

הַגִּיד לְךָ אָדָם, מֵה-טוֹב; וּמֵה-יְהוָה דּוֹרֵשׁ מִמֶּךָ, כִּי אִם-עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט וְאַהֲבַת
חֶסֶד, וְהִצַּנֵּעַ לְכַת, עִם-אֱלֹהֶיךָ

“He has told you, O man, what is good! What does Hashem require of you but to do justice, to love kindness and walk humbly with your God?”

A discussion on Modesty based on Micah 6:8

A Related Story:

Modesty is an attitude and a way of conduct. While it includes appropriate dress, it reaches well beyond. The book of Rut contains important lessons on the significance of modesty and also in its moderation:

In Rut 2:5, Boaz asks his workers the identity of Rut at the time collecting grain in the fields. On this inquiry, Rashi raises a paradox of modesty. He asks why Boaz, a righteous man, was commenting on a random woman collecting in the field? He answers that Boaz noticed how modestly she was acting. In other words, Rus stuck out due to her modesty.

Tsniut is not primarily about how you dress but about how you act. It is about being dignified and maintaining privacy. The clear message is that in an immodest environment, we must still act modestly even if that means we will ironically be immodestly sticking out. Rut's story is one of following her own beliefs and ideals regardless of the society in which she lives.

Some Textual Questions to ask Chanichim:

- What does it mean to “walk humbly with your God”?
- Are justice, kindness and humility all that is required of us as humans? Can all mitzvot be placed into these three categories?
- Is there a difference between what is required of a man and a woman with regard to Tsniut?
- Do you think that it is a paradox for Rut to have “stuck out” due to her modesty?

Some General Questions to ask Chanichim:

- What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of Tsniut?
- Apart from with regard clothing, which mitzvot are linked to Tsniut?
- To what extent is modesty a social construct?
- Are there any negative aspects to modesty/humility?
- If a connection with God is what Jews strive towards, why does it matter how we present ourselves to society?

Some personal Questions to ask Chanichim:

- What do you think is a modest way of conducting oneself?
- Why do you think Tsniut is a core Jewish value? Do you find it difficult to conduct yourself in a modest way – why?
- Do you think there is room for the idea of modesty to change as society progresses?
- Do you think that a person can be modest even if they do not dress in a Tsnuva way?
- Do you think that its necessary to dress in a Tsnuva way when the rest of society's fashion is to do the opposite? Doesn't this make Jews “stick out” even more?

Some Interactive Resources:

Youtube: Tzniut: Showing your true self:

- Do you agree that we live in a superficial world?
- Do you agree that clothing defines us?

Other sources and quotes to bring into discussion:

Isiah 6:3:

One should not say (to oneself): "I am now in an inner room - who can see me?", for the Holy One Blessed Be He, "His glory fills the whole earth."

Devarim 22:5:

“A woman must not put on man's apparel, nor shall a man wear woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is abhorrent to the LORD your God.”

Vayikra Rabba 34:3

Hillel the Elder was walking with his students. They said to him, "Rabbi, where are you walking to?" He said to them, "To fulfill a commandment!" They said to him, "And what commandment is this?" He said to them, "To bathe in the bathhouse." They said to him: "But is this really a commandment?" He said to them: "Yes. Just like regarding the statues of kings...the one who is appointed over them bathes them and scrubs them, and they give him sustenance...I, who was created in the [Divine] Image and Form, even more so!

Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 75:1:

A handsbreadth that is **uncovered** on a woman **in a place where it is her practice to cover it**, even if it his wife, if it forbidden to read the Shema in front of it.

Rabbi Dov Linzer, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah

Jewish tradition teaches men and women alike that they should be modest in their dress. But modesty is not defined by, or even primarily about, how much of one's body is covered. It is about comportment and behavior. It is about recognizing that one need not be the centre of attention. It is about embodying the prophet Micah's call for modesty: learning “to walk humbly with your God.”

Rabbi Andy Shugerman, Jewish Theological Seminary:

Moses first becomes "Moshe Rabbeinu" ("Moses our teacher") in our tradition because of his public role as the conduit for God's Torah, conveying the divine commands to the people after communing with God on Mount Sinai. The second section of the midrash interprets the first verse of Numbers as a turning point for Moses, as the Tent of Meeting provides him a place for intimacy and private communication with God. Micah's prophetic pronouncement about modesty supports the notion of Moses leading by example as "a very humble man, more so than any man on earth"