

And you shall make vestments of sanctity... for glory and splendor. (28:2)

Some of us get carried away by the impression we develop based upon an individual's attire. In reality, it is difficult to ignore-- or not be impressed by-- one who is impeccably dressed, his clothing perfectly cut to his body's form, the material and color drawing attention to the wearer's position in life. Our first impression is generally governed by outside appearances, of which clothing plays a leading role. Of course, if the wearer opens his mouth and spews forth one foolish statement after another, our first impression will be impugned, and our next impression invariably overpowers it. A wise man waits, while everyone else judges a person by what he sees at first glance. This is sadly why Madison Avenue lives by the phrase: "Clothing makes the man." They know that first impressions count, and one does not get a second chance to make a "first" impression.

Horav Shlomo Levinstein, Shlita, relates an incident which took place concerning *Ibn Ezra*, which is a classic. *Ibn Ezra* lived in abject poverty. Indeed, he felt that, for some reason, he just was not destined to be financially sufficient. He once said that if he were to sell candles, the sun would never set; or, alternatively, if he were to sell *tachrichim*, shrouds, people would not die. The cards were stacked against him – a situation which he had come to accept and live with. His dire circumstances did not deter him from his diligence in Torah study. Hence, we are blessed with his brilliant commentary on the Torah.

Being poverty stricken, he dressed the part, his clothes simple, unassuming, and quite threadbare. He certainly did not dress the part of a brilliant sage who had no peer. One *Erev Shabbos* found him in a small, distant town far from his home. He approached one of the community's wealthy Jews and asked if he would host him for *Shabbos*. The man took one look at *Ibn Ezra's* clothes and began to hem and haw. Ultimately, he acquiesced, but he asked him to sit in a corner of the dining room where he would not have to gaze at him dressed as a decrepit pauper. He brought his food to him as covertly as possible, in order not to gather any attention to his indigent guest.

On *Motzei Shabbos*, *Ibn Ezra* approached his host and said, "I would like to extend my gratitude to you for your warm hospitality. At this opportunity, I would like to propose a *shidduch*, matrimonial match, for your daughter, who I notice is of age. I know a wonderful young man who I know would fit in perfectly with your family. I am certain you will appreciate his external bearing and comportment." *Ibn Ezra* knew this young man well. He was, indeed, a fine, upstanding, well-dressed and well-behaved young man. Alas, his erudition in Torah was non-existent, as he had not had the opportunity to study.

Knowing that the wealthy man would not settle for a non-intellectual, regardless of his excellent demeanor and appearance, *Ibn Ezra* said, "The young man in question is very diligent and somewhat of a counter-culturist. He keeps to himself and hardly speaks to anyone. I ask that you make available for him a small quiet room where he can keep to himself. You may still gather a

group of scholars to test him in areas of Torah knowledge. I will forward the question to him and return immediately with his response.”

Shidduchim were not easy to come by – even for the wealthy. A good boy was even more difficult. Thus, despite the circumstances, the wealthy man agreed to the proposal. *Ibn Ezra* instructed the young man to remain silent. He would take care of everything. A few days later, *Ibn Ezra* appeared with the young man. He was everything that the man had hoped for: handsome, well-dressed, noble bearing; in short, his external appearance was the “package” he was seeking for his daughter. A group of sages gathered to present him with their *halachic* queries, which *Ibn Ezra* quickly fielded for him. The sages gave their approbation of the young man. Apparently, he must be a genius. He immediately answered every question they sent to him succinctly, indicating a breadth of knowledge uncommon for anyone his age. They were veritably impressed. Needless to say, the *shidduch* went through.

Following the engagement, *Ibn Ezra* moved on, and the young man now had to fend for himself. It did not take long for the truth to be revealed: the young man was well-dressed and handsome, intellectually philistine. He knew nothing. The wealthy man was furious. How could he allow his daughter to marry someone who was so intellectually challenged? The man summoned *Ibn Ezra* and demanded, “How could you have done this to me? I trusted you to bring me a young man that I would be proud of – and you brought him!”

“You do not seem to understand,” *Ibn Ezra* began. “I noticed that you are impressed by externalism: nice clothes, appearances, behavior. Nu – I brought you ‘nice clothes’! I did not get the impression that anything else mattered!”

The man took the hint. He was acutely aware of the concept to which *Ibn Ezra* was alluding. He asked, “What do I do now? Do I let my daughter marry this man?”

“Do not worry,” *Ibn Ezra* replied. “Let them get married. I will tutor the young man, and soon you will see that he will become proficient in what really matters!” So it was. The young man studied with the illustrious *Ibn Ezra* for a number of months and, before long, he was counted among the erudite Torah scholars of his community.