

And they were not ashamed. (2:25)

Prior to eating of the *Eitz HaDaas*, Tree of Knowledge, Adam and Chavah had no idea concerning the significance of *tznius*, moral modesty/privacy. Thus, they were not embarrassed by their lack of clothing, since, as *Rashi* explains, the concept of *tznius* allows a person to distinguish between good and bad. In other words, *tznius* is the barometer and medium by which one determines whether his actions are good or bad. By maintaining a *tznius* demeanor in thought, action and dress, one diminishes the opportunity for, and possibility of, improper temptation that can lead to sinful behavior. Guarding against a breakdown in *tznius* is similar to asking oneself: Is my conduct appropriate, or am I bending the rules?

Therefore, there will be those who gravitate to subjective extremes, both to the right and to the left. Some will posit that “everything goes,” because I do not “feel” that it is wrong/bad/inappropriate. We are living in modern times, and everyone dresses this way. These misguided people seem to forget that we/*Klal Yisrael* are not “everyone.” Only we have been given the mandate of *Kedoshim tiheyu*, “Be holy” (*Vayikra* 79:2).

There are also those on the right who go to the other extreme, which demands that one dress in garments that are so concealing, that they cause the individual (in today’s open-minded culture) who “happens” to gravitate to a “progressive” environment, to mistakenly think that he is evil, he is dangerous, he is shameful. Therefore, as in all areas of service, the *derech ha’memutza*, golden mean/ middle path, *tznius* should be no different. There are parameters which follow Torah law – and there are self-conceived parameters that have been adjusted to conform with today’s hedonistic standards of living. I guess in such an instance, the golden mean will be far from the middle.

Having said this, we return to our opening statement: *Tznius* is the means by which one determines the appropriateness of his actions. How does one know the true motivations for his own actions? One could think that easing off a bit in his/her religious activities makes him/her more accessible, thus allowing him/her to better reach out to a brother/sister, when, in fact, he/she simply wants to ease up and slack off because the religious demands interfere with his/her social life, etc.

Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, posits that one must familiarize himself with the guises of the *yetzer* and, after a battery of tests, was diagnosed with a malignant tumor that had metastasized. The doctors gave the grim verdict: There was nothing that they could do other than give her pain meds to make her comfortable. She had mere weeks to live.

The girl did not give up; her parents did not give up. They might not have been observant Jews, but hope is a value that is inherently Jewish. They pleaded with the doctors to try something – anything –at least to make an effort at saving their daughter’s life. The doctors finally agreed and scheduled surgery for the next day. Feeling that their chances for success were very low, they assigned a young, inexperienced surgeon, with the feeling that it would be good practice for him, since there

was nothing to lose; the surgeon really could not go wrong.

They say that there are no atheists in a foxhole. The night before the surgery, the non-observant girl began to plead with Hashem. She said, "*HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, I am not perfect, and I probably do not deserve any favors from You. In ancient times, when we had a *Bais Hamikdash*, a sinner would confess and offer a *korban* and achieve penance. Today, we have no *Bais Hamikdash*, no *korbanos*, no *Kohanim*, but I still want to bring a *korban*."

At that moment, she walked to her closet, removed all of her immodest clothing and carried it out to her yard. She made a pile and struck a match, creating a large pyre of burning clothing. She cried out, "Hashem, this is my *korban*!"

The next day, the girl went to the hospital in her nightgown and robe. She had no other clothing. Her entire wardrobe had been elevated to *korban* status. She had the surgery, and, lo and behold, the tumor had not metastasized. It was totally contained – and benign. She had just been the fortunate recipient of a miracle. When she shared the story behind the miracle with her friends, they, too, wanted to reap the benefits of dressing modestly. The next day, they all came together, brought out their immodest attire and made a bonfire!

The girls were now left with nothing presentable to wear. No problem – that is what malls are for. They all went together to celebrate their newly-accepted modesty – by shopping for new clothes. When that terrorist bomb was set to go off, those girls were at the mall, shopping for new, modest clothing!

Miracles occur because people adhere to the laws of *tznius*. Why? What do miracles have to do with *tznius*? Perhaps the miracle is Hashem's overt response to the Jew or Jewess who is secure enough to live covertly, in a modest fashion, without calling attention to him/herself.