

PART 4: CHAPTER 1, VERSES 6-7

by Rabbi Yitzchak Schwartz

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

Verse 7. *"And the Lord said to Satan, Where have you been? Satan said, 'I've been going back and forth, and walking up and down across the earth.'"*

Commentary

It is noteworthy that the *Satan* is described as coming "also" among the children of G-d. This seems to indicate that he came apart from the rest of the group (the children of G-d). We have already mentioned that the day when these events took place was *Rosh Hashana*. The children of G-d allude to the *malachim* (angels) that come to argue on behalf of their earthly counterparts. Their main line of defense is to present evidence that will demonstrate that the virtues of the accused obviate the condemnation of the prosecution. The *Satan* is the prosecutor. His line of prosecution is based upon the character faults and transgressions of the Divine Will perpetrated by the defendant.

As one can imagine, for some people the case may be 'open and shut', for better or worse. Still, there are many difficult cases where the presentation of the prosecution and the defense are equally convincing. In these cases a higher level of judicial scrutiny must be exercised in order to decide the case. A closer and more exacting examination of the virtues and the faults of the accused may shed new light upon the case.

Maimonides explains that the fact that the *Satan* came apart from the children of G-d indicates that he was not an equal party in this group. His appearance is secondary to that of the children of G-d, hence his separation from the rest of his colleagues. Herein lies a deep philosophical idea. The potential for evil and destruction in this world is not commensurate with the potential for good. The purpose of evil is to facilitate our capacity for free will. Like many other phenomena in this world, these forces can be used or abused.

Our challenge is to overcome the temptation of evil. In so doing we can continually reach higher levels of moral and spiritual perfection. When we chose to prevail over the temptation of evil we

help to abate its existence. However, if we chose to exercise the option for evil the end result is inevitably destruction at various levels and degrees. Like a virus, evil has the capacity to consume its host and undermine its own existence.

Whether we overcome it or succumb to it, evil has no permanent place in this world. The fact that the effects of our decisions are not immediately evident does not diminish from the truth of this spiritual law of nature. Figuratively speaking we can describe evil as a black whole, or the anti-matter of the spiritual world that governs the physical creation. An overdose of it will cause its host to implode from its own weight.

Summary

He stands off to the side of the 'children of G-d' to indicate that his existence is not a permanent fixture of creation.

Text Copyright © 1996 Rabbi Y. Schwartz and Project Genesis, Inc.

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