

"And Hashem, Elokim, fashioned the side that He had taken from the man into a woman." (2:22)

The *Midrash* teaches us that Hashem "deliberated" before He created the first woman. Everything is influenced by the source from which it is created. Consequently, Hashem arranged it so that woman would not be created from any part of the body which would have an adverse affect upon her. He said, "If I create her from the head, she might become lightheaded. If I create her from the eyes, she might be overly curious, looking where she should not. If I create her from the ears, she might be predisposed to listen to gossip. If I create her from the mouth, she might be overly talkative. If I create her from the heart, she might be overly jealous. If I create her from the hands, she might be constantly touching things. If I create her from the feet, she might wander." Hashem, therefore, decided to create her from the rib, which is doubly covered by a layer of skin and clothing. He wanted the woman to be a *tznuah*, modest and chaste.

Not only did Hashem want woman to be intrinsically free of any negative traits, He created her with a specific goal - to be a *tznuah*. **Horav Yitzchak Goldwasser, Shlita**, infers from *Chazal* that *tznius* for a woman is not merely one more area through which she is to serve Hashem; rather, it symbolizes her inherent personality, which she is to refine and dignify. Implicit in woman's creation was a mandate for her to develop a specific trait of human personality to its maximum - *tznius*. She was created with the capacity to excel in this area!

Horav Goldwasser cites the *Talmud Sotah 2a* in which *Chazal* declare, "They only pair a woman with a man according to his deeds." As it says in *Tehillim 125*, "For the sceptre of wickedness shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous." In interpreting the phrase, "according to his deeds," *Rashi* comments, "A *tznuah* to a *tzaddik* and a *prutzah* to a *rasha*." He seems to equate "righteous" with *tznius* and "wicked" with promiscuity. This implies that the determining factor for women regarding their virtuous standing -- or lack thereof -- is compliance with the *Torah* code of *tznius*!

This idea, suggests *Horav Goldwasser*, lends meaning to the *pasuk* at the end of *Mishlei*, "A woman of valor who can find? Far beyond pearls is her value." Why does *Shlomo Ha'Melech* choose pearls as opposed to other types of precious jewels? The answer lies in the Hebrew word for pearls - *peninim* - which alludes to *panim*, inner being. The *pasuk* tells us that a woman's greatest virtue is "*penimah*," her innerself, not her ability to capture the attention of the public eye. This coincides with the *pasuk* in *Tehillim 45*, "The glory of the daughter of the king lies on the inside." The true grandeur and majesty of every Jewish woman are not manifest in the public domain, but rather - *penimah* - through dimensions of the inner self. It is not necessary for her to have public acclaim in order to achieve her recognition. She does not have to emerge from that which today's hedonistic society considers to be an archaic imposed seclusion from the outside world in order to attain recognition.

The quest for identity, liberation and self-assertion most often originates from feelings of inner-discontent, and low self-esteem. Because the secular soul is so empty, one feels obligated to compensate for it by seeking public identity, either through a multitude of relationships or through careers and experiences. The Jewish woman should not feel this need, if she truly understands her mission in life. Our vacuous society has stereotyped the Jewish woman as a non-entity whose goal in life is to be subservient in a male-oriented society. This notion can only exist in a society that is far removed from religion and G-d. The central motif in Judaism is that all actions take place before Hashem, Who is the source of all value. The concept of "public" approval pales in comparison with Hashem's approval.

The Jewish woman shapes and guards the Jewish home. She has the fundamental responsibility to create an atmosphere which expresses the vibrance of the *Torah* way of life. *Torah* is not something which is taught; it must be lived! This "living" is the creation of the Jewish wife and mother. Her success or failure is manifest by her children. Indeed, the stamp she leaves on her home expresses her uniqueness and individuality. This is the *Torah's* idea of self-definition. Can one demonstrate a greater sense of success?