

CHAPTER 3:5 PERSONAL PROVIDENCE

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Derech Hashem -- The Way of G-d 2:3:5

Based on this we can now understand why some people suffer trials and tribulations ¹. A person who's mostly righteous, or somewhat righteous and somewhat wrongful ² could be subject to tribulations because he warranted being prodded to examine his ways and to do *teshuva* ³.

. These particular tribulations wouldn't come to him to atone for his past sins, like those cited before ⁴ whose aim is to purify a person of his sins while he's yet alive. These particular tribulations would be meant to stir him to *teshuva* ⁵.

After all, people only suffer punishments when they sin and don't do *teshuva* ⁶, as G-d wants us to not sin or to at least do *teshuva* if we do. But one can still be cleansed if he didn't do *teshuva* through tribulations.

So tribulations sometimes come our way to inspire us to do *teshuva*. If we're not moved to do that, though, we're sometimes made to suffer tribulations in order to be cleansed ⁷. For as Elihu told Job, "(G-d) opens their ears to discipline and bids them to repent of their sins" (Job 36:10).

Footnotes:

¹ I.e., based on the idea that our successes or failings in life are often rooted in G-d's input as cited in 2:3:4.

² It's clear that the thoroughly or almost thoroughly wrongful won't experience this. ³ See *Berachot* 5a as well as 2:2:5 above.

Ramchal is touching on why the righteous sometimes suffer which seems so unfair, which we discussed above in 2:2:9 (see note 1 there) and will return to in 2:3:8-9.

Here's how he explains it. He'd said in 2:3:1 that G-d distributed challenges among us all as a part of His plans for us, and that while we don't know how things work along these lines (which makes them seem so unfair when they're really not) we're nonetheless to realize that in the end everything will function as it must. In 2:3:2 he underscored the fact that G-d Himself decrees what's to apply to

whom based on what's most fitting (showing that G-d understands the implications of all of this), and he made much the same point in 2:3:3.

Then Ramchal went on to contrast the experience of the righteous and the wrongful as far as that's all concerned, saying in 2:3:4 that righteous people (often) experience different degrees of Divine assistance, while wrongful people are often held back, but "the point of the matter is that G-d brings all of this about (too) ... so as to ultimately benefit humankind" and that "He factors in everyone's situation when He decides what's to come about".

His point here is that sometimes the mostly- or nearly-righteous are tried too which also seems unfair, but that G-d does that also for a very good reason: to encourage them in their righteousness.

⁴ See 2:2:5.

⁵ That's to say that one who's righteous for the most part but who has sinned too much for his own good and was *potentially* fully righteous might be made to suffer a setback in the hopes that he'll then come to wonder what brought it on, conclude that it was his sins that did, and would decide there and then to repent. And all because G-d cared about his well-being and was willing to prod him on toward righteousness.

See *Da'at Tevunot* 40 where Ramchal expands upon the fact that there are only three ways to achieve perfection: by being righteous, engaging in *teshuva*, or suffering tribulation.

⁶ See *Messilat Yesharim* Ch. 5.

⁷ "Cleansing" will be discussed in 2:3:9 below.

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