

Yirat Shamayim
The Awe, Reverence,
and Fear of God

EDITED BY
Marc D. Stern

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THE ORTHODOX FORUM

The Orthodox Forum, initially convened by Dr. Norman Lamm, Chancellor of Yeshiva University, meets each year to consider major issues of concern to the Jewish community. Forum participants from throughout the world, including academicians in both Jewish and secular fields, rabbis, rashei yeshivah, Jewish educators, and Jewish communal professionals, gather in conference as a think tank to discuss and critique each other's original papers, examining different aspects of a central theme. The purpose of the Forum is to create and disseminate a new and vibrant Torah literature addressing the critical issues facing Jewry today.

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Introduction:

I Failed to Guard My Own Vineyard

Marc D. Stern

A glance at the impressive shelf of (as of this writing) 16 volumes of the Orthodox Forum shows that, with no more than a handful of exceptions, the subjects explored all touch upon the intersection of Orthodoxy with some external phenomena: interactions with non-observant Jews, war, *tikkun olam*, business ethics, “scientific” biblical and Talmudic scholarship, and egalitarianism.

These volumes and their focus toward the world accurately mirror the outward, non-self-reflexive, focus of centrist or modern Orthodoxy. One of the distinguishing characteristics of that branch of Orthodoxy is precisely its concern with the outside world, combined with a sense of obligation to, and not merely exploitation of, it.

That engagement with a world, only some of whose core values Orthodoxy shares, carries with it exposure to values, ideas, and methods (*e.g.*, critical biblical studies, egalitarianism) which require examination before being assimilated – if at all – into Orthodox

practice and thought. All this is desirable and necessary, but it should not come at the cost of “guarding our own vineyard,”¹ of exploring and nurturing the fundamentals of our service to God. The neglect of these inwardly directed, parochial obligations – such as the focus of this volume, the fear of God – might be dismissed as nothing more than the neglect of an uncontested principle taken for granted and routinely put into practice. Perhaps, too, it comes from a commendable reluctance to speak with confidence and familiarity about the Unknowable.

But at least to me it seems that the reason is in large part different and more worrying. It is as if we in the modern Orthodox community – I do not exclude myself – are discomfited by God talk. This reticence is not, God forbid, because we are guilty of substituting orthopraxy for orthodoxy – although there is some measure of that – but because we have not developed a modern vocabulary of fear of God. That fear is, or should be, an indispensable element of our religious commitment and environment. The failure to cultivate a sense of what *yirat shamayim* demands of us in all of our contemporary circumstances distorts and impoverishes our religious life and our communal discourse. Indeed, in this regard, it must be said that we have not nurtured our own garden.

Perhaps, too, the silence stems from a fear of pushing a topic when rabbis are uncertain if it will strike a ready chord amongst laypeople, or, perhaps, whether raising the question itself will cause people to abandon actual practice if they find themselves wanting in *yirat shamayim*.

Two unscientific anecdotes suggest this may be a false fear. I raised the subject when speaking out-of-town on *shabbos*, and found acute interest in discussing it – after people got over the shock of being asked what they thought *yirat shamayim* meant. My wife had a similar enthusiastic if surprised response when she asked her students at Bruria High School to discuss their understanding of *yirat shamayim*. But Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, in his contribution to this volume, pointedly refuses to eliminate this concern with where such discussions might lead as a legitimate concern.

Rabbi Tzi Dov (Harold) Kanotopsky identified one source of the problem over sixty years ago:²

Unfortunately, this [familiarity with God, and an absence of fear of Him] is the mental attitude of a good many Jews today. They feel a little too close to and too friendly with Torah and with God.

* * *

The rabbis express this thought explicitly in a *midrash* [*Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishmael, Parashat Yitro, Parasha 4*]... They comment on the phrase... “The entire mountain was filled with smoke” because God descended on the mountain in fire. The Torah was given in fire, and, in its essence, resembles the nature of fire.

This is the nature of fire. If one comes too close to the flame, he will be smitten by the heat. If one detaches himself completely from the fire, he will remain cold. Therefore, man must warm himself at an appropriate distance from the fire.

* * *

My relationship with God and his Torah must be such that while we are close and even intimate, it is not a relationship on an equal basis. We must always bear in mind that while God is...a merciful God and our merciful Father who loves us and calls us His children.... we cannot and dare not approach God and Torah over a counter of expediency and attempt to negotiate with Him according to our values and priorities. For God always remains...the jealous God, the demanding God, the exacting God.

It is entirely true that...the love of God, is the highest degree that man can attain in the worship of the Almighty. But sometimes I feel that we have too much [love] and too little [fear]. We may have too much love of God and too little fear of God.

I cannot testify to the accuracy of this depiction of the situation sixty years ago – Rabbi Kanotopsky was himself an acute observer

of American Jews – but it would appear as if nothing much has changed.

This volume is an attempt to begin a discussion of *yirat shamayim* in modern language and in light of our current circumstances; to insist that the subject deserves, nay demands, our sustained attention; and to enable all of us to better integrate it into our lives, at the same time to avoid shallow and empty descriptions of piety or arrogant smugness. Neither should it compel (as it seems to in some Orthodox circles) a growing denial of modern biological and social science, and a systematic denigration of the importance of human endeavor.

The subject of *yirat shamayim* as a topic for a forum grew from a conversation with Rabbi Elchanan Adler on a *shabbos* afternoon. We were bemoaning the fact that in *haredi* literature, discussions of *yirat shamayim* are commonplace while they are uncommon in modern Orthodox sources. (The significance of that difference is less clear.) Rabbi Adler gets credit for the idea of making *yirat shamayim* a Forum subject. Disagreements with this introduction are to be blamed on me alone.

The topic of *yirat shimayim* is explored here from a variety of perspectives. These plainly do not exhaust the topic. For reasons beyond our control (and concerns of space and time), some aspects of *yirat shimayim* are not explored. There is, crucially, no comprehensive exploration of *yirat shimayim* as it impacts halakhic observance, the problem of *humra* and *yarei shamayim yotzei et kulam* (the God-fearing person will satisfy all views), so characteristic of the halakhic world of the *Mishna Berura*, but not the contemporaneous *Arukh ha-Shulchan*. Although we have Professor Alan Brill's important essay on *yirat shamayim* in modern Hasidic practice, we don't have an exploration of *yirat shamayim* across the full range of Hasidic views, as they exist now, and as they were in the past. And while the issue was explored at the Forum, we have not reprinted all the essays dealing with the problem of educating to *yirat shamayim* in all the yeshiva high schools.

Even if these aspects of *yirat shamayim* had been explored, and even if each of the articles we do publish strikes a chord, and even if

we had even a broader range of views than we have, I am certain that we have fallen short. *Yirat shamayim* lies flat on the page. It is easier to talk about *yirat shamayim*. In some circles, the phrase is tossed about readily. Judgments about it – and who really possesses it – are made far too easily, often dependent on matters of, at best, tertiary importance, such as the size of a man's hat brim and its color.

Precisely because *yirat shamayim* is primarily an internal sense, generally impossible to accurately assess from the outside, there is an understandable tendency to seek easy and readily applied external criteria by which to measure it. Parents and educators seek litmus tests to measure success in inculcating it. Such criteria easily give rise to superficial assessments and can mask blatant abuse – think of some of our recent child abuse or *kashrut* scandals – but they are also social markers of the importance we attach as a community to *yirat shamayim*. I am personally skeptical of the value of such markers, but I am, in more reflective moments, ready to concede that I might be wrong. After all, these counter-cultural markers do declare a commitment to the service of God.

The best way I know to learn and teach *yirat shamayim* is to see it up close when it is palpably genuine. Stories of *gedolei yisroel* – if true and not just hagiography – and, better yet, up-close observation of those who are truly *yarei shamayim* (whether a *gadol b'yisorel* or a *ba'al ha-bayis*) may in the end be the best way to teach *yirat shamayim*, and not just to children. In this regard, this or any other volume about *yirat shamayim* will fall short. Still, our tradition insists on full discussion of abstract religious concepts, and assumes, as with other aspects of Talmud Torah, that the discussion is both intrinsically valuable and conducive to good practice.

* * *

Yirat shamayim, like *midot tovot* (good character traits), or belief and trust in God (*emunah* and *bitachon*), is a phrase in the lexicon of every Orthodox Jew. But like those other phrases, it is a phrase whose meaning is often only vaguely understood, or is reduced to some broad, lowest common denominator. Professor Warren Zev Harvey begins the discussion by attempting to bring precision to the

discussion by defining terms. He surveys the meaning of the phrase, as used in the Talmud, to modern writers and thinkers, persons as variegated as Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman and Professor Yeshayu Liebowitz.

Professor Harvey's broad survey raises any number of important points. Is *yirat shamayim* an end to itself or simply a necessary precondition for other goods? Is it an indispensable guarantor of simple social morality (as Rabbi Wasserman thought, and the Rav at least once wrote), or is it just one among many such motivations, including natural morality? Is it an ethical or a religious value, or both? Is it a universal or particular value? In the first footnote to his article, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein observes that while he writes from a Jewish perspective, much of what he discusses is universally relevant.

It is important to call attention to another subject Professor Harvey discusses: the relation between *yirat shamayim* and intellectual contemplation and Torah study – a subject discussed also by Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, Rabbi Shalom Carmy, and Rabbi Elyakim Krumbein. Is one the end of the former? Is one to be accorded a higher priority than the other? More daringly, as Rav Kook argued, *yirat shamayim* without cultivation of knowledge can actually impede spiritual progress. Professor Harvey writes:

The dual propositions that *yirat shamayim* must be associated with knowledge and with morality were affirmed forcefully in modern times by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Ha-Kohen Kook. In his *Orot ha-Kodesh*, II, *rosh davar*, he taught that “*yirat shamayim* is everything, all life and goodness” and can raise one to “the heights of the heavens,” but he warned that when it gets distorted into *yirat ha-mahashavah* [“the fear of thought”] it leads one into the “mire of ignorance” which “takes away the light of one’s soul, makes one’s power fail, and one’s spirit gross.” He also warned, “*yirat shamayim* must not push aside the natural morality of a human being;” and indeed the “sign

of pure *yirat shamayim* is precisely the enhancement of our natural morality.

Like Rashi on Job 4:6, Rabbi Kook contrasted *yirat shamayim* based on knowledge with *yirat shamayim* not based on it. In his *Arpelei Tohar*, he writes: “a human being becomes sluggish and idle by reason of *yirat shamayim* that lacks knowledge (*she-ein-bah de’ah*).” [Footnotes omitted.]

Finally for purposes of this summary, Professor Harvey’s essay recalls the Rav’s distinction between *yirah* (roughly, awe) and *pahad* (fear), a distinction to which Rabbi Carmy also devotes considerable attention:

Judaism, continued Rabbi Soloveichik, requires *yirat shamayim*, but not fear. The Bible never commands us to have *pahad* for God, but only *yirah* [e.g., Exodus 20:17; Leviticus 25:17; Deuteronomy 10:20]; and the Talmud inculcates the virtue of *yirat shamayim*, not *pahad shamayim*. While Judaism does not advocate *pahad*, “the whole Torah in its entirety is founded on the foundation of *yirah*.” [Footnotes omitted].

The core ideas encapsulated in the phrase *yirat shamayim* are enduring and unchanging. But different circumstances call for different emphasis and certainly different methods of education to *yirat shamayim*. Rabbi Krumbein, writing of the Musar movement of the nineteenth century, for example, acknowledges that Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, founder of the movement, urged adherents to contemplate the awful punishments which awaited those who did not fear God, or who sinned in other ways. That emphasis, Rabbi Krumbein argues, would be inappropriate in contemporary circumstances. Nevertheless, Rabbi Krumbein shares Rabbi Salanter’s insistence that Torah study alone is typically insufficient to ground religious and moral development:

We see someone using his impressive intellect for the sake of advanced Torah achievement. Do we need to ask what is going on inside him? Are we witnessing the healthy ambition of a century ago? Or perhaps a single-minded self-absorption, inspired by the utter totality of modern commercialism and consumerism? Can we today trust the façade of a happily learning yeshiva student, and assume that his inner reality is likewise unencumbered with emptiness, doubt or repressed religious crisis? By any remote chance, is he essentially finding refuge in Talmud study, while his inner self is being gnawed away by the post-modernist obliteration of depth in all its forms? Can we today ignore the possibility that the Torah study is a compulsive immersion, which reflects a need – already noted in *Mesilat Yesharim* – to avoid confronting the self? Or may we safely assume that even if it is, *hamaor she-ba* – “the light within” Torah – will straighten out everything?

Today, then, he suggests the following revised form of *Musar* study:

There must be a pervasive openness and respect for the student’s viewpoints and inclinations. *Musar* in our time is a call, not a rebuke. Responding to the call is a personal matter of individual choice. We must be willing to introduce tension into the subject matter. Differences among various sources should be learned in an atmosphere of free discussion....

The curriculum itself must first have a clear idea of what it means by *musar*. I would favor a broad definition: the branch of Torah that teaches a person how to be and live, as opposed to how to behave in given situation, which is the focus of *Halakha*. Behavior is only one aspect of life, and it doesn’t necessarily involve the cultivation of religious imperatives such as faith and *yirat shamayim*. *Musar* concentrates on personal spiritual concerns such

as emotional life, character, traits, and the setting of goals. Teaching these areas is not only a matter of theory and concepts, but also of practical skills.

The curriculum itself would have three parts. A prologue would clarify the idea of ethical and spiritual progress as a distinct religious desideratum. From there we arrive at the other two parts: *musar* as a field of study, and as a discipline.

Similarly, Dr. Alan Brill, reviewing relevant strands of Hasidic thought, acknowledges that Hasidic ideas about *yirat shamayim* will not readily be assimilated whole into the contemporary religious practice. Nevertheless, he urges that there is a way to fill the void:

Particularly revealing is the popularity of a Neo-Hasidic *musar* work rapidly devoured by those seeking a path to God in our communities – Rabbi Itamar Shwartz’ *Belivavi Mishkan Evneh*. Its basic message is that we must overcome our physical natures through submission, separation, and removal from the false physical world. Then, after separation through following *hasidut*, one learns to have fear of God through nullification of the self.... Since all events are from God, there is a complete relinquishing of the sense of autonomy, choice, and reflection.

Why does this appeal to people with suburban lives? I submit that it provides a way to get outside of the physicality and vanity that characterize such lives. The constant white noise of contemporary life is the backdrop for this desire to call a halt to the sounds of consumerism, media overload, and even intellectual innovation. When the secular means we use to insulate ourselves and maintain security despite our fears fail, extreme fear of heaven serves as a replacement for the fears of contemporary life.

Note that for Rabbi Krumbein the problem to be addressed is an outgrowth of (if one may say such a thing) “too much” unalloyed

Torah study; for Dr. Brill, the problem is too much human endeavor of all kinds. But Dr. Brill's prescription involves a negation or at least suspension of human endeavor, and a demotion of its importance. One may question whether that is likely to be an acceptable approach across the community – and, if it would be, whether it is an acceptable one.

Questions about how to advance *yirat shamayim* have many implications. One important example is the debate in national religious circles in Israel over the study of *Tanakh* (Bible) *b'govah eynayim* – eye to eye, as it were. That is, when studying biblical characters and episodes, should we evaluate them “eyeball to eyeball” as equals (or at least fundamentally as persons similar to ourselves), or as figures entirely distinct and removed from ourselves.

Part of this debate, which has been waged intensely in *dati-leumi* and *haredi-leumi* circles in Israel for several years, but which is largely unknown in the United States, is simply textual. Does the biblical text offer directly, or, as the late Nahama Leibovitz insisted was usually the case, indirectly, something which amounts to a value judgment? Ignoring such textual judgment distorts the text just as much as would reading into it value judgments that are absent. Of course, we can point to examples of the humanizing of the text to the point of distortion, where the text is made laughingly unrecognizable by exaggerated attempts to “humanize,” for example, the patriarchs. The flaw with such clumsy efforts to humanize biblical figures is not so much theological as textual. It is just bad interpretation.

The debate, though, is also even more largely about how one should use the biblical figures as role models for *yirat shamayim*. Leading *haredi* figures – especially those associated with the *Musar* movement, but not exclusively³ – have insisted on the perfection, or near perfection, of biblical figures. Their apparent “sins” are dismissed as slight deviations, unfitting for persons of their stature, but hardly a blip for us mere mortals. Undoubtedly, this tendency, which often requires exegetical contortions, is motivated by the concern that if the biblical figures are acknowledged to have sinned, the reader cannot know what to learn from them and what not to learn from them.

Neither Rabbi Nati Helfgot nor Rabbi Mosheh Lichtenstein in the papers presented here accept that extreme position. Rabbi Helfgot quotes Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein's curt dismissal of the use of petrified models of piety – even as he and Rabbi Moshe Lichtenstein disagree sharply about how to present biblical figures to elementary or secondary school students. Rabbi Helfgot believes that carefully exposing students to flaws of great people, even as we emphasize that their shortcomings are after all small departures from otherwise exemplary lives, is good pedagogy (as well as good biblical interpretation). Rabbi Moshe Lichtenstein suggests that it is important to first nurture children in a deep and abiding respect, love, and admiration for our biblical heroes as models for God-fearing people, and for Chazal's understanding of them. In an addendum, Rabbi Lichtenstein speculates that the differences between him and Rabbi Helfgot may reflect pedagogical differences between Israeli and American schools.

There may be less dividing the two than meets the eye; neither is an unadorned fan of *Tanakh b'govah aynim*; neither endorses the *haredi* view (and that of Rabbi Tzvi Tau)⁴ which rejects the humanizing approach in principle. Rather, they debate what educational method will best make biblical figures accessible to young people as role models.

The problem of education toward *yirat shamayim* is not one limited to yeshiva or day school students. Adults, too, need such education. Erica Brown explores the role of fear in adult education, especially adult education addressed to non-Orthodox Jews. Her approach highlights a different perspective on fear. In adult education, she reports, fear of educational failure, of being exposed as ignorant, is an overarching problem confronting adult educators. Then, too, the press to cover material does not allow time for the reflection necessary for *yirat shamayim*.

Moreover, when asked directly at the Forum whether adult educators functioning in a non-Orthodox setting typically raised issues of *yirat shamayim*, Brown said no – that such issues are not easily raised in the average adult education class because they were well beyond where the students were religiously. It would be interesting

to compare that response with the practice of Orthodox *kiruv* groups such as NCSY or Aish-ha-Torah. Do they discuss *yirat shamayim* in any meaningful way? If they do – and not in some unrecognizable and diluted fashion – does it serve to attract or repel? And if they do not, what should we make of the silence?

Rabbi Jack Bieler, in remarks which could have incorporated Rabbi Kanotopsky's decades-old lament about there being too much love, and not enough fear, in synagogue, addresses the painful problem of the absence of awe and reverence in the modern Orthodox synagogue. Reviewing the relevant *halakhic* sources, as well as the mandated and customary architecture of the synagogue, Rabbi Bieler concludes that *yirat shamayim* should be manifest in public behavior in the synagogue. Yet, he observes "a visitor to the most contemporary modern Orthodox synagogues in North America would be hard pressed to report that he experienced an atmosphere that reflected...particular engagement with and fear of God." (It is fair to question whether this is a problem limited to modern Orthodox synagogues.) He makes numerous suggestions of how to correct the problem.

The problem of education and the synagogue are not only, or even chiefly, technical problems related to identifiable deficiencies in those institutions (say, poor teachers or overly long and too formal services). Rather, they are just a manifestation of a more general problem, or set of problems, all of which impede the nurture and expression of *yirat shamayim*. These impediments are analyzed in Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein's comprehensive and elegant article. Although I cannot hope to do justice to Rabbi Lichtenstein's analysis, and surely not to his lyrical prose, he points to two problems as central: the rise of science and the tendency to humanism, that is, the placing of humans (not God) at the center of our moral and day-to-day discourse. Neither of these phenomena is inherently problematic, nor, *a priori*, incompatible with religious seriousness, and yet each alone (and both together) create substantial problems for *yirat shamayim*.

The problem of science and its insistence on mechanical laws is well known. Less well known and less frequently discussed is the

problem of humanism. Humanism, as Rabbi Lichtenstein uses the term, does not mean secular humanism, the doctrine that man may not ethically defer obligations to a Creator. He means instead a rejection of religious quietism in place of religiously directed human activity. While observing that these phenomena are by no means exclusively products of the modern age, they are particularly intense in contemporaneous circumstances. Coupled with the growing faith that science can explain all, the result is a sense of human independence whereas “religious existence is significantly interwoven with a sense of dependence.” The “amenities afforded by affluence, as well as the self-image buttressed by it, may often reduce one’s reliance upon divine sustenance.”

What is to be done? Rabbi Lichtenstein offers a range of suggestions how these adverse effects might be ameliorated. No surprise here, he suggests neither repudiating science nor humanism entirely; science for obvious reasons, and humanism because “the exercise of human choice is the linchpin of the entire *halakhic* universe.” He rejects as well the suggestion that in light of contemporary circumstances it would be best to stress observance over belief or adopt ascetic approaches. In the end we have little choice:

We shall persist in cultivating [human] moral sensibility, but with the profound sense that where we encounter difficult terrain, after we have walked the extra mile, we humbly but thoroughly submit to divine norm and wisdom. That is the gist of the crucial test of the *akedah*, the conjunction of responsive *hineni* with tremulous fear and trembling. [Footnotes omitted.]

Moreover, he notes:

[W]e shall not denigrate *yirah* in the interest of spiritual ease and psychological comfort. Rather, we shall live and act out of the profound sense that fear and joy, tremor and love, are, vis-à-vis the Ribbono Shel Olam, intertwined and reciprocally fructifying. This sense was

one of the linchpins of the Rav's religious thought and experience...

Of course, Rabbi Lichtenstein also emphasizes the importance of Talmud Torah to cultivating *yirah*.

Rabbi Shalom Carmy's characteristically rich paper similarly defies easy summary. Deftly weaving into a coherent whole, insights from figures as distinct as Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner, Rabbi Kook, the Rav and various *ba'alei musar*, Rabbi Carmy attends to the central question: if humans dislike fear – and they do – and desire to avoid it – and they do – “why would [people] want to fear God at all?” The proper question is not why “they no longer fear God as much.” Cataloging the various categories of fear-temporal fears: fear of being abandoned by God; fear of punishment (including hell), and fear of God's grandeur, Rabbi Carmy assesses each of these on their respective religious merits and in light of our contemporary situation. He concludes:

[T]he desire to flee from God's presence, however absurd, is part of our experience. This is obviously true where we feel guilt and moral shame.... It is no less true when we are overwhelmed by an encounter that is too much for us, even in the aesthetic realm. And as we have seen, the experience of God's grandeur intrinsically communicates a sense of our unworthiness and finitude...[as does the] realization that flight is impossible. The inability to escape God is an essential component of the experience of fear, whether it arises primarily from moral ontological inadequacy. The awareness that God is with us, no matter how far we fly, is often a source of overwhelming comfort... Sometimes it gives comfort even at times when God's presence and solicitude is the occasion of reproach, as in Jonah 2....

[T]he proper response in the face of the *mysterium tremendum* is humility. The proud human being is to lower himself, and the physical expression of this is hiding in the cleft of a rock, making oneself less prominent,

taking up less space. “The reward of humility is the fear of God” [Proverbs 22:4]. “Humility leads to fear of God.”

[*Avoda Zara* 20b]

Rabbi Kenneth Auman, a rabbi occupying a large and important pulpit, addresses as a starting point the problem of “flipping out,” of children who return from a year (or more) of study in Israel “more religious” than their parents. For our purposes Rabbi Auman uses a definition of *yirat shamayim* more limited – and far more practically oriented – than the other presenters. He defines it as a “motivated feeling, a genuine desire to create a relationship with God through the strict discipline of, and the joy and satisfaction in, *shimirat hamitzvot*.”

That definition allows one to bypass the didactic problem: “if *yirat shamayim* is indeed primarily a feeling... that becomes part of one’s character, it cannot be ‘taught’ anymore than happiness can be taught to a melancholy person.” Instead, he suggests:

There are two somewhat contradictory strategies that ought to be employed when the religious educator inevitably realizes that despite his or her best efforts, he is seeing very few results. One strategy is to attempt methods of communication other than the standard teaching to which he is accustomed. The biblical text, “so that you will learn to fear God your Lord as the days,” can be instructive. We noted that while most of the commentators avoided understanding the word *tilmad*, as learning, they did take it to mean effecting a positive change in attitude – either by becoming habituated to *yirat shamayim* or by being inspired to it. Both habituation and inspiration can be important tools in the rabbi’s or educator’s communication arsenal.

Surveying other methods of habituation – including the use of (or reluctance to use) role models, Rabbi Auman cautions that while habituation is more important than education:

Nevertheless, education does indeed play a role in the overall process, as a precursor to the inspiration or habituation.... We might say that while education is not necessarily the method of choice for imbuing *yirat shamayim*, it is indeed a prerequisite for the process.

Here, too, Torah study plays a role:

Our rabbis teach...the ignorant cannot be truly pious or righteous, which in our context means that one must possess a minimal amount of knowledge as to what is required Jewish behavior before being motivated to behave Jewishly. All the motivation in the world cannot be defined as *yirat shamayim* if that motivation does not lead one along the path of Torah and *Mitzvot*.

At the end of the volume there are dueling papers by Rabbi Meir Soloveichik and myself debating whether the government has a role to play in fostering *yirat shamayim*. (He thinks it does; I disagree.) Rabbi Soloveichik's article is particularly noteworthy for its close and careful reading of his great uncle's essay, "Confrontation." Aside from its other considerable merits, his paper is an important although controversial exposition of that seminal paper. What divides us, I think, aside from different ideas about the proper role of government, is whether in an age of secularism and consumerism an official notation of the importance of God is essential or a distraction. Our disagreement is less about the problems we face than about possible solutions and their costs.

Dr. Mark Gottlieb, an educator, presents a paper which outlines one possible way of teaching about *yirat shamayim*. Dr. Gottlieb calls for a refocusing of the curriculum in boys' yeshivot with the aim of providing a comprehensive world view rooted in *yirat shamayim*. Implicit in Dr. Gottlieb's article is a call for some modification of the almost exclusive focus on Talmud in the curriculum. While that call will no doubt provoke debate, it is worth noting that both he and my wife, Marcy Stern, who presented a paper at the

Forum (not reproduced here for a variety of reasons not related to the merits), spoke at the Forum about teaching *yirat shamayim* at a girls' high school, and report a thirst by students to address the topic. One hopes educators take note.

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The discerning reader will by now detect both commonalities and dissonances in the various approaches to *yirat shamayim* laid out in this volume, chief among them, varied assessments of the viability of religious humanism. I am certain though, that all of those who participated in the publication of this volume share the common goal of increasing *yirat shamayim*, and that the hope that the liturgy for *motzei Shabbat* – that during the coming week, we “should be cleaved to the fear of God” – will be fulfilled for each of us as individuals, for us as a community, and, indeed, for all mankind.

NOTES

1. *Shir-ha-Shirim* 1:6.
2. R' T.D. Kanotopsky, *Rejoice In Your Festivals*, ed. D.A. Zomick (2007), pp. 79–81. See also, *ibid.*, pp. 70–73.
3. See J.J. Schachter, On the “Morality and the Patriarchs: Must Biblical Heroes Be Perfect?” in Z. Grumet, ed., *Jewish Education In Transition: Proceedings of the First International Conference on Jewish Education* (2006) for a discussion of Rabbi Aharon Kotler.
4. See R' Tzvi Tau, *Tzadik B' Emunatu Yichye* (2004); R' H. Angel, “Torat Hashem Temimah: The Contributions of R' Yoel bin Num to Religious *Tanakh* Study,” *Tradition* 40, 3 (2007), p.5.