

INVESTING IN TSNIUS - דברי חיזוק

(adapted from "Oz Vehodor Levusho" with permission from the author)

There are certain areas of *Yiddishkeit* that are such an integral part of the fabric of our society that to tamper with them would amount to undermining the very foundation of Klal Yisroel. This is especially so when it comes to *Tsnius*, the cornerstone of the *Kedusha* of *Klal Yisroel*, and the Torah tells us indeed explicitly that if anything unseemly be found in our camp, the *Shechina* will *ch'v* depart from us.

In our day and age, the society in which we live does not cater for our fashion needs, nor does it support the way of dress which Jewish women have always considered becoming. In fact, the philosophy behind today's fashion industry, to expose and accentuate as much as possible, is diametrically opposed to the Torah ideals of modesty and refinement. It comes therefore as no surprise, that dressing according to Halacha, will nowadays require a certain amount of sacrifice, be it financial, by allowing for additional expenses, or be it moral, in withstanding the pressures of society.

However, it is a known fact that some degree of *Mesirus Nefesh* is demanded of every generation. Previous generations, and especially the one before our own, went through much harder *nisyonos* and yet passed with flying colours. If so, are we, the Jewish women of the '90's, not prepared to meet this test "head on"?

As far as financial hardship is concerned; Chazal tell us that the Ribono shel Olam "refunds" any costs a person incurs for Shabbos or Yom Tov or for the Torah education of his children. The Ritvo adds that this principle extends to all other Mitzva expenses. This means that the Ribono shel Olam will refund us the extra expenses we incur in order to dress *tsniusdik*, i.e. extensive alterations or the replacement of garments which at second glance do not live up to the required standards.

It should be noted that in the merit of *Mesirus Nefesh* for *Tsnius* the community at large is blessed with sustenance and *parnoso*:

It is related in the Gemara (Brachos 20a) that when Rav Yehudah would remove just one shoe (in order to prepare to daven for rain), it would start raining right away, whilst the other Chachomim would pray at length for rain with no response. The Gemara explains this by saying that: "The earlier ones were *moser nefesh* for the sanctification of Hashem's name". The Gemara then brings as an example how Rav Ada bar Ahava took the courageous step of ripping an outrageous cloak off a woman, an action which could have resulted in serious consequences from the woman's husband and family, in order to prevent the scourge of *pritzus* from spreading amongst the Jewish people. As a result of such actions they merited to have their tefillos for sustenance answered.

From this quotation we can clearly see that rain, one of the most elementary substances needed for the preservation of human life, is guaranteed when people are *moser nefesh* for *Tsnius*. Accordingly, women who are prepared to go "the extra mile" to ensure that their clothes meet the standards of Chazal and our contemporary Gedolei Hador, undeterred by the extra bother and expense, will be instrumental in providing Klal Yisroel with ample food and *parnoso*. And this is of course not to mention the manifold spiritual benefits women will reap by infusing their homes with a spirit of *Kedusha* and *Tahara*, as Chazal tell us that in the merit of dressing and behaving in a modest way, women are *zoiche* that their husbands and children will be successful in their learning.