



“R’ Akiva said: All scriptural songs are holy however Shir HaShirim is Holy of Holy’s – for it solely speaks of the Fear of Heaven and the Acceptance of Hashem’s Yolk” (Rashi, Shir HaShirim 1:1)

Anyone with even a casual familiarity with Shir HaShirim stands perplexed at these words. Of all the Scriptures, expressions regarding the Fear of Hashem are conspicuously absent from Shir HaShirim. To the contrary, from its beginning to end it almost exclusively speaks of the Love of Hashem.

The *Iyun Tefillah* (authored by a talmid of Rav Akiva Eiger) in his commentary to the *bracha* of *Ahava Raba* asks: Towards the beginning of this *bracha* we say: *Our Father, the merciful Father, the merciful One - have mercy upon us, and put into our hearts to understand and to comprehend and to listen and to study and to teach and to keep and to do and to preserve all of the words of the study of Your Torah with love.* Whereas, towards the end of the *bracha* we say: *And make our heart cling to Your commandments, and unite our hearts to love and fear Your name.* This seems hard to understand for love of Hashem is a higher level of servitude than fear of Him. If so, why do we begin by asking Hashem to serve Him with love and only later we make a request regarding serving Him with fear?

The *Iyun Tefillah* explains: The fear of Heaven of which we speak in the *bracha* of *Ahava Raba* doesn’t refer to regular fear, rather, it is a fear that is in reality an even higher level of love. To explain this, he brings an analogy from the “*Sefer HaBris*”: *Shlomo was adorable but mischievous and his dangerous antics sewed fear into the hearts of his parents. Their love for him overflowed as they watched their cute three-year-old laughingly dance on top of the table, but their love mingled with fear for the child’s safety. Why were they fearful if they were in no danger themselves? Because they loved their child so much they dreaded the thought of the slightest harm befalling him.* The *Sefer HaBris* explains that this such fear is the highest form of love of Hashem. When we love Him so much that we dread committing a sin, knowing the pain it causes Him.

With this we can understand Rashi’s description of Shir HaShirim as solely speaking of the Fear of Heaven, for such fear indeed expresses the highest level of love for Hashem!

