

DA'AT TEVUNOT - SECTION 6: CHAPTER 3

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

1. There is another factor at work that explains why some righteous people reap the rewards of their righteousness here in this world while others who are just as righteous don't. In fact, this factor explains many of the great mysteries in the human experience and it's termed Mazal (which is erroneously translated as "luck" or "fortune"). Let's touch on a number of things beforehand, though, before we go on to explain it [1].

Ramchal has made the point already about the place of wrong and injustice a number of times but it bears repetition: in his own words, just as "G-d Himself has granted wrongfulness its character and allotted it the boundaries He wanted it to have," he explains, "G-d Himself will likewise bring about things that will undo it" in the end, make no mistake about it. It's just that the whole process needs to follow the rules He set up for it.

What are those rules? We are not privy to many of them, sadly. For G-d alone "knows the roots of (i.e., the root causes behind) everything He wants to do, the reasons behind His decrees that are hidden from us", while all we know are the outcomes of those decisions. Some of what we do know, though, is based on the idea that some things are meant to experience "an overt abundance" of Divine beneficence, while others need to experience "a covert and limited" degree of it to fulfill their roles here. And all of that factors into what we experience in the world

2. There's another fundamental truism that touches on all this that we'd do well to bear in mind: that "nothing comes about that's (clearly) good or (apparently) bad that doesn't in fact bring about some (clearly) visible good and beneficial effect in the world" in the end, Ramchal underscores. After all, haven't we been taught that "Whatever Heaven brings about is for the good" (Berachot 60a)?

The point is that there are many ways that sort of goodness can come about, and that on one very deep level, "none of it depends on (human) input or on (one's personal) merits", Ramchal adds, "but rather on the sum and substance of the world", which G-d alone fully understands in fact and can satisfy. But what we do know is that some situations call for abundance and others not [2].

Notes:

[1] For Kabbalistic references in this chapter see R' Friedlander's note 462; R' Shriki's notes 157, 159-160; and R' Goldblatt's notes 4 as well as note 86 on p. 490 of his edition.

[2] Ramchal offers an esoteric reference to the waxing and waning of the moon which occurs for

various natural and supernatural reasons, which itself hearkens to our people's ultimate fate (given that the Jewish Nation is often likened to the moon [see Sanhedrin 42a]), but that's beyond the present treatment and the subject at hand.

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.