

Now I know that you are a G-d-fearing Man. (22:12)

Chazal (*Sanhedrin* 39:13) distinguish between the level of *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, evinced by Avraham *Avinu* and Ovadyahu. Concerning Avraham it is written *y'rei Elokim atah*, you are G-d fearing, while concerning Ovadyahu the *Navi* writes, *Va'yaar Hashem meod*, he feared Hashem very much."

The added word, *meod*, describing Ovadyahu's *yiraas Shomayim*, takes him "over the top" and presents him as being on a higher level of *yiraas Shomayim* than even our first Patriarch.

In 1920, Yeshivas Slabodka was forced to relocate to Nicolaiav, where *Horav Mordechai Dov Eidelberg, zl*, served as *Rav*. It was *Shabbos Parashas Naso* and the *Rav* ascended the podium to address the congregation concerning the critical importance of sustaining the *Yeshivah* which was presently in their community. He began by questioning the above statement of *Chazal*. Is it possible to make such a statement concerning Avraham *Avinu*, who sacrificed himself to reach out to a world society totally influenced by the moral turpitude of pagan beliefs? These were people who practically from the beginning of time served every idol in existence. They were the targets of Avraham's outreach efforts. How can *Chazal* say that Ovadyahu, who was undoubtedly righteous and had risked his life to sustain the *Neviim*, Prophets, was on a higher spiritual plane with regard to *yiraas Shomayim*?

We must say, explained the *Rav*, that Hashem's reward for one's positive actions and service is commensurate with the amount of exertion and toil he expends. *L'fum tzaara agra*, "Reward is in consonance with the pain" (*Pirkei Avos* 5:26).

Avraham *Avinu's* level of *mesiras nefesh* to slaughter Yitzchak is beyond our ability to fathom. All his hopes for Yitzchak to be his successor, to continue his outreach, to be the next Patriarch, were all dashed with the command to slaughter Yitzchak. Nonetheless, at the end of the day, Avraham heard the command directly from Hashem, which alone makes the *nisayon* much more palatable. [If we would realize that every *nisayon* we undergo is actually Hashem speaking to us, our reaction throughout the ordeal would be different, but who thinks things out so carefully?]

Ovadyahu's *mesiras nefesh* was the result of his own personal motivation. He felt it was necessary to do, regardless of the immediate danger to his life. The lives of one hundred *Neviim* hung in the balance. How could he in all good conscience ignore their needs? This is why his level of *yiraas Shomayim* has the added appellation, *meod*.

The *Rav* concluded with a plea to the community to stand up and be counted to support the health and welfare of the student body of the *Yeshivah*. They are *Klal Yisrael's* future, without whom our spiritual lives are on the brink.