

Now, O Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d. (10:12)

Chazal (*Berachos* 32B) derive from this *pasuk* (in which Hashem asks us to fear Him) that everything is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven. Everything in a person's nature and circumstance in life -- such as his height, complexion, financial success and his intelligence -- are in Hashem's hands. Whether or not one is G-d-fearing (and, by extension, all aspects of spiritual growth), however, is man's decision. It is not forced upon him. Fear of Hashem is part of man's free-will. The *Talmud* asks: Is fear of Heaven a small thing? They respond that, yes, for Moshe *Rabbeinu* who made the above statement (*pasuk* 10), *yiraas Shomayim* is a small thing. This is comparable to one who has asked for a large utensil which he has available. Since he already has it in his possession, he does not view it as being large (and hard to come by). When one asks his friend for a small utensil, but his friend does not have it, the small utensil which he does not have becomes like a large utensil, since he is unable to fill the person's request.

The commentators make the obvious point: Although fear of Heaven was a small matter for Moshe, this was not about Moshe. This concerned *Klal Yisrael* for whom it was no small matter. *Drashos HaRan* explains that fear of Heaven is highly achievable by all. True, it requires great effort, but, once it has been achieved, the benefits are so great that the person will look back on his efforts as being trivial in comparison. Additionally, one who realizes the benefits at the onset of his journey will view the efforts as insignificant.

The *Maggid, zl, m'Dubno* explains that the generation revolves around its *tzadik*. The righteous person of each generation achieves exalted levels of *yiraas Shomayim*. Once this has been achieved, he brings the sublime qualities of *yiraas Shomayim* down to this world, which then become accessible to the "ordinary" man. In other words, what appears (and truly on its own is) formidable is mitigated by the *tzadik's* personal efforts and achievements. We ride his coattails. The *Maggid* cites the *Gaon, zl, m'Vilna* who likens this to one who fills a large bowl with water. He keeps on pouring until it overflows and fills the smaller bowls next to it. Moshe brought his *yiraas Shomayim* accomplishments down to us, so that it has become a much easier task for us.

Horav Aryeh Leib Heyman, zl, offers an innovative approach toward understanding this *Chazal*. Someone has a large vessel in which he is able to put all his many possessions. Thus, if someone asks to borrow the vessel, he would refer to it as his large vessel. A person who possesses numerous vessels -- some large, some small, some medium -- does not view his large vessel as being out of the ordinary. It is one of his vessels.

This is the idea behind *Chazal's* statement. True, *yiraas Shomayim* is not simple to achieve. It is clearly likened to a large vessel. One does not reach the pinnacle of *yiraas Shomayim*, however, without first acquiring an assortment of "vessels." As he ascends the ladder of Heavenly fear, he garners for himself a number of spiritual plateaus. Thus, he does not view his achievement as

being out of the ordinary. It is just one more accomplishment in his spiritual journey.

The *Kotzker Rebbe, zl*, has a different take on *Chazal* – one that stands alone in its perspective on achieving *yiraas Shomayim*. He views *Chazal's* statement attributing everything but *yiraas Shomayim*, to Heaven, as a reference to *tefillah*, prayer. Everything for which we pray to Hashem is not guaranteed an affirmative response. The answer may very well be: “No.” Hashem decides which requests He will grant and which He will not. When it concerns *yiraas Shomayim*, however, it is different. When one sincerely prays to Hashem to grant Him *yiraas Shomayim*, if he really wants it badly enough, Hashem will allow the person's prayers to have efficacy. Prayer for *yiraas Shomayim* is in the hands of man.

The manner in which a person prays – his passion, fervor and *kavanah*, intention -- is the litmus test of his *yiraas Shomayim*. *Horav Moshe Aharon Stern, zl*, was the embodiment of one whose entire being is suffused with fear of Heaven. This was evidenced in his total demeanor, but especially in the way in which he *davened*. His prayers were impassioned, emanating from the depths of his heart. He would supplicate Hashem like a humble servant standing before his Master. He did not *shukel*, sway back and forth, but stood motionless, thinking over every word that emerged from his mouth.

It is related that *Horav Shlomo Zalmen Auerbach, zl*, never repeated a word or a pasuk. When he prayed, he weighed each word carefully and meticulously with the same assiduousness as one who is counting money. He never backtracked, because he said it correctly the first time. He was particular to daven with a minyan, quorum of ten men. He instructed his students in the importance of davening with a minyan. He once asked his six-year-old grandson, “How does Abba put on Tefillin?” The child innocently proceeded to demonstrate how his father put on Tefillin. *Rav Shlomo Zalmen* immediately approached the child's father and chided him for not davening with a minyan in the morning. (This was a rare occasion, but a bright boy can pick up a lot from even a few times.) “It is obvious that you have davened at home. How else could your young son know how to put on *Tefillin*?”

Rav Moshe Aharon Stern asked *Rav Shlomo Zalmen Auerbach* a *halachic* question (on behalf of a student). If one arrives late for *davening*, and the *minyan* is near the culmination of *pesukei d'zimrah*, should he slowly recite only those parts of the service which the *Shulchan Aruch* deems necessary, or should he quickly zip through the entire *pesukei d'zimrah*? *Rav Shlomo Zalmen* wrung his hands and shook his head in dismay concerning what he had just heard. He tried unsuccessfully to justify the question. He simply could not understand how someone who spends his day engrossed in Torah could ask such a question. How could a *ben Torah* come late to davening?

The *Zohar HaKadosh* (commentary to *Parashas Terumah* 131) cites an inspiring *mashal*, parable. A king invited his entire populace to meet him at the capital city on a certain day at a set time. The people did not rush to be on time, except one man who came early to greet the king. When the

monarch arrived, he asked the man where the rest of the people were. The response was, "They are on their way." The king became visibly upset at his subjects, but he was so appreciative of the one man that had showed up that the man became the king's friend and confidante. Likewise, Hashem comes to every *shul* to rest His *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, on the congregation of Jews. When Hashem sees that there is no *minyan*, He becomes "upset." Those who are present, however, become "friends" of Hashem. Sadly, we do not think about it this way. Hashem is waiting for us. When we are late, He must wait longer.

I conclude with an illuminating exposition from *Horav Yisrael Chortkover, zl (Nezer Yisrael)*, concerning the efficacy of *tefillah*. I cite it because *Klal Yisrael* has so many requests, issues that keep people awake at night. *Tefillah* is the only pathway to Hashem. Perhaps the following will make us appreciate it more.

Chazal (Devarim Rabbah 88) teach, *Tefillah oseh mechtzah*, "Prayer achieves a half." This comment begs elucidation. Why should sincere prayer only accomplish half of one's requests? The *Rebbe* explains that *Chazal* are sharing a powerful hidden message. Hashem wants to help every Jew, to shower us all with His benevolence. Furthermore, He not only wants to do this, He is waiting for us, hoping for the opportunity to carry out His wishes. The problem is that we are not always worthy of His kindness, due to our shortcomings. This is where *tefillah* enters into the picture. The purpose of *tefillah* is to repair, correct and rectify our half of the equation, to elevate ourselves to be deserving of His munificence that He is waiting to give us. The Almighty is always ready and waiting. He wants to give. Now, we must be ready and worthy of accepting His assistance. He is waiting for "our half." This is what is meant by *tefillah oseh mechtzah*. It is the "half" that makes it "whole."