

THE PATH OF THE JUST - CHAPTER 24:5

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

One of the things the angels have over us is that they literally see and hear G-d up close, day after day, year after year. (We have things over them, to be sure, but that's not the subject at hand.) And we're told that they "constantly shiver and tremble for the Majesty of G-d" in the heavens above; they experience a sense of "terror ... in the face of G-d's Grandeur"; and that they "fear that they might overlook some small aspect of the honor and holiness due Him" given what they see and know.

In fact, Ramchal goes on to say, "whenever or wherever the Divine Presence is revealed there's shaking, shivering and trembling". After all, isn't it so that "the earth shook and the heavens dropped at the presence of G-d" (Psalms 68:9), and didn't the psalmist ask to G-d to "tear the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would melt at Your Presence" (Isaiah 63:19)?

Well, if that's true of the angels and animate objects, it would logically be expected all the more so for we humans, he argues. After all, "It's only right that we (too) should tremble and shiver in the knowledge that we're constantly standing in the Presence of G-d, and that it's (nonetheless) so easy for us to do something unfitting before G-d's exaltedness".

This indeed is what Eliphaz was referring to when he asked, "What is man that he should be worthy, that one born of a woman should be righteous? Behold G-d has no faith in His holy ones, and in His sight the heavens are not worthy (all the more so is that true of man)" (Job 15:14-15); as well as, "Behold, G-d does not have faith in His servants and He charges His angels with foolishness. How much more (does He not have faith in) those who live in houses of clay" (Job 4:18-19).

And so Ramchal adds that "everyone must certainly tremble and shiver at all times" in deathly fear that he may be off the mark and somehow be profaning G-d's holy name. Didn't Elihu say, "My heart trembles and is moved out of its place at this as well; listen closely to the noise of His voice" (Job 37:1-2). "This then is the sort of fear that the truly pious should have on their faces at all times", he concludes.

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