

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS
BAMIDBAR

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS

בְּשִׁיטְחָא

THE DIAMOND WITHIN

The first *Passuk*¹ of this week's *Parshah* states that Hashem spoke to Moshe in the *Ohel Moed*. The *Medrash*² observes that Hashem had spoken to Moshe in many places - in Egypt, on *Har Sinai*, etc. However, once the *Mishkan* was built, Hashem said, "Tznius, modesty, is laudable," and from then on, Hashem essentially only spoke to Moshe *Rabbeinu* in the *Ohel Moed*.

This *Medrash* seems hard to explain. How does *Tznius* fit into this? Isn't the *Middah* of *Tznius* the idea of covering up something that may be inappropriate? By contrast, one would expect that the conversations between Hashem and Moshe, which were obviously very holy and filled with Torah, to be broadcast throughout the entire desert. Why cover them up in the *Ohel Moed*, and how can you call that *Tznius*?

Reb Henschel Leibowitz, in his *Chidushei HaLev*³, explains how this *Chazal* informs us of an important aspect of the human psyche, and by extension, an expanded understanding of *Tznius*. We think that *Tznius* is the idea of concealing something improper. Though *Tznius* can be applied to those situations, the truth is that *Tznius* is much greater. *Tznius* is a way of life - unassuming, and unpretentious. Thus, if someone is sensitive to *Tznius*, the more precious something is, the more likely they are to keep it concealed. The interactions between Hashem and Moshe were special and holy and for that reason, they were not flaunted or ostentatious. They were kept private, meeting only in the *Ohel Moed*.

We sometimes think that the way to attain esteem, status or honor is to wear something, own something or do something that can grab someone else's attention. However, this *Chazal* highlights that doing so is actually cheapening ourselves. By recognizing that esteem, status and honor comes only from within ourselves - we are each dignified and important individuals, children of Hashem, part of a holy nation, coming from illustrious people - it is only natural that we treat ourselves the same way and strive to live within the parameters of *Tznius*.

1 *Bamidbar* 1:1

2 *Bamidbar Rabbah* 1:3

3 *Chidushei HaLev Bamidbar* 1:1

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Sensitivity to *Tznius* sounds like a very subtle *Middah*. How does one engender these feelings - and perhaps more importantly, why bother? What value is there in this feeling?

Both of these questions can be addressed with the same perspective. When we focus on showing off, being ostentatious, and 'playing to the crowd' we lose something very precious. We lose our relationship to ourselves, our relationship to others, and our relationship to Hashem.

By keeping precious things private, we preserve the purity of those relationships, those actions, and those items.

Imagine if one were to videotape their *Tefillah*, one in which they were crying and asking Hashem for help. If they were to take that video and put it on display in a museum, it would take that special relationship that was developed with Hashem, and turn it into a cheap curiosity, devaluing it into entertainment for the masses.

By recognizing how we impact ourselves by being flashy, we will think twice before we decide to display our lives before all.

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BETWEEN ME AND HASHEM

The Zuckermans* had suffered through the horrors of the Holocaust, and after meeting in a Displaced Persons camps in Europe, made their way to the United States to rebuild their life. They worked very hard, made a living, and were blessed with children and grandchildren. They were not wealthy by any measure, but made enough to raise a family.

By carefully putting away some money, their daughter, Esther, was finally able to purchase special gifts, one for her mother, and one for her father, Ben. After some consideration, Esther settled on the perfect gift for her father - a silver *esrog* box. Ben had a particular affinity towards *esrogim*, even going so far as to try to grow an *esrog* tree in the New York climate! This box would bring beauty to the *Mitzvah*, and enhance Ben's experience.

Thus, on the first day of Succos, Ben proudly carried his silver *esrog* box to *shul* - wrapped in a plastic bag! On the way to *shul* he met Mr. Cohen, a neighbor from a few houses down. "What do you have in the bag, Ben?" asked Mr. Cohen.

"My daughter bought this silver *esrog* box for me," responded Mr. Zuckerman, pulling aside the plastic bag for Mr. Cohen to peek inside.

"It's beautiful! What a nice present!" Mr. Cohen then furrowed his brow. "Why are you keeping it wrapped up in the plastic? I thought you were hiding something in there, why not carry the box as it is?"

Mr. Zuckerman shook his head. "Yes, it is beautiful, and that's exactly the point. It would be ostentatious for me to bring it out to show everyone in the street. Better I should wait until I get to *shul*, and I'll put it down by my table," he said in his Hungarian accent. "I don't need that everyone should look at me and say, 'Oh, Mr. Zuckerman has a nice *esrog* box!'"

"But there's something special about beautifying *Mitzvos*!" protested Mr. Cohen. "Let people see how much you care about the *Mitzvah*!"

Ben Zuckerman was adamant. "No, it's not my way. I don't need people staring. Making *Mitzvos* beautiful is one thing, showing off is another."

**Based on a true story known to the author.*

Making *Mitzvos* beautiful is one thing, showing off is another.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Though Dovid *HaMelech* had the opportunity to kill Shaul, he refrained from doing so when he realized Shaul's sensitivity to *Tznius*.¹
- A child's sensitivity to *Tznius* is heavily influenced by the home. Even subtle actions can have a big impact.²
- The first set of *Luchos*, which were given with great fanfare, were destroyed. But the second set, which were given with *Tznius*, last forever.³

¹ *Bamidbar Rabbah* 4:20

² *Rashi Bereishis* 34:1 s.v. בת, *Bereishis Rabbah* 80:1, *Maharzu ibid.* s.v. מקשטת

³ *Medrash Tanchuma, Ki Sisa* 31