

הלכות יסודי התורה • פרק שני

Complete Word-for-Word Interlinear • Navy & Gold Edition

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, the Rambam takes us on a beautiful journey to fulfill the fundamental mitzvos of loving and fearing Hashem. The Rambam teaches us that the path to true yiras Shamayim and ahavas Hashem is through deep contemplation of the wondrous, vast creations that Hashem brought into being. By looking at the greatness of the cosmos, a person's neshama is filled with a powerful yearning to know Hashem, while simultaneously feeling humbled by our own smallness before His infinite wisdom.

To help us begin this contemplation, the Rambam introduces us to the spiritual hierarchy of the universe. He explains the three categories of creation, focusing deeply on the spiritual forms that have no physical bodies—the holy angels. We will learn about their ten distinct spiritual levels, how they receive their existence one from another, and how they all stand in awe, recognizing their Creator according to their spiritual capacity.

All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.

ה'א

המצוה לאהב ולירא את השם הנכבד והנורא

Halacha 1 • The Mitzvah to Love and Fear the Glorious and Awesome God

האל הנכבד והנורא הזה מצוה לאהבו וליראה אותו שנאמר דברים

Devarim as it is said Him and to fear to love Him it is a mitzvah this and the awesome the glorious This God

וה "ואהבת את ה' אלהיך". ונאמר דברים ו יג "את ה' אלהיך

your God Hashem — 13 6 Devarim and it is said your God" Hashem — "And you shall love 5 6

תירא:

you shall fear"

This halacha establishes the positive commandments to love and fear Hashem, citing the biblical sources for both obligations.

ה'ב

הדרך לאהבת השם ויראתו על ידי התבוננות בבריאתו

Halacha 2 • The Path to Attaining Love and Fear of God Through Contemplating His Creation

והיאך היא הדרך לאהבתו ויראתו. בשעה שיתבונן האדם במעשיו

on His deeds the person that contemplates at the time and His fear to His love the path is And how

וברואיו הנפלאים הגדולים ויראה מהן חכמתו שאין לה ערך

measure to it that there is not His wisdom from them and he sees the great the wondrous and His creations

ולא קץ מיד הוא אוהב ומשבח ומפאר ומתאנה תאנה גדולה לידע

to know great a yearning and yearns and glorifies and praises loves he immediately end and not

הַשֵּׁם הַגָּדוֹל. כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר דָּוִד תְּהִלִּים מִב ג "צִמָּאָה נַפְשִׁי לֵאלֹהִים לֹאֵל
for God for God my soul thirsts 3 42 Tehillim Dovid that said like the great the Name
חִי". וְכִשְׁמַחֲשֵׁב בַּדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֹו עֲצָמָן מִיָּד הוּא נִרְתַּע לְאַחֲרָיו
backward recoils he immediately themselves these on the matters And when he reflects living
וַיִּפְחַד וַיִּוָּדַע שֶׁהוּא בְּרִיָּה קְטַנָּה שְׁפֵלָה אֲפֵלָה עוֹמֶדֶת בְּדַעַת קִלְיָה
flimsy with understanding standing dark lowly small a creature that he is and knows and fears
מְעוּטָה לִפְנֵי תַמִּים יְדוּת. כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר דָּוִד תְּהִלִּים ח ד "כִּי אֶרְאֶה
I see When 4 8 Tehillim Dovid that said like of knowledge the Perfect before limited
שְׁמִיךְ מַעֲשֵׂי אֶצְבְּעֶיךָ" תְּהִלִּים ח ה "מָה אֲנוֹשׁ כִּי תִזְכְּרֶנּוּ".
You should remember that man What is 5 8 Tehillim Your fingers the work of Your heavens
him
וּלְפִי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֹו אֲנִי מְבָאֵר כָּלֵלִים גְּדוּלִּים מִמַּעֲשֵׂה רַבּוֹן
the Master of of the work of great principles explain I these the matters And according to
הָעוֹלָמִים כִּדִּי שִׁיְהִיו פֶּתַח לְמִבִּין לְאַהֲבָא אֶת הַשֵּׁם. כְּמוֹ
like the Name — to love for the understanding an opening that they will be in order the worlds
one
שֶׁאָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים בְּעֲנִין אֲהֶבָה שְׁמִתוֹךְ כִּךְ אֶתָּה מְכִיר אֶת מִי
He — recognize you this that from within love regarding the matter of the Sages that said
שֶׁאָמַר וְהָיָה הָעוֹלָם:
the world and was who spoke

The Rambam explains how contemplating the vastness and wisdom of God's creation leads a person to both intense love for Him and a humbling sense of awe.

הלי ג

חֲלֻקַּת הַבְּרִואִים לְשָׁלֹשׁ קְטֵגוֹרִיּוֹת שׁוֹנוֹת Halacha 3 • The Division of All Creations into Three Distinct Categories of Matter and Form

כָּל מָה שֶׁבְּרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּעוֹלָמוֹ נִחְלָק לְשָׁלֹשׁ חֲלָקִים. מֵהֶן
of them parts into three is divided in His world He blessed the Holy One which created that All
בְּרִואִים שֶׁהֵן מְחֻבָּרִים מִגִּלְמֵ וְצוּרָה וְהֵם הַיּוֹם וְנִבְסָדִים תָּמִיד
constantly and perishing are coming into being and they and form from matter are joined that they are creations
כְּמוֹ גּוֹפּוֹת הָאָדָם וְהַבְּהֵמָה וְהַצִּמְחִים וְהַמִּתְכּוֹת. וּמֵהֶן בְּרִואִים שֶׁהֵן
that they are creations and of them and the metals and the plants and the beast man the bodies of like
מְחֻבָּרִים מִגִּלְמֵ וְצוּרָה אֲבָל אֵינָן מִשְׁתַּנִּין מִגּוּף לְגוּף וּמִצּוּרָה לְצוּרָה
to form and from form to body from body changing they are not but and form from matter are joined
כְּמוֹ הָרֵאשׁוֹנִים אֲלָא צוּרָתָן קְבוּעָה לְעוֹלָם בְּגִלְמֵם וְאֵינָן מִשְׁתַּנִּין כְּמוֹ
like changing and they are not in their matter forever is fixed their form rather the first ones like
אֵלֹו. וְהֵם הַגִּלְגָּלִים וְהַכּוֹכָבִים שֶׁבֵּהֶן. וְאֵין גִּלְמֵם כְּשֶׁאֵר גִּלְמִים וְלֹא
and not matters like other their matter and is not that are in them and the stars are the spheres and they these

צורתם כשאר צורות. ומהן ברואים צורה בלא גלם כלל והם

and they at all matter without form are creations and of them forms like other their form

המלאכים. שהמלאכים אינם גוף וגויה אלא צורות נפרדות זו מזו:

from this this separated forms rather and physical form body are not for the angels are the angels

The Rambam explains the three categories of creation: physical things that change, celestial bodies with fixed forms, and purely spiritual angels.

הלי ד

מהות המלאכים ומראות הנבואה

Halacha 4 · The Non-Physical Nature of Angels and Prophetic Metaphors

ומהו זה שהנביאים אומרים שראו המלאך אש ובעל כנפים. הכל

all wings and possessor of fire the angel that they saw say that the prophets this And what is

במראה הנבואה ודרך חידה. לומר שאינו גוף ואינו כבד כגופות

like the bodies heavy and he is not a body that he is not to say riddle and by way of the prophecy in a vision of

הכבדים. כמו שנאמר דברים ד כד "כי ה' אלהיך אש אכלה הוא"

is He consuming fire your God Hashem For 24 4 Devarim it is said just as the heavy ones

ואינו אש אלא משל. וכמו שנאמר תהילים קד ד "עשה מלאכיו

His angels He makes 4 104 Tehillim it is said and just as a parable rather fire and He is not

רוחות:"

winds

The Rambam explains that prophetic descriptions of angels as having fire or wings are entirely metaphorical, as angels are completely spiritual and incorporeal.

הלי ה

ההבדל בין המלאכים ומעלתם זה מעל זה

Halacha 5 · The Distinction Between Angels and Their Hierarchy of Existence

ובמה יפרדו הצורות זו מזו והרי אינן גופין. לפי שאינן

that they are not because bodies they are not and behold from this this the forms are separated And by what

שוין במציאותן אלא כל אחד מהן למטה ממעלתו של חברו. והוא מצוי

exists and he his fellow of from the level is below of them one each rather in their existence equal

מכחו זה למעלה מזה והכל נמצאים מכחו של הקדוש ברוך

blessed the Holy One of from the power exists and everything from this above this from the power

הוא וטובו. וזהו שרמז שלמה בכתבתו ואמר קהלת ה ז "כי

for seven five Koheles and said in his wisdom Shlomo that alluded and this is and His goodness is He

גבה מעל גבה שמר:"

watches high above high

This halacha explains that since angels have no physical bodies, they are distinguished from one another by their spiritual levels and chain of influence.

הלי ו

זֶה שֶׁאִמְרָנוּ לְמַטָּה מִמַּעֲלָתוֹ שֶׁל חֵבְרוֹ אֵינָהּ מַעֲלַת מָקוֹם. כְּמוֹ אָדָם
a man like of place a level is not his fellow of the level below which we said This

שִׁיּוּשֵׁיב לְמַעַל מִחֵבְרוֹ. אֵלָּא כְּמוֹ שֶׁאִמְרִין בְּשְׁנֵי חֲכָמִים שֶׁאֶחָד גָּדוֹל
is greater that one sages regarding two that they say like but his fellow above who sits

מִחֵבְרוֹ בְּחֲכָמָה שֶׁהוּא לְמַעַל מִמַּעֲלָתוֹ שֶׁל זֶה. וְכְּמוֹ שֶׁאִמְרִין
that they say and like this one of the level above that he is in wisdom than his fellow

בְּעֵלָּה שֶׁהִיא לְמַעַל מִן הָעֲלוּל:
the effect · above that it is regarding a cause

The Rambam explains that terms of height and level regarding spiritual entities refer to intellectual and causal superiority, not physical space.

ה'ל' ז

עֶשֶׂר מַעֲלֹת הַמַּלְאָכִים וּשְׁמוֹתֵיהֶם

Halacha 7 · The Ten Spiritual Levels of Angels and Their Respective Names

שְׁנוֵי שְׁמוֹת הַמַּלְאָכִים עַל שֵׁם מַעֲלָתָם הוּא. וְלִפְיָכֶּךָ
and therefore it is their level the measure of is according to the angels the names of The difference of

נִקְרָאִים חַיּוֹת הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְהֵם לְמַעַל מִן הַכֹּל וְאוֹפָנִים וְאַרְאֵלִים
and Er'elim and Ofanim all · above and they are HaKodesh Chayyot they are called

וְחַשְׁמַלִּים וְשֶׁרָפִים וּמַלְאָכִים וְאֱלֹהִים וּבְנֵי אֱלֹהִים וְכְרוּבִים וְאִישִׁים. כָּל
all of and Ishim and Keruvim Elohim and sons of and Elohim and Mal'achim and Serafim and Chashmalim

אֵלּוֹ עֶשְׂרֵה הַשְּׁמוֹת שֶׁנִּקְרְאוּ בָּהֶן הַמַּלְאָכִים עַל שֵׁם עֶשֶׂר
ten the measure of are according to the angels them by which are called names ten these

מַעֲלֹת שֶׁלָּהֶן הֵן, וּמַעַלָּה שֶׁאֵין לְמַעַלָּה מִמֶּנָּה אֵלָּא מַעֲלַת הָאֵל
the God the level of except it above that there is not and the level they are of theirs levels

כְּרוּךְ הוּא הִיא מַעֲלַת הַצּוּרָה שֶׁנִּקְרְאָת חַיּוֹת. לִפְיָכֶּךָ נֶאֱמַר בִּנְבוּאָה
in prophecy it is said therefore Chayyot that is called the form the level of it is is He blessed

שֶׁהֵן תַּחַת כִּסֵּא הַכְּבוֹד. וּמַעַלָּה עֲשִׁירִית הִיא מַעֲלַת הַצּוּרָה
the form the level of it is tenth and the level the Glory the Throne of under that they are

שֶׁנִּקְרְאָת אִישִׁים וְהֵם הַמַּלְאָכִים הַמְדַּבְּרִים עִם הַנְּבִיאִים וְנִרְאִים לָהֶם
to them and appear the prophets with who speak the angels and they are Ishim that is called

בְּמִרְאֵה הַנְּבוּאָה. לִפְיָכֶּךָ נִקְרְאוּ אִישִׁים שֶׁמַּעֲלָתָם קְרוּבָה לְמַעֲלַת
to the level of is close because their level Ishim they are called therefore prophecy in a vision of

דַּעַת בְּנֵי אָדָם:
man sons of the knowledge of

This halacha details the hierarchy of the ten spiritual levels of angels, from the highest Chayyot HaKodesh to the lowest Ishim who communicate with prophets.

ה'ל' ח

וְכָל הַצּוּרוֹת הָאֵלֹהִים חַיִּים וּמַכִּירִין אֶת הַבּוֹרֵא וְיוֹדְעִים אוֹתוֹ יָדְעָה
 with knowledge Him and know the Creator — and recognize are alive these the forms And all
 גְּדוֹלָה עַד לְמֵאד. כָּל צוּרָה וְצוּרָה לְפִי מַעְלָתָהּ לֹא לְפִי גְדֻלָּתָהּ.
 His greatness according to not its level according to and form form each exceedingly unto great
 אֲפֹלוּ מַעְלָה הָרִאשׁוֹנָה אֵינָה יְכוּלָה לְהַשִּׁיג אֱמֶתֶת הַבּוֹרֵא כְּמוֹ שֶׁהוּא אֵלָּא
 rather He is as the Creator the truth of to grasp able is not the first the level Even
 דַּעְתָּה קִצְרָה לְהַשִּׁיג וְלִידַע אֲבָל מַשְׁגָּת וְיוֹדַעַת יוֹתֵר מִמָּה שֶׁמַּשְׁגָּת
 grasps than what more and knows it grasps but and to know to grasp is too short its mind
 וְיוֹדַעַת צוּרָה שְׁלֵמֻטָּה מְמַנָּה. וְכֵן כָּל מַעְלָה וּמַעְלָה עַד מַעְלָה עֲשִׁירִית גַּם
 also tenth the level until and level level every And so it that is below the form and knows
 הִיא יוֹדַעַת הַבּוֹרֵא יָדְעָה שְׂאִין כַּח בְּנֵי הָאָדָם הַמְחֻבָּרִים מִגִּלָּם
 from matter who are joined man of sons of strength that there is no with knowledge the Creator knows it
 וְצוּרָה יְכוּלָה לְהַשִּׁיג וְלִידַע כְּמוֹתָהּ. וְהַכֹּל אֵינָן יוֹדְעִין הַבּוֹרֵא כְּמוֹ
 as the Creator know do not And all of them like it and to know to grasp able and form
 שֶׁהוּא יוֹדֵעַ עַצְמוֹ:
 Himself knows He

This halacha explains that while the spiritual forms possess immense knowledge of the Creator relative to their levels, none can fully grasp His true essence as He knows Himself.

ה'ט

הַכֹּל נִמְצָא מֵאֱמֶתֶתוֹ וְהוּא יוֹדֵעַ אֶת הַכֹּל

Halacha 9 · All Existence Derives from the Creator and He Knows All Things

כָּל הַנִּמְצָאִים חוּץ מִן הַבּוֹרֵא מִצּוּרָה הָרִאשׁוֹנָה עַד יְתוֹשׁ קָטָן שִׁיְהִיָּה
 that is small a mosquito until the first from the form the Creator of outside the existing things All
 בְּטִבּוֹר הָאָרֶץ הַכֹּל מִכַּח אֱמֶתֶתוֹ נִמְצָאוּ. וּלְפִי שֶׁהוּא יוֹדֵעַ עַצְמוֹ
 Himself knows that He and because exist His truth from the power of everything of the earth in the center
 וּמַכִּיר גְּדֻלָּתוֹ וְתִפְאֳרָתוֹ וְאֱמֶתֶתוֹ הוּא יוֹדֵעַ הַכֹּל וְאֵין דָּבָר נִעְלָם
 hidden thing and there is no everything knows He and His truth and His beauty His greatness and recognizes
 מִמֶּנּוּ:
 from Him

This halacha explains that all creations derive their existence from the Creator's truth, and because He knows Himself, He knows everything in existence.

ה'י

אַחֲדוּת הַבּוֹרֵא וְדַעַתוֹ הַנִּשְׁגָּחָה

Halacha 10 · The Absolute Unity of the Creator, His Knowledge, and His Life

הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מַכִּיר אֱמֶתוֹ וְיוֹדֵעַ אוֹתָהּ כְּמוֹ שֶׁהִיא. וְאֵינּוּ יוֹדְעַת
 know and He does not that it is like it and knows His truth recognizes He blessed The Holy One

בְּדַעַה שְׁהִיא חוץ מִמֶּנּוּ כִּמּוֹ שְׂאֵנוּ יוֹדְעִין. שְׂאֵין אָנוּ וְדַעַתְנוּ אֶחָד
 are one and our knowledge we for not know that we like of Him outside that is with a knowledge
אֲבָל הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרֵךְ הוּא וְדַעַתּוֹ וְחַיּוֹ אֶחָד מִכָּל צֶד וּמִכָּל פֶּנֶה
 corner and from all side from all are one and His life and His knowledge He may He be blessed the Creator but
וּבְכָל דְּרָךְ יְחִוּד. שְׂאֵלְמַלִּי הִיָּה חַי בְּחַיִּים וְיוֹדַע בְּדַעַה חוץ
 outside with a knowledge and knowing with life living He were for if unity way of and in every
מִמֶּנּוּ הָיוּ שֵׁם אֱלֹהוֹת הִרְבֵּה הוּא וְחַיּוֹ וְדַעַתּוֹ, וְאֵין הַדְּבָר כֵּן
 is so the matter and not and His knowledge and His life He many gods there there would be of Him
אֶלָּא אֶחָד מִכָּל צֶד וּמִכָּל פֶּנֶה וּבְכָל דְּרָךְ יְחִוּד. נִמְצְאָתָ אַתָּה אוֹמֵר
 say you consequently unity way of and in every corner and from all side from all one rather
הוּא הַיּוֹדַע וְהוּא הַיְדוּעַ וְהוּא הַדַּעַה עֲצֻמָּה הַכֹּל אֶחָד. וְדָבָר זֶה
 this and matter is one the whole itself is the Knowledge and He is the Known and He is the Knower He
אֵין כַּח בִּפֶּה לְאֹמְרוֹ וְלֹא בְּאָזְן לְשִׁמְעוֹ וְלֹא בְּלֵב הָאָדָם
 man in the heart of and not to hear it in the ear and not to say it in the mouth power there is no
לְהַפִּירוֹ עַל בְּרִיו. וּלְפִיכָךְ אוֹמֵר חַי פֶּרַעַה וְחַי נַפְשָׁךְ וְאֵין
 and not your soul and by the life of Pharaoh by the life of it says and therefore its truth upon to recognize it
אוֹמֵר חַי ה' אֶלָּא חַי ה'. שְׂאֵין הַבּוֹרָא וְחַיּוֹ שְׁנַיִם כִּמּוֹ חַיִּי
 the life of like are two and His life the Creator for not Hashem as lives rather Hashem by the life of it says
הַגּוֹפִים הַחַיִּים אוֹ כְּחַיִּי הַמַּלְאָכִים. לְפִיכָךְ אֵינוּ מַפִּיר הַבְּרוּאִים
 the creations recognize He does not therefore the angels like the life of or the living the bodies
וְיוֹדְעִם מִחֲמַת הַבְּרוּאִים כִּמּוֹ שְׂאֵנוּ יוֹדְעִין אוֹתָם אֶלָּא מִחֲמַת עֲצֻמוֹ
 Himself because of rather them know that we like the creations because of and know them
יָדָעִם. לְפִיכָךְ מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהוּא יוֹדַע עֲצֻמוֹ יוֹדַע הַכֹּל שֶׁהַכֹּל נִסְמָךְ
 is dependent for everything everything He knows Himself knows that He because therefore He knows them
לוֹ בְּהוּיָתּוֹ:
 in its existence on Him

This halacha explains that Hashem's knowledge is not external to Him, but rather He, His life, and His knowledge are completely one.

הלי"א

מַעֲשֵׂה מֶרְכָּבָה וְהַגְבֻּלַת הַבְּאוּר כְּהֵם

Halacha 11 · The Depth of Ma'aseh Merkavah and the Limits of Explanation

דְּבָרִים אֵלּוּ שְׂאֵמְרָנוּ בְּעֶנְיָן זֶה בְּשְׁנַיִ פְּרָקִים אֵלּוּ כִּמּוֹ טֶפֶה מִן הַיָּם
 the sea from a drop are like these chapters in two this regarding the subject that we said these Matters
הֵם מִמָּה שְׂצָרִיךְ לְבָאֵר בְּעֶנְיָן זֶה. וּבְאוּר כָּל הָעֲקָרִים
 the principles all and the explanation of this regarding the subject to explain is needed compared to what they
שְׁבִשְׁנַיִ פְּרָקִים אֵלּוּ הוּא הַנִּקְרָא מַעֲשֵׂה מֶרְכָּבָה:
 the Chariot the Work of is that which is called it these chapters that are in the two

The Rambam explains that the profound concepts discussed in the previous chapters are merely a drop in the ocean of the esoteric discipline known as Ma'aseh Merkavah.

חל"ב

הגבלת למוד סודות התורה והצנעתם

Halacha 12 · The Restriction and Concealment of the Secrets of the Torah

צו חכמים הראשונים שלא לדרש בדברים אלו אלא לאיש אחד
one to a man except these on matters to expound that not the early the Sages commanded
בלבד והוא שיהיה חכם ומבין מדעתו ואחר כך מוסרין לו
to him they transmit so and after from his own and understanding wise that he be and he alone
ראשי הפרקים ומודיעין אותו שמץ מן הדבר והוא מבין
understands and he the matter of a trace him and they make known of the chapters the outlines
מדעתו ויודע סוף הדבר ועמקו. ודברים אלו דברים עמקים הם
they deep matters these and matters and its depth of the matter the end and knows from his own knowledge
עד למאד ואין כל דעת ודעת ראויה לסבלן. ועליהם אמר שלמה
Shlomo said and on them to bear them fitting and mind mind every and there is not exceedingly until
בחכמתו דרך משל משלי כו כ"בשים ללבושה" כך אמרו חכמים
the Sages said so for your clothing lambs 26 27 Proverbs metaphor by way of in his wisdom
בפרוש משל זה דברים שהן כבשוננו של עולם יהיו ללבושה
for your clothing shall be the world of the secrets that they are matters this metaphor in the explanation of
כלומר לה לבדה ואל תדרש אותם ברבים. ועליהם אמר משלי ה יז
17 5 Proverbs said and on them in public them expound and do not alone for you meaning to say
"יהיו לה לבדה ואין לזרים אתה". ועליהם אמר שיר השירים ד יא
11 4 Songs Song of said and on them with you for strangers and not alone for you they shall be
"דבש וחלב תחת לשונך", כך פירשו חכמים הראשונים דברים שהן
that they are matters the early the Sages explained so your tongue under and milk honey
כדבש וחלב יהיו תחת לשונך:
your tongue under shall be and milk like honey

This halacha outlines the strict conditions under which the deepest secrets of the Torah, such as Ma'aseh Merkavah, may be transmitted only to a single, exceptionally wise student.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter begins by establishing the mitzvos of loving and fearing Hashem, explaining that these middos are awakened when we contemplate the greatness of His creations. The Rambam then categorizes all creation into three groups: physical things that change, permanent physical bodies like the stars and spheres, and purely spiritual forms without any physical matter, which are the angels. He explains that the physical descriptions of angels in the Torah are merely prophetic metaphors, as they have no physical form or weight. Instead, they are structured in ten spiritual levels, from the holy chayyot down to the ishim, who communicate with the prophets. The Rambam concludes by explaining that while these lofty spiritual beings have

immense knowledge of Hashem, even the highest angel cannot fully comprehend the Creator, whose knowledge, life, and Essence are completely one.

לְמַעַשָּׂה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

The Rambam is teaching us a fundamental secret about how a Yid builds a real, living relationship with Hashem. We often think that love and fear of Hashem are emotions that just have to strike us like lightning, or that they are reserved only for the greatest tzaddikim. But the Torah commands every single one of us, "And you shall love... and you shall fear." How is this possible? The Rambam reveals the path: it comes through active contemplation. When you stop to look at the world, from the vastness of the stars to the intricate design of a tiny leaf, you are looking at the wisdom of the Creator.

This contemplation is a two-step movement of the soul. First, when you see the infinite wisdom and beauty in creation, your heart is pulled close; you are filled with a deep yearning and love to know Hashem. But in the very next moment, as you realize how small and limited you are standing before the Master of the universe, you naturally recoil in healthy awe and yiras Shamayim. True avodah requires both. We cannot serve Hashem properly with love alone, which can lead to familiarity, nor with fear alone, which can lead to coldness. We need the heartbeat of both running and returning.

Today, take just two minutes to step away from your busy schedule, look at something in Hashem's creation, even just the breath in your lungs or the sky outside your window, and think: "The Creator of the entire universe made this with infinite wisdom, and He wants a relationship with me."