

## Whoever among the servants of Pharaoh feared Hashem, chased his servants and livestock into the houses. (9:20)

The *Torah* seems to distinguish between different types of Egyptians. While the majority were obviously evil and supportive of Pharaoh's diabolical plans to do with the Jews as he pleased, there were those who were "G-d-fearing"; they were "*yarei es dvar Hashem*," "feared the word of Hashem." Is that really true? Were these Egyptians truly G-d-fearing, or was it a ruse to save themselves and their possessions from ruin? Whatever happened to those animals that were rescued from death because of their owner's "fear of the word of Hashem"? *Chazal* tell us that the horses that belonged to those "select" Egyptians were later used to chase the Jews who left Egypt. The *Midrash* satirizes the G-d-fearing Egyptians. They feared Hashem when the lives of their horses were at stake, but they openly defied Him when the issue was Jewish survival. This blatant hypocrisy has challenged our people throughout history. The same people who have professed religion, love, and fear of G-d have acted with utmost hatred towards the Jews. They have treated us cruelly, brutally inflicting the greatest atrocities upon us, all in the name of religion! We must endeavor to explain the sanctimonious fear of G-d which the religious Egyptians displayed.

In the sphere of morality, Hashem is the source of ethics for three reasons. First and most basic is *yira'as ha'onesh*, fear of punishment. Man must obediently submit to Hashem's service as a result of his fear of retribution for transgression, as well as his anticipation of reward for being moral and upright. *Chazal*, however, have always spoken disparagingly of those who do not move beyond this stage by aspiring to a higher level of service to Hashem.

We consider the next two characteristics prerequisites for developing proper motivation towards serving Hashem. They are *yira'as ha'romemus*, fear of awe--or man's awareness of Hashem's overwhelming greatness--and, ultimately, *ahavas Hashem*, love of Hashem. Although "awe of Hashem" compels obedience and submission to Him, the *Torah* demands that we aspire to attain "love of Hashem." These concepts, which arise out of the recognition that Hashem is the source of absolute value, establish the basis and foundation of moral law. The G-d fearing Egyptians were only able to reach the first stage, fear of retribution. Hence, the *Torah* states that they were "*yarei es dvar Hashem*." They feared Hashem's word, but they were fearful only of His "word," His actions; they were not actually in fear of "Him." This "fear" was nothing more than cowardice which was quickly transformed when they felt that they were no longer in danger. One must possess all the qualities of fear and love of Hashem in order to maintain the appropriate moral balance.