

CHAPTER 4:9 MAN'S STANDING IN THIS WORLD, AND THE SPECIFIC WAYS AVAILABLE TO HIM

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Derech Hashem -- The Way of G-d 1:4:9

The best way to draw close to G-d, though, is through Torah-study¹ -- by reciting² and studying it, and by comprehending it. For G-d actually granted us texts that were composed by Him which are the Torah itself and the Books of the Prophets in His love for us. They have the unique ability to endow anyone who reads them with the highest levels of spiritual achievement -- when he reads them in a holy and pure way³ and with the intention to fulfill G-d's intentions.

Anyone who tries to understand and know what has been passed down to us from the Torah's commentators⁴ grows greater and greater in the process⁵ -- especially if he tries to grasp its esoteric and mystical levels, for anyone who aspires to that reaches the highest and most perfect soul levels⁶. And in fact, not only does anyone who dwells on Torah acquire those levels but creation itself is likewise elevated⁷.

Notes:

¹ That is, G-d wanted us to know His wishes for us and He wanted us to be able to go back to the statement of those wishes again and again. He also wanted us to withdraw from the world in the course of each and every day in order to re-read that statement. That series of wishes is the essential backdrop of Torah-study.

See 4:2:1-7 for more about Torah study.

² The original reads *higgayon* which can be translated as either "reciting" or "reflecting upon". But it's obvious based on 4:2:2 below that Ramchal is referring to the former.

As such, Torah-study works on two levels: on a mere recitative one, and on a deeper, cognitive one (spoken of immediately following this). That's is, we can grow in our inner beings by merely *uttering* words of Torah (in the original Hebrew) given that the words themselves are infused with an inscrutable steam and thrust of their own. Needless to say, merely uttering scientific, historical, literary and other such texts does nothing to deepen our being, despite the truth and elegance of

their pronouncements, because the words themselves aren't cosmically significant.

³ See 4:3:1.

⁴ This is apparently referring to the Talmud and other works of The Oral tradition as well as the classical commentaries based on them.

⁵ We affect our inner beings because we're nibbling at the very core of G-d's will for us, so to speak, and communing with His very Being in some inexplicable way. It's somewhat analogous to communing with an author's mind while reading his or her work deeply and slowly. But just as you can never truly commune with an author through his works, because so much is left unsaid -- that's all the more so true when it comes to communing with G-d Himself while delving into His Torah. The best way to put it, perhaps, is that you're communing with G-d's will for us at the time, rather than with G-d Himself.

⁶ Ramchal stressed the importance of the study of Kabbalah in quite a number of places. See, for example *Adir Bamarom* pp. 1, 15, 22, and 113 and *Derech Chochma*. In fact, he himself authored dozens of Kabbalistic books and booklets.

⁷ See *Messilat Yesharim* Ch. 1 and *Kohelet Rabbah* to Ecclesiastes 7:13.

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