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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

## ACT LIKE ROYALTY AND RECEIVE THE MOST MAGNIFICENT CLOTHING!

### PARSHAS KI TETZEH

The Torah tells us that within our army encampment we must maintain holiness to continue Hashem's protection. The Chofetz Chaim zt"l (in Geder Olam Perek 6, as quoted in Biurei Chofetz on the Torah compiled by Rabbi Nachum Meir Yaakov Weinrab) says a very powerful parable on this pasuk. There was a dealer in precious stones who lived in the capital city. He and his wife both worked in the business. He would often travel to far-away places to buy precious stones and then send them to his wife to sell. One day, the officers of the king came to their store, looking for very precious jewels for the king's crown. The wife said that it would befit the king's crown to have the most exquisite jewels. She did not have those jewels in the store, but she would send a

letter to her husband to purchase them. The king's officer promised the woman a huge reward for getting the gems. They cautioned her to be very sure that the gems were genuine. The king would be receiving his crown at a coronation ceremony with many other kings in attendance. Many of the other kings were gem experts. If they were to notice a fake gem in the king's crown, it would be a huge embarrassment for the king. If that were to happen, the king would severely punish the officers as well as the gem dealers. The wife assured the officers that she and her husband were careful to sell only genuine gems. The wife sent her husband a letter to buy the finest gems for the king's crown. The husband sent back a letter in response. He said that he had bought the finest gems and that he would be sending them to his wife. He had checked their authenticity with a few experts. However, the responsibility of being placed in the king's crown was a very fearful thought. Therefore, he cautioned his wife to be extra careful and have the gems checked by a few of

*"For Hashem is moving within your camp to save you and to defeat your enemies before you, so your camp must be holy; let Hashem not see within you, disgraceful objects lest Hashem turn away from you." (Devarim 23:15)*

her local experts to ensure that they were genuine. When the wife received the precious gems along with the letter, she was very excited. She couldn't wait to receive a handsome reward in addition to the great honor that the king would bestow on her. She ignored her husband's warning and assumed that the checking for authenticity that he had done was sufficient. She sent a message to the king's officers that she had received the beautiful gems. They came to get them and rewarded her handsomely. At the coronation, the king was very proud, telling the other kings that he had even bought precious gems from a far-away country to adorn his crown. To his disbelief and great embarrassment, the other kings told him that the gems were counterfeit! The woman who had sold the gems to the king was imprisoned. She argued that it wasn't her fault since she had told her husband to make sure the gems were genuine. Her husband, who meanwhile had returned home, was also imprisoned. He said that the gem experts to whom he had shown the gems

had fooled him. And, anyway, he had told his wife to have them checked by local experts before selling them to the king. The officers screamed at the husband, blaming him for relying on his wife and not being diligent enough to ensure that he had totally confirmed their authenticity. The husband and wife were both thrown into prison where they were inflicted with terrible suffering. The husband and wife each blamed each other for the terrible situation that they were in.

The **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l used this parable to explain the following: One's Torah learning and performance of mitzvos creates jewels which are placed into crowns to adorn Hashem. When one passes away and goes to *Olam Haba*, he is adorned with those very same crowns which were formed by his mitzvos and Torah learning. However, if a mitzvah is done in a manner lacking holiness, then in place of a beautiful gem, a dark spot is placed on Hashem's crown. If one learns Torah or says a bracha, a blessing, while facing a woman who is not modestly attired, even his own wife, then his Torah learning or bracha does not become holy. Instead of a brilliant light, in the place of a beautiful gem, there is a place of darkness in the crown. This is a blight on Hashem's crown, and it is embarrassing in front of the heavenly retinue. After this man and woman pass on, the angels will scream that their souls should receive terrible punishments for their actions which disgraced the King of Kings, Hashem. At the time of judgement, people try to deflect the blame. The wife will blame her husband who recited the bracha while facing her when immodestly attired. The husband will blame his wife for sitting opposite him, dressed immodestly, while he was saying a bracha, and for ignoring his request to dress

appropriately at that time. The angels will tell the husband that he should have moved to another place or at least turned away while reciting the blessings. Both husband and wife will be punished for disgracing Hashem instead of showing honor to Hashem. The angels will take them to receive harsh punishments. The wife will turn to her husband in tears, blaming him for not being more careful. She will tell him that he should have warned her about the severity of her sin. Had she realized, she would have dressed differently. The husband will respond by blaming his wife. He had told her numerous times that what she was doing was wrong. Yet, she desired to look beautiful in front of others and wanted to copy her friends who dressed inappropriately.

The **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l ends by saying that we should be wise and forewarned. A husband should constantly remind his wife about the importance of not being immodestly dressed in front of any man who is learning Torah or saying a bracha. Every woman should do all that she can do ensure that this not happen.

**Rav Elchonon Wasserman** zt"l (in sefer *Kovetz Ma'amarim*, quoted in [Talelei Oros](#) by Rabbi Yissachar Dov Rubin) says that a woman should always be dressed modestly. **Rav Elchonon** zt"l often spoke about the terrible persecution suffered by European Jews, especially those in Poland and Lithuania, between World War I and World War II. It reached the point where every gentile felt that it was his birthright to kill and torture Jews.

**Rav Elchonon** zt"l quoted the **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l's explanation for this. Hashem is the guardian of the Jews. However, when Hashem sees that the Jews are guilty of a lack of modesty and other

shamefulness, Hashem removes His protection.

Thus, nations become free to attack us.

It says in Sefer **Tehillim** (Psalms 45:14) *“The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is*

*wrought with gold.”* **Rashi** explains that all honor awaits the King’s daughter who conducts herself inwardly with modesty. Her clothing will be more precious than the golden settings in the clothing of the Kohain Gadol.

**It is very difficult not to be influenced in our dress, even a little, by the immoral society around us. We must remember that we are the beloved of Hashem and are royalty. Great reward awaits those who can maintain appropriate standards of modesty, befitting the daughter of the king.**

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*Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.*

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