon a discussion arose as to whether or not this would be feasible in view of the heavy guard, and as to whether it would be permissible to cause the inscription of a Divine name to be destroyed, even though it appeared in such an unworthy place. One of the oldsters suddenly declared that he had discovered the best of all advices: What, he explained, have those "goyim" done to us - they have taken a Divine name and put it in their house of idol worship? Let us take, revenge of them once and for all, let us take a "tzeylem" (cross) and put it in our shul - we'll show them"! ...

This reasoning of compromising one's own "tznius" for the purpose of influencing others in favor of "tznius" almost resembles the reasoning of that good old fellow.

SOMEONE TO BE EMULATED

But there is more to it. Consciously or unconsciously, it reveals dishonesty. In general it may be said that any idealism that involves greater comfort than non-idealism sounds, to say the least, suspicious. In this world, an idealist usually brings sacrifices for his idealism, and does not, in most cases, materially or physically benefit from it.

Idealism, more often than not, means swimming against the current, but to claim that because one is an idealist he “has to” swim *with* the current is not very convincing.

Our Torah is a “teaching of life”, it is given by Him Who gives and creates life. Therefore, man is *able* to observe the entire Torah while alive and within life, and to be alive while observing the Torah in its entirety. One commandment does not rule out the other. In cases where it does, Torah itself has explicitly decreed how and what to do. Ahavas Yisroel - including the sacred duty of bringing back to faith the estranged brethren and sisters - is a vital part of the Torah. Its true observance can only result in better observance of all other commandments, not in the opposite. If, in its name, the neglect of even one commandment, Rabbinical enactment or even custom is demanded, this only proves that “Ahavas Yisroel” is not genuine.

In addition to all this, let us examine our specific topic more carefully on its own merit.

We have earlier explained that our present generation of estranged young Jews is very different from the type of the old-time hard-boiled “maskil”, “leftist” etc. His heart is open for Yiddishkeit because he seeks and yearns for something which he does *not* find in his present environment. The immoral atmosphere in which the present-day street lives is one of the things that the searching Jewish youngster - particularly the girl - abhors, from which she wishes to escape somewhere. If she is confronted, in the place *to which* she longs to escape, with what is basically an effort to imitate the standards of immorality *from* which she wishes to escape, (albeit with some lip-tribute applied to “lenient interpretations” of a token skeleton of “tznius”) - she will ultimately feel repulsed rather than brought closer.

Young people have an especially delicate sense to smell insincerity or weakness. Our searching girl *expects* her new environment to be different from, and not to emulate her old environment. To teach her that (for this is what it practically amounts to) the true way is to follow the latest whims of the fashion of the world with which she is disgusted, only that some consideration must be given to a minimum standard of sleeves and/or stockings (preferably also only for nine months a year, with hotels, summer resorts, beaches etc., “out of bounds” of the “standard”) will hardly impress any sincere girl. It will only prove to her that the place where she thought to find what she believed to be missing, is actually missing the things that she already has - so why bother?

Idealism, more
often than
not, means
swimming
against the
current, but
to claim that
because one is
an idealist he
“has to” swim
with the current
is not very
convincing.

Influencing others, as said, is a sacred duty. It is THE sacred duty of our generation; but it can easily become a cheap excuse.

Adhering to the truth, carefully scrutinizing one's own actions and attitudes in the light of truth and truth only - and "there is no truth but Torah" - will and can help every girl - and every person - rise above the foolishness of the cheap excuse to the standards of the Sacred Duty. ■

לזכות
חנה דבורה בת ר' שלמה
מאת ילדי' ונחדי' שיחיו

Raising Proud Children

As heard from **Rabbi Menachem Mendel Gluckowsky**
Member of Beis Din Rabbanei Chabad and Rov of Kehilas Chabad, Rechovot

A Matter of Identity

Y

iddishe pride is a very important factor in living Yiddishkeit. When educating children, particularly in our times, we must ensure that they grow up with a healthy sense of pride of who they are. This will greatly impact many situations later on in their life.

Though we may be unaware, our pride is a driving force behind many of the choices we make. When we shop for clothing, for instance, we often choose – not so much according to the item's beauty and practicality, as much as by the identity it gives us.

Some people will be selective about the car they drive or the pen they write with, for it distinguishes them as part of a certain class. It's not the pen which is important, as much as the identity it connotes.

The desire to belong to a specific trend and style will often prevail over all other motivations. A judge proudly enters the courtroom dressed in a long black gown, because of the honor it connotes, and the doctor feels satisfaction when walking the hospital corridors dressed in simple scrubs and a stethoscope hanging over the shoulder. Despite the plainness of their dress, they wear them proudly because of the identity it represents.

In a similar vein, when our children will feel proud to be Yidden, they will eagerly follow its customs. They will be completely uninterested in mimicking the behaviors of other nations, because of their pride in whom they are. They will be proud to dress in

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the traditional yiddishe fashion, regardless of what the goyim think. They will walk as Yidden, talk as Yidden and even tell yiddishe jokes, for their identity will be a yiddishe identity.

In current times, when we are exposed to many outside influences, it is the yiddishe pride which keeps a child on the right path.

Identity Crisis

In recent times, there has been somewhat of an identity crisis amongst the youth. Lacking a solid education, and having been overly exposed to worldly opinions and (non) values, they have begun accepting goyishe notions. Matters that have been simple and obvious to the average person in the past, are now considered to some as strange.

For example: Yiddishe women were always proud to remain at home and occupy themselves with the holy work of tending to the physical, emotional, and ruchniyus'dike needs of their children. With the wave of "women's freedom" in the secular world, some women in our community have become affected as well. They now aspire to have a career as a doctor, engineer or social worker, rather than stay at home and do "nothing" (!?).

Large families, which were the joy and pride of every yiddishe couple, are now viewed by some as burdensome. One or two children are "enough," as the world says.

Values such as Emunah and Bitachon, trusting in Hashem at every step in life, is to some irrational and unrealistic. They believe they must go to college at all costs, for the sake of parnassa.

There are numerous other examples of goyishe values that have infiltrated our lives, a direct result of a weak yiddishe identity. By strengthening the identity, such issues will automatically be resolved.

Yiddishe Self Esteem

The question, then, that needs to be addressed, is how to instill and nurture yiddishe pride.

In order to attain yiddishe pride, it is important for our children to identify with their yiddishkeit. A person can only be proud of something when they understand and appreciate it. When our children appreciate the meaning and uniqueness of yiddishkeit, they will surely stand proud.

The torah tells us we are Hashem's chosen nation. Every Yid was chosen to fulfill a special mission in bringing Hashem into the world. While all the other nations mill about aimlessly, without a unique purpose, the Yidden have been given Hashem's precious torah to make the world a *Dira Betachtonim*.

This is very uplifting. We, ordinary human beings, have been chosen for a mission that really makes a difference. Which child would, after realizing this, be jealous of his goyishe neighbors?

Varied Standards

On shlichus, it is the strong yiddishe identity which keeps children strong. Shluchim must instill in their children a value for yid-dishkeit, so that they will not be inclined to compare themselves to their mekuravim. Seeing that his home is very different from those of the other yidden, the child will have a clear identity and will not become confused.

In truth, wherever one lives there will always be families with various standards. Parents should explain the value of their observances, making the children proud of whom they are. In fact, it is often more difficult for those who are not on shlichus.

A yungerman once came to me complaining about his struggles with his son's chinuch. He strengthened his point by telling me that his brother is a shliach in a small town where he is the only chasidische family. His nephew must attend a local day-school, and is the only boy in his class with a short haircut, proper *peiyos* and "eidele" clothing. He is the only one who does not watch movies. Yet, the boy is not looking to compromise his lifestyle, to be similar to his peers.

The yungerman concluded, "Yet I who live in a frum community have to struggle with my son. He wants to have a longer haircut, as some other boys do, shorter *peiyos* and stylish clothing. If any other boy is allowed to do or view something, he wants to do the same."

I explained to him that while shluchim have additional *koichos*, their primary tool is the pride in what they represent. His nephew knows that he is special and has no interest in giving that up.

I explained to him how he too can accomplish this. Though he is a businessman, he can view this title only as a job description, while his true identity is a Yid. He can empower his son to feel proud of his lifestyle, even amongst his friends in *cheider*. He can learn to appreciate his advantages over his less fortunate friends.

There are numerous examples of goyishe values that have infiltrated our lives, a direct result of a weak yiddishe identity. By strengthening the identity, such issues will automatically be resolved.

This is very uplifting. We, ordinary human beings, have been chosen for a mission that really makes a difference. Which child would, after realizing this, be jealous of his goyishe neighbors?

Another advantage the shluchim have is their constant involvement in influencing others. Since the boy on shlichus is busy influencing others, it is unlikely that he will be influenced by them. We must empower our children to be *mashpi'im* on their friends, and then they won't become *mushpa'im*.

Chassidishe Values

When educating children towards a chassidishe way of life, and the higher standard that it entails, it is this same pride that holds them apart. When they understand and appreciate what chassidus is, what it means to be a chossid, and they value its richness, they will have no interest in lowering their standards.

Living at a higher standard should not lead them to arrogance. When they understand that these values were given to us by Hashem, they will be thankful for the gift and gently share it with others. We must be proud of what we have, yet accepting of those who do not.

There is also no need to justify ourselves when we meet others who have a lesser standard. There is no reason to be uncomfortable telling someone that we are careful about a certain standard. It is mistaken to believe that everyone must be the same.

Of course, this should be done with the appropriate sensitivity, considering the given situation.

Pride in the Home

There are three basic components in inculcating yiddishkeit into our children in a healthy manner: family, enjoyment and consistency.

(1) Family

In a sicha to Nshei Chabad in 5731, the Rebbe spoke of the significance of the family unit in regard to transmitting yiddishkeit. When Hashem counted the Yidden, highlighting their distinctiveness amongst all the other nations, they were counted according to their families. From this we derive that the strength of the yiddishe nation is largely dependent on the atmosphere in each home.

The logic is understandable. We face many challenges to our observance of the yiddishe path; the goyishe culture around us attempts to swallow us in. At times, it may be difficult for one individual to stand up to social pressures, to remain focused on the right values.

When the home is strong, it is less of a challenge. A yiddishe home, replete with an atmosphere of torah, will give family members the courage to withstand the challenge. Peer pressure will be far less significant.

Such an atmosphere is created by conducting warm Shabbos tables, filled with niggunim and stories. The torah which the children learn in *cheider* is in the sefarim, but the torah at home is a 'living torah'. The living experience of torah impacts their life far more than all formal learning.

The home must also be clean of foreign influences. Magazines, videos and the internet threaten to abolish everything that we teach our children. We toil long and hard to instill yiddishe values, and it gets washed away with just a few hours on the internet. It is vital for every parent to clear the home of any negativity, so that the children are capable of taking in the yiddishe values. Otherwise, we are sowing unfertile land.

Role Models

As many parents realize, our perspective is automatically transferred to our children. When we are excited, they are excited and when we are uninterested, so are they. If we want our children to be proud of their yiddishkeit, we must feel proud. If we want our children to have an enthusiasm for mitzvos, we must be excited as well.

In addition, it is important that we verbalize our excitement in our yiddishkeit. In our relationship with our children, we make a point to tell them how we love them, otherwise they will not feel it. Similarly, it is important to express in words, our feelings of anticipation of an upcoming Yom-Tov and our satisfaction in having helped another Yid. If one does not hesitate to mention how nice food or furniture is, he surely should not be shy to declare how wonderful Shabbos is, and how inspired he was from a farbrengen.

However, our emotions must be genuine and comprehensive. A big *baal tzedaka* who mutters behind closed doors over the nuisance in dealing with 'beggars', has lost the positive influence from his good work. Our children will be truly influenced when they see that it is really our life.

Many of the yiddishe immigrants kept Shabbos, yet their children did not. It is said that the reason for this was that they would constantly hear from their parents how it is "*shver tzu zein a Yid*" (difficult to be a Yid). Though they saw their parents make the effort, they read between the lines.

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A real chayus will not come by itself. In order to have an ongoing enthusiasm, it is vital for the father to have shiurim in torah, study chassidus and apply it daily life. This will bring warmth into the home and the children will pick it up as well. (see Hayom Yom 4 Cheshvan)

(2) Enjoyment

In order for a child to develop an appreciation for torah and mitzvos, it is imperative that they find it enjoyable. If they enjoy the experience, they will want to come back for more.

When Hashem gave the torah to the Yidden, he gave it to them with thunder and lightning. One of the lessons learned is that the teaching of yiddishkeit should be done with excitement and fanfare.

A Yom-Tov should be celebrated in full grandeur, befitting the specific day. On Shavuos - cheesecake and blintzes should decorate the table, on Chanukah – latkes and gatherings, and on Purim – hamantashen, costumes and shalach manos; this causes the children to really get into the spirit of Yom-Tov and enjoy it. When fulfilling a mitzvah, it should be done with added splendor, bringing yiddishkeit to the child in a pleasurable way.

Upon the completion of learning a section of torah, a siyum should be held, making the learning exciting and important. We must grab the opportunity, when they are finishing a perek or mes-ehta, to make learning a dear and precious experience.

On the first day of shivah, after my father a”h passed away, a man related to us the following story:

“It was 1957 (5717), and I was teaching with your father in the Beis Yehudah school in Detroit. Once, your father went to the Rebbe for a few days, and he asked me to substitute his class. We learned the end of Parshas Vayeitzei, and I asked one boy to read the final possuk which concluded the Parsha. The boys all spoke up, telling me that was not how their rebbi, your father, had taught them. He would hold an auction, and the highest bidder would receive the honor of reciting the final possuk.

Then, the money would be used to buy food for a *seudas mitzvah*.

I held the auction, and the possuk was won for \$1.77, which was quite a sum in those days. The following day, the winner got up before the class and with great excitement recited the final possuk, and we then held an impressive seudah. I learnt a valuable lesson about how torah should be taught to children.”

Living at a higher standard should not lead them to arrogance. When they understand that these values were given to us by Hashem, they will be thankful for the gift and gently share it with others.

This, the Chozeh of Lublin explains, is why the head of evil *malochim* is called “Samach Mem”, for he battles one who wants to make a Siyum Masechta or Seudas Mitzvah, both of which bring an infusion of yiddishkeit into their life.

Relating to Yiddishkeit

It is also important for children to understand yiddishkeit on their level. It is not enough that they be told information and know the answers. When they relate to the concept, then they can appreciate it.

Stories are an excellent tool to help them relate to a concept, making the idea real and interesting. Games can also be used to perk their interest. Children should find yiddishkeit enjoyable and pleasurable.

(3) Consistency

Another component in engraving yiddishkeit in the hearts of our children, is the consistency of it in daily living. When a child, particularly in the younger years, grows up with constant performance of mitzvos and *minhagim*, it becomes part of him. “This,” the Rebbe wrote to a preschool teacher, “Has a greater impact than the explanations given, and is relevant even to children who do not yet understand a lot” (Igros Kodesh vol. 14 page 71).

Positive Reinforcement

Another Important factor in building the yiddishe home is encouragement and positive reinforcement. When we notice our children doing something extraordinary in *yiras shomayim* and *middos tovos*, we need to compliment them for their efforts.

Recently, my son came home one day and told me that he had received a chocolate with a questionable *hechsher* and had refrained from eating it. I told him how proud I was of him, and offered him to buy a chocolate with a reliable *hechsher*.

We cannot take for granted their growth in yiddishkeit. It is not enough to send them off to school, trusting that all will be taken care of. Parents must be involved and show constant support in the growth of their child.

Furthermore, by taking an active interest in the lives of our children, we develop a strong relationship with them, which affects their connection to yiddishkeit. Naturally, a person is drawn to act like a person whom they adore. When the child respects and loves his parents, he will be drawn to imitate their lifestyle.

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Seeking Guidance

As in all issues of chinuch, one should have a *mashpia* from whom guidance may be sought. When making specific decisions, great care must be taken to balance between the desired standards and the emotions of the child. ■

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The Rebbe's Direction

Selected Messages from the Rebbe on the subject of Pride and Courage

The Final Obstacle

Acharon shel Pesach 5738

The Basis of Shulchan Aruch

T

he Shulchan Aruch begins with the instruction that we not be ashamed of scoffers. Since the Shulchan Aruch was written for Yidden of all ages and backgrounds, it is understood that this applies to everyone.

Being that this is what the Shulchan Aruch commences with, we can understand two contrary messages: that it is something easy and that it requires mesiras nefesh.

When speaking to Yidden about the observance of torah and mitzvos, one can notice that often, the only obstacle preventing him from following Shulchan Aruch is the fear of what his neighbors might say. Even if he manages to ignore his neighbors, his wife will ask him, "What happened all of a sudden?"

On the other hand, once one has succeeded in overcoming this obstacle, there is nothing holding him back from following the path of torah and mitzvos.

New Beginning

Whatever happened until now is irrelevant! From now on things must be different!

After the lengthy enslavement in Mitzrayim, the Yidden's status changed, from exiled to freed people, in one moment. We too can leave our 'Mitzrayim' in one moment.

The only condition is to be proud of who we are. Just as the Yidden left Mitzrayim proudly, happy with their yiddishe identity, we too must be proud in order to leave galus.

One must remember that the true reason why others laugh at him is because they are jealous of his strength to conduct himself as a Yid. The scoffer also wants to leave 'Mitzrayim,' but he is ashamed of what his neighbors will say, and seeing that his friend has succeeded leaving, he is jealous. He is embarrassed to admit his failure, so he makes justifications to pacify himself.

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From the above we understand how 'not being ashamed of scoffers' is the basis of Shulchan Aruch.

The Way to Pride

How does one achieve this? How can one not be influenced by what others think?

He need not be a great lamdon, he only needs to contemplate how Hashem is always with him. If one would feel that Hashem is actually right near him, it would not enter his mind to be ashamed of a mere human being. It is even enough to think about this once a day and it will have an effect on the rest of the day.

The same applies to one who observes torah and mitzvos but had a "bad day" in his service of Hashem. He should not be ashamed of his friends or neighbors who may ask, "Why the difference between yesterday and today?" He should return to his original path, knowing that he is following the way of the king of kings, Hashem himself.

-Sichos Kodesh 5739 vol. 2 page 507

Proud Yiddishe Children

Simchas Torah 5715

Obvious Yidden



We know that even in the harshest of exiles, Mitzrayim, the Yidden did not change their names, language, and dress. Nowadays, unfortunately some Yidden do not have such "strength" and look for various schemes to have their child not be recognizable as a Yid.

It is crucial, that when a yiddishe child walks in the street, he should be identified as such already from afar. Sadly, in our times, we are simply ashamed and try to hide who we are, using all possibilities imaginable.

This is also the case, when this child grows up and starts to put on tefillin when he becomes a Bar Mitzvah. As Chazal tell us, that the possuk, "The nations will fear you when they will see Hashem's name on you," – refers to the Tefillin shel Rosh. So when this Bar Mitzva yingel, who wears tefillin, walks in the street, he has such power that even the greatest nations will fall for him! But practically, what happens? They obscure

the place where tefillin are worn by letting his hair grow long, so no one should notice that he's a Yid who wears tefillin. Where is the pride?!

The parents are concerned that when their child will be walking down the street, he may need to ask directions, and he will speak English with a "yiddishe accent", and be recognizable... as a Yid! To prevent this "issue", they teach their child "English" and other secular studies, which contaminate his mind!

... Where is the "Yiddishe shtoltz"?! The Jewish pride?!

Success the Yiddishe Way

They claim, they must teach the child in English etc, for then he'll have some "gain" materially, and an easier, organized in life. – This claim has no place whatsoever, for no one knows the future, and all we do must be in accordance with Torah.

... Hashem has already given Bnei Yisroel the Torah, more than 3,000 years ago, and since then, we see that the "unprofessional" (batlan'dik) nation – which doesn't learn "grammar" etc – is indeed standing strong!

Among all the other nations, despite all their "wisdom", even a mere memory hasn't remained. While Yidden – this "unprofessional" nation, without "wisdom" and expertise in worldly matters – truly stand strong by holding onto the Torah.

So then, their claim about material benefit – has no validity, since something which isn't in accordance with the Torah – can't bring any gain, and to the contrary.

-Toras Menachem vol. 13 page 73

Pride of being a Frum Yid

Rosh Chodesh Elul 5714

Without Shame



Wearing a sheitel has a beneficial impact on children and grandchildren and on sustenance and health, as is written in the Zohar (III, p. 126a).

One should not ask: I know of a woman who does not wear a sheitel and still things go well for her regarding

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children, health, and sustenance, as well as life in general. First of all, we do not know what transpires in the life of another, what type of travails he or she is undergoing; no one tells the other about all that takes place in one’s life. Second of all, we are not to look at what is going on by others; we are to do what Hashem commands us to do.

(The Rebbe mentioned here that “we are a minority among the nations.” Should we also conclude that since there are more goyim than Yidden in this world, and things are going well for them, that we are to imitate their ways? Were we to act in such a manner, the Yiddishe nation would have ceased to exist, chas v’shalom, a long time ago.)

When a Yiddishe woman walks in the street without a sheitel, there is no (discernible) obvious difference between her and others. However, when she wears a sheitel, one can tell that here is a Yiddishe, frum woman. It is not necessary to go in the streets loudly proclaiming, “I am frum” — but whom are we embarrassed of? friends? And if others were they to say that this is a frum Yid — what is the shame of the matter?!

Does such conduct require much mesirus nefesh? If, chas v’shalom, one cannot afford food and his children are hungry, but he still does not do business on Shabbos — this requires great mesirus nefesh. And still, without a doubt, Shabbos is kept.

Relying on Hashem

When one goes, for example, to a doctor, one does not understand why he prescribes a particular medicine, but he is believed and relied upon. Or if an infant is not digesting its milk and a doctor changes the formula, will the mother say that she will wait until

she attends five years of university so that she understands the doctor’s reasoning, and only then follow his advice?

There was a university student who came to me and said that he does not put on tefillin or wear tzitzis because he does not understand why he should do so. The reason for opposing a sheitel is that one does not understand intellectually the need for it. Why not simply rely on Hashem? When one is asked to give a dollar and is promised a hundred thousand dollars in its stead, one readily does so even when one doubts that he will receive the [promised] hundred thousand dollars.

Avoiding Tests

Why place oneself in the path of temptation? Before davening, we beseech Hashem, “Do not bring us to temptation.” Who is greater than Dovid Hamelech, concerning whom the Gemara states that he completely vanquished his yetzer horah, and nevertheless he did not withstand a test.

Even the reformers do not say that a sheitel contradicts ethics, only that it is old-fashioned. What then is there to fear? Let it be said that here goes a Yiddishe daughter.

My father-in-law related that the city of Frankfurt had very religious Jews — their piety made a name for them over all of Germany. This is so, notwithstanding the fact that previously Frankfurt was filled with freethinkers. All this came about in the merit of three women who were firm in their resolve to wear a sheitel, observe family purity and provide their children with a kosher education. This had an effect on the men and other women of the community. In time, the community of Frankfurt changed for the better.

(Likutei Sichos Vol. 13 page 188)

Standing Tall

From a letter of the Rebbe, Chanukah 5721

Above Fashion

In reference to your question concerning a sheitel — where you write that you object to it, on the grounds that it is old-fashioned, etc.

Let me first say that one does not approach matters of Torah and mitzvos from the perspective of whether or not they are considered old-fashioned or new-fashioned. We observe Torah and mitzvos because they are directives from the Creator of the world and of man.

The Best Option

It is self-understood that the Creator knows what is best for man, and He desires for man to be happy — not only in the World to Come but also here and now. This is why Torah is called Toras Chayim, a Torah of Life, for it is a guide to a good and satisfying life on earth.

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One does not approach matters of Torah and mitzvos from the perspective of whether or not they are considered old-fashioned or new-fashioned. We observe Torah and mitzvos because they are directives from the Creator of the world and of man.

Specifically on the question of a sheitel, let me quote the words of the holy Zohar (III, p. 126a) which are quoted in Mishnah Berurah, and I will quote only the positive results [of wearing a sheitel] mentioned there, omitting the negative aspects [that result from not wearing a proper head covering]: “Her children will be superior ... her husband will be bentched with brachos in ruchnius and gashmius, with wealth, children and grandchildren.”

Considering the great reward that is promised to the woman and mother who wears a sheitel, it surely is worthwhile to wear it, even if doing so involves serious difficulties and conflicts. How much more so when the objection to it is — as you write — only because it is “old fashioned.” This is neither a real nor a valid objection, but merely based on the “opinion” of others.

Conviction is Admired

Let me also add that even considering the general attitude towards this and other mitzvos, there has been a radical change in recent years – of admiration and respect 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.

Influencing Others

Furthermore, if you will eventually settle in a yiddishe neighborhood, you will find that other young women will wish to emulate your good example, and thus you will have the additional merit of influencing others in the right way. The reverse is also true, for a Yid 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 sheitel.

It is no less important to bear in mind that marriage is called “an everlasting edifice,” meaning that it is an everlasting institution, one that is of vital importance not only to husband and wife, but also to future generations. Every parent desires to ensure the happiness of his or her children and will do everything possible to guarantee that this happiness comes about.

Of course, you might point to an individual who does not wear a sheitel. However, it is surely unnecessary to point out that each person may have her own particular weakness. If one is to follow the principle of “Who is wise? He who learns from every person,” one will be wise to learn only from the person’s strong and positive qualities and not from his weak ones. ■

(From a letter of the Rebbe, Chanukah 5721)

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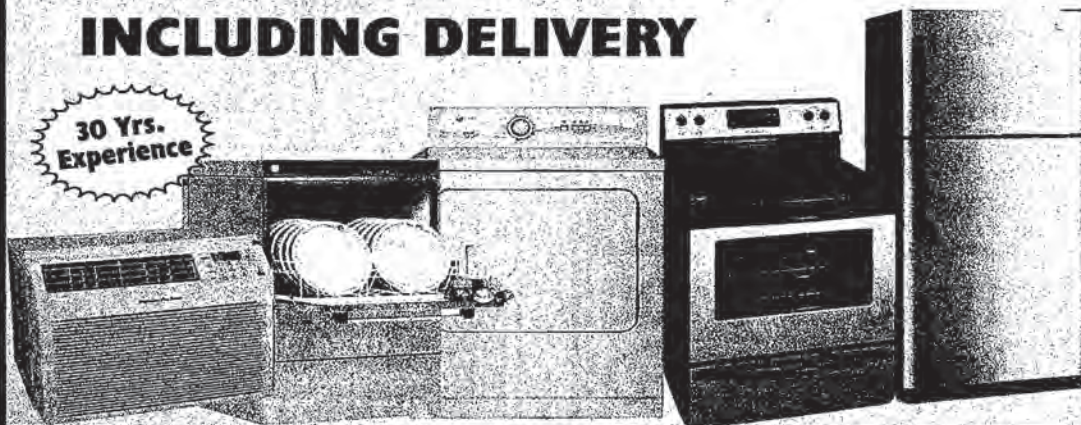
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