

# PART 19A: CHAPTER 4

*by Rabbi Yitzchak Schwartz*

In our last few lessons we discussed the startling phenomenon that at times decisions and actions based upon freewill may facilitate the exact opposite of the desired results. This seems to indicate that man's destiny is not determined by freewill. Yet there are many cases when our freewill does achieve the desired results. Indeed, in many cases the results could not be achieved without our conscious decisions and efforts. For example, you find yourself in the middle of a busy street and a truck is closing in on you. You make a quick decision to move and escape mortal danger. It goes without saying that if not for your decision and action to escape danger the likelihood of a tragic ending would be great. Furthermore, you could rightfully claim that your decision and action to move created the possibility for your safe escape from danger.

There is another category of events that are only partially influenced by freewill. Events of this type are also influenced by forces beyond our control and therefore it cannot be claimed that freewill is totally responsible for the results. For example, you are a farmer and want to plant a wheat field. You must make a decision to sow the field and then carry out that decision. But you are still not going to get a wheat field unless the forces of nature bring rain and other essential environmental and agricultural conditions are met e.g. good soil and fertile seed. These things are out of your control. It is the combination of your freewill and forces beyond your control that will bring about the successful growth of the field.

In summary, there are three categories of activities:

1. Actions based upon freewill that are the direct cause of the desired results.
2. Actions based upon freewill that do not produce the desired results due to intervention of forces and events beyond our control ( the story of Joseph and his brothers).
3. Actions based upon freewill that are only partially responsible for the end results. It is important to understand that events that belong to the last two categories are not the result of random circumstance. Rather, they are influenced and directed to be harmonious with G-d's will, despite any apparent incongruence. Based on this introduction we can have a better understanding of Elifaz's arguments with Job.

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