

CHAPTER 8: THE DETAILS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE - PARAGRAPH 4

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Had we the ability to observe past, present, and future head-on for ourselves we'd note, we're taught here, that all of existence can be broken down into four epoch periods. And we'd see that each period corresponds to one of the four stages of human maturation, as if the whole of history was the story of a single individual. (In fact, Ramchal and others often see the universe and all of us in it as a single unit, with a vast body comprised of infinite components, driven by a single labyrinthine spirit.)

The first period corresponded to infancy, in that it was the time when everything and everyone was seeped in darkness and unknowing, and almost nothing was known of G-d and His perfection. (Understand that there were many who believed in G-d at the time; it's just that they knew nothing of His real nature -- His perfection -- and thus tended to anthropomorphize Him or to declare Him too lofty for this world, and to worship "more approachable" idols instead.) The sages refer to this period as the "two thousand years of desolation."

The second period is the one we're in now, and we'd liken it to childhood. It's better than the first period, in that we know about G-d and His perfection, we've been granted His Torah, and we worship Him. Yet, still and all, we're not privileged to have prophets or Divine Inspiration, and we don't see any out-and-out signs of G-d's will for ourselves. And while we can indeed acquire knowledge on our own now, what we can come upon is nothing compared to what we can learn by Divine means. In fact, the difference between the two is as vast as the one between body and soul.

The third, which we'd liken to early adulthood, is a more exalted state. The world was in that state when the Holy Temple stood. Israel was rich in wonders and miracles then, and prophets roamed about. But G-d only bestowed those kinds of things upon special individuals. And even they found it hard to come by since there many impediments to it and a lot of effort was needed to perpetuate it.

(Notice, by the way, that things aren't in chronological order, in that "early adulthood" -- the era of the Holy Temple - came before our own era, "childhood". Now isn't the time to dwell upon this, but suffice it to say that that's the sad reality that came about as a consequence of the destruction of the two Holy Temples.)

The fourth period, which we'd liken to full maturity, will be the greatest of them all. It's the one the prophets saw coming about in the end, and it will be characterized as being the time when there'll

no longer be unknowing, when Divine Inspiration will be bestowed upon each one of us effortlessly, when humankind will have reached its pinnacle, and when we'll endlessly blossom in our beings and to delight in G-d's Presence unto eternity.

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

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