

Summer Institute 2018

Faculty Elective II

Tuesday, August 21, 4:45 PM

Is Feminist Tzniut (Modesty) an Oxymoron?: Reimagining Modesty with **Rabbi Aviva Richman**

<p>I was disappointed by this session. I found the sources and discussion to be simplistic, especially for a session that was meant to re-examine a controversial topic. Plus, when I posed a question, it wasn't really answered. (Another fellow who was in the session approached me the next day telling me that he appreciated the question and that he was disappointed that it wasn't answered.)</p>
<p>I learned many new things in this session, especially because tzniut is not something I have studied or am particularly familiar with other than observing it in practice. I was intrigued by the sources Rabbi Richman shared and overall deepened my understanding of the topic.</p>
<p>I always love learning with R' Aviva. She is sensitive, thoughtful, brilliant, and deeply perceptive.</p>
<p>I was really hoping for more on this one. I think the text analysis was superficial and uninvolved.</p>
<p>I really appreciated the framing of tzniut as about behavior, rather than about clothing, at the beginning of the session. I found that framing to make the conversation much more accessible to those of us who may not follow a traditional understanding of tzniut as it pertains to clothing but may see ourselves as trying to live out tzniut as a value. However, I wish that this thread had continued throughout the session in a more direct way.</p>
<p>I found the introduction to the topic to be eye-opening and the sources to drive conversation. I would have loved to hear more personal reflections on the title, and how others in the community are dealing with it. Loved the Torah, wanted more personal experience.</p>
<p>I was a little lost in this particular class regarding the texts and presentation. That being said, I really liked the poem about one of the dresses written by an Israeli poet. It juxtaposed the tension between dressing a certain way because one feels empowered (i.e. the individual as subject) versus fearing that one will be judged for how they dress and will lose their confidence in the process (i.e. the individual's experience as object).</p>
<p>Loved this session, and the delicate mix of ancient texts and a few contemporary poems as a complement/contrast to some of the ways we usually think about modesty. I appreciated the unusual angles Rabbi Richman highlighted - eg, first dealing with the body vs God's perspective and only then dealing with the body vs other humans' perspectives. It felt that it was an opening of a conversation without a clear end point, which maybe just speaks to the best we can do at this moment. I might have wanted to see some of the more difficult texts / texts explicitly enumerating what parts of the body should be covered addressed head-on.</p>

Rabbi Aviva is extremely knowledgeable, and it is great to have the opportunity to learn from her. I wish the session had matched more with the topic - while it was interesting and valuable, I didn't feel it answered the question. I also wish it had been more interactive (breaking up into discussion groups, participation from participants). There was a lot of information given that was a bit complicated, so I felt a tiny bit lost. I heard her session on the Vagina Monologues was amazing.

I think R. Aviva did a great job of creating a space for shared learning. I think the ultimate message may have been a bit too nuanced - it was difficult to understand how exactly to translate it into our own lives. Perhaps it would have helped had we used fewer sources.

I loved having the opportunity to learn with Rabbi Aviva and it was brave of her to choose such a topic to take on for a one-off session which I really appreciate. Very interesting class and discussion, which made me want to learn more!

There was a lot to unpack in this session and folks were bringing a lot of baggage around the topic. Aviva brilliantly navigated those feelings without letting her chiddush get strangled by the baggage. I think perhaps more than any other session, these were the words I needed to hear in elul to begin preparing me for the awesome days of judgement and connection to come.