

DIMENSIONS IN CHUMASH

EKEV

To Go in Hashem's Ways

וּשְׁמַרְתָּ אֶת מִצְוֹת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְלַכֵּת בְּדַרְכָּיו וּלְיִרְאָהוּ אֹתוֹ.

You shall observe the commandments of Hashem, your God, to go in His ways and to fear Him.¹

The idea of “going in Hashem’s ways” appears twice more in our parsha. In Chapter 10, it states:²

וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שֹׂאֵל מֵעַמּוֹךָ כִּי אִם לְיִרְאָהוּ אֹת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְלַכֵּת בְּכָל דְרָכָיו וּלְאַהֲבָהוּ אֹתוֹ.

And now, Israel, what does Hashem, your God, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your God, to go in all His ways and to love Him.

And in Chapter 11, we find:³

כִּי אִם שְׁמַר תְּשַׁמְרוּן אֶת כָּל הַמִּצְוֹה הַזֹּאת... לְאַהֲבָהוּ אֹת ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לְלַכֵּת בְּכָל דְרָכָיו וּלְדַבְּקָהּ בּוֹ.

For if you will observe this entire commandment... to love Hashem, your God, to walk in all His ways and to cleave to Him.

It is interesting to note that in all three of these verses, this concept is presented differently in terms of other Torah ideals:

- ▷ In the first verse, it is mentioned before fear of Hashem.
- ▷ In the second verse, it is mentioned after fear of Hashem and before love of Hashem.
- ▷ In the third verse, it is mentioned after love of Hashem and before cleaving to Him.

What are we to make of these shifts?

¹ Devarim 8:6.

² Verse 12.

³ Verse 22.

The Chafetz Chaim explains.⁴ Fear of Hashem, love of Him, and cleaving to Him are three increasingly higher levels of one's relationship with Hashem. On the other hand, the idea of "going in His ways" represents emulating Hashem's attributes of kindness and compassion, things that are generally expressed in one's relationships with other people. There is a notion that prevails among many whereby development in one's relationship with Hashem involves disassociating oneself from other people and their needs — things which might serve only as a distraction from one's spiritual pursuits. Our parsha teaches just the opposite. The three verses that mention emulating Hashem represent a progression, with each time that the concept appears seeing the person at a more developed stage in his relationship with Hashem. By emulating Hashem in his dealings with others, the person attains an affinity with — and a closeness to — the Divine. Hence, initially it can lead him toward fear of Hashem, from there to love of Hashem, and from there the cleaving to Him.

This sweeping view of the concept of "going in Hashem's ways" as it appears in our parsha is a compelling reminder of the synergy that exists between all categories of mitzvos.

From Blessings to Awe

וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שֶׁאֵל מֵעַמְּךָ כִּי אִם לִירְאָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ...

And now, Israel, what does Hashem, your God, ask of you, except to fear Hashem, your God...⁵

The Talmud sees an allusion in the words of our verse for the idea of reciting one hundred blessings every day, expounding, "Read not 'מה' — *what*' but 'מאה' — *a hundred*."⁶ What is the connection between these two things?

R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach explains that the Gemara is addressing the fact that in asking, "What does Hashem ask of you, except to fear Him?" the verse appears to see fear of Hashem as something that is simple and straightforward. As we know, this is often not the case. How, then, are we to understand the verse's message? In truth, however, the reason people find fear of Hashem difficult is because they are not conscious of Hashem and all He does for them on an ongoing basis. Reciting blessings every day helps instill that consciousness, as it maintains an awareness of Hashem's control of and benevolence toward the world. When a person has this, fear of Hashem can actually be seen as something that is natural and straightforward. As such, the Gemara informs us that it is through "מאה" that one is able to access the "מה."⁷

4 Introduction to *Ahavas Chesed*.

5 Devarim 10:12.

6 Menachos 43b.

7 Heard from Rav Auerbach by my cousin, R' Elimelech Cooperman, shlita.