

And now, Yisrael, what is Hashem, your G-d, asking of you, other than to fear Hashem, your G-d. (10:12)

In his commentary to *Sefer Shemos* (3:22) *Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl*, distinguishes between various meanings for the word *sho'ail*, to borrow/to ask. His rule is: When the word *sho'ail* is followed by the word *mei'eis*, from, it means to request, as it says (*Shemos* 3:22), *V'sho'alah islah mishchentah*, "Each woman shall request from her neighbor." When the word *sho'ail* is followed by the word *me'im*, with, it means to borrow, as in (*Shemos* 22:13), *V'chi yishal ish mei'im reieihu*, "If a man shall borrow from his fellow." The reason for this is that, when one borrows an object, he does not become its owner. Ownership is retained by the object's physical owner. Thus, the owner who lends an object will "come along with it" (so to speak) and he is still *imach*, "with you."

With this idea in mind (*imach* implies that the owner comes along with the object), *Horav Shimon Schwab, zl*, homiletically renders the above *pasuk* which addresses *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven. Why does the Torah write, *Mah Hashem... sho'ail mei imach*, "What does Hashem wish (to borrow) (request) from you?" What is the meaning of Hashem "borrowing" our *yiraas Shomayim*? It should rather have said, *Mah Hashem sho'ail mei itach*, "What does Hashem request of you?"

Rav Schwab cites *Chazal* (*Niddah* 16b) who teach, "Everything is in the hands of Heaven except for the fear of Heaven." Everyone must expend his own effort and toil to achieve *yiraas Shomayim*. There are no "free tickets," no easy way. Nonetheless, in our *tefillos*, prayers, we implore Hashem, *V'yacheid levaveinu l'ahavah u'l'yirah es Shemecha*, "Unify our hearts to love and to fear Your Name." If we ask for it, it means that this is a way of achieving it. Apparently, this *tefillah* implies that *yiraas Shomayim* can be had for the asking, even without expending our own effort.

Initially, one must do it himself. He must toil to achieve *yiraas Shomayim*. After one has acquired a modicum of *yiraas Shomayim* by virtue of his own exertion, however, we pray to Hashem that He "borrow" this *yiraas Shomayim* and "repay" it with interest. We know that achieving the optimum level of fearfulness is beyond our ability. Thus, we ask for Heavenly assistance, knowing full well that unless we achieve the first rung, we will not be able to climb the ladder on our own.

Yiraas Shomayim means *yiraas ha'romemus*, fear of awe. A person is awestruck with fear of the greatness of Hashem; thus, he diligently does everything possible to uphold the *mitzvos* and everything that Hashem asks of us. It is a constant *mitzvah*, because Hashem is constantly with us; otherwise we would not exist. *Shivisi Hashem l'negdi tamid*, "I set Hashem before me always" (*Tehillim* 16:8) is a halachic imperative which enjoins us to act appropriately all of the time, regardless where and in what circumstances, we find ourselves. *Horav Moshe Soloveitchik, zl*, would not stand *Shemoneh Esrai* a minute longer in public than when he recited it in private. He saw this practiced by his father, *Horav Chaim Soloveitchik, zl*. *Rav Chaim* dressed in public as he dressed in private. One's behavior must be consistent, because one always stands before

Hashem.

Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl, taught, “Man’s very essence is directed solely to the goal of recognizing the Creator and, consequently, not only his soul is bound together with the Master of the Universe, but even his body and his entire existence are rooted in the great purpose for which he is intended.” (*Rav Gifter*, Rabbi Yechiel Spero). I can attest that these emotions were evident in the *Rosh Yeshivah*’s total demeanor. He once wrote, “If man finds his Creator, he has found everything.” This was not a mere aphorism; this was the way the *rosh yeshivah* lived his life.

Horav Aryeh Levin, zl, the *Tzaddik* of Yerushalayim, was wont to say, “A person who is truly reverent in his fear of Heaven is one who lies awake at night worrying, ‘What have I done today to relieve the suffering of a Jew made wretched by his troubles?’” *Rav Aryeh* had an uncanny ability to relate to the entire social and religious gamut of Jewry. He had feelings for them all and was acutely aware that what caused one to be on the outskirts of religion was usually circumstances in his life that were often beyond his control. He saw through the cloud of ambiguity which others refused to penetrate; thus, he was able to reach out to love and be loved by all. He saw Hashem in each and every Jew. To achieve such a spiritual plateau, one must truly be a *yarei Shomayim*.

Horav Avraham Kalmanovitz, zl, was one of the leaders of the *Vaad Hatzalah*, Relief and Rescue. Following World War II, he worked feverishly to save Jews, both physically and spiritually. He was instrumental in the spiritual reclamation of Moroccan Jewry which was falling prey to the heresy preached by the *Alliance Israelite Universelle*. (This was a Paris-based secular Jewish organization founded in 1860 by the French statesman Adolphe Cremieux to safeguard the human rights of Jews around the world. In North Africa, they attempted to secularize the Jewish legal and educational systems, attempting to alienate Jews from the Orthodox way of life.) This motivated *Rav Kalmanovitz*’s clarion call for help. “Save Moroccan Jewry,” he cried to anyone who would listen. He travelled to *Eretz Yisrael* and called a meeting of the *gedolim*, Torah leaders, and implored them to help: “Give me someone who speaks their language, who is a scholar, righteous and G-d-fearing, who can turn the tide of assimilation.” The Torah leaders chose a young man, *Horav Rapahel Abo, zl*, and charged him with the mission.

Rav Raphael spoke with his revered *Rebbe*, the *Rosh Yeshivah* of Porat Yosef, *Horav Ezra Attiyah, zl*, and asked his advice. The *Rosh Yeshivah* not only agreed, but gave him *tzedakah*, charitable funds, to ease the burden of starting up the program. *Rav Raphael* left his young wife in Yerushalayim as he trail-blazed the spiritual wasteland that was Morocco at the time. After searching for a suitable community in which to establish a *yeshivah*, he arrived in a city which had a sizeable Jewish community that seemed interested. Indeed, the *rosh ha’kahal*, *Reb Moshe Yifrach*, a distinguished man of means, even agreed to join in the endeavor. His presence would surely turn the tables in *Rav Abo*’s favor.

At the very last minute, *Reb Moshe* called that something had come up. He could not attend the meeting. “But I need you,” the young *Rav* asserted. “If you do not attend, it will all be in vain. The

kahal respects you. Your attendance is critical to our success.” “I am very sorry. My son is ill and I just picked up medicine at the pharmacy. I do not want to be late in giving him the medicine,” was *Reb Moshe*’s reply. “Please, I beg of you, without your presence, everything that we had planned will be a waste. Your son will be well. Hashem will see to his cure. I assure you!”

The plea emanating from *Rav Raphael*’s pure heart moved *Reb Moshe*. (*Rav Raphael* was all of thirty years old at the time.) *Rav Raphael* spoke passionately to the crowded *shul*, where a standing-room only crowd had gathered to listen. Undoubtedly, *Reb Moshe Yifrach*’s presence would make a difference. Suddenly, the doors burst open, and the pharmacist came running in, pushing himself through the crowd. As soon as he saw *Reb Moshe*, he fell on him and asked, “Where are the pills?” “What pills?” *Reb Moshe* asked. “The ones that I gave you.” “Here, in my pocket.” When the pharmacist saw the jar of pills, he all but fainted.

“You have no idea how lucky you are,” the pharmacist cried out. “When I finished my day’s work, I reviewed the pharmacy receipts and prescriptions. I suddenly realized, to my horror, that I had given you the wrong medicine. The pills had somehow been exchanged and placed in the wrong container. The pills that I sold you would have killed your son. Hashem looked after you!”

At that moment, the entire congregation gazed at *Rav Abo*, knowing full well that it was his perseverance in demanding that *Reb Moshe* attend the meeting that had saved the day. It did not take long for the Moroccan community to learn that they had a *tzaddik* living in their midst. *Rav Abo*’s deep-rooted commitment to Hashem set the foundation for the Otzar HaTorah educational network to grow in Morocco.