

## Glorious Modesty (Vayera)

*“Modesty forbids what the law does not.” — Seneca*

Our Matriarch Sarah is remembered as a woman of extraordinary grace and beauty. Her presence was so striking that even in her later years, rulers sought her out. Abraham, aware of the danger her renown might attract in a world where power often overruled principle, feared that men might harm him to take her. In a moment of human frailty, he asked that they present themselves as siblings rather than as husband and wife. This act, while protecting his life, placed Sarah in a vulnerable position before powerful monarchs.

Yet God’s providence intervened. Sarah was safeguarded from harm, and she was ultimately returned to Abraham with dignity intact. Avimelech, the King of Gerar, who, like Pharaoh of Egypt before him, learned that Sarah was not to be taken, bestowed upon her a gift described as “*ksut einayim*,” literally “a covering for the eyes.”

This phrase has invited many interpretations. The Ibn Ezra (to Genesis 20:27) explains that it may have referred to a distinctive headdress, one that both concealed and honored her. It shielded her from the gaze of others, while at the same time proclaiming her nobility and the esteem in which she was held.

Ibn Ezra further suggests that Avimelech’s gift may have included not only this garment but also a public acknowledgment, whether through decree, protection, or proclamation, that Sarah was Abraham’s wife and thus not to be approached. In this way, Abraham’s recognized role as her husband became Sarah’s safeguard, allowing her dignity, personhood, and sanctity to be preserved.

May the world notice not our image, but our light.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben-Tzion

### *Dedication*

*To the Kaplan Medical Center for performing the first donor-free artificial cornea implant:*

<https://www.jpost.com/health-and-wellness/article-872530>