

## PART 3: CHAPTER 1, VERSE 6

by Rabbi Yitzchak Schwartz

Verse 6. "One day the sons of G-d came to stand before the Lord and Satan came among them."

### Commentary

The 'One day' in the verse above is *Rosh Hashana*, the Day of Judgement. On *Rosh Hashana* G-d convenes His court to judge all of His creation. At present in our text the case brought before the court is that of *Iyov*.

The *Mishna* in tractate *Rosh Hashana*, (see our last installment) enhances our understanding of the verse for it says. "On *Rosh Hashana* all the inhabitants of earth pass before G-d in judgement." In the High Holiday prayer book, the *Machzor*, there is a very poignant prayer commonly known as the *Netane Tokef* prayer which deepens our understanding of the essence of *Rosh Hashana*:

"Let us now relate the power of this day's holiness, for it is awesome and frightening. On it your Kingship will be exalted; Your throne will be firmed with kindness and You will sit upon it in truth. It is true that You alone are the One Who judges, proves, knows, and bears witness; Who writes and seals, (counts and calculates); Who remembers all that was forgotten. You will open the Book of Chronicles-it will read itself, and everyone's signature is in it. The great shofar will be sounded and a still, thin sound will be heard. Angels will hasten, a trembling and terror will seize them--and they will say, 'Behold, it is the Day of Judgment, to muster the heavenly host for judgment!'--for they cannot be vindicated in Your eyes in judgment. All mankind will pass before You like members of the flock. Like a shepherd pasturing his flock, making sheep pass under his staff, so shall You cause to pass, count, calculate, and consider the soul of all the living; and You shall apportion the fixed needs of all Your creatures and inscribe their verdict."

"On *Rosh Hashanah* will be inscribed and on *Yom Kippur* will be sealed how many will pass from the earth and how many will be created; who will live and who will not; who will die at his predestined time and who before his time; who by water and who by fire; who by sword, who by beast, who by famine, who by thirst, who by storm, who by plague, who by strangulation, and who by stoning. Who will rest and who will wander, who will live in harmony and who will be harried, who will enjoy

tranquillity and who will suffer, who will be impoverished and who will be enriched, who will be degraded and who will be exalted."

Let us return to the verse, the 'children of G-d' symbolize the sum total of all humanity. They are judged regarding all that has or has not been accomplished in this world during the previous year. The individual and collective deeds of mankind, the fruits of our own free will choices are all scrutinized by the Divine tribunal on *Rosh Hashana*. G-d has an all encompassing plan for the course of human affairs. Throughout history the ultimate goal is redemption.

As we mentioned previously, every physical phenomenon has a spiritual life force behind it. In Hebrew these forces are called *malachim*. They too are among the 'children of G-d' who stand before the Divine tribunal on *Rosh Hashana*. To the extent that our choice of actions lead us down a path that converges with G-d's plan, the appropriate *malachim* are instructed to assist in every way possible so that we may sustain our constructive activities. However, should our decisions lead us to behavior contrary to the Divine plan G-d may take measures to counterbalance our misconduct in order to insure the fulfillment of His will. At this point the *Satan* may be enrolled. It is his job to create obstacles that will compel us to take a detour from our deviant ways. This whole process, which takes place over a period of many generations, may be circuitous but inevitably it will lead to redemption.

At times the human capacity for free will can interfere with the Divine plan for redemption. Therefore, it becomes necessary every year that G-d make the necessary adjustments in world affairs so as to restore the correct direction towards fulfillment of His objectives. These corrections are often described as the decrees of heaven. They are far too intricate and complex for us to completely fathom. We lack the essential depth of historical perspective and adequate peripheral vision in order to fully appreciate the global effects of these decrees.

It is understandable to all that G-d will utilize the deeds of the righteous to bring to fruition His universal scheme for redemption. However, it is not so obvious that He also manipulates the evil deeds of the wicked in order to get us back on track. This is where the *Satan* is useful. We will discuss this concept at greater length in our next lesson.

## Summary

On *Rosh Hashana* all of creation is on trial and the children of G-d are the defendants. The on-going evolution of world history is the direct result of the annual *Rosh Hashana* tribunals. G-d charges each one of the appropriate *malachim* with its task for the coming year on the Day of Judgement, *Rosh Hashana*. At that time they are imbued with a life force that they in turn impart upon their respective physical counterparts. Among the *malachim* that stand before G-d at this awesome time is the *Satan*. The *Satan* is selected by G-d to serve as the spiritual force behind all that is evil and destructive in this world. (see our previous installment) He too is assigned a new list of activities for

the new year ushered in on *Rosh Hashana*. At the top of his list this year is - *Iyov*.

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