

CHAPTER 7: MOSES AND PROPHECY □ PART 1

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

We'd learned how vitally important our interactions with G-d are and about their consequences; but an obvious question in the face of all that is, "How are we to know the best way to interact with Him?" It's a fundamentally important question that touches on the whole idea of revelation, prophecy, and Divine inspiration, so Ramchal begins to discuss all that here.

As he puts it, "G-d wanted to divulge certain things to humankind in this world, so He provided a method of revelation ... and it's termed 'prophecy'".

That's to say that at a certain point in His intentions for the universe before it was created, G-d decided to institute a means of making His will known, since He wanted us to be aware of it. For even though G-d Himself is utterly unfathomable and inscrutable, and so it follows that His will would be just as unfathomable and inscrutable, He nonetheless wanted us to know what He had in mind for us. So He established a means of communication with us that would give us an inkling of His intentions.

This is a rather radical notion in fact, since it implies that we'd been granted insight into the Divine Mind on some level. What an astounding phenomenon! To think that mortal man could somehow be privy to G-d's thoughts! But it's true and is in fact one of the fundamentals of the Jewish Faith, for without that knowledge we could never follow through on G-d's wishes and thus never fulfill our mission on this earth.

Among the things G-d wants us to know, as Ramchal put it, are His "secrets, mysteries, methods of providence, and matters concerning this world". That's to say that G-d not only wanted us to know how to interact with Him and draw close to Him through the mitzvah-system, He also wanted to make us privy to certain more arcane things.

Now, though he doesn't enunciate the "secrets" and "mysteries" he's referring to here, Ramchal does delve into all that in other works. What they come to at bottom are the Kabbalistic notions that are strewn throughout the Torah that address all sorts of esoteric things like the nature of the soul, the makeup of the backdrop of everything physical, and more. The "methods of providence" that Ramchal refers to here harkens back to what we cited in the last chapter, and "matters concerning this world" are literally things we'd need to know about the world in order to function here in an acceptable manner.

The point is that G-d deigned to reveal a number of mysterious as well as open and aboveboard

things to us, and He chose to do it in a way that we can access -- or at least in a way that some of us could. Since one would have to qualify for prophecy to tap into that sort of knowledge-base and not everyone can.

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.