

“By the man to whom these belong I am with child.” And she said, “Identify, if you please, whose are this signet, this wrap and this staff.” (38:25)

What is the definition of *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven? A G-d-fearing Jew is one who is acutely aware of Hashem's Presence, who understands that he stands before G-d at all times and that all of his actions and designs are under Heavenly scrutiny. A G-d-fearing person never loses his perspective of Hashem. This may sound like a given, almost a simple understatement, but, if one thinks about it, most of us act as if we do not think Hashem is “looking.” If one were to ask the average person how to develop recognition, a profound realization of Hashem, the response would probably be, “By studying such scholarly works of Jewish philosophy as *Moreh Nevuchim*, *Sefer Halkarim*, *Kuzari*, etc.” One would never suggest that, by making the appropriate decision when confronted with a *nisayon*, a challenging test, he would indicate that he realizes and recognizes that there is a G-d Who is in control. When we do the right thing and overcome a personal proclivity to follow the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, when we are confronted with the choice of doing right or wrong – and we act correctly – we have just demonstrated our recognition and fear of Hashem. One cannot claim to be G-d-fearing unless he shows that he is aware of Hashem's Presence – at all times.

Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl, derives this idea from *Rashi's* commentary to the words *haker na*, “Recognize, if you please.” *Rashi* writes: “The word *na*, in this context, expresses nothing but request. Tamar implied, ‘Please, recognize your Creator and do not destroy three souls.’” The *Mashgiach* explains that Tamar was intimating to Yehudah: “If you have the courage to stand up in public and take responsibility for your actions, by confessing to your paternity, thus not allowing the destruction of three lives, then you have demonstrated that you recognize the Creator.”

Rav Wolbe explains that *hakoras haBorei* is determined by one's ability to withstand a *nisayon*, a challenge. If he is able to break his *middos*, character traits, in order to act truthfully, then he has shown that he is aware of Hashem's presence in his life. *Vayaker* Yehudah – Yehudah overcame his *middos* (Confession would quite possibly incur embarrassment. Many a person would lie his way out of the predicament, but not Yehudah, who was aware that Hashem was “watching” the events unfold.) and deferred to the *emes*, truth, thus demonstrating that he recognized Hashem.

While it is true that *yiraas Shomayim* is a quality that one develops over time, it is certainly important that a feeling for *yiraas Shomayim*, an understanding of its overriding significance, and comprehending its meaning, are all imbued in a child as he/she develops. From the earliest age, a child must be taught that Hashem is everywhere, He is all-knowing and all-seeing. This sets the stage for understanding the meaning of fear. One learns to internalize the fact that Hashem's Presence is with him at all times.

A father once brought his young son to the **Brisker Rav, zl**, with a request that the Rav bless him that he grow to be a true *talmid chacham* and *yarei Shomayim*. The *Rav* responded with sound advice: "If you learn with your son, he will become a true *talmid chacham*, and if your wife *davens* and implores Hashem that her son grow up to be a *yarei Shomayim*, he will become a *yarei Shomayim*." The *Brisker Rav* was of the opinion that the *tefilllos* of a mother for the future of her young child are of utmost importance. Furthermore, he considered a mother's *tefilllos* to carry greater weight than that of the father. A mother is closer to a young child than the father. Therefore, her *tefilllos* are expressed with greater keenness and maximum sincerity. Also, women are more emotional and closer to tears than men. As a result, a mother's *tefilllos* have a greater likelihood of being expressed with accompanying emotion, with a *lev nishbar*, broken heart, which are the most beloved of all *tefilllos*.