

DA'AT TEVUNOT - SECTION 6: CHAPTER 5

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

1. Ramchal reiterates the point that no righteous act will go unrewarded -- in the World to Come. But there's no denying the fact that some of them will not be rewarded in the here-and-now, given that there are two "accounts" kept, if you will: a "Mazal account" and a "reward and punishment account". Let's clarify that some more [1].

The "reward and punishment account" is the one in which "measure for measure" is the overarching rule (see Sanhedrin 90a, Sotah 8b, Breishit Rabbah 9:11, etc.), which indicates that everything I do -- good or bad -- will be reimbursed on one level or another, and oftentimes manifestly. The more mysterious and often inexplicable or even incongruous "Mazal account", on the other hand, seems to have no abiding rules and sometimes gives the impression of being arbitrary.

But the point of the matter is that the "Mazal account" also follows rules -- more clandestine ones to be sure which demand more of the faithful, and which sometimes call for what's termed "blind faith" (which comes down to faith rooted in deep trust, hope, and an abiding confidence in G-d's wisdom) - - but it follows rules nevertheless.

2. Now, that last point suggests something else, we'd propose: the fact that not seeing their goodness and benevolence rewarded in the here-and-now, and necessarily having to fall back on their own deep-set faith in the truth of reward and punishment, deserves -- and it earns -- even greater reward.

According to Ramchal it also suggests that their being called upon to endure such a challenge and their ultimately succeeding at it is largely what differentiates the righteous from the rest of us who often cannot bear the test.

For indeed it sometimes seems that the sardonic statement that there is "one and the same occurrence for the righteous as for the wrongful, for the good and the pure, as well as for the unclean" (Ecclesiastes 9:2) is all too true. So the faith that the righteous demonstrate in the face of appearances only bolsters their convictions and intensifies their righteousness.

After all, who, other than the truly righteous, can easily-enough carry on in a world where he or she often can't determine "the rules of the game", if you will, given that sometimes "The reward and

punishment account" factors in, and other times the "Mazal account" does?

3. What we're each to draw upon, though, is the surety that G-d can be trusted to bring about what's best in the end, with that end in sight, and in love. And we're to do our best to live out His "dream" for us in this world in the ways He encourages us to.

And we're to rest assured that the good will be rewarded (and the wrong will be penalized) in The World to Come. It's just that there are moments -- even whole generations -- that demand more mysterious and arcane phenomena to flourish. But we're here assured that those events, too, are for the good, and are only the necessary preparations for the ultimate revelation of G-d's sovereignty.

Notes:

[1] For Kabbalistic references in this chapter see R Friedlander's notes 473-474, and R' Shriki's notes 163, 165.

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.