

The Fear of Yehovah

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Through out the Tanakh the Fear of Yehovah is stated. Is it fear as we would understand the word fear or can it have other meanings? We are going to look at the words for fear and see what exactly it means in the Tanakh.

In Mish'lei/Proverbs 1:7, it states “The Fear of Yehovah is the beginning of Knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

The word translated as Fear in this verse is yare 3373 that is an adjective feminine (Yod-Resh-Aleph) and listed in pg. 431 in the BDB and 561 in the NEHC. It is from yare (Yod-Resh-Aleph) and reference 3372, which is on page 431 in the BDB and pages 559-560 in the NEHC and is the verb.

Also related to ya're the adjectives is the word yir'ah (Yod-Resh-Aleph-Hey) and is reference number 3374.

These are the words we will be looking at today.

First let look at how the verb defines Yare in the Tanakh. Most of the references to Yare are in the Kal form with a few Niphil or Piel forms. The Kal form is the active stative form so we will start there.

Yare in the Kal

Bereshit/Genesis 18:12-15 (15)

12 And Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “Now that I am withered, am I to have enjoyment—with my husband so old?” **13** Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I in truth bear a child, old as I am?’ **14** Is anything too wondrous for the LORD? I will return to you at the time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.” **15** Sarah lied, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was frightened (yare’ah יִרְאָה). But He replied, “You did laugh.”

Here we see that Sarah felt the fear of being afraid. This is one type of fear the Tanakh presents to us. It is the kind of fear we are use to seeing and know.

Shemot/Exodus 3:6

6 I am,” He said, “the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid (yare יִרְאָה) to look at God.

Moshe did not know Elohim so at first he was afraid as would anyone be. This would change over time. Next is the fear one learns to have. This is normally a respect one gains from experience. Like not putting your hand in a fire and getting burnt.

Shemot/Exodus 9: 28-30 (30)

28 Plead with Yehovah that there may be an end of Elohim's thunder and of hail. I will let you go; you need stay no longer." 29 Moses said to him, "As I go out of the city, I shall spread out my hands to Yehovah; the thunder will cease and the hail will fall no more, so that you may know that the earth is Yehovah's. 30 But I know that you and your courtiers do not yet fear (tiyr'un תִּירְאוּן) Yehovah Elohim."

Here we see that even though Pa'ro experienced the might of Elohim he did not yet have a fear of him. Why because he would not let the people go yet.

The Fear we need to have of Yehovah is one that it learned and not naturally occurring.

Shemot/Exodus 20:15-18

15 All the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the blare of the horn and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they fell back and stood at a distance. 16 "You speak to us," they said to Moses, "and we will obey; but let not Elohim speak to us, lest we die." 17 Moses answered the people, "**Be not afraid (lo tira'u אַל-תִּירְאוּ)**; for haElohim has come only in order to test you, and in order that the **fear of Him (yir'ato יִרְאָתוֹ)** may be ever with you, so that you do not go astray." 18 So the people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where haElohim was.

This is a different type of fear than that of being afraid. It was one Moshe had for Yehovah while not being in fear of approaching him or speaking to him.

Shemot/Exodus 14: 30-31

30 Thus Yehovah delivered Israel that day from the Egyptians. Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the shore of the sea. 31 And when Israel saw the wondrous power which Yehovah had wielded against the Egyptians, the people **feared (vayiyru וַיִּירְאוּ)** Yehovah; they had faith in Yehovah and His servant Moses.

Here is the kind of fear that is the beginning of knowledge. It is the awe or respect one has without being afraid. We know this was a kind of respect because when used in reference to humans it is denoting respect.

Bamidbar/Numbers 12:8

8 With him I speak mouth to mouth, plainly and not in riddles, and he beholds the likeness of Yehovah. How then did **you not shrink/fear** (lo yare'tem לֹא יִרְאַתֶּם) from speaking against My servant Moses!”

Having fear in the sense of awe and respect is what being referred to here.

Yehoshua/Joshua 4:14

14 On that day Yehovah exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel, so that **they revered** (vayir'u וַיִּירְאוּ) him all his days as **they had revered** (yar'u יִרְאוּ) Moses.

Here we see that the word for fear was used for Moshe as well as for Joshua later.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 6:13

13 **Revere** (tiyra תִּירָא) only Yehovah Eloheykha and worship Him alone, and swear only by His name.

We are to hold only him in awe and respect of all Elohim.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 13:5

5 Follow none but Yehovah Eloheykhem, and **revere** (tiyra'u תִּירְאוּ) none but Him; observe His commandments alone, and heed only His orders; worship none but Him, and hold fast to Him.

Again repeated like this many times so they would not forget it.

Shemot/Exodus 15:11

11 Who is like You, O Yehovah, among the celestials; Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome (nora נֹרָא) in splendor, working wonders!

This is the Niphal form but also denotes fearful or respect in Tefillat or Praises.

So how would one learn and show respect of Yehovah Eloheyynu.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 4:10

10 The day you stood before Yehovah Eloheykha at Horeb, when Yehovah said to Me, “Gather the people to Me that I may let them hear My words, in order that they may learn

to revere (leyir'ah לְיִרְאָה) Me as long as they live on earth, and may so teach their children.”

To listen to him and hear his voice is one way one may show and learn respect for him.

Devarim 8:6 (5-6)

5 Bear in mind that Yehovah Eloheykha disciplines you just as a man disciplines his son. 6 Therefore keep the commandments (mitzvot) of Yehovah Eloheykha: walk in His ways **and revere Him** (ul'yir'ah וּלְיִרְאָה).

Take the correction given by Yehovah as a son would from his father. We keep his mitzvot, way in the way he shows us is doing his instructions and holding him in respecting him.

Yehoshua/Joshua 24:14

14 “Now, therefore, **revere** (yar'u יִרְאוּ) Yehovah and serve Him with undivided loyalty; put away the gods that your forefathers served beyond the Euphrates and in Egypt, and serve Yehovah.

Serve him alone as Elohim and not mix the service with other Elohim with his.

Shemu'el Aleph/I Samuel 12:24 (20-24)

20 But Samuel said to the people, “Have no **fear** (tiyra'u תִּירְאוּ). You have, indeed, done all those wicked things. Do not, however, turn away from Yehovah, but serve Yehovah with all your heart. 21 Do not turn away to follow worthless things, which can neither profit nor save but are worthless. 22 For the sake of His great name, Yehovah will never abandon His people, seeing that Yehovah undertook to make you His people.

23 “As for me, far be it from me to sin against Yehovah and refrain from praying for you; and I will continue to instruct you in the practice of what is good and right.

24 Above all, you must **revere** (yar'u יִרְאוּ) Yehovah and serve Him faithfully with all your heart; and consider how grandly He has dealt with you. 25 For if you persist in your wrongdoing, both you and your king shall be swept away.”

This was after they asked for and got their King. The first use of Yare is in the sense of afraid or fear. The second one is respect that they must show and be faithful in you whole heart.

Mish'lei/Proverbs 3:7

7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; **Fear (yara אַרְאֵי)** Yehovah and shun evil.

To show awe and respect we must put away the evil we do.

With his knowledge then lets look at the Adjective form and see what it says about having awe and respect for Yehovah.

Bereshit/Genesis 22:11-12

11 Then an angel/messenger of Yehovah called to him from heaven: “Abraham! Abraham!” And he answered, “Here I am.” 12 And he said, “Do not raise your hand against the boy, or do anything to him. For now I know that you **fear (yare אַרְאֵי)** Elohim, since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me.”

The willingness to follow Elohim no matter the risks.

Shemot/Exodus 18:21

21 You shall also seek out from among all the people capable men who **fear (yir’ey אַרְאֵי)** Elohim, trustworthy men who spurn ill-gotten gain. Set these over them as chiefs of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, and 22 let them judge the people at all times. Have them bring every major dispute to you, but let them decide every minor dispute themselves. Make it easier for yourself by letting them share the burden with you.

One who fears Elohim is a person of truth and does not seek out gain in a matter of justice.

Tehillim/Psalms 15:2-5 (4)

2 He who lives without blame, who does what is right, and in his heart acknowledges the truth; 3 whose tongue is not given to evil; who has never done harm to his fellow, or borne reproach for [his acts toward] his neighbor; 4 for whom a contemptible man is abhorrent, but who honors those who **fear (yir’ey אַרְאֵי)** Yehovah; who stands by his oath even to his hurt; 5 who has never lent money at interest, or accepted a bribe against the innocent. The man who acts thus shall never be shaken.

Thus a man like this is also one who fears Yehovah.

Tehillim/Psalms 22:24, 26

24 **You who fear (yir’ey אַרְאֵי)** Yehovah, praise Him! All you offspring of Jacob, honor Him! Be in dread of Him, all you offspring of Israel!

26 Because of You I offer praise in the great congregation; **I pay my vows in the presence of His worshipers (nedaray ashellem neged yare'ayv / my vows I pay before his fearers נְדַרְי אֲשֶׁלֶם נֶגֶד יְרֵאָיו).**

Those who fear see David repay his vows. He saw his people as being respectful of Yehovah.

Tehillim/Psalms 85:10

10 His help is very near those who **fear Him (liyre'ayv לִירְאָיו)**, to make His glory dwell in our land.

Those who fear him bring good things to the land.

Tehillim/Psalms 147:11

11 but Yehovah values (rotzeh/pleasure רוֹצֵה) those who **fear Him (yare'ayv יְרֵאָיו)**, those who depend on His faithful care.

Those who fear him he takes pleasure in them.

Mish'lei/Proverbs 14:2

2 He who maintains his integrity **fears (yare יִרְאֵ) Yehovah**; A man of devious ways scorns Him.

A person who fears Yehovah has integrity.

Mish'lei/Proverbs 31:30

30 Grace is deceptive, Beauty is illusory; It is for **her fear (yir'at יִרְאֵת)** of Yehovah That a woman is to be praised.

The Fear of Yehovah is valued more than Beauty and Grace. It will not fade.

Now lets look at the Feminine Noun form for what it says on Fear of Yehovah Eloheynu.

Shemu'el Bet/2 Samuel 23:1-3 (3)

1 These are the last words of David: The utterance of David son of Jesse, The utterance of the man set on high, The anointed of Elohay of Jacob, The favorite of the songs of Israel: 2 The spirit of Yehovah has spoken through me, His message is on my tongue;

3 Elohey of Israel has spoken, The Rock of Israel said concerning me: “He who rules men justly, He who rules in **awe (yir’at יִרְאַתְּ)** of Elohim.

David did make plenty of mistakes while he lived but in the end it is spoken that he was in awe or respected Elohim. This shows us we don’t need to have perfect lives but rely and keep his commandment and his ways and continue to praise and pray to him. Seeking him out when we are wrong.

Divrei HaYamim Bet/2 Chronicles 19:8 - 11 (9)

8 Jehoshaphat also appointed in Jerusalem some Levites and priests and heads of the clans of Israelites for rendering judgment in matters of Yehovah, and for disputes. Then they returned to Jerusalem. 9 He charged them, “This is how you shall act: **in fear (bayir’at בַּיִרְאַתְּ)** of Yehovah, with fidelity, and with whole heart. 10 When a dispute comes before you from your brothers living in their towns, whether about homicide, or about ritual, or laws or rules, you must instruct them so that they do not incur guilt before Yehovah and wrath be upon you and your brothers. Act so and you will not incur guilt. 11 See, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all cases concerning Yehovah, and Zebadiah son of Ishmael is the commander of the house of Judah in all cases concerning the king; the Levitical officials are at your disposal; act with resolve and Yehovah be with the good.”

We see how one should judge in being in awe of Yehovah.

Mish’lei/Proverbs 2:1-11

1 My son, if you accept my words And treasure up my commandments; 2 If you make your ear attentive to wisdom And your mind open to discernment; 3 If you call to understanding And cry aloud to discernment, 4 If you seek it as you do silver And search for it as for treasures, 5 Then you will understand the **fear (yir’at יִרְאַתְּ)** of Yehovah And attain knowledge of Elohim. 6 For Yehovah grants wisdom; Knowledge and discernment are by His decree. 7 He reserves ability for the upright And is a shield for those who live blamelessly, 8 Guarding the paths of justice, Protecting the way of those loyal to Him. 9 You will then understand what is right, just, And equitable— every good course. 10 For wisdom will enter your mind And knowledge will delight you. 11 Foresight will protect you, And discernment will guard you.

Reverencing Yehovah is first to listen to his words, then upholding his commandments. After much experience individuals gain wisdom in doing them. This allows one to discern. It help us to understand how to Fear Yehovah.

Mish’lei/Proverbs 8:13

13 To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride, arrogance, the evil way, And duplicity in speech.

Mish'lei/Proverbs 9:10

10 The beginning of wisdom is fear of Yehovah, And knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Mish'lei/Proverbs 10:27

27 The fear of Yehovah prolongs life, While the years of the wicked will be shortened.

Mish'lei/Proverbs 14:26-27

26 Fear of Yehovah is a stronghold, A refuge for a man's children. 27 Fear of Yehovah is a fountain of life, Enabling one to avoid deadly snares.

Mish'lei/Proverbs 15:16, 33

16 Better a little with fear of Yehovah Than great wealth with confusion.

33 The fear of Yehovah is the discipline of wisdom; Humility precedes honor.

Mish'lei/Proverbs 16:6

6 Iniquity is expiated by loyalty and faithfulness, And evil is avoided through fear of Yehovah.

Yermiyahu/Jeremiah 32:40 (38-41)

38 They shall be My people, and I will be their Elohim. 39 I will give them a single heart and a single nature **to revere (leyir'ah לְיִרְאָה)** Me for all time, and it shall be well with them and their children after them. 40 And I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them and that I will treat them graciously; and I will put into their hearts **reverence for Me (yiratiy יִרְאֵתִי)**, so that they do not turn away from Me. 41 I will delight in treating them graciously, and I will plant them in this land faithfully, with all My heart and soul.

To Fear Yehovah is to listen, keep, and learn his ways which shows that we respect and revere him. We fear him not because we are afraid but because we love him. We learn in this time and gain understanding, knowledge, wisdom. We learn to judge rightly, to treat people properly, to worship Him more fully.