

Mishlei 20-24

Control – Steps

Key Concepts

Although man has free will to decide on his course of action, it still remains in Hashem's power to let him carry out his projects (take the physical steps along the route he has planned) or to prevent him.

Exploring Mishlei

(כד) מֵה' מְצַעְדֵי גֵבֶר וְאָדָם מֵה יָבִין דְרָכּוֹ:

(24) *The steps of man are from Hashem,
for what does a man understand of his own way?*

The physical capacity to carry out a man's decision comes from Hashem. If in His ultimate wisdom, He wishes a different turn of events, He has only to prevent the man physically from carrying out his decision. Since human perception is limited, the man may feel frustrated at this blocking of his will. Thus, he may not understand why his way must be other than his original intent.

Learning Mishlei

(24) From Hashem — מֵה' —
are the steps of man. — מְצַעְדֵי גֵבֶר

As for man himself — אָדָם —
what does he understand — מֵה יָבִין —
of his way? — דְרָכּוֹ

Additional Insights

[1] Although the physical action is provided to man (גֵבֶר) by Hashem, it depends on man himself (אָדָם) understanding the purpose of the action and initiating it. (הגר"א)

[2] Because Hashem has the final say over the actual action, it is up to man to hope and pray for Divine help to ensure that the action is in man's interest and to make it happen appropriately." (רבינו יונה)