

# CHAPTER 1: DIVINE PROVIDENCE IN GENERAL □ PARAGRAPH 3

*by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman*

We humans are unique because of our free will and our inherent ability to achieve perfection or not to, and because we're active, vital agents in this universe rather than passive ones <sup>1</sup>. So the sort of Divine supervision touching on us is necessarily unique, too.

All of our activities are overseen and all of their consequences -- everything we do and everything that comes about as a result is scrutinized, and G-d reacts to each one of us in light of all that <sup>2</sup>, measure for measure <sup>3</sup>.

That's not true of other beings. They're reactive rather than active agents and merely exist to maintain their species in ways set out by their roots <sup>4</sup>. So they're supervised in ways appropriate to that.

But since we humans are indeed active and we affect things on our own, we're each explicitly overseen <sup>5</sup> in light of our actions. But we'll expand on this later <sup>6</sup>.

Footnotes:

1. We discussed free will at length above. See note 2 to 1:3:1 for references.

2. Indeed G-d interacts with us, rather than just oversees or supervises us as He does other species as we'll see. Because we are His "partners" in the universe (see Breishit Rabbah 11:6).

See Ch. 3 of this section below for more on this as well 4:9:3, and Ma'amar Halkkurim, "B'Hashgacha" and "B'Torah uMitzvot".

3. See 4:8:4 below as well as Da'at Tevunot 48, Klach Pitchei Chochma 94, and Messilat Yescharim Ch. 4.

That's generally understood to mean parallel and equivalent recompense, with an arithmetically equal reaction to each action, tit for tat. But it may simply refer to a generally fitting and appropriate though not exact reaction to goodness or wrongfulness.

See 2:2:3-4 and 4:8:4 below on reward and punishment. Also see Shabbat 105b, Nedarim 32a, and Sanhedrin 90a as well as Sefer Halkkurim 4:9 and Moreh Nevuchim 3:17.

4. That's to say that G-d merely oversees the actions and experiences of other species and the

consequences of them on a broad, more all-encompassing scope.

They often-enough play more vital -- albeit passive -- roles in the course of things, but that's only so as to move things along according to G-d's plans aside from keeping their species going. See Ma'amar Halkkurim, "B'Torah uMitzvot".

5. And judged.

6. The difference between G-d's supervision of humans as opposed to other entities can be likened to how a teacher relates to an outstanding student as opposed to how he acts toward more pedestrian students.

The outstanding student (i.e., humankind) enjoys the teachers special attention and hes allotted certain special privileges. The teacher watches over him and reacts to him proudly, almost dotingly; he duly notes and rewards the students contributions to the class, and the teacher may even parry from time to time with the good student. Should the bright student somehow test his teachers mettle and go too far, that would be noted too, and the star student would then suffer the consequences of that.

The pedestrian students (i.e., other species) are certainly observed in class and encouraged to do what they do best, but because they neither shine nor significantly contribute to the quality of the class, theyre observed only enough to see to it that they get what they can from the class, in order to maintain order and progress. But theyre still-and-all not doted over.

7. See Ch. 3 below.

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Rabbi Yaakov Feldman has translated and commented upon "The Gates of Repentance", "The Path of the Just", and "The Duties of the Heart" (Jason Aronson Publishers). His works are available in bookstores and in various locations on the Web.