

## Moshe stood at the gateway of the camp and said, 'Whoever is for Hashem, join me!' And all the Levi'im gathered around him. (32:26)

Moshe explained to the Jews that they would have to take a stand. They could not claim to be servants of Hashem while still professing allegiance to the Golden Calf. Moshe cried out, "*Mi l'Hashem eilai!*", "*Whoever is for Hashem, join me!*" Shevet Levi came forward. They were the only ones who had the courage to take a stand, to make a total commitment to the Almighty. *Chazal* question the poor response to Moshe's challenge. Who would not come forward to swear allegiance to Hashem? *Chazal* seek to redefine Moshe's question. He asked, "Who was there that did not contribute towards the Golden Calf; who gave nothing in any way, shape, or form for this idol?" Only members of *Shevet Levi* could say that they had been isolated from this sin, that they had nothing to do with the nation's first *avodah zarah*, idol.

*Targum Onkelos* and *Yonasan ben Uziel* both define the phrase, "Whoever is for Hashem, join me!" as a call to those who have *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven. This definition is enigmatic. First, is there no other definition for "*Mi l'Hashem*" other than "Who is G-d-fearing"? Second, if that is the case, why could not Moshe have simply said, "Who is G-d-fearing, join me"?

Indeed, the literal translation of "*Mi l'Hashem eilai,*" is -- "*Whoever belongs to Hashem, join me.*" **Horav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Shlita**, comments that to belong to Hashem is no simple task. Who is able to say that every fiber of his essence is totally sublimated to Hashem? Who knows and understands and is willing to say emphatically that he is totally subjugated to Hashem? Who can make such a statement? Only *Bnei Levi* came forward. They were the only ones who were secure with their response. Only they could attest to their total self-abnegation and complete subservience to the Almighty.

Individuals like the members of *Shevet Levi* were not concerned with the ramifications or consequences of their commitment. If their devotion to Hashem endangers them, they have no fears. If they will be scorned and disdained, they are not concerned. They belong to Hashem. How are we to detect if one belongs to Hashem or if he actually belongs primarily to himself? The litmus test for proving one's true allegiance is *yiraas Shomayim*. If one is G-d-fearing, if he is in awe and fear of Hashem, then he belongs to Hashem. Consequently, if one is *l'Hashem*, he is by implication also a *yarei Shomayim*. The two simply go hand-in-hand.

What was the proving ground for Moshe? How did he choose between those that belonged to Hashem? He noted those who in the past had trusted him and maintained their belief that he was returning--on time, with no questions, no answers, just simple belief and commitment. Only he who had nothing whatsoever to do with the Golden Calf could claim membership in this elite group.

If Moshe were to ask for those who considered themselves *yarei Shomayim*, many would have

come forward. After all, who does not consider himself G-d-fearing? Who would not want to be a G-d-fearing Jew? Unfortunately, a large gap exists between wanting to fear G-d and actually fearing Him. Moshe did not seek out those who aspired to be G-d-fearing or those who already thought that they were. He sought those who actually were *yarei Shomayim*, those select few who really belonged to Hashem. Is it any wonder that the only ones who came forward were *Shevet Levi*?