

"And all the chariots of Egypt." (14:7)

Rashi cites the *Midrash* that states that the animals which were hitched to these chariots belonged to those select Egyptians who feared the word of Hashem. They had removed their animals from the fields during the hailstorm, which was the sixth plague. The cattle of these G-d fearing individuals were endangering Jewish lives. This *Midrash* clearly satirizes the G-d-fearing Egyptians. They feared Hashem only when the lives of their cattle were at stake, but overtly defied Him when the issue was Jewish survival. Our people have confronted this type of blatant hypocrisy throughout history. The very same people who professed religion, love, and fear of G-d acted towards the Jews with the utmost hatred, treating them cruelly, brutally inflicting upon them the greatest atrocities. All this has been presented in the name of religion! We must endeavor to explain this sanctimonious fear of G-d displayed by the religious Egyptians.

In the sphere of morality, Hashem is the source of the ethics of behavior for three reasons. First, there is fear of punishment. On one hand man submits to Hashem's service because of fear of retribution for transgression. On the other hand, is the anticipation of reward for obedience. *Chazal* have always spoken disparagingly, however, of those who do not progress beyond this stage, who do not aspire to more sophisticated levels of service to Hashem. *Chazal* consider reasons two and three to be necessary in order to develop appropriate motivation towards serving Hashem. They are "fear of awe", or man's awareness of Hashem's overwhelming greatness, and, ultimately, "love of Hashem." Although awe of Hashem inherently compels submission to Him, we are required to aspire to and attain the ultimate step, love of Hashem.

These concepts which arise out of recognition of Hashem as the source of absolute value establish the foundation of moral law. The G-d fearing Egyptians were only able to reach the first stage: fear of retribution. Hence, the *Torah* states that they "feared Hashem's word". They were fearful only of His "word" and His actions, but they were not concomitantly afraid of "Him". This "fear" was nothing more than cowardice, which quickly transformed when these Egyptians perceived that they were no longer in danger. One must experience all of the qualities of fear and love of Hashem in order to maintain the proper balance of conduct.