

## Am I pretty?

I look in the mirror. A sometimes risky activity. I see a mother, wife, grandmother, psychologist, etc. I think, how does the world see me? Maybe a nicer sheitel would help, maybe more makeup, maybe glitzier jewelry, maybe higher heels, maybe a more fitted top. . . the list goes on and on. Isn't it interesting how our list of adjectives tends to focus on the external, superficial and materialistic aspects of ourselves?

One night I attended a Shiur on Tznius. (I've been taking my own advice from my "Stepping out" article and going to evening events.) The speaker was Chavi Bauman. She's a dynamo who inspires the audience with her personal tale of triumph in the area of Tznius. Some of you may see that word and politely put down the article. You might say, oh, I'm not ready to work on that so better not to hear this. You might say, she's a Psychologist not a Rebbetzin, why is she writing about Tznius? My answer? It all boils down to one concept, self-esteem.

Self-esteem is the way we perceive of ourselves. It is based on an internal sense that is strongly affected by those around us, those we love as well as by the proverbial "they". You know, the unseen force of public opinion. That force of people that really makes no difference in our lives, but somehow affects our decision making process. Self-esteem affects the way we interact, the way we do business and even the way we dress.

On a simple level, our clothes are a cover for our bodies. On a deeper level they are a reflection of the body they cover. If we see our bodies as a commodity, to be displayed publicly to entice the highest bidder, then the clothing needs to be flashy and eye catching, like display cases with halogen lamps and music blasting. If we see our bodies as an extension of our soul and inner beauty, then we don't want the attention drawn to the outer trappings, but rather want the chance for our inner beauty to transcend the outside world.

Let's think of some examples where the above theory applies. When you have a painting that isn't too inspiring, you might try to jazz it up by putting it into an interesting frame. When you have a painting that evokes untold amounts of

deep emotion, you want to focus on those emotions and not be distracted by a gaudy frame. With this second painting you are likely to put it in the simplest, most sophisticated frame to complement its beauty. In other words, the less positive we feel about the picture, the more we feel the need to compensate by putting it into an attention drawing frame.

Hmm, makes you think. Play this next idea out in your mind and see if it rings a bell. If you had to think of the ultimate, most meaningful compliment to give someone, what would it be? Would it be a compliment about her externals such as her car, house or dress? I find that the most meaningful compliments are ones that reflect the essence of a person such as, “she is so sweet and generous”. CB Weinfeld wrote an article in the Yated several months ago about the way she perceives of me. I was honored and humbled to have been chosen as her topic. In the three pages she never once commented on my wardrobe. Granted, my wardrobe’s not too exciting but I don’t think that’s why she omitted it. Rather, she wrote about what I do, how I interact with others, real stuff. When she wrote that she perceives of me as having a Shem Tov, an inner quality, you’d better believe that was worth a lot more than having her notice my figure!

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