

CHAPTER 8: THE REDEMPTION - PART 4

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

And finally, after the full and rousing victories of the Messianic Era, the grand and staggering revival of the dead, and the frightful and terrible Day of Judgment, the world will advance to the age known as The World to Come in which we'll draw close to G-d. In fact, that has always been the soul's dream. For as Ramchal put it elsewhere, "The soul is a portion of G-d above", and wants to draw close to Him; as "all it longs to do is to return and attach itself on to its Source ... and it will have no rest until it will" (Da'at Tevunot 24). Indeed, "humankind will clutch onto G-d and will revel while grasping His Glory without any detriments, impediments, or hindrances" then (Ibid.).

The truth is that The World to Come is inexplicable. Since it will be the epoch that "no one has heard, no ear has perceived and no eye has seen, G-d, but Yours" since "ancient times" (Isaiah 64:4). Nonetheless we're taught that it will be the time in which the righteous "will delight in the L-rd" (Isaiah 58:14), when "the upright will sit before You" (Psalms 140:14) and experience "the fullness of joy in Your presence" (Psalms 16:11), where "there will be neither eating, drinking, etc. ... only the righteous sitting with crowns on their heads, delighting in the radiance of the Divine Presence" (Berachot 17a). And it's where, as Ramchal offers elsewhere, we'll experience "a continuous and eternal attachment onto G-d" (Derech Hashem 2:2:3).

This is how Ramchal depicts the process. The world "will once again be 'formless and void'" (see Genesis 1:2) and "return to (the state of) 'water within water'", meaning to say that it will return to what had been at the very beginning. "The righteous ..." -- which is to say, everyone there by then -- "will be sustained like the Ministering Angels" (who stand in G-d's Presence even now, in this world), "and will no longer have any this-worldly needs". And reality will be re-created "in a new form" in which the righteous will "enjoy the true good".

In the end, it could best be portrayed as the time when "the L-rd will be King over all the earth; ... (when) the L-rd will be one and His name will be one" (Zachariah 14:9) in truth.

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.