

“And you shall discern from among the entire people, men of accomplishment, G-d fearing people.” (18:21)

Ibn Ezra explains that those who genuinely fear Hashem do not fear people. A judge who is subject to Divine authority is swayed by neither bribery nor threats. He responds to a Higher Authority. This implies that a person's fear of man diminishes commensurate with his increasing fear of Hashem. With this in mind, *Horav Sholom Schwadron, z.l.*, notes that one who feels that he has achieved *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, should ask himself how much of earthly/human concerns he fears.

Rav Schwadron substantiates *Ibn Ezra's* thesis with a famous incident from *Navi*. Yonah *Ha'Navi* was fleeing Tarshish. While he was on board the ship, Hashem cast a mighty wind across the sea, causing the vessel to become so storm tossed that it hung at the precipice of destruction. The sailors became frightened and cried out, each to his own god. They cast the ship's wares overboard to lighten its load. Nonetheless, the ship was about to sink. During all these crises, Yonah had decided to descend to the ship's hold and lay down to sleep.

The captain approached him, asking, “How can you sleep at such a dangerous time? Call out to your G-d. Perhaps He will listen.” The sailors then cast lots to determine on whose account this calamity had befallen them. The lot fell on Yonah.

They turned to Yonah and demanded of him, “Tell us now, because of whom has this calamity befallen us? What is your role? And from where do you come? What is your land, and of what people are you?” (*Yonah* 1:8).

The last question seems a bit incongruous. They did not simply ask him, “Who is your nation?” They asked, “And of what people are you?” They seemed to be focusing more on the characteristics of the nation than on him. They were more concerned with the nation than with him as an individual. Why?

Rav Schwadron explains that Yonah appeared before them as an enigma. The storm was raging; the ship was about to capsize – and Yonah went to sleep. Is this a rational reaction to such a situation? Everybody was beating his chest, crying out to his god, yet Yonah went to bed, as if he did not have a care in the world. Not only did he go to bed – he even was able to fall asleep. Not a care in the world – or so it seemed.

When they saw this sight, a man sleeping during a storm that was threatening the ship, they asked, “From what type of nation do you originate?” That is when Yonah responded, “I fear the G-d of Heaven and earth.” In other words, everything originates from Hashem Who rules the Heaven and earth and everything in between. Wherever one is standing it is all the same. There is no reason to fear the ominous threat of the weather, because it is all the same – Heaven and earth. One who

fears Hashem has nothing else to fear. Everything else is merely an illusion.