

Mussar HaTorah

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Torah Insights into Human Nature – Dedicated in memory of Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz zt"l

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Parashas Vayeitzei

“AND BEHOLD THERE WAS A LADDER ON THE GROUND, ITS HEAD IN THE HEAVENS...” (BEREISHIS 28:12)

**Do not be astonished –
because Hashem is
watching every occurrence**

RABBEINU BECHAYE EXPLAINS that this vision of a ladder with its head reaching into the heavens was actually a prophetic metaphor that explained to Yaakov the justice inherent in the world. Many times we see the righteous suffer; often the wicked enjoy great success. This vision explains these seeming injustices: Everything that happens in the world is run by a hierarchy similar to a ladder. On the first rung are the celestial spheres that are directly involved in events that take place on earth. Above them are the angels, who impart the forces to these celestial spheres. Above the angels, on the highest rung, is Hashem, Who oversees and manipulates all earthly events. Similarly, Shlomo HaMelech says (Kohes 5:7), “If you see people stealing from the poor, and perversion of justice and righteousness...” do not be astonished – because Hashem, is above all, watching every occurrence. Hashem is telling Yaakov that one need not be confused by the apparent miscarriage of justice; Hashem is running the world through a complex, multi-level arrangement and all His actions are just.

The verse in Kohes is addressing a questioner who is a believer in Hashem, but is baffled by the injustice that he witnesses around him. How can Hashem allow such evil to occur? The wisest of men, Shlomo HaMelech, answers that everything happens through an elaborate system of influences and layers of control, and Hashem rules above it all. Does this answer the question? The questioner knew that Hashem controls everything, but was puzzled that He allows injustice to exist. He is told, “It’s a vast, intricate system through which Hashem runs the world.” That is interesting to know, but the bottom line hasn’t changed. True, it is a complex, multi-layered mechanism – but one that ends up with seemingly unfair results! How can Hashem allow it?

**This questioner believes
more than merely the
fact that Hashem runs the
world**

Apparently, this questioner believes more than merely the fact that Hashem runs the world. Deep down, he is also aware that Hashem is just and righteous, and all that transpires is based on His infinite wisdom, even if man’s limited, mortal mind cannot grasp it. However, somehow this deep-seated conviction gets buried when a person sees events which, on the surface, don’t make sense and appear to be unjust – the mind questions, “How can this be?” This desire to understand subtly shifts his perspective from that of a humble mortal to one of an equal as the unanswered question triggers confusion, a bit of ego and perhaps even anger, and the intellectual faith in Hashem’s infinite wisdom is forgotten. Shlomo responds, “Do you realize Whom you are questioning? Do you have the slightest glimpse of the vast machinery of Divine administration of this world, with layers of angels and celestial bodies executing His will?” The questioner, humbled by this reminder of Hashem’s greatness and his own smallness, retreats from his righteous indignation and accepts His judgment.

**We all want to make sense
of events around us**

We all want to make sense of events around us, and it bothers us when life seems cruel or unfair. These questions can cloud our basic faith in Hashem’s inscrutable wisdom, and we can begin to think we can challenge Him as an “equal.” An antidote to this problem is to visualize the awesome symphony of Divine government that controls this world. This will reinforce our faith in Hashem’s unceasing kindness and appreciate that all He does for us is with abundant love and for our best interests