

CHAPTER 1: SERVING G-D IN GENERAL □ PARAGRAPH 4-5

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

As we'd learned, we're encouraged to foster an intimacy with G-d -- to regularly catch sight of Him all about us and to hear out what He has to say. After all, as Ramchal put it, we were created to attach onto G-d's Presence at bottom, and nothing less (see 1:4:6). But there excellent ways to do that and then there are some flawed ones.

Since it only stands to reason that G-d would have prepared a way for us to do just that (inasmuch as He's the one who wants us to), we would also expect Him to have acquainted us with it, and to have chosen the best way. In fact, all that's true. The mitzvah-system that G-d granted us is the very best way for us Jews to draw close to Him; and when we observe it wholeheartedly and reverently and thus hear Him out, we can indeed catch sight of Him all about us.

But there are impediments along the way (as there must be since, after all, how satisfying would triumph be without challenge?). The deepest, most serious impediment of all to drawing close to G-d is ironically the very most basic thing about us: our worldliness. Because besides being an out-and-out gift from G-d, our worldliness is also fraught with the potential for unholiness. And there's the rub.

Yet thanks to the mitzvah-system we're able to transcend our rank physicality and to draw close to G-d in the process. For, as we put it earlier on, when we follow its dictates about how to use the physical world to a holy end we manage to "use the very same environment in which we could easily fail" -- our rank physicality -- "as a base for succeeding" (1:4:4), and we'll have managed to grow close to G-d while in the world as He wants us to.

Understand, though, that in order to fulfill so lofty a role the mitzvah-system would have to be all-inclusive and to affect each and every moment, occasion, and circumstance of one's life. It would also have to adapt to one's spiritual standing at the time, to be malleable enough to change according to more external circumstances, and it would have to somehow satisfy the demands of both Heaven and Earth.

And indeed, G-d therefore has seen to it that it does all that (which explains the elastic though resilient nature of halacha).

So we'll now be delving into various mitzvot, including loving and fearing G-d, reciting the Sh'ma Yisroel and Its blessings, praying, those mitzvot we follow through on throughout the course of the day, intermittent and seasonal mitzvot, as well as incidental mitzvot and blessings.

May G-d grant us the ability to fulfill His wishes for us in this lifetime, and may we always keep Him in mind when we do.

Text Copyright © 2004 by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman and **Torah.org**.