

"And the maiden was very fair to look upon, a virgin and no man was on familiar terms with her." (24:16)

This *pasuk* is the basis of the *Torah's* characterization of the modesty appropriate for a Jewish daughter. **Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl**, notes that *Torah* does not say *aht vgsh tku* "A man does not know her," as it states in other places, but rather *vgsh tk ahtu*, a term which does not occur in any other place. This seems to imply that not only was she a virgin in the usual sense, that no man knew her, but she was also so uncommonly modest that no man had dared to become intimately familiar with her. Rivkah's standard of *tznius*, modesty, her exemplary purity, was such that she commanded respect even at her young age. The truly modest Jewish girl has a high level of instinctive morality, displaying an aura of dignity and refinement. As such, even the most uncouth young man would never approach her improperly. People demonstrate their basic nature in the presence of someone for whom they have little or no respect. The *bas Yisrael* is the touchstone of *tznius* who serves as an example for others.

Horav Meir Shapiro, zl, once had a dispute with a rabbi who had a tendency to be more relaxed in his religious observance. He manifested his "liberal" stance in his public association with the secularists whose antagonistic views of *Torah* and *mitzvos* were notorious. When *Horav* Shapiro took him to task for attending their social affairs, he replied that, in reality, his intentions in attending these functions were not malicious. It was just that he was constantly receiving invitations which were difficult to refuse. *Horav* Shapiro responded to this lame excuse by quoting the *pasuk* which describes Rivkah's virtue, rather than praising the people of the community for not approaching her in an immoral manner. This teaches us that when someone's behavior is exemplary, their peers will inevitably respect him. Rivkah was so refined in her moral virtue that people were inclined to treat her with the utmost reverence. When a person distances himself from any indiscretion, people will not invite him to join them in an unprincipled endeavor. Obviously, if the rabbi was the recipient of many invitations to attend functions that reeked of animus to *Torah*, it was because the organizers considered him to be one of them. One's friends are indicative of the association he values.