

Hashem, your G-d, shall you follow. (13:5)

When the *Chafetz Chaim*, *zl*, met the *Gerrer Rebbe*, *zl* (*Imrei Emes*), at the first *Knessiah Gedolah*, he asked him about what appeared to be an inconsistency in *Rashi's* commentary concerning the definition of the word *acharei*. In the above *pasuk*, *Rashi* does not view *acharei* as having any “geographical” impact, while, in 11:30, *Acharei derech ma'vo ha'shemesh*. “Far, in the direction of the sunset,” *Rashi* explains the *pasuk* does have geographical impact: “Wherever *acharei* is used, it is *muflag*, it implies a considerable distance in time and space.” The *Chafetz Chaim* asked, “According to *Rashi's* explanation, how are we to understand the *pasuk* (above), *Acharei Hashem Elokeichem teileichu*? Is the Torah implying that one should follow Hashem – from a distance?”

The *Rebbe* replied, “One who feels himself distant is actually quite close. One who feels himself close (and makes every effort to publicize his religious practice) is not really close – he is distant from Hashem.” How often do we meet someone who either does not know or has rejected religious observance who is asked, “What are your religious beliefs?” The usual response that we hear is, “In my heart. I do not require a display of overt practice to satisfy my religious beliefs. I keep Judaism in my private ‘room’ – in my heart.” This person’s relationship with Judaism probably hails back to his youthful relationship with an aged grandfather who was a devout Jew, not only in practice, but also in his appearance and demeanor. As a result of this early encounter and relationship, the grandson, who observes little or nothing, considers himself to be an authority on the Jewish religion and how it should be observed.

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl (cited by *Horav Shlomo Levinstein*), relates that when the *Chazon Ish* moved to Bnei Brak, nothing much was there. He wanted to build a Torah community. Someone had to be the first candidate. He accepted it upon himself to be that someone. After a short while, the *Chazon Ish* said to *Rav Galinsky*, “Did you see what the *rosh ha'ir*, mayor, of the ‘city’ (*Rav Gershtenkorn*) did for me? He placed a street light near my house to illuminate the street. I derived a powerful lesson as a result of this light. When I walk outside at night, I notice my shadow. When I move away from the light, my shadow looms larger in size. The farther I move away, the larger and taller my shadow becomes. This taught me that the closer one is to the light, the smaller he is. Indeed, if he stands beneath the light, he projects no shadow. The further he moves away, the larger he becomes.” The lesson is obvious: One who is connected to Hashem, to His light and the light of Torah, does not see himself, because one cannot perceive self-hood in the presence of such light. When he sees more of himself, it is a sign that he is distant from the Torah.