

CHAPTER 3: INSPIRATION AND PROPHECY □ PARAGRAPH 6

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Though we like to think otherwise, the human body really can't withstand too much revelation, very much spirituality, or even a smidgen of G-d's Presence outright. And were it to be faced with any such excesses it would "shut down", the way our minds simply can't take in too much information and our hearts refuse to tackle too much grief or sorrow.

So when a prophet -- who's a human being and physical, at bottom -- is granted revelation, his body also shuts down in a way (though it can accommodate far more than ours could, as we'll see). He becomes overwhelmed, begins to tremble and shake, and to feel as if "he's being turned inside out", as Ramchal puts it (which is to say, as if his perceptions were being ultimately challenged and his stake in reality was being unearthed). His senses close off, his mind stills (for a while), and his entire being becomes overtaken by G-d's Presence.

So great a level of revelation and d'vekut allows the prophet's soul a degree of illumination that's simply unfathomable to us. It's based on the fact that his soul would be drawing from its highest root at that point and would be attached onto G-d. The experience is far more profound and unearthly than inspiration could ever be, and it's what sets prophets apart from the rest of us.

The actual *process* of revelation is as follows (in short): First off, G-d's Presence makes itself known to the prophet, it then projects itself on to the prophet's imagination, the imagination then produces mental images (which the imagination itself doesn't initiate, but rather makes use of), and those mental images then suggest things to the prophet's rational mind which he then retains in all clarity when he withdraws from his reverie.

There are in fact numerous degrees of revelation, all the way up to Moses' most exalted one, as we'll see in the next chapter.

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

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