

# CHAPTER 3:8 PERSONAL PROVIDENCE

*by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman*

## Derech Hashem - The Way of G-d 2:3:8

There are other ways to succeed overall, too, that are rather extraordinary 1. This touches upon the makeup of the World to Come discussed earlier, the overall rectification of the universe 2, and our people's interdependence.

The fact is that the World to Come won't only be comprised of those who earned a place there by themselves: people of a lower spiritual level who depended on the intercession of a righteous person will also be a part of it 3. The only difference, though, is that such a person would be on a lower level in the World to Come than the righteous person, and would be subservient and dependent upon him 4. So for the most part, the only people who wouldn't be in the World to Come would be those who neither earned a place there on their own or didn't depend on the intercession of the righteous. As such, fewer people than we might have imagined will be in the World to Come.

This principle is rooted in the fact that, as we've been taught, all of our people have been bound to each other from the first. As it's said, "All of Israel are responsible for one another" (Shavuot 39a). Now, this interdependence obviously implies that we can also perhaps harm each other's spiritual standing 5, but G-d's mercy is abundant and He allows for more good to come about by this association than harm.

Sadly enough, though, the righteous person who assumes this role would suffer in his life as a consequence. But that would actually enable him to atone for people of his generation 6. Those righteous people would nonetheless have to lovingly accept those tribulations -- just as they'd be expected to accept the tribulations due them in their lifetimes because of their own errors -- in order to affect this phenomenon. But in the end they would have atoned for their generation and become leaders in the World to Come.

There could be even loftier righteous people than they who could even rescue and benefit those of their generation who deserved to be utterly annihilated were it not for these righteous souls' own sufferings.

And there can even be a more exalted sort of person whose withstanding even greater trials and tribulations would allow for the chain of events that would help bring on the state of ultimate perfection 7.

At bottom the explanation for all of this 8 is rooted in the fact that from the first there was an unfathomable, esoteric need for that pious individual to suffer in order for him and the world at large to reach perfection. And that's rooted somehow in the phenomenon discussed before 9 of G-d hiding His light and countenance, and in mankind's status being exacerbated over and over again by one serious sin after another, which would have brought on an even greater degree of G-d's hiding His goodness.

In fact, the world would have come to be in such a bad state that G-d's unfathomable wisdom would have had to bring about very many things to undo all of that harm, which would include all of mankind having to suffer all sorts of travail. But G-d arranged things from the first that a few select righteous and pious individuals could rectify things for the sake of sinful people, which is why these especially laudable individuals would have to endure Heaven's judgments more so than others.

It's just that since they're so lofty and actually deserve reward, they'd suffer less than those of lower standing would have had to. And these lofty people will be rewarded all the more so because of their tribulations, which would then enable them to help yet others to be a part of the World to Come -- even those of the past. And those righteous individuals will be among the very loftiest souls in the World to Come and the people closest to G-d.

Footnotes:

1 That is, how to ultimately succeed as we'll soon see. This harkens back to earlier discussions about why some people succeed either materially (see 2:2:9, 2:3:4, 6 ,7, etc.) or spiritually (see 2:2:3, 2:3:7, 4:2:2, etc.) while others don't.

2 See 4:2:2.

3 This could be taken to imply the bond between a Rabbi and his disciples or a Chassidic Rebbe and his Chassidim. The Rabbi or Rebbe could help the others by their prayers, advice, intercession in Heaven, and the like. But we'll see that there are other ways to affect the less-than-righteous, too.

4 Sadly enough Ramchal doesn't explain the implications of the sort of "subservience" and "dependence" cited here, but that's likely because this will be occurring in a realm we simply can't fathom to begin with.

5 That is, the wrongful can be a bad influence on the righteous.

6 See Babba Metziah 84b, T.Y. Berachot 2:8, Breishit Rabba 33:1, and Zohar 3:20b, Tikkunei Zohar 76b, and Zohar Chadash 25a.

7 See Da'at Tevunot 162 and Clallim Rishonim 34.

8 I.e., the reasons why certain pious individuals could salvage the souls of sinful people with their own pain and suffering, and could even foster the great redemption, and why they themselves would have to suffer ...

9 See 1:2:3 and 1:3:4.

10 The clear implication of all of this is that very nearly no one will be excluded from the great redemption and the World to Come.

There's apparently a problem here, though. Because at first blush the idea that someone so lofty could exist to redeem the world, and would suffer for the sins of others in the process would seem to smack of Christianity to some! But we'll now show how rational and traditionally Jewish an idea this is.

First off, if it only took one person (who suffered as a consequence) -- Adam -- to doom humankind, it would logically only take one or a select few people to suffer as well in order to redeem it.

Secondly, Abraham and Sarah apparently had to descend to Egypt in the course of a famine and to experience that humiliation and the deprivations of the famine themselves in order to save the entire proto-Jewish nation they'd formed (see Genesis 12:10-20).

And we're taught that there have been righteous individuals who could have redeemed everyone (see Breishit Rabbah 35:2 which singles out R' Shimon bar Yochai and his son Eliezer who suffered by being exiled to a cave for many years, according to Shabbat 33b), and upon whom all of our people depended (Ta'anit 24b). Also see Messilat Yesharim Ch's 13 and 19, and Isaiah 53:5.