

PART 29: CHAPTER 5, VERSES 12- 17

by Rabbi Yitzchak Schwartz

12. He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their policy.

13. He traps the wise with cunning and speeds the counsel of the stubborn.

14. In the day they will meet with darkness and in bright daylight they will grope night like it is night.

15. He will save the weak from the sword of their mouths and the impoverished from the hands of the strong.

16. And the poor will have hope and the evil shuts its mouth.

17. Behold, fortunate is the person that G-d rebukes and the discipline of G-d he does not reject.

Commentary:

When the wise use their wisdom for wicked purposes G-d does not always halt or interfere with their plans. Instead, He exploits their actions to produce the results that He desires. This is vividly demonstrated in the story of Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37).

Joseph's brothers thought that he posed a threat to the future well being of the family and decided to do away with him. G-d turned their plan of destruction into a plan of salvation for Joseph and eventually for the entire family. They tried to control and subjugate Joseph, instead they became his servants. There was no plausible way for this to happen had it not been for the brothers conspiracy to kill Joseph, that was later commuted to his sale into slavery, which led to his ultimate rise to power. (Remember Joseph's dreams?) When G-d chooses this course of action things move quickly. "He traps the wise with cunning and speeds the counsel of the stubborn."

The quick success of the wicked is at first deceiving. They interpret this as a clear sign of certain

success. Quite the opposite may be true because G-d is likely to adopt their plan for His own intents and purposes. At other times G-d may directly interfere with their plans, foiling any positive results that their actions produce. "In the day they will meet with darkness and in bright daylight they will grope like it is night." When G-d maneuvers and manipulates their actions to fulfill His intents and purposes the wicked find themselves groping in daylight. What appeared to the wicked to be a clear and bright path to success suddenly turns to darkness.

Planet Earth is, and always has been, overpopulated with wicked people who would not hesitate to bring the entire world to the brink of destruction in order to fulfill their selfish agendas. The malevolent tactics and techniques that they use to execute their evil schemes obviates any effective response on the part of moral and ethical people. Although G-d is not inclined to interfere with the gift of freewill that He gave to man, under such circumstances it is certainly easy to justify such interference.

In verse 16 the Malbim explains that the week would have no hope at all if freewill would always be effective. G-d confounds the plans of the wicked in order to save the week. The world is not a lawless jungle. When wickedness pushes the limits of G-d's tolerance the effectiveness of freewill is temporarily suspended. Then the wicked must close their mouths... indeed a miraculous feat. They plot endlessly to consume the wealth of others by any possible means... "He will save the week from the sword of their mouths and the impoverished from the hands of the strong. And the poor will have hope and the evil shuts its mouth."

There are times when man can effectuate change and productivity with his freewill. There are other times when it is completely ineffectual. The condition of human suffering can fall into either of these categories. Sometimes suffering is the result of our own decisions and actions, or lack of them. This is readily observed in the multitude of life threatening conditions that afflict modern man as a result of haphazard and dangerous life styles and habits. There are other times when suffering comes regardless of our decisions and actions. In these cases G-d is taking corrective measures in order atone for any wrong doing, or to redirect a person who is proceeding in life in the wrong direction.

Suffering that comes as a result of inappropriate use of freewill is indeed a bitter lot. But the suffering that is selected by G-d to redirect us from a wayward path or to bring atonement for misdeeds is a form of kindness. The recipient of this type of hardship is fortunate to have received direct discipline from G-d. Whether they be minor afflictions that are unobtrusive reminders that a person is on the wrong track in life, or major calamities that serve a cleansing function for previous harmful misconduct, suffering is a gift from G-d. The recipient of these Divine gifts should not reject them... "Behold, fortunate is the person that G-d rebukes and the discipline of G-d he does not reject."

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