

PART 28: CHAPTER 5, VERSES 8 - 12

by Rabbi Yitzchak Schwartz

- 8. But I would seek to G-d, and to G-d I would commit my cause:*
- 9. Who does great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number:*
- 10. Who gives rain upon the earth, and sends water upon the fields:*
- 11. To set up on high those who are low; that those who mourn may be exalted to safety.*
- 12. He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their policy.*

Commentary:

The Malbim explains that although Elifaz tries to demonstrate to Iyov that man's fate is not predetermined he concedes that the realm of freewill is not boundless. There are times when one's direction and efforts are more an exercise in futility than productive action. Even worse, often the exact opposite of our intentions and plans come true. This seems to support the notion that man is not a free agent, and that there exists some force beyond our grasp that exercises a level of control over our actions.

Elifaz claims that this is not the case. Although there are times when the sovereignty of freewill is abated, nevertheless, Elifaz maintains that we remain responsible for our actions.

Elifaz's claim that "... I would seek to G-d, and to G-d I would commit my cause" means that when the freewill of man is abrogated he views this as an act of Divine providence. We should not seek some inexplicable force or vague notion of fate and luck. It is G-d who at times interferes with our freedom of choice. Man, nevertheless, remains totally responsible for the vast majority of his actions.

Verse #9 is brought as support for this viewpoint. "Who does great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number." There are two types of wonders that G-d preforms in creation; great things and... marvellous things. The 'great things' are the acts of nature that take place on a

constant basis everywhere in the universe. The 'marvellous things' are the wonderous events that take place from time to time that defy natural explanation. Verses 10-11 are examples of how the 'great and marvelous things' are acts of Divine design.

"Who gives rain upon the earth, and sends water upon the fields". It can be easily observed that water is the basis for all forms of life; from the simplest microorganisms to human beings. Water brings out life from the soil; "To set up on high those who are low...." According to the Malbim this refers to the seeds that lie low in the ground. They soak up the water from the soil and rise up high to the nurturing sunlight.

"...those who mourn may be exalted to safety", this translation of the Hebrew word 'kodrim' seems to follow Rashi's interpretation. The Malbim interprets it differently. He says that 'kodrim' refers to the animals that would be parched and scorched in the heat of the sun if there was not sufficient water available to them.

One of the great wonders of this world is that water is so abundant. Water is the prerequisite for all known forms of life. Teleological reasoning views this as indication of an overall design and plan. Random chance can be the cause of singular events. But when one thing is the cause of many different types of phenomena; such as water producing the life medium for everything from microbes, to redwoods, to human beings, it demonstrates thought and design not coincidence.

The Ramban (Nachmanides) points out that of all natural phenomena, rainfall is the most unpredictable. The sun, moon and constellations all have predictable patterns. We can calculate their appearance with great accuracy. Rainfall, on the other hand, is very unpredictable. Yes, once the clouds appear it is possible to predict with some degree of reliability the likelihood of precipitation. But the appearance of rain bearing clouds is very difficult to predict with any degree of accuracy. In various parts of world extended periods of draught occur. When this happens the lives of millions of people, animals, and plants are severely effected.

"To set up on high those who are low; ... " According to the Ramban this refers to the clouds that rise from below [after water evaporates the water vapor rises to form clouds]. G-d scrutinizes and judges man's conduct. When the human behaviour becomes deviant G-d responds with disciplinary measures. Often, this can take the form of cessation of rain, the source of all life. Conversely, in response to meritorious conduct G-d may reward us with material blessings that to a great deal depend on an abundance of rain.... "those who mourn may be exalted to safety."

The Ramban explains verse 9-12 (in his commentary on verse 9) in a very original way. "He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their policy." Elifaz claims (verse 8) that all that occurs is an act of Divine providence and even that which seems to be bad is a benevolent act of G-d, a blessing in disguise. "

For affliction does not come out of the dust, nor does trouble spring out of the ground..." Rather, the 'afflictions' that we suffer are designed for a positive purpose. Often our hopes, desires, and plans

can lead us into circumstances and situations that are not, in the long run, to our benefit. Even when things do not go as planned and the most undesirable events take place this should be interpreted as kind interference by G-d to spare us the unanticipated trouble and anguish that lurks just around the corner of the fulfillment of our desires and plans.

"But man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. But I would seek to G-d, and to G-d I would commit my cause" The Ramban interprets this to mean that man is destined for trouble due to the fact that we are created with two conflicting inclinations; the 'yeitzer hatov'=good inclination, and the 'yeitzer hara'=bad inclination. The 'yeitzer hatov' is the source of our desire to do what is moral and ethical even in the face of great personal sacrifice. The 'yeitzer hara' is the source for our desire to fulfill base and selfish desires regardless of any moral or ethical considerations.

We are afflicted with internal turmoil from 'day-one' because the purpose of our existence is to empower our 'yeitzer hatov' to prevail over the 'yeitzer hara' by virtue of our capacity for freewill. Man's predisposition for trouble and turmoil is as natural as the sparks rising upward from a hot coal. The benign nature of natural phenomena, such as the fact that heat rises, are part of G-d's design for an orderly and convenient life in this world. We can view the inner and external turmoil of man in the same way; hence, "...man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. But I would seek to G-d, and to G-d I would commit my cause". It is all part of G-d's design for life.

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The author is the Rosh Hayeshiva (Dean) of [Orchos Chaim Yeshiva](#) in Jerusalem.