

EXILE □ CHAPTER 4

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Let's quote a bit from another one of Ramchal's works, "A Discourse on Fundamentals", in which he presents his vision of the ideal, Messianic world. For with that in hand we'll indeed be able to sense for ourselves just what we're missing in galut. (We'll actually expand upon some of the ideas here later on in this section in another context.)

He says there that "the truly best situation for the world to be in" which will be fulfilled in the Messianic era, "would be for people to cling onto wisdom and to serve their Creator." Which is to say that in the ideal world, we'll all be drawn instinctively to wisdom and would serve G-d as a consequence.

Now, that's a curious, even a foreign thought for most of us. Simply because "wisdom" is a hollow term today. For while we admire know-how, acuity, acumen, and grasp, we don't really admire or even know much about wisdom. And that's because wisdom is rooted in the ability to discern what's right, true, and of lasting importance; and at bottom our age doubts that anyone can (or even has the right to) do that.

Yet we search for wisdom all the time. It's what we want when we ask for advice, since what we're hoping for in fact insight into what's indeed right, true, and of lasting importance in our situation. It's just that we can't quite sit quietly by when someone makes such decisions about larger issues -- matters that are outside of our small universe of concerns; it vexes us when someone thus dares to make judgments about *ultimate* rightness, truth or importance. But the truth be known, we suffer mightily for our reticence.

In any event, humanity would indeed "cling onto wisdom" in the best of all worlds; and will serve G-d as a consequence as we said, because serving G- d will prove to be right, true, and of lasting importance in fact.

There's more to it, though. "Truth would be manifest and unambiguous" then, "tranquility and quietude will prevail", and "there'll no longer be tribulation, pain, or harm" in the best of all worlds. And what's more, "G- d will openly display His Glory to the world" and He'll "rejoice in His handiwork as His handiwork rejoices in Him."

Now, that's clearly not the state of the world today, which seems the very antithesis of all that. For indeed as Ramchal presents it, we now find ourselves "awash in desires"; the great majority of us do indeed "despise wisdom and are removed from it"; "very, very few if any" of us "tend to serve G-d";

"truth has been dashed to the ground" in our day and age; and consequently "there's hardly any quietude, and no tranquility" for "tribulation and hurt" prevail instead.

Not only that, but as so many of us sense for ourselves, "G-d is hiding His Glory from the world" now, "and everything seems to go about as if by chance, as if entrusted to the laws of nature" alone. "G-d doesn't rejoice in His handiwork, mankind doesn't rejoice in Him, and no one even recognizes or knows what it means for all of creation to rejoice before its Creator." And finally, as one would expect in such a world, "the wrongful are in control while the good are subordinate."

Indeed, that's the very cast and composition of the galut that is our lives now. For our world is ample yet empty; bright yet preposterous; and awash in the sort of perfidy, anarchy, anguish, and murkiness that can only come about when G-d is hidden -- when His very Presence is in galut, if you will.

Now, the Tradition has been addressing galut -- and our redemption from it -- since the inception, as we indicated before. So let's start off by providing the traditional layout of the how's and wherefore's of redemption, then go on from there to offer Ramchal's unique revelations about it from our source-work, "Ma'amar HaGeulah" (A Discourse on The Redemption).

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