

PART 6: CHAPTER 1, VERSES 7-8

by Rabbi Yitzchak Schwartz

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."

8. "And the Lord said to Satan, have you seen my servant Job? Is there anyone else like him, any earnest, upright, G-d fearing man who stays away from evil?"

Commentary

Verse 7

The *Satan's* response to G-d needs some explanation. Why was he wandering "back and forth, and walking up and down across the earth"? The *Malbim* elucidates this in the following way. The manifestation of evil in this world is destruction of varying forms and degrees. Destruction exists only in the physical realm. Hence, the *Satan* can carry out his functions only within the perimeters of this world. He must, therefore, spend his time meandering around the earth.

Destruction manifests itself in three ways.

1. By way of the natural vulnerability of animate objects to disease, death and their subsequent decomposition.
2. Death and havoc inflicted by violent eruptions of forces of nature and disease.
3. Acts of folly and wickedness perpetrated by man.

The "wandering back and forth, and walking up and down across the earth" indicates that the *Satan* is responsible for delivery of all of the above should man's evil actions grant him license to do so. The world of the spiritual is by its very nature immune to these phenomena. This means that the *Satan* can accomplish his mission only in the physical world. We shall understand the significance of this in the next verse.

Verse 8

It seems only logical that in this verse the *Satan* should begin his prosecution of *Iyov* in light of the fact that G-d has just granted him the permission to do so (see our commentary part 5b). Instead, G-d takes the floor and begins proclaiming the virtues of *Iyov*. Apparently the *Satan* had nothing to say. Indeed, was he not described as a totally "upright, G-d fearing man who stayed away from evil" (in verse 1). *Iyov* was exceedingly agitated and disturbed by his suffering. We can readily justify his attitude. Even G-d testified to his sterling character.

The *Malbim* explains the significance of the Divine testimony. Evil and destruction are natives of the physical world. Man was created from physical matter along with a Divine soul that his Creator breathed into him. These two aspects of human nature are in a constant struggle. The physical drives of man, when unrestrained, want no restrictions or limitations. The more pleasure the better, regardless of the means and ends.

The soul, on the other hand, desires closeness to G-d which is accomplished only through moral and ethical discipline. As the practice of prudent control and moderation replace unbridled physicality, we become more spiritual than corporeal. To the extent that this transformation progresses, conceivably, one could become immune to evil and destruction of all forms.

In light of this G-d's testimony about his servant *Iyov* takes on new meaning. ".....my servant Job? Is there anyone else like him, any earnest, upright, G-d fearing man who stays away from evil?" *Iyov* elevated himself above and beyond the mundane existence of most humans. He, by his Creator's own testimony, achieved a state of G-dliness that deemed him immune to evil and destruction.

Summary

Destruction, in any of its forms can occur only within the perimeters of the physical. G-d informs the *Satan* that he can have no effect upon *Iyov*. His level of spiritual perfection placed him outside the *Satan's* jurisdiction. Since *Iyov* was absolutely righteous his suffering cannot be attributed to guilt or flaw of character.

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