

CHAPTER 8: THE DETAILS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE - PARAGRAPH 3

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Ramchal terms the following "an important principle that underlies all of existence and everything that takes place". So we'll do all we can to lay it out straight.

He starts out by reiterating a statement he'd made early on (1:4:3) that the world as we know it is one of overall darkness and materiality, with some light and spirit seemingly added on as an afterthought. What lies behind all that is a phenomenon referred to as "the emanation of G-d's light". Ramchal will make a couple of points about that soon, but we'll take this opportunity to explain the concept itself.

One way to describe the emanation of G-d's "light" is to depict it as a flow of occult and immaterial dynamism downward and outward from G-d's Being to the world that allows for real and tangible phenomena.

But in order to bring it closer to our experience we'd compare it to the process of speaking. For when we speak we produce sounds that, while not occult and immaterial, are nonetheless rather abstract. Those sounds can be said to flow "downward and outward" from our own being to others, and they indeed produce "real and tangible phenomena" too -- as when I'd tell you I love you, for example, which would have you blush and soften your heartbeat. (The analogy between G-d's emanation of light and speech is one of the reasons why the Torah depicts G-d as creating through speech, by the way.)

In any event, it's the quantity and quality of G-d's emanations of light that lies behind the state of the world, as well as behind the degree of right and wrong here. As such, the greater the emanation, the deeper, wider, more bountiful, rich and righteous the result; while the lesser the emanation, the shallower, narrower, less bountiful, poor, and wrongful the result. It's clear then, given the aforementioned predominance of darkness and materiality, that G-d is emanating a lesser degree of His light in the world now -- though that will not always be the case ... but that's a subject far beyond the reaches of the one at hand.

(In more technical terms, G-d's emanating His light to us in abundance is described as His "shining His face upon us", which we'd liken to His paying full attention to us, while His restricting His light is described as His "hiding His face from us", which we'd liken to His paying little attention to us.)

Suffice it to say that everything is thus maintained and directed by a unique blend of emanations -- from fuller to lesser, to an alternately brilliant and darkened complex combination of both. Know, too, that the combination of emanations that goes into each and everything shifts and rolls-about moment by moment.

This series is dedicated to the memory of Yitzchak Hehrsh ben Daniel, and Sarah Rivka bas Yaakov Dovid.

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