AND THE LORD SPOKE UNTO MOSES IN THE WILDERNESS OF SINAI IN THE TENT OF MEETING. Before the Tent of Meeting was set up, He spoke with him from the bush, as it is said, “And God called unto him out of the midst of the bush” (Ex. 3:4). Then, And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying (Ex. 12:1). He also spoke to him in Midian, as it is said, “And the Lord said unto Moses in Midian.” (Ex.4:19). At Sinai also He spoke to him, as it is said, And the Lord spoke unto Moses in Mount Sinai, saying (Lev. 25:1). As soon, however, as the Tent of Meeting was set up, God thought to Himself, ‘ Modesty is a beautiful thing, as it is said, “And walk modestly with your God.” (Micah 6:8), and so He then spoke to him in the Tent of Meeting.

David (in his Psalm) likewise said, “The daughter of the king is all dignified within; her clothing is of embroidered gold.”(Ps.45:14). The king alludes to Moses, as is inferred from the following passages. It is said, And I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel lord (Isaiah 19:4); this applies to the plagues that came upon Egypt. And a strong king shall rule over them (ib.) applies to Moses who was King of the Torah which is designated strength; as it is said, “The Lord will give strength unto his people” (Ps. 29:11). Therefore, “The daughter of the king is all dignified within; her clothing is of embroidered gold.” Ps.45:14). “… her clothing is of embroidered gold. alludes to Aaron; as it is said, And you shall make embroidered work of gold (Ex. 28:13).

From here it has been inferred that a woman who conducts herself with becoming modesty deserves, though she be a lay Israelitess, to be married to a priest and to rear up High Priests; since it is said, The Holy One blessed be He, said, “her clothing is of embroidered gold.” In like manner it befits My dignity that I should speak in private, as
is implied in the text, And when Moses went into the Tent of Meeting (Num.7:8-9).

YOUR MIDRASH NAVIGATOR
1. This Midrash makes the jump from Moses to a “woman’s conduct”. What has happened to our concept of modesty?

Midrash Leviticus Rabba 20:11

It is related that Simeon the son of Kimhith went out to talk with an Arabian king, and a jet of saliva from the latter’s mouth was spurted on to Simeon’s garments and defiled him. His brother Judah entered and ministered in the office of the High Priesthood in his stead. On that day their mother beheld two of her sons officiating as High Priests. It was said: Kimhith had seven sons, and all of them served in the office of the High Priesthood. The Sages sent to her the following enquiry: ‘What good deeds have you to your credit? The beams of my house, she said to them, ‘have never beheld the hair of my head nor the seam of my undergarment. They remarked: All flours (kimhaya) are but ordinary flour, but the flour of Kimhith is fine flour, and they applied to her the text, “The daughter of the king is all dignified within; her clothing is of embroidered gold.”’ (Psalms 45:14).

YOUR MIDRASH NAVIGATOR
1. Is modesty in dress an end in of itself, or is it a means to achieve another quality?

Maimonides, the Laws of Relationships 13:11

Wherever it is not customary for a woman to go to the marketplace with only a head covering and it is required for her to have her bodyed covered with something like her wedding garment, like a shawl, a husband is obliged to provide this for her. But not the other garments. If he is wealthy, however, he should provide for her according to his wealth so that she may go and visit her family home, or a mourner’s home, or to a party. For all women may come and go to their family home to visit, and to a party in order to

1 a similar version appears in the Jerusalem Talmud Yoma 5a
bring lovingkindness to her friends and relatives, so that they will visit her as well. For she is not in prison and cannot be not to go out and come in. It is, however, unseemly for a woman to go out constantly, outside and in the streets, and a husband should prevent his wife from doing so more than once or twice a month as needed. For a woman’s beauty is to dwell inside the corners of one’s home, as it is written: “The daughter of the king is all dignified within...”

Micah 6:8

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love loving mercy, and to walk modestly with your God?

YOUR BIBLE NAVIGATOR
1. What does it mean to walk modestly with God?

The School of R. Anan taught: It is written, “O prince’s daughter! your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of an artist.”(Song of Songs 7:2) Why are the words of the Torah compared to the thigh? To teach you that just as the thigh is hidden, so should the words of the Torah be hidden.

And this is why Rabbi Eleazar said, What is the implication of the text, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk modestly with your God?”

To do justice means [to act in accordance with] justice; to love mercy refers to acts of loving kindness; and to walk modestly with your God refers to attending to funerals and dowering a bride for her wedding. Now, we can deduce: If in matters which are normally performed publicly the Torah enjoins to walk modestly, how much more so in matters that are normally done privately?

YOUR TALMUD NAVIGATOR
1. What kind of modesty is being espoused in this story?