

BEHAR (LEVITICUS 25:1-27:34)

Don't Just STAND There...

2009 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

We strive to be holy. It is not an easy task. The Torah was not given to angels; it was given to human beings with human weaknesses. Yet, we make the effort.

In our daily prayers, we make reference to the angels in Heaven and the divine symphony of praise that they offer to G-d every day:

*...They are all beloved; they are all flawless; they are all mighty, and they do the will of their Maker with awe and reverence. They all open their mouths in holiness and purity, in song and hymn -- and bless, praise, glorify, revere, sanctify, and declare the kingship of the Name of G-d, the great, mighty, and awesome King, holy is He... All of them proclaim His Holiness and say with awe: **"Holy, holy, holy is G-d, Master of the Hosts; the whole world is filled with His glory..."***

Pretty heavy stuff. The Heavens ring forth with holiness that we mortals cannot even begin to imagine, much less, understand. Yet we try:

*We shall sanctify Your Name in this world, just as they sanctify it in Heaven above, as it is written by Your prophet, "they call one another and say: **'Holy, holy, holy..'**"*

The above prayer is recited standing, with our feet together as if they are one foot, just like the angels, about whom it is written, *and their legs are one straight leg*" (Ezekiel 1:7) and who are referred to as "Standers." (Zechariah, 3:7)

All this, of course, begs the question: whom are we trying to kid??!

We are simple, mortal human beings. How can we even contemplate a serious attempt at being like the angels? Their level of holiness is so far beyond ours that it seems pointless to even make the comparison.

This week's Torah Portion promises blessings for living according to G-d's ways. It then continues by warning us of the repercussions created by abandoning the Torah. (It is customary to read this "Tochachah" -- *Rebuke*, in a lower volume and faster speed than the rest of the Torah reading. In so doing, we demonstrate our reluctance to even read about the negative events that could possibly befall us, G-d forbid. It is also customary for this Aliyah to be given to the rabbi, the Torah Reader, or the Gabbai, so as not to offend a member of the congregation by calling him up for the reading of these curses.)

In introducing these rewards and punishments, the Torah lets us know what is expected of us: *"If you will walk in My decrees, and observe My commandments and perform them; then I will provide your rains in their time and the land will give its produce..."* (Leviticus, 26:3-4)

Rabbi Yehonasan Eibeschutz, in his commentary, Tiferes Yehonasan, points out that the Torah expects us to **walk** in G-d's **decrees**, and **observe** His **Commandments**. A Decree is a Mitzvah for which there is no known explanation, such as the prohibition of eating pork, or wearing a garment made of linen and wool. And we are expected to **walk** in these decrees.

Rabbi Eibeschutz quotes the verse from the Book of Zechariah, cited above, that the righteous will merit to walk among the "Standers", the angels. Why, asks Rabbi Eibeschutz, are angels called Standers? It is because they stand in place, unable to become elevated. Yes, they are holy, but since they are basically "programmed" to do G-d's will, they are unable to achieve higher levels of holiness.

We, on the other hand, are "Walkers". We have the ability to walk in G-d's decrees. When we are given a Mitzvah to fulfill, and we don't understand the reason for this decree, it is easy to make excuses not to fulfill that Mitzvah. However, if we look at it as a decree from our King, we accept this decree and fulfill it. ("Ours is not to reason why...")

Angels are in a different situation. As heavenly beings, they understand the reasons behind all of the commandments. They lack the struggle that we endure. An angel does not have an internal drive to reject a commandment. G-d has said to do it; the angel fully understands the reason for the commandment, and he fulfills it.

As a result of the fact that the angel does not go through the struggle, his reward is not as great. To be sure, an angel occupies a lofty level. However, he is a Stander; he will remain at that level forever.

We, however, are Walkers. We can walk in G-d's decrees and achieve great spiritual levels and enjoy G-d's rewards.

The angels are sublime, magnificent beings, who stand at a very high spiritual level. We possess the ability to walk right past them.

We just have to make sure that we are walking in the right direction.

Have a great Shabbos.

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