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Warm Up!

*A fascinating story of the Friediker Rebbe with a timely lesson,
as told by the Rebbe at a Yud Shevat farbrengen*

One of the stories that the [Friediker] Rebbe recounted at length was of the time during the lifetime of his father [the Rebbe Rashab] his father sent him on a mission to the then capital city, St. Petersburg. It was during wintertime.

After the trip he related that at one point he had visited a certain government minister, who was not very fond of Jews. This particular minister led a wild lifestyle, and so the meeting was set for nighttime. The meeting dragged on, and by the time their discussion ended it was already well into the night.

Although he was wearing a large “puter” (fur coat), appropriate for the St. Petersburg climate during the winter, the [Friediker] Rebbe later recounted that the cold was to such a degree that despite his precautions and special clothing, he was forced to enter a bar to warm up. All sorts of people hung out there, but it was

the only place open at that late hour.

In this story of *nesi doreinu* there are numerous details, and being that he told the story in detail, each detail must teach us a specific lesson.

There is, however, also a general lesson that every public activist can learn from this:

The activist leaves the *daled-amos* of Torah. Not *chas ve’shalom* because he does not want to learn Torah, rather because he must discontinue his learning in order to perform his duties as a public servant. The Torah that he learned previously is taken along in his memory. He should be conscious that upon leaving the *daled-amos* of Torah and *teffilah* he must don special clothing; he must wear a fur coat!

...Yet, he may argue, “Why is this necessary? I have been around for quite a while and I have never worn a fur coat!”

The argument is strengthened when the cost of a fur coat can be high, together with the apparent discomfort of wearing a heavy garment. [He can claim that] without the coat he feels so much freer; it all seems so unnecessary...

...When going out on a *shlichus* to the “outside” in the winter season, one does not first wear summer clothing and only then check the temperature, changing afterwards into a fur coat. Rather, before heading out one should consult with those with experience, asking how to fulfill the *shlichus* in a manner that will not harm the *shliach*.

And they will tell him that at the outset he must wear the appropriate garments!

In addition to the clothes that are normally sufficient for a Yid who finds himself in the *daled-amos* of Torah, he must wear extra clothing when going out into the business world and dealing with

“the merchants of Lod and the nations of the world.”

Similarly, a public activist, or any Jew that must operate outside of his home, must don garments that will sufficiently separate him and his body heat from the cold that surrounds him. This will fend off the cold of the street.

In order for his body to be considered a truly Jewish one it must be warmed by Torah and mitzvos, by Yiddishkeit.

Mitzvos are considered clothing, and although a limited amount of “clothing” is enough to keep him warm in shul, yeshivah or at home, when leaving this atmosphere it is imperative that extra clothing be added.

One might argue: By isolating myself from the culture of the street, through adding extra clothing, I will not be able to affect it! In order to succeed I must be similar to [the outside] and allow some of my warmth to dissipate. And perhaps I must even remove some of my Jewish clothing!

But the fact is that is that the opposite is true. In order to be successful you have to be a healthy person, and in order to be a healthy person you have to be a healthy Yid. In order to be a healthy Yid you must be saturated with Torah and Mitzvos—“*Ki hem chayenu ve'orech yameinu.*”

Torah is our lifeline and our guide for life, and it instructs us that in order to be healthy and have the ability to influence the culture of the streets—to transform it from a *reshus harabim* to the *reshus* of “*Yechido shel oilom,*” where G-dliness is apparent and where everyone behaves accordingly—then before going out into the streets it is vital to put on additional clothing.

It must be clothing that will separate us from the cold, thereby protecting us from it.

Only through shielding ourselves from the cold will we succeed in constantly diminishing it, to the point that the entire world will shine and be warmed by Torah and mitzvos. **D**

(Based on *Sichas Yud Shevat*, 5741)

