

## Chapt 1. The Beginning of Wisdom is the fear of Hashem

It says in Mishlie, “ The beginning of wisdom is the fear of G-D” (Proverbs 1,7). Rav Eleazer said, “ If a man desires to serve his Master, from what place should he commence and in what place should he first aim at unifying the name of his Master? In “ fear” , with which the ascent heavenwards commences (Zohar 3,56b)” . So therefore we begin the first chapter in the same way and the wisdom of our sages shall follow in this chapter and the ones following.

Many of us go through life sleeping. We follow the commandments but somewhat by routine. Hashem wants robots, but they are Malachim, we have a *neshama*. Our *neshamos* are constantly attached to Hashem Yisborach. There is not a moment that passes in which we are not showered with Hashem's Divine Light that sustains us. So why do we seem to ignore this. It is brought in Sefer Tomer Devorah that Hashem suffers great humiliation because of us. When one sins, Hashem is still sending his influx down to that person. Of course He can remove it and the person can just vanish. But Hashem is Hashem, B” H! Slow to anger, humble and He bestows tremendous patience. He gives us a chance to repent and continues to sustain us. If only one would recognize this would they ever sin and cause Hashem such humiliation. Though we are still attached via His Divine Light, we are smearing dirt on a window. How can we see clearly afterwards. The funny thing is, we expect to still see clearly. Our Devices (attachment to Hashem) is impaired!

**The Chazon Ish said, “ the only pleasure for me is to do the will of Hashem. I could suffer no greater hurt than to be ensnared by sin. My teachers taught me that before any move, one must consult the Shulchan Aruch, code of Jewish law..... That is all I have in this world” (Kovetz Igros Chazon Ish sec 1:153)**

The gates of *teshuva* (repentance) are always open. It is mostly through lack of fear of Hashem that we sin. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of Hashem. So maybe this is the place to put more emphasis. This is also clear by the fact that R. Yosef Caro placed this concept first in our Shulchan Aruch. In the very first simon in Mishna Berurah, the Chafetz Chaim brings down, “ one must picture to himself always how he is standing before Hashem, may He be blessed, for the Holy One, blessed be He, fills the entire universe with His glory. It has been written, on the authority of the Ari, of blessed memory, that one should always picture the Divine Name before his eyes with the vowel pointing of the word (**show this in Hebrew**) *yirah* (fear), like this \_\_\_\_\_. This is the hidden meaning of the verse, “ I have placed the L-D before me always,” and it is of considerable benefit as regards the fear of Heaven (First Simon Mishna Berurah).” It is too bad that this first concept in the Mishna Berurah is not emphasized so much today. Please look there to learn more about the idea of writing this down as the practice might lead to erasing G-D’ s name which is forbidden if you wanted to write it down. One is also forbidden to think Torah thoughts in a rest room, place of filth or in the midst of immodesty.

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The following is from Missions Chasidim (pg.415,#7). Once on an ice cold winter, the pious Rabbi Yitzchok of Drobitch, was on the road traveling. He would go from town to town speaking over Torah. Some of his fellow Jews passed by in a carriage. Having compassion, they took him with them in the carriage. In the middle of the journey they suddenly came upon a river and without warning Rabbi Yitzchok leaped off from the carriage, he took off his garments and went into the freezing river and stayed there. In astonishment, the others stared on. After a few minutes, he came out, put on his garments and got back into the carriage. When they asked him why he had done such a thing, he answered, "My practice is to always have the name YKVK, B"H, before my eyes, in black fire on a background of white fire. While we were traveling, at that moment, it disappeared from before me. So I went into the river and pleaded, "Master of the World, if you return to me, good; but if not, why should I live any longer?" And it was returned to me.

The Rachmei ha-Av teaches, " You should have continuous *deveikus* with G-D, blessed be He, and you should not lose it for even one minute, either when you are just waking, or just before you fall asleep. Immediately when you wake up you should accustom yourself to say continually, " Blessed is the One and Only One," and the verse, " I have placed the L-D before me always" (*shivitti Hashem L' negdi tamid*) or at least the word *Shivitti*, I have placed (Rachmei ha-Av, #16 D' vekut).

A disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, Rabbi Yaakov Koppel Chassid, would verbally repeat at all hours of the day, nonstop, " I have placed the L-D before me always" even during the hours of work and business (Tiferet Beit David, pg. 103).

I, the insignificant Isacc, son of Solomon, of Acco, proclaim this both to individuals and the masses, who wish to know the mystery of binding one' s soul on high. One can attach his thoughts to G-D, and when one does so consistently, there is no question that he will be worthy of the world to come, and G-D' s name will be with his constantly, both in this world and in the next. You should constantly keep the letters of the Unique Name in your mind as if they were in front of you, written in a book with Torah (Ashurit) script. Each letter should appear infinitely large. When you depict the letters of the Unique Name in this manner, your mind' s eye should gaze on them, and at the same time, your heart should be directed toward the infinite Being (Ain Sof). Your gazing and thought should be as one. This is the mystery of true attachment, regarding which the Torah says, " To Him you shall attach yourself" (Deuteronomy 10:20). If you are able to do this no evil will befall you, you will not be subject to errors caused by logic or emotion, and you will not be the victim of accidents. As long as you are attached to G-D, you are above all accidents, and are in control of events (Meir Eynayim, Ekev).

Dovid Hamelech says, " I have placed the L-D before me constantly" (psalms 16: 8). Rashi explains, " In all my deeds, I have placed His fear before my eyes. Why? Because He is always at my right hand to help me so that I should not falter."

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Why this name of Hashem and not another are we supposed to think about? The reason is that this name is the cause of all causes and the source of all sources. Included in it are all things, from *Keter*, Crown (the highest Sefirah) to the lowliest gnat. One must recognize that it is forbidden to pronounce this name in any form whatsoever. In prayer, when praying, we say its Cognomen Adna instead. This is because it is the holiest of G-D's names, and it is connected to every spiritual level. It is for this reason that this name can be used as a ladder through which a person can connect themselves to the highest spiritual levels. It says, "The Torah of YKVK is complete." (Psalms 19:8). This is because all the words of the Torah are woven and connected from this name of Hashem (Sha' are Orah, intro). In Genesis 2:7 the Torah says, "YKVK Elokim formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils a soul-breath, *neshama*, of life; man thus became a living creature."

The word *shiviti* is related to the root-word *shaveh* which means equal. The idea of equanimity is a fundamental principle in attaining piety. A disciple of Rabbi Joseph Gikatalia, Rabbi Moshe once said, "If a person's heart impels him to rectify his traits, perfecting his personality and deeds, he should pursue humility to the ultimate degree. He should be insulted, but not insult, hear himself scorned but not respond." The Divine Presence will then immediately rest on him and he will not have to learn from any mortal being, for the spirit of G-D will teach him." (Reshit Chakhmah, Anavah, 3)

In Tzava' at Harivash the Baal Shem Tov says, "Shiviti is an expression of *histavut*, equanimity. No matter what happens, whether people praise or shame you, and so too with anything else, it is all the same to you. This applies likewise to any food, it is all the same to you whether you eat delicacies or other things. For the *yetzer hara* is entirely removed from you. Whatever may happen you should say, "It comes from Hashem blessed be He, and if it is proper in His eyes..." Your motives are altogether for the sake of Heaven, and as for yourself nothing makes any difference. This, idea of equanimity, is a very high level. Also, serve G-D with all your might because everything is "required [for above]". G-d wishes to be served in all possible ways. This means the following. Sometimes one may walk and talk to others and is then unable to study. Nonetheless, you must attach yourself to G-D and effect *yichudim*, unifications. So also when on the road, thus unable to pray and study as usual, you must serve G-D in other ways. Do not be disturbed by this. For G-D wishes to be served in all possible ways, sometimes in one manner and something in another. That is why it happened that you had to go on a journey or talk to people, in order that you serve Him that alternate way (Tzava' at Harivash 2-3).

Wherever you travel, there are things you must correct. You must only be careful not to sin while you are there. If you do not sin, you can correct things wherever you travel. Even if you are an average person, you will do holy things in each place. You will pray, say a blessing over food, and many similar things. For even the lowliest Jew does holy things wherever he goes. Each man is destined from on high to be in a particular

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place at a given time. At that time and place there is something that he must correct. (Sichos HaRan 85)

When one serves G-D every moment there is no opportunity to be arrogant, to love pride or other character traits that are evil (Tzava' at Harivash 52). This is why it is so important to make ones entire being a place for the *shichinah* to rest as is explained in another teaching from the Baal Shem Tov, "Your thought should always be secluded with the Shechinah, thinking only of your continuous love for Her that She may be attached to you." Say constantly in your mind, "When will I merit that the light of the Shechinah abide with me?" (Tzava' at Harivash 8)

Rebbe Nachman says, "You should never fear anything except G-D. If ever you begin to feel afraid of anything, remember the great fear which is due to G-D. Throughout the day, fill your entire consciousness with this sense of awe. It will help you to pray with all your strength, to utter the words with such force that they are like thunderbolts! Then you will hear the words which are on your lips. This is the way to achieve true joy, and to perform the mitzvot with a joy derived from the mitzvot themselves. Then you will attain the understanding of how to nullify all harsh decrees even after the decrees have been made, G-D forbid. In order to achieve these levels, you must combine your fear of Heaven with love. A person's main strength lies in the love he has for G-D. Nevertheless fear must come first (Lekutey Etzot, Awe & Devotion).

Reb Moshe Chaim Luzzatto says that love and fear of G-D are the particular concepts that bring a person nearer to his Creator and form a bond of attachment to Him. This refers to true love and fear, namely, love of G-D's Name and awe of His greatness, rather than love of His rewards and fear of His punishments (Zohar 1:11b). When one stands in awe before G-D's greatness, he is purified of the darkness associated with his physical body, and is enveloped by the Divine Presence. The greater this awe the greater the purification and envelopment. The highest level is when one attains the ability to feel awe constantly, being surrounded by the Divine Presence always. This was the perfection attained by Moshe, as our Sages teach us, "With regard to Moshe, fear [of G-D] was a small thing. As a result of content awe, Moshe was continuously surrounded by the Divine Presence (Berachos 33b).

Rabbenu Yonah writes (Mishlei 18:10), "Know that trust in G-D is one of the highest levels of fearing G-D." Therefore, a righteous person who is without sin need not worry about being harmed, as it is written, "You who fear Hashem trust in Hashem." (psalms 115:11).

Rabbi Akavya Ben Mahalel would say, "Reflect upon three things and you will never come to sin: Know from where you came, to where you are going, and before whom you are destined to give an accounting. 'From where you came' - From a putrid drop; 'to where you are going' - To a place of dust, maggots, and worms; and before

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whom you are destined to give an accounting' -before the king of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He" (Pirkei Avot 3:1).

Hashem made things of this world that could be used to our advantage in serving and coming close to Him or be used to our disadvantage. There is so much impurity and material distractions from this world awaiting just to stumble us into wasting our short and valuable time here. It is our choice to choose the correct path but its not an easy one as it involves much effort and hard work. The decision is yours. Do you want to be close to Hashem? If so, settle for nothing less and make it happen! Fear of G-D is the beginning of it all but to make it happen you need to follow the mitzvos righteously. We are in this world to elevate fallen sparks from physical matters to the spiritual realms. This is mainly done through mitzvos! The Torah is " a Tree of Life to those who hold fast to it" (Proverbs 3:18). Ones devotion to the study of Torah is the key to their ability to properly fear G-D. The Torah is the blueprint of creation according to Chazal. It is the manual as to how we are to perform the commandments, and it teaches us how to be proper Jews. Without its study there is no Fear of G-D in ones life! Therefore in Tanach we learn, " This Torah shall not depart from your mouth." (Yehoshua 1:8)

You are to serve G-D with both fear and joy. These are " two friends that do not separate [from each other]." Fear without joy brings depression. It is inappropriate to feel anguished in serving G-D, you should always be joyful (Tzava' at harivash 110). Fear on its own can lead to gloominess and dejection. Joy on its own leads to carelessness and frivolity. The Zohar says, " when a man comes to serve his Master he should do so first in fear, and through that fear he will afterwards perform the precepts of the Law in joy." (Zohar 3:56a)

Everywhere one looks there is the glory of Hashem. There are thousands of State and National parks in which one can learn to appreciate the hand of Hashem but even more so we are surrounded by His glory every moment of our daily lives. Rebbe Nachman teaches that one should look for the inner intelligence of the things that happen in our lives. This means realizing that everything Hashem does is for the good. Sometimes we are able to pinpoint this good while other times we have to just believe that there is somehow good in difficult situations we might be in and we will understand it at a later date. This later date may have to be in the times of Moshiach or when we ascend to the next world. Have no doubt though that Hashem loves you and does what is best.

It says in Tikunei Zohar 21:63 that man is identical with his thought. The Baal Shem Tov states, " Wherever the person' s will and thought are, that is where he is himself (Keter Shem Tov)" . It says in the psalms 94:11, " Hashem knows the thoughts of man." In Zechariah 4:10, " They are the eyes of Hashem, which scan the entire earth" . If our thought is on Fearing G-D, a concept from the Torah, or on the performance of a mitzvah, then we are going to be where we are supposed to be. " The end of the matter, all having been heard: Fear G-D and keep his mitzvos, for this is the whole of man." (Koheles 12:13)

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In the Talmud Rabbah bar Rav Huna said, “ One who has Torah but not fear of Heaven is like a treasurer who has been given the inner keys, but not the outer ones. How is he to enter?” Rabbi Yannai called out, “ Woe to him who has no courtyard, but has made a gate to it!” (Shabbos 31a-b). King Solomon said, “ Better a little with fear of Hashem than a great treasure with much turmoil” (Mishlei 15:16). The Torah is the only gate by which one can enter into true fear of G-D. Rav Judah said, “ The Holy One blessed be He, created His world only that men should fear Him.” For it is said[Eccl. 3, 14], “ and G-D hath done it, that men should fear before Him.” (ibid)

Wine was poured three times for Rebbe Mordechai of Tchernobel to recite Kiddush. Nevertheless, each time he tried lifting the cup, he trembled so violently that the wine spilled. After he finally succeeded in making Kiddush, he was asked why he had trembled so much. “ As the cup of wine was being poured, I began meditating on before Whom I stand to recite the Kidduch. I was struck by the awesomeness of Hashem and could not help but tremble” .(From my Fathers Shabbos Table, Mediation)

Rebbe Nachman teaches that every night, when the sun goes down, every Jew is judged on high by Hashem. This process ends at *Chatzos*, around midnight. If a person has sinned, going against a law or any commandments, these are brought before Hashem during the early evening hours.

It is brought in Devarim Rabbah,5:4, "when there is no judgement below, there is judgement above". So in other words, as Rebbe Nachman teaches, a person must judge daily all their actions and confess their wrongdoings to Hashem (this is one aspect of Hisbodidus, see chapter \_\_\_\_). He says in Likutey Maharar #15, that a person who wants to experience a taste of the *Or HaGanuz* (the hidden light), the mysteries of the Torah from the future world, must elevate the character trait of fear to its source. This is done through self judgment. By following this, all fright of false fear is removed and only pure *Yiras Hashem*, fear of Hashem, remains.

When a person is judged with the judgment of Heaven, justice becomes clothed in all things and all things become Hashem's messengers for carrying out "the written judgment."(psalms 149:9). However, when a person judges himself below so that there is no judgment above, then fear does not clothe itself in anything in order to arouse the person. This is because he has aroused himself.

When a person achieves true *Yiras Hashem* through self judgment, it will lead to *daat* (understanding). When a person has *daat*, he merits more perception of the Torah. The Torah dwells with a person who has this *daat*, but you must have fear to have *daat*. As is written in Daniel 2:21, “ Hashem gives wisdom (Torah) to the wise (a wise person is someone with *daat*).”

Having this *daat* and fear of Hashem helps one to pray with self sacrifice. As it says in Sotah 5a, "The prayers of a humble person are not rejected". Through this type of prayer a person sheds his garment. This in turn causes the hidden Torah to shed its garment for him, so that he merits tasting the *Or HaGanuz*, the Torah of the Future, as explained in PAPAROT LeChokhmah.

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As we know from Mishlie, “ the beginning of wisdom is the fear of Hashem.” Therefore the key to *Avodas Hashem* is certainly to constantly recognize before Whom you stand, the holy One blessed be He! The key to unlock this chapter and receive true *Yiras Hashem* is to open the lines of communication between yourself and Hashem. This is done through *Hisbodidus* as will be explained in later chapters!

Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa said, “ Whenever a person’ s fear of sin comes before his wisdom, his wisdom will endure; but when a person’ s wisdom comes before his fear of sin, his wisdom will not endure.” (Pirkei Avot 3:11). Having true fear of G-D is a job one has to work on their entire life. It isn’ t something that can be done overnight but as you have learned here, there are many methods of coming closer to G-D and increasing your fear of Him. When the holy Moshiach comes everyone, all the nations will fear G-D (**FIND PLACE**). On that day YKVK will be One and His Name is One (Zechariah 14:9).