

Mitzvah of the Week: Do Contemporary Jews Fear Hashem?

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1. דברים פרק י, יב-כ

(יב) ועתה ישראל מה יקוּץ אֱלֹהֶיךָ שְׂאֵל מֵעַמּוֹד **כִּי אִם לִירָאָה אֶת יְקוּץ אֱלֹהֶיךָ** לְלַקֵּת בְּכָל דְרָכֶיךָ וּלְאַהֲבָה אֹתוֹ וְלַעֲבֹד אֶת יְקוּץ אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ : (יג) לְשֹׁמֵר אֶת מִצְוֹת יְקוּץ וְאֶת חֻקֹּתָיו אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מֵצַוֶּה הַיּוֹם לְטוֹב לָךְ : (יד) הֲוֵה לִיקוּץ אֱלֹהֶיךָ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְשָׁמַיִם הַשָּׁמַיִם הָאָרֶץ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר בָּהּ : (טו) רַק בְּאַבְרָהָם חֶשֶׁק יְקוּץ לְאַהֲבָה אוֹתָם וַיִּבְחַר בְּזֶרְעוֹ אַחֲרֵיהֶם בְּכֶם מִכָּל הָעַמִּים כִּי הִנֵּה : (טז) וּמִלֶּתְכֶם אֶת עַרְלַת לִבְבְּכֶם וְעַרְפְּכֶם לֹא תִקְשׁוּ עוֹד : (יז) כִּי יְקוּץ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הוּא אֱלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֲדֹנֵי הָאֲדֹנִים הָאֵל הַגָּדֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשָּׂא פָנָיִם וְלֹא יִקַּח שֹׁחַד : (יח) עֲשֵׂה מִשְׁפָּט וְתוֹם וְאַלְמָנָה וְאַהֲבֵה גֵר לְתֵת לוֹ לֶחֶם וְשִׁמְלָה : (יט) וְאַהֲבֵתָם אֶת הַגֵּר כִּי גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם : (כ) **אֶת יְקוּץ אֱלֹהֶיךָ תִירָא** אֹתוֹ תַעֲבֹד וּבוֹ תִדְבֹק וּבְשִׁמוֹ תִשָּׁבַע :

1. Deavrim 10:12-20

And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God demand of you? **Only this: to revere the LORD your God**, to walk only in His paths, to love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and soul, keeping the LORD's commandments and laws, which I enjoin upon you today, for your good. Mark, the heavens to their uttermost reaches belong to the LORD your God, the earth and all that is on it! Yet it was to your fathers that the LORD was drawn in His love for them, so that He chose you, their lineal descendants, from among all peoples—as is now the case. Cut away, therefore, the thickening about your hearts and stiffen your necks no more. For the LORD your God is God supreme and Lord supreme, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who shows no favor and takes no bribe, but upholds the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and befriends the stranger, providing him with food and clothing.— You too must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. **You must revere the LORD your God:** only Him shall you worship, to Him shall you hold fast, and by His name shall you swear.

2. חזקוני דברים פרק י פסוק כ

(כ) את ה' אלקיך תירא שלא לעבור על מצות לא תעשה.

2. Chizkuni Deavrim 10:20

“You shall fear the Lord your G-d;” This is a warning not to transgress negative commandments.

3. ויקרא פרק יט פסוק יד

לא תקלל חרש ולפני עור לא תתן מכשול ויראת מאֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲנִי יְקוּץ :

3. Vayikra 19:14

You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind. You shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

4. רש"י ויקרא פרשת קדושים פרק יט פסוק יד

ויראת מאלהיך - לפי שהדבר הזה אינו מסור לבריות לידע אם דעתו של זה לטובה או לרעה, ויכול להשמט ולומר לטובה נתכוונתי, לפיכך נאמר בו ויראת מאלהיך המכיר מחשבותיך. וכן כל דבר המסור ללבו של אדם העושהו ואין שאר הבריות מכירות בו, נאמר בו ויראת מאלהיך :

4. Rashi 19:14

Because in this case it is not given to human beings to know whether the intention of this man (the offender) was for the advantage or the disadvantage of the person whom he advised, and he thus might be able to evade the responsibility by saying: "I meant it for the best", Scripture therefore states with reference to him: "But thou shall be afraid of thy God" Who is cognizant of thy secret thoughts. Similarly in all actions where it is given only to the heart of him who does it to know the motive that prompts him and where other people have no insight into it, Scripture states, "But be afraid of thy God!" (Sifra, Kedoshim, Section 2 14; Bava Metzia 58b).

5. ספר החינוך פרשת עקב מצוה תלב

להיות יראת ה' על פנינו תמיד לבלתי נחטא, כלומר **שנירא ביאת ענשו** ולא יהיה לבבנו בלי מגור אליו כל היום, ועל זה נאמר [דברים י', כ'], את ה' אלהיך תירא... שורש המצוה ביראת ה' נגלה לכל רואי השמש, כי השמירה הגדולה מן החטא הוא יראת ענשו.

5. Sefer HaChinukh Mitzvah 432

The commandment of fearing God: That the fear of God, may He be blessed, should always be on our faces, that we not sin; meaning to say that we fear with a fear of His punishment and that our hearts not be without fear of Him, the whole day. And about this is it stated (Deuteronomy 10:20), "The Lord, your God, you shall fear."

The root of the commandment of fearing God, may He be blessed, is revealed to all who see the Sun, as the greatest protection from sin is the fear of His punishment.

6. ספר מסילת ישרים פרק כד

יש יראת העונש, וזהו המין האחד, ויש יראת הרוממות, וזהו המין הב', שיראת החטא חלק ב' ממנו, ונבאר עתה ענינם והבדליהם: יראת העונש, כפשוטה שאדם ירא מעבור את פי ה' אלהיו מפני העונשים אשר לעבירות, אם לגוף, ואם לנפש. והנה זאת קלה ודאי כי כל אדם אוהב את עצמו, ויירא לנפשו, ואין דבר שירחיק אותו מעשות דבר אחד יותר מן היראה שלא תבואהו בו איזה רעה, ואין יראה זו ראויה אלא לעמי הארץ, ולנשים אשר דעתן קלה, איך אינה יראת החכמים ואנשי הדעת.

המין הב' הוא יראת הרוממות, והוא שהאדם ירחק מן החטאים, **ולא יעשה מפני כבודו הגדול יתברך שמו, כי איך יקל, או איך יערב לבו של בשר ודם שפל ונמאס לעשות דבר נגד רצונו של הבורא יתברך ויתעלה שמו, והנה זאת היראה אינה כל כך קלה להשיג אותה, כי לא תולד אלא מתוך ידיעה והשכלה להתבונן על רוממותו יתברך, ועל פחיתותו של האדם, כל אלה דברים מתולדות השכל המבין ומשכיל.**

6. Mesilat Yesharim Chapter 24

The first type is fear of punishment, and the second is fear of G-d's exaltedness (Yirat Haromemut), of which Fear of Sin is the second part therein. We will now

explain their matters and differences. Fear of punishment, as its name implies, is for a person to fear transgressing the word of the L-rd, his G-d, due to the punishments incurred for the transgression, whether to body or soul. This [type of fear] is certainly easy to attain. For every man loves himself and fears for his soul and there is nothing which keeps a person from doing something more than the fear that this thing might bring harm to him.

The second type of fear is fear of G-d's exaltedness (Yirat Haromemut). It means that a person distances and refrains from sin because of G-d's great honor, blessed be His Name. For how could his heart of flesh and blood, lowly and petty, allow or dare do something against the will of the Creator, blessed and exalted be His Name?! This type of fear is not so easy to attain, for it will arise only out of knowledge and thought, [namely] by contemplating G-d's exaltedness, blessed be He, and the lowliness of man. All these things are outgrowths of the intellect which understands and attains insight.

7. ספר מסילת ישרים הקדמה

היראה היא יראת רוממותו יתברך שיירא מלפניו כמו שיירא מלפני מלך גדול ונורא, **ויבוש מגדולתו על - כל תנועה שהוא בא להתנועע, כל - שכן בדברו לפניו בתפלה או בעסקו בתורתו.**

7. Mesilat Yesharim, Introduction

Fear [of G-d] - this is fear of the exaltedness of G-d, namely, that one fears before Him like he would fear before a great and awesome king, feeling abashed by His greatness before making any movement before Him. All the more so, when speaking before Him in prayer or studying His Torah.

8. מנחת חינוך פרשת עקב מצוה תלב

(א) להיות יראת השי"ת על פנינו כו' ביראת עונשו כו' ובסוף כתב ולתת על לבו כו' וישיב להם נקם כו'. ומצוה זו מבואר בר"מ פ"ב מהלכות יסוה"ת ושם מבואר האיך הדבק ליראתו בשעה כו' והוא יראת הרוממות. **והרב המחבר נקט יראת העונש שהוא ג"כ מצוה ועיי"כ בא ליראת הרוממות וכבר האריכו במצוה זו כל ספרי מוסר ואשרי כל ירא ד' השי"ת ישים חלקינו עמהם:**

8. Minchat Chinukh Mitzvah 432

This mitzvah is clarified in Rambam, and there it is clarified how one clings to reverence... and this is the reverence of exaltedness. **And the author [of the Chinukh] defined it as fear of punishment, which is also a mitzvah, and from it results in exaltedness, and this**

mitzvah has already been elaborated upon in the mussar books, and fortunate is the God fearing individual, and God should place among them.

9. רמב"ם הלכות יסודי התורה פרק ב הלכה א

האל הנכבד והנורא הזה מצוה לאהבו וליראה אותו שנאמר ואהבת את ה' אלהיך, ונאמר את ה' אלהיך תירא.

הלכה ב

והיאך היא הדרך לאהבתו ויראתו, בשעה שיתבונן האדם במעשיו וברואיו הנפלאים הגדולים ויראה מהן חכמתו שאין לה ערך ולא קץ מיד הוא אוהב ומשבח ומפאר ומתאוה תאוה גדולה לידע השם הגדול

9. Rambam Hilkhoh Yesodei Ha-Torah 2:1-2

It is mandatory to love and fear this Glorified and Awe-inspiring God, for it is said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" ([Deut. 6.5](#)); and as it is said: "The Lord thy God thou shalt fear." (Ibid. 6, 13).

But how may one discover the way to love and fear Him? When man will reflect concerning His works, and His great and wonderful creatures, and will behold through them His wonderful, matchless and infinite wisdom, he will spontaneously be filled with love, praise and exaltation and become possessed of a great longing to know the Great Name

10. רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק י הלכה א

אל יאמר אדם הריני עושה מצות התורה ועוסק בחכמתה כדי שאקבל כל הברכות הכתובות בה או כדי שאזכה לחיי העולם הבא, ואפרוש מן העבירות שהזהירה תורה מהן כדי שאנצל מן הקללות הכתובות בתורה או כדי שלא אכרת מחיי העולם הבא, אין ראוי לעבוד את ה' על הדרך הזה, שהעובד על דרך זה הוא עובד מיראה ואינה מעלת הנביאים ולא מעלת החכמים, ואין עובדים ה' על דרך זה אלא עמי הארץ והנשים והקטנים שמחנכי אותן לעבוד מיראה עד שתרבה דעתן ויעבדו מאהבה.

הלכה ב

העובד מאהבה עוסק בתורה ובמצות והולך בנתיבות החכמה לא מפני דבר בעולם ולא מפני יראת הרעה ולא כדי לירש הטובה אלא עושה האמת מפני שהוא אמת וסוף הטובה לבא בגללה, ומעלה זו היא מעלה גדולה מאד ואין כל חכם זוכה לה, והיא מעלת אברהם אבינו שקראו הקדוש ברוך הוא אוהבו לפי שלא עבד אלא מאהבה והיא המעלה שצונו בה הקדוש ברוך הוא על ידי משה שנאמר ואהבת את ה' אלהיך, ובזמן שיאהוב אדם את ה' אהבה הראויה מיד יעשה כל המצות מאהבה.

10. Rambam Hilkhoh Teshuva 10:1-2

Let no man say: "Behold, I perform the precepts of the Torah, and engage myself in its wisdom so that I will receive all the blessings described therein, or so that I will merit the life in the World to Come; and I will separate myself from the transgressions against which the Torah gave warning so that I will escape the curses described therein, or so that I will suffer excision from the life in the World to Come". It is improper to serve the Lord in such way, for whosoever serves the Lord in such way, he is a worshiper because of fear, which is neither the degree of the prophets nor the degree of the sages. And the Lord should not be worshiped that way, save only by ignorant men, women and infants who are trained to worship because of fear, until their knowledge increases when they will worship because of love.

The worshiper because of love, engages himself in the study of the Torah and the observance of precepts and follows the paths of wisdom on no account in the world, neither for fear of evil nor in order to inherit the good; but he does the true thing because it is true, and in the end the good comes because thereof. That degree is a great degree, indeed and not every scholar attains it; for such was the degree of Abraham our father, whom the Holy One, blessed is He! called His beloved, because he worshiped not, save because of love, and it is, furthermore, the degree concerning which the Holy One, blessed is He! commanded through Moses, saying: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God" ([Deut. 6.5](#)); for, when man will love the Lord with a proper love, he will momentarily perform all of the commandments because of love.

11. ספר המצוות לרמב"ם מצות עשה ד

והמצוה הרביעית היא שצונו להאמין יראתו יתעלה ולהפחד ממנו ולא נהיה ככופרים ההולכים בקרי אבל נירא ביאת ענשו בכל עת והוא אמרו יתעלה (ואתחנן ו) את י"י אלהיך תירא.

11. Sefer Hamitzvot of Rambam, Positive Commandment #4

And the fourth [positive commandment is, that He has commanded us to affirm His awesomeness, and to fear Him, and we shall not be as infidels who pursue their hearts' desires wantonly. Rather, we shall fear His retribution at all times; and this is the import of "Hashem, your God, you shall fear."

12. אמת ליעקב דברים פרק י פסוק כ

והנראה **דמצות היראה היא התוצאה** מן היראה, כלומר, שעושה איזו פעולה או מונע את עצמו מאיזו פעולה מפני יראה זו, ואין שום נפקותא בעילת היראה - אם מפני הרוממות או העונש, ובלבד שתגרום התוצאות הנדרשות, כדאשכחן בפ"ק דקידושין [דף ל"א ע"ב]: איזהו מורא כו' לא עומד במקומו כו' לא סותר את דבריו וכו', הרי שאין המורא עצמה מצוה היא אלא התוצאה היא המצוה...

12. Emes L'Yaaov, R. Yaakov Kamenetsky, Devarim 10:20

It seems that the mitzvah of *yirah* is a **result** of reverence meaning that one who does a particular activity or prevents oneself from an activity because of this *yirah*, and the cause of the *yirah* makes no difference – whether it is because of exaltedness or punishment, as long as it causes the desired results. We see examples in which reverence is manifest in actions – the reverence itself is not the mitzvah, but its result.

13. תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף כח עמוד ב

אמרו לו: רבינו, ברכנו! אמר להם: יהי רצון שתהא מורא שמים עליכם כמורא בשר ודם. אמרו לו תלמידי: עד כאן? - אמר להם: ולואי! תדעו, כשאדם עובר עבירה אומר: שלא יראני אדם.

13. Talmud Bearchot 28b

His students said to him: Our teacher, bless us. He said to them: May it be His will that the fear of Heaven shall be upon you like the fear of flesh and blood. His students were puzzled and said: To that point and not beyond? Shouldn't one fear God more? He said to them: Would that a person achieve that level of fear. Know that when one commits a transgression, he says to himself: I hope that no man will see me.

14. תלמוד בבלי מסכת קידושין דף לא עמוד א

אמר ר' יצחק: כל העובר עבירה בסתר - כאילו דוחק רגלי שכינה, שנאמר: כה אמר ה' השמים כסאי והארץ הדום רגלי.

14. Talmud Kiddushin 31a

Rabbi Yitzhak says: Anyone who transgresses in private, it is considered as though he is pushing away the feet of the Divine Presence. As it is stated: "So says the Lord: The heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool" ([Isaiah 66:1](#)).

15. רש"י מסכת קידושין דף לא עמוד א

והארץ הדום רגלי - והעובר בסתר אומר אין המקום כאן לפיכך הוא נסתר לומר אין יודע נמצא כדוחק רגליו ומקצרו לומר אין כאן.

15. Rashi Kiddushin 31a

One who transgresses privately is saying "God is not here," therefore He's hidden, saying I don't know where he is, and this is like pushing away the feet [of the Divine] and saying He is not here.

16. שולחן ערוך אורח חיים הלכות הנהגת אדם בבקר סימן א סעיף א

שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד (תהילים טז, ח), הוא כלל גדול בתורה ובמעלות הצדיקים אשר הולכים לפני האלהים, כי אין ישיבת האדם ותנועותיו ועסקיו והוא לבדו בביתו, כישיבתו ותנועותיו ועסקיו והוא לפני מלך גדול, ולא דבורו והרחבת פיו כרצונו והוא עם אנשי ביתו וקרוביו, כדבורו במושב המלך. כ"ש כשישים האדם אל לבו שהמלך הגדול הקדוש ברוך הוא, אשר מלא כל הארץ כבודו, עומד עליו ורואה במעשיו, כמו שנאמר: אם יסתר איש במסתרים ואני לא אראנו נאם ה' (ירמיה כג, כד), מיד יגיע אליו היראה וההכנעה בפחד השי"ת ובושתו ממנו תמיד (מורה נבוכים ח"ג פ' נ"ב

16. Shulchan Arukh Orach Chayim 1:1

Rem"a: **"I have set the Lord before me constantly" (Psalms 16:8); this is a major principle in the Torah** and amongst the virtues of the righteous who walk before God. For a person's way of sitting, his movements and his dealings while he is alone in his house are not like his way of sitting, his movements and his dealings when he is before a great king; nor are his speech and free expression as much as he wants when he is with his household members and his relatives like his speech when in a royal audience. All the more so **when one takes to heart that the Great King, the Holy One, Blessed Is He, Whose glory fills the earth, is standing over him and watching his actions**, as it is stated: "Will a man hide in concealment and I will not see him?" - the word of God" (Jeremiah 23:24), **he immediately acquires fear and submission in dread of God, May He Be Blessed, and is ashamed of Him constantly** (Guide for the Perplexed III 52).

17. "Contemporary Impediments to *Yirat Shamayim*," R' Aharon Lichtenstein, *Orthodox Forum*

These observations border, again, on the platitudinous. And yet, we need beware of exaggeration. **Impediments to religious faith, sensibility, and lifestyle were not patented by Voltaire or Comte, by Spinoza or Y.L. Gordon. They are inbred within human nature**, inherent within patterns of culture, the primary categories familiar from time immemorial... We are here introduced to the psychological and existential patterns which will help us classify impediments to *yirat shamayim*; to ideological wanderlust and passional concupiscence, respectively. I assume, for our purposes, that the terms, *hirhurei averah* or *zenut* need not be understood in their narrower senses, as denoting thoughts of fornication or sexual license, but can be read as referring **to libidinous lust, generally – or, even beyond that, to material desire, which competes with the committed religious life, distracts a person from its realization, and distances him from the Creator. However, they also include less visceral elements, more social or passional than appetitive – power, status, opulence, leisure – as well as the blend of the carnal and the passional typified by sexuality.** At a second plane, the aspiring Jew encounters obstacles more closely related to the quest for *hayyei olam*, whether **the attraction of alternate religions, enticing by dint of ritual pageantry or social provenance, or the impact of ideology and speculation which poses philosophic difficulty. These are the archetypal impediments, material and spiritual, to the optimal attainment of *yirat shamayim*.** To these may be added elements, such as esthetic pleasure, especially music, which straddle both realms. Taken collectively or even independently, these are formidable dangers under the best of circumstances. **However, each unquestionably has been reinforced within the modern context. On the material side, the concern with creature comfort, and the faith – at least, within the West – that it could be significantly attained, have increased measurably; and the scientific and technological revolution, animated by Bacon's conviction that "knowledge is power" and the relative mastery of nature as the fruits which that revolution has wrought, are self-evident as agents of that concern. That revolution, more than welcome per se, has, however, exerted an ancillary negative impact upon instinctive religious sensibility. Religious existence is significantly interwoven with a sense of dependence... Scientific progress, has, however, eroded the sense – and, from a certain point of view, possibly also the reality – of human dependence...** Nevertheless, without risking the hypocrisy of such moralizing, one can simply note the obvious fact that the amenities afforded by affluence as well as the self-image buttressed by it, may often reduce one's reliance upon divine sustenance. At the heart of the contemporary accretion to both *aharei levavkhem* and *aharei eineikhem* lie two distinct and yet related factors. The first is the **homocentric character** of much modern culture – even of its religious component. At one plane, we are witness to an overwhelming emphasis upon human welfare and desire, however, defined, as the telos of the good life. At

another, **liberal doctrine enconces man – preferably, individual man – as the arbiter of moral and theological truth, in the face of traditional authority.** Quite apart from the specifics of a particular contrempeps, the concomitant defiance may be inconsonant with fostering the humility so critical to meaningful *yirat shamayim*. This tendency is greatly exacerbated by the thrust of postmodern theory and practice. While its character may intensify certain modes of religion, the subjectivist bias encourages a heterodox *elu v'elu* which leads to an unbounded doctrinal no man's land, devoid of dogmatic content or commitment. *Yirat shamayim*, however, demands both. **We may distinguish between four separate levels of contemporary impediments to its attainment. The most comprehensive is emotional atrophy, the inability to feel deeply and sensitively about almost anything** – especially, of a spiritual nature; the personality of a lotus-eater of sorts, unruffled and uninspired, marked by lassitude and insouciance, issuing in, or bred by, radical ennui. **At a second level, we may note an individual fully capable of powerful emotion, both positive and negative, but tone deaf to the quintessence of *yirat shamayim*: reverence... One rung higher, we can encounter a person endowed with the capacity for reverence, but lacking the ability or the desire to perceive its unique content within the context of the divine and transcendental.** Awed by the grandeur of human creativity, cosmic mystery, or, like Kant, by the moral law, he is nonetheless insensitive to *sui generis* response to *sui generis* reality. He does not fully appreciate the import of *yihud Hashem*, in its qualitative sense, and, hence, does not apprehend the sense of the singularly numinous. **Finally, within our own community, there exist those who, whether floundering or assertively self-assured, may be religiously motivated in universal terms, but not attuned to the particularistic context of *yahadut*, not sufficiently convinced that *Mosheh emet v'torato emet* [Moshe is true, and his Torah true].** Whereas the previous class is marked by taints of idolatry, these decline or defect, tinged by skepticism or agnosticism... However, at times, the relative neglect of *yirah* stems from the human psyche more than from textual and theological sources. The sense of proximity and warmth and the desire for it – in part, the basis of *ahavah* and, in part, its product – is far more comforting and reassuring than the sense of distance and recoil experienced in *yirah*; hence, the gap in emotional appeal. **Many, C.S. Lewis has somewhere noted, do not want a Father in Heaven, but rather a Grandfather in Heaven.**

18. קהלת פרק יב, א-יד

(א) וזכר את בוראיה בימי בחורתיך עד אשר לא נבאו ימי הרעה והגיעו שנים אשר תאמר אין לי בהם חפץ: (ב) עד אשר לא תחשך השמש והאור והיורה והכוכבים ושבו העבים אחר הגשם: (ג) ביום שילעו שמרי הבית והתענותו אנשי החיל וקטלו הטחנות כי מעטו וחשכו הראות בארבות: (ד) וסגרו דלתים בשוק בשפל קול הטחנה ויקום לקול הצפור וישחו כל בנות השיר: (ה) גם מגבה יראו וחתחתים בדרך וינאץ השקד ויסתבל החגב ותפר האביונה כי הלך האדם אל בית עולמו וסבבו בשוק הספדים: (ו) עד אשר לא ירחק ירתק חבל הכסף ותרח גלת הזהב ותשבר כד על המבוע ונרץ הגלגל אל הבור: (ז) וישב העפר על הארץ כשהיה והרוח תשוב אל האלהים אשר נתנה: (ח) **הבל הבלים אמר הקוהלת הבל הבל:** (ט) ויתר שהיה קהלת חכם עוד למד דעת את העם ואזן וחקר תקון משלים הרבה: (י) בקש קהלת למצא דברי חפץ וכתוב ישר דברי אמת: (יא) דברי חכמים כדברנות וכמשמרות נטועים בעלי אספות נתנו מרעה אחד: (יב) ויתר מהמה בני הזהר עשות ספרים הרבה אין קץ ולהג הרבה יגעת בשר: (יג) **סוף דבר הבל נשמע את האלהים ירא ואת מצותיו שמור כי זה כל האדם:** (יד) כי את כל מעשה האלהים נבא במשפט על כל נעלם אם טוב ואם רע:

18. Kohelet 12:1-14

So appreciate your vigor in the days of your youth, before those days of sorrow come and those years arrive of which you will say, "I have no pleasure in them"; before sun and light and moon and stars grow dark, and the clouds come back again after the rain: When the guards of the house become shaky, And the men of valor are bent, And the maids that grind, grown few, are idle, And the ladies that peer through the windows grow dim, And the doors to the street are shut— With the noise of the hand mill growing fainter, And the song of the bird growing feebler, And all the strains of music dying down; When one is afraid of heights And there is terror on the road.— For the almond tree may blossom, The grasshopper be burdened, And the caper bush may bud again; But man sets out for his eternal abode, With mourners all around in the street.—

Before the silver cord snaps And the golden bowl crashes, The jar is shattered at the spring, And the jug is smashed at the cistern. And the dust returns to the ground As it was, And the lifebreath returns to God Who bestowed it. **Utter futility—said Koheleth— All is futile!** A further word: Because Koheleth was a sage, he continued to instruct the people. He listened to and tested the soundness of many maxims. Koheleth sought to discover useful sayings and recorded genuinely truthful sayings. The sayings of the wise are like goads, like nails fixed in prodding sticks. They were given by one Shepherd. A further word: Against them, my son, be warned! The making of many books is without limit And much study is a wearying of the flesh. **The sum of the matter, when all is said and done: Revere God and observe His commandments! For this applies to all mankind:** that God will call every creature to account for everything unknown, be it good or bad.

19. Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski, “Malchus: The Theme of Rosh Hashanah”

Democracy may have diminished our *yiras shamayim* (awe of Hashem). In the Talmud and Torah literature we often find parables that attempt to enhance our *yiras shamayim* by saying, "If one were in the presence of a mortal king, how cautious one would be with one's words and deeds. How much greater should one's caution be in the presence of the Almighty King." This may not have much impact on us, since we do not relate to a mortal king today. We elect a president for a period of time, who does not have unlimited powers. To the contrary, his powers are limited by congress and the courts. After his term is over, he is an ordinary citizen. Even in countries that do have a king, it is usually a ceremonial position, with power resting in the hands of an elected government.

20. The Fear of God in Our Time, *Jewish Values in a Changing World*, Rav Yehuda Amital z”l

Yet even this approach has proven itself inadequate in our generation. **The tools and knowledge available today allow us to study each and every cell in the human body and see precisely what constitutes "His wisdom which is incomparable and infinite."** Still, we remain so very far away from the reaction described by **Rambam: "He will straightway love Him, praise Him, glorify Him, and long with an exceeding longing to know His great name."** It seems that even in a generation where every educated person understands the complexity of atomic particles and the possibility of genetic engineering, this knowledge is still very far from a belief in God who rules nature, who exists independently of the world, "who reigned before any being was created, and who alone shall still be king at the end when all shall cease to be."

It seems to me, therefore, that the worship of God in today's world should be founded in large part upon a feeling that stands somewhere between the fear of punishment and the fear of God's exaltedness... **The fear of one's parents is based neither on the fear of punishment nor on the fear of their exalted nature. It stems from a natural feeling present in every healthy person, who feels obligated to listen to his parents, to avoid contradicting them, to bring them pleasure, and to act on their behalf with full devotion.** He expects no reward, nor does he fear punishment; his attitude does not even stem from the mitzva to honor one's mother and father. Rather, he follows his natural feelings.

21. “Why scientists say experiencing awe can help you live your best life,” Sarah DiGiulio

Maybe you've felt it standing on the rim of the Grand Canyon. Maybe it happens when you think about the vastness of space or glance up at the sky and marvel at a supermoon. Or maybe you feel it when you see someone offer up a seat on a crowded train to another individual they've never met. **The emotion is awe. And, psychologists say it can play an important role in bolstering happiness, health and our social interactions — and it may have actually long played a role in how and why humans get along and ultimately cooperate with one another.** She and other psychologists and neuroscientists who study awe define it as the

emotion we feel in response to something vast that defies our existing frame of reference in one area or another, and leads us to change our perception of that frame of reference. It comes from one of the oft-cited papers on the topic published in the journal *Cognition and Emotion* in 2003. **“It’s how we respond when we see something new or novel that doesn’t fit with our understanding of the world,”** Amie Gordon, PhD, Principal Research Scientist in the Emotion, Health, and Psychophysiology Lab at University of California-San Francisco, tells NBC. **And it changes us.** One important distinction between awe and other emotions (like inspiration or surprise) is that **awe makes us feel small** — or feel a sense of “self-diminishment” in science-speak. And that’s good for us, Stellar explains. We spend a lot of our time thinking about what’s going on in our world and what’s affecting us directly. **“Awe changes that, making us see ourselves as a small piece of something larger.”** **Feeling small makes us feel humbled (thereby lessening selfish tendencies like entitlement, arrogance, and narcissism).** And feeling small and humbled makes us want to engage with others and feel more connected to others, Gordon adds. “All of that is important for wellbeing,” she says.

[22. “A Chronic Lack of Awe,” *Psychology Today*, Dr. Gwen Dewar](#)

I don’t know if other creatures feel awe, and can’t say when, in our evolutionary history, our ancestors first got blown away by something immense or amazing. But if you think about where our ancestors came from—vast savannas populated by fantastic animals, like elephants and giraffes— it seems there was plenty to inspire awe. Of course, not everybody born before the Industrial Revolution got their daily dose. In ancient Greece, women of a certain class were cloistered in their homes. People stuck in perpetually overcast, featureless environments probably suffered an awe-deficit. Folks living in dark forests might have missed some great views. **But overall, our ancestors must have experienced quite a bit of awe. And nowadays? For most city-dwellers, the night sky is merely a murky orange haze. Daylight hours are spent indoors, with brief forays from building to building. Many people, perhaps especially the parents of young children, feel there isn’t enough time to get things done. Getting outside—finding a place to see the stars or gaze down from a hilltop—has become a luxury. And childhood has changed dramatically. No longer running in packs outdoors, kids living in modern, information-based societies spend an unprecedented amount of time inside. So we’ve become estranged from natural sources of awe.** But it’s hardly the case that we’re lacking in opportunities. The movies, television, video games—these media are powerful tools for inducing awe, more powerful, perhaps, than mere text because they engage us with sights, sound effects, and emotionally-charged music. Parents who want to “unplug” their children from these influences should perhaps reflect. For some kids, the electronic media may be the only source of awe they know.

[23. *Eight Reasons Why Awe Makes Your Life Better*, Summer Allen](#)

In another study, participants who recalled an awe experience placed less value on money than did participants who recalled a happy or neutral experience, and viewing awe-inducing images reduced the effort people were willing to put into getting money (where effort was measured by tolerance for listening to an unpleasant sound). Why might awe decrease materialism? According to the researchers, the answer may lie in the self-transcendence that awe can inspire. “People in awe start to appreciate their sense of selfhood as less separate and more interrelated to the larger existence,” they write. “The experience of awe elevates people from their mundane concerns, which are bounded by daily experiences such as the desire for money.”

24. תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף לג עמוד ב

ואמר רבי חנינא: הכל בידי שמים - חוץ מיראת שמים, שנאמר: ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלהיך שואל מעמך כי אם ליראה.

24. Talmud Berachot 33b

And Rabbi Ḥanina said: Everything is in the hands of Heaven, except for fear of Heaven. Man has free will to serve God or not, as it is stated: "And now Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you other than to fear."