

CHAPTER 2: MANKIND IN THIS WORLD □ PARAGRAPH 2

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

There are two aspects to attaching onto G-d's presence in the World to Come ¹, There's one's own personal achievement of that and there's all of humankind's. One's own comes down to his striving for perfection through his own efforts ² while humankind's comes down to all of it striving to attain the World to Come as a whole ³.

Now, since humans have a yetzer hatov and a yetzer harah, and free will ⁴, it necessarily follows that there'd be both righteous and wrongful people⁵ in the world. In the end, though, the wrongful will be undone and the righteous will be gathered together in the World to Come as a perfected community where they'll enjoy the true good. But there's a lot involved in all of that, as we'll see.

Footnotes:

1. Refer to 2:2:1.
2. And to thus attain a place in the World to Come...
3. That's to say that while each one of us is to try to attain a personal experience of the World to Come, all of humankind as a whole is to try to bring about a universal experience of it. The point of the matter is that while humankind itself has an overarching universal spiritual goal, each one of us has our own that's aligned with that, to be sure, but separate from it too. For each one of us is alternately a simple single, rank part of the whole of humankind and yet a unique manifestation of it. That paradox -- and the struggle it implies touching one one's place in the whole versus his own individual needs -- defines so much of the human experience. The rest of this chapter will concentrate on humankind's struggles in all of this while chapter 3 below will concentrate on the individual's.
4. See 1:3:1, and note 2 there.
5. One of the implications of this very significant remark is that wrongfulness and wrongful people prove the existence of free will -- they're not merely products of it. Since free will is a fundamental factor in everything, it follows then that the wrongful must somehow earn a degree of ironic "merit" for being so. Nonetheless, once their role will have played itself out with the advent of the Messianic Era, they'll still-and-all be undone (as Ramchal will soon make the point).

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.