

Shalom Bayis Newsletter Issue 28

Looking Good

By Rabbi Yehoshua Berman

Who cares if Esav would have stared at Rachel?

Ok, he's a crass, hedonistic man and he might stare. Why is it such a big deal that Yosef (who was all of 6 years old at the time) needed to stand in front of his mother and make himself as tall as can be so as to block Esav from



looking at her¹?

You'd be inclined to answer that if Esav would have set his eyes on Rachel, maybe he would feel like pursuing her.

Meaning, it's not the looking itself that Yosef was necessarily worried about, but the potential disastrous downstream effects thereof.

That is certainly a workable *pshat*.

But the fact that *Chazal* say that Yosef merited the *bracha* of “*alei ayin*” – special divine protection from *ayin hara* – implies that it is precisely the looking that Yosef was determined to prevent.

Yosef felt that it is imperative to block his uncle's eye from setting its evil sights on his mother because that *ayin hara* in and of itself

¹ See Rashi on Vayishlach 33:7

is a reality of negativity. Irrespective of any downstream outcomes that may or may not materialize, that malicious gaze generates a harmful impact.

Because seeing creates connection.

When Moshe put forth his last-ditch, desperate plea to be allowed entry into Eretz Yisrael, Hashem's response is, "Go up the mountain and look at it".

If a child asks for a candy and you say no, you don't hold it in front of him and say, "But you can look at it".

So how are we to understand Hashem's response, "Go up the mountain and look at it"?

The answer is that seeing creates connection.

Moshe Rabbeinu, the faithful shepherd of Bnei Yisrael, gazed upon the land and thus created a connection and conceptualization of the kedusha of the land and its purpose that would infuse his precious flock with the ethical roadmap for their entry into and settlement of the land.

Similarly, someone who was *zocheh* to see an *adam gadol* lives with a far deeper appreciation of Torah values and a heightened perception of the greatness of which man is capable of achieving. That connection, built through having set eyes on greatness, can inspire his own life to ever greater heights.

Yosef was adamant that Esav not be able to create any connection whatsoever with his mother. He made sure that Esav's evil eyes would be completely blocked from setting their sights on Rachel for that connection through sight would be inherently harmful.

Rachel's beautiful appearance had to be reserved exclusively for Yaakov (I once wrote a piece, based on an eye-popping Gemara, how men also have to look good for their wives. Read that [here](#)).

The fact that the Torah describes Rachel as “beautiful of form and beautiful of appearance” immediately preceding “and Yaakov loved Rachel” underscores the significance of the connection created by sight and the importance of spouses looking good to one another (I compiled 3 practical examples into an **easy-to-read infographic**. You may be surprised by how powerful they are. Get the infographic [here](#)).

To the extent that a negative impact can be generated by an evil gaze, so too, and all the more so, is a positive impact generated by good looking.

While it is true that it is the realm of thought and emotion that carries that most profound value, the fact remains that we exist in this world within a corporeal reality.

Accordingly, it would be a mistake for couples to allow themselves to slip into an attitude of, “Well, we love each other so deeply, so who really cares about externalities”.

When a true connoisseur of the arts gazes upon the works of a great master, he doesn’t just see a “pretty painting”.

He sees so much more than that. He sees depth. He sees emotion. He sees profound concepts coming to life. To one who truly understands art, it is that depth and profundity that is the true value of the masterpiece.

Yet, if you crumple the canvass and carelessly allow it to become grimy and dusty – thinking, “Well, who really cares about externalities anyway; after all, it’s the depth and the emotion that is the main thing” – it would be a foolish ruination of the work, wouldn’t it?

For the observer to be able to fully access and appreciate that great depth and profundity, he needs the medium of the positive sight connection.

Internal beauty is not an adversary of external beauty.

On the contrary, they are meant to exist as a harmonious whole. A streamlined, integrated continuum that are inextricably intertwined (For couples who want to go deeper into the blend of staying attractive and staying desirous—I explore that fully, with the foundations principles and practical skills, in the *Keeping It Fresh & Alive* module of my ICSE series. Details [here](#).).

When spouses put in time and effort to maintain and enhance their pleasant appearance for one another, they are not engaging in frivolous trivialities that are a “nice extra”. Rather, they are engaging in the *avodas ha'kodesh* of *zeh Keili v'anveihu*; maintaining and enhancing the beauty, on all levels, of the abode that they personally provide for the *Shechina* to dwell in this world.

P.S. I'm considering writing a short follow-up piece related to this topic. Which one would you want more? Click [here](#) to vote:

- *The 5 biggest mistakes couples make that silently lower desire*
- *The 5 small things spouses do that instantly boost emotional and physical connection*



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