

The deeds of the Rock are perfect. (32:4)

We are unable to fathom Hashem's ways. It is impossible to come to grips with sadness and tragedy unless one has perfect faith that incorporates all of Hashem's actions under the rubric of one harmonious whole. All actions are good – even if the “good” eludes us. All come from Hashem Who is the essence of good. He is perfect. We, however, as mortals, are imperfect; thus we are unable to grasp Hashem's perfection. We can only believe with consummate faith in everything that he does.

Chazal (Koheles Rabbah 20:15) teach that the word *tzur*, rock, a term which connotes strength, is derived from the word *tzayar*, artist. It is as if the Torah were saying, *Ein tzayar k'Elokeinu*, “There is no artist like our G-d.” This means, “A mortal artist can draw a beautiful, brilliant picture on a canvas. He cannot, however, imbue it with life, spirit, organs. Hashem has fashioned man and endowed him with life and spirit. He is the Master Artist.

The question which *Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl*, posed is obvious. *Tzur*, rock, denotes strength and power, intimating that Hashem is all powerful, and, as “our” Rock, He is everything. What praise can be added to this – that He is a Master Artist? He has created everything and controls everything. Does the fact that He is the greatest artist add significantly to Hashem's attributes?

Rav Galinsky presented this question to the author of the *Michtav MeiEliyahu, Horav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, zl*, who explained with a story. Two centuries earlier, the King of France, which was the art capitol of the world, announced an exhibition at which they would choose which artist had produced the best painting. Obviously, the criteria for deciding the “best” was multi-faceted and subjective, but the king, who considered himself to be an art aficionado, would decide together with a panel of judges. In order to have a fair and balanced competition, they all had to paint the same thing: a bowl of fruit arranged on a windowsill. Each artist was permitted to make his personal decision concerning the landscape – rural or urban – to be seen outside the window.

The entire country became involved in the contest. Every artist or would-be artist was vying for the honor of winning the coveted prize. The day of the exhibition arrived, with each artist unveiling his masterpiece. The artists presented a wide variety of styles and backgrounds to embellish their paintings. They finally narrowed down the field to twenty finalists. The judges had one problem: these twenty paintings were extraordinary in beauty and ingenuity. This group of artists had outdone themselves, to the point that the judges were unable to arrive at a unanimous decision. They left it up to the king. Since he had commissioned the exhibition and he considered himself a connoisseur, he should render the final decision. As far as they were concerned, any one of the twenty artists could be the winner.

The king entered the hall and walked from painting to painting, impressed with the individuality of each artist's skill. At every painting, he said, “Very nice.” He gave no hint which one he would choose, since his reaction to each painting was identical. Suddenly, the silence was broken by the

flapping of wings. A bird had flown in through an open window and made a beeline for the fruit bowl. It began pecking at the fruit, giving up in frustration when it could not grab anything in the bowl. Frightened, it flew at the window to leave. Once again, it banged into the canvas, since the window was part of the scenery. Confused, it finally located the window from which it had flown in and left.

It took but a minute – but it was that minute that determined the winning artist. Anyone who could paint a painting that appeared so true to life that it could fool a bird was a master artist of unparalleled talent. This was a composition worthy of distinction.

End of story. *Rav Dessler* summed up the lesson: “Hashem created such a perfect world, with all its creations complete, orchestrated and choreographed as if everything is natural and the world that we live in runs on nature. Despite our learning and faith, we fall prey to the notion that the world around us – with all of its inhabitants – are real, when this could be no further from the truth. This is the meaning *Ein tzayar k'Elokeinu*, “Hashem is the Master Artist” Who created a world so perfect and real that it camouflages His Presence and guidance. We erroneously think that life in this world continues on as an act of nature. This is because Hashem has concealed Himself so well, that, in order to “find” Him, we must penetrate the concealment by using our minds to realize that a word of such intricacy and magnitude does not just happen. Hashem guides every aspect of the world and all its living creations.