

REALLY WORTH SOMETHING

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

Sometimes people confuse the concepts of conceit --*Ga-avah*-- and self- worth. The words of our teachers put things in perspective. Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian Zt"l said, "The essence of the concept of humility is not that one should be unaware of one's capacities. To the contrary, a person should recognize his strengths. However, he should know that his skills and talents are a gift from G-d, and that they are not his doing. He should feel that had another person been equally endowed, he could have achieved more". The Hazon Ish Zt"l says, "A person should know his value, and if he is indeed learned in Torah he must know this. However, one should not feel that this makes him superior to others." Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz Zt"l said, "The person who does not recognize his strengths and talents is much worse off [than the one who does not recognize his defects], because he is totally unaware of the tools with which he can achieve spiritual goals."

A person sometimes feels that "I am not so special" or "I am not conceited!" That feeling usually comes from the wiles of the evil inclination. He likes to prevent people from doing "good" by making them think that the "good" that is done in the world should be left to those more talented, more religious or more dedicated than themselves. A person who doesn't recognize their talents can't put them to good use. Self-esteem is necessary not forbidden.

Today when you paint a picture of yourself that is small and weak stop and think about the task you were about to take on. If it was something that would really help others or something that would help you take another positive step in spiritual growth --attribute your "weakness" to the stratagems of the evil inclination. Take another look in the mirror and you will see that G-d put this task before you as a test of your spiritual resolve and that He gave you all the tools that you might need to complete the project successfully. Try this simple technique and you will achieve a success rate that even you yourself thought you could never achieve.

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