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[Home](#) > 48 Ways - 007 Fear of Hashem

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Lower “Yirah” and Higher “Yirah”

When the Jewish people stood at Har Sinai, they grew afraid when they heard all the sounds that were taking place. Moshe told them, *“Do not be afraid; it is for this that you are being tested, to see if you will have all awe on your faces.”*

This sounds like a contradiction. Were they supposed to be afraid, or not?

The *Ramchal* says that there are three kinds of awe of Hashem, “*yirah*”: **1)** *Yiras ha’onesh* (fear of punishment), **2)** *Yiras haromemus* (fear of slighting Hashem’s honor), and **3)** *Yiras cheit* (fear of sinning). “*Yiras cheit*” is the highest level of *yirah*.

Thus, Moshe was telling them not to have the lower kind of fear, which is to be afraid of being punished; and that instead, they should have the higher kinds of fear – *yiras “haromemus”* and “*yiras cheit*”.

There is a *mitzvah* to remember when we stood at Har Sinai. The point of remembering Har Sinai is to remember the kind of awe which we had then. It is a kind of remembering which helps a person remember that he must feel as if he is standing in front of Hashem.

‘Yirah’: To “See” Reality

What is the implication of “*yirah*”?

“*Yirah*” has the same letters as the word “*reiyah*” – to see. When a person has ‘*yirah*’, he really “sees”. When a person has ‘*yirah*’, he “sees” a matter in a very tangible way.

Why must a person have ‘*yirah*’? Furthermore, if a person has ‘*yirah*’ and he really comes to feel Hashem’s presence, won’t he die from this? Isn’t it written, “*For no man can see Me and live*”?

The *Ramchal* writes that only through *Yiras Hashem* (fear of Hashem) can a person have “*chochmah*” (wisdom). “*Yirah*” needs a *sefer* for itself to explain what it is.^[1] [1]

The *Chovos HaLevovos* says that “a *chassid* (pious individual) can see through the ‘eyes of his intellect’. What does this mean? How do you see through the intellect? Is he describing a concept that’s one of the hidden parts of Torah?!

The concept means that a person “sees” Hashem in his heart. It is not the regular kind of seeing; you can’t see Hashem. So *yirah* doesn’t simply mean “fear”. Fearing Hashem is only the outer ‘garment’ of ‘*yirah*’. ‘*Yirah*’ is when one **sees** the truth, in a palpable sense.

With your physical eyes, you can only see your body. You can’t see your soul with your physical eyes. But your soul can see spiritual realities. In order to really learn Torah, you need to “see” it, through your soul. We have a pure soul within us – a *neshamah* – and we need to use it to learn Torah.

Thus, our intellect alone isn’t enough for learning the Torah. There are very bright non-Jews as well who learn Torah. What is the difference between then between a Jew who learns Torah than a non-Jew who learns Torah? The difference is that a Jew has a pure and Divine soul, a *neshamah*, and he can learn Torah through his soul, not through his regular intellect which even a non-Jew has.

But the only issue is, if a Jew is indeed learning Torah through his soul, through his *neshamah*.

So the concept of the *Chovos HaLevovos* of “seeing through the eyes of the intellect” is not referring to the regular intellect. It is really what the *Ramchal* writes (in *sefer Daas Tevunos*), that there is a higher intellect which guides the soul. This is the holy kind of intellect. This is “*yirah*”.

The Depth of Remembering Har Sinai

Remembering Har Sinai is not a matter of *Chassidus* (piety). It is one of the six mitzvos to remember every day – it is a *halacha*.

What is the difference between the Torah one learns after he dies and goes up to Heaven, to the Torah one learns down here on this earth? Is it the same learning? If it’s the same, why can’t a person just stay down here and learn here forever? It is clear to anyone that learning in heaven is a whole different kind of learning. Why? It is because there, the learning of the Torah is with total “*yirah*”.

What is the meaning of a “*Gadol*”? A “*Gadol*” who is someone who has “*yirah*”. Someone who has revealed his soul has the “eyes of the intellect” – and he has “*yirah*” in turn.

Someone who truly ‘remembers’ Har Sinai, is one who has *yirah* – he is able to “look every day at the words of Torah as if they are new.”

What To Aspire For In Our Learning

What should we aspire to in our learning? A superficial kind of aspiration is to aspire for more knowledge of Torah. But the inner kind of aspiration is to for one to wish that he merit a revelation of Hashem through his Torah learning. That is the true aspiration we should have in our Torah learning.

The desire to have knowledge in the Torah is only a *tool* that we use in order to come to the real aspiration we need to have. The real aspiration to have in learning is to come to the recognition of *Hashem* through one’s learning – the level that we had by Har Sinai. We need to return to the very state we were in when we stood at Har Sinai!

Lishmah

When a person merits this, his Torah learning will become more real to him.

A person has to give up all his extraneous desires in order to learn the Torah and aspire for a recognition of Hashem. That should be his sole desire.

If someone learns Torah "*lishmah*" (for the right reasons), he is at the level of standing at Har Sinai to receive the Torah. Learning Torah "*lishmah*" means that one learns Torah only to be able to come to recognize Hashem through it!

The more a person learns "*lishmah*" like this, the more Torah is revealed to him. Without "*lishmah*", even if one *davens* very well every day, he will not merit to have much success in his learning, even though he stands before Hashem every day in prayer. When a person lives with "*lishmah*", though, he always feels as if he is truly and always standing in front of Hashem - thus he will be successful.

The words here should change your whole attitude about how you can merit to "receive" the Torah. You must remember how you stood at Har Sinai - and the way you were at Har Sinai is the way to accept the Torah.

(I hope that none of you thought that this this was just another "*shmuess*.")

[1] [2] The Rov has given two series on the topic of yirah\feare of Hashem: *Maarachot B'Yiras Hashem* and *Sugyot B'Yiras Hashem*.

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