

Good Shabbos Everyone. In this week's parsha Nasso, the Torah speaks about the mitzvahs related to the Sota. Without getting into the gory details of the Sotah, details which are inappropriate for a family audience, we will focus on one issue regarding the Sotah; namely, the issue of Tznius - modesty.

To begin with, it is fair to say that the entire Sotah ordeal was caused by a lack of modesty. Furthermore, and ironically, the Sotah on trial is arguably shamed in public by being exposed immodestly. The Kabbalistic Zohar takes the opportunity this week to detail some of the curses that will befall one who carries herself in an immodest fashion. In that the Zohar mentions curses for immodest behavior, we can infer from it the blessings one will receive for modest behavior. Namely, one who carries herself in a modest way will merit good children, and wealth and peace in the home. The following amazing true story illustrates, if at least anecdotally, the power of dressing modestly.

"Chana'le", who lived in Poland in the early 1900's, had a lot of questions. She loved her parents very much. Her parents, who were followers of the Slonimer Rebbe adhered strictly to the Chassidic way of life. It would not be until 1917 that a religiously backed school for girls, called Bais Yaakov, would be established. Until then, during the heady years of the "Enlightenment," many an intelligent girl with a hunger for secular knowledge often sought intellectual stimulation in places not so kosher for a Jewish girl.

Chana'le was one of those girls who struggled with her Jewish identity. Her head swam with questions she wanted answered, but none of her sisters or her girlfriends felt any of the same needs. This made her feel very alone. Her parents were prominent members of the community and tried to answer her questions, but they knew, and Chana'le felt, that the answers did not satisfy her.

Notwithstanding Chana'le's questions about faith, she would never dress immodestly. Something deep inside of her Jewish soul, told her that dressing modestly was the just the right thing to do. Even though she thought the modern clothes were appeared more stylish, she took upon herself the mitzvah of tznius.

In those days, there were gatherings of people committed to the causes of the day — socialism, communism, fascism, etc. One morning, Chana'le wandered into one of these meetings. The meeting was meant for libertarians, people who sought freedom of mind and freedom of spirit. She told her parents about the meetings. Although her mother tried to discourage her from attending, the pull was too strong for her to resist. The libertarian group began to meet more and more often, and Chana'le went to all the meetings. Even though the attendees at the meetings scoffed at Chana'le's traditional form of dress, she continued to attend nevertheless. Her parents were dismayed that she went to the meetings, but they were afraid to say anything or do anything that would chase her even further away.

One day, though, Chana'le set out and did not return. The family went to look for her, but an extensive search confirmed that she was not to be found. At her wits' end, Chana'le's mother ran to the Slonimer Rebbe, Reb Shmuel Weinberg, of blessed memory.

The Rebbe was sitting with a group of people discussing some important matters, when Chana'le's mother burst into the room. She was crying out of panic and fear and blurted out: "Which of you is the Rebbe?"

Her tone and manner were completely understandable under the circumstances, and seeing her distraught state, nobody protested her bursting in on the Rebbe.

Chana'le's mother burst out again: "You must do something! My daughter is missing and her life is in danger!" The Rebbe tried to calm her down and asked to hear the whole story. He then closed his eyes, concentrated deeply, and then asked her, "Was there any one mitzvah that your daughter was particular to fulfill even though it meant for her great sacrifice?"

Chana'le's mother thought for a moment, and then her eyes lit up. "Yes! Although my Chana'le had many questions about our practices, she was very careful regarding tznius! In fact, even on the hottest days, when it was uncomfortable to be wearing modest clothing, she always persevered."

Hearing this piece of information, the Rebbe asked the panic-stricken mother if she had any of Chana'le's clothing at home.

When she answered in the affirmative, the Rebbe told her, "Take a few threads from the neckline of a sweater of hers and roll them together to form "a wick. And then take that wick and use it to kindle a light for the candles on Shabbos. I hope this will help illuminate the spark in her neshamah. Besides that, daven very earnestly for her to return."

Chana'le's mother ran back home. It was almost Shabbos, and there was much to do. She searched Chana'le's room for her favorite sweater, and did as the Rebbe had instructed her.

After lighting the wicks, she cried bitterly as she said the traditional prayer said after candle-lighting: "May it be Your will... that You show favor to me... and that You consider us with a consideration of salvation and compassion... and that You make our households complete..."

Tears streamed down her cheeks and blinded her vision, as she begged Hashem to return her daughter to her. Somewhere in a nearby village, Chana'le was sitting with a group of her new friends when she felt something inside her — it was an unusual feeling in her soul, nothing like she had ever felt before. She began thinking of how her mother must have been crying and she felt the pull to return home. By Sunday, she had returned home — without any more questions. (A Touch of Warmth, P. 78, Reb Yechiel Spero)

The verse in Tehillim (Psalms) states, "the entire honor of the daughter of the King lies inside..." (45:14) There are many interpretations on this verse. One particularly inspiring interpretation is that modesty is the true honor of Jewish girl, who is a daughter of the King, the Holy One Blessed is He. Let us all do our part to carry ourselves in a modest way and to encourage others to do the same. That way all Jewish women will reveal their true status as the daughters of the King. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**