

Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

EIKEV

You shall understand that G-d chastises you as a father chastises his son (8:5).

The Ramban explains that in bringing up a child, the father looks to the child's growth and future. Not spoiling them, but using firmness and even hardships on occasion, to prepare them for living as a responsible adult. To be able to deal with situations, and appreciate good rather than take it for granted. G-d did the same to the Israelites: He made them endure the hardships of living in the Wilderness so that they may appreciate the resources, wealth, and pleasure of settling and living in the Land.

In addition, G-d's being close to the individuals of Klal Yisrael as a father is to a son implies Hashgacha P'ratis: that the trials that G-d imposes on individuals are for that person's benefit, as a concerned father chastises his son. Indeed, the Ramchal (Derech Hashem: Providence 3) explains that part of Hashgacha P'ratis are the trials one suffers, which are generally G-d-sent opportunities for spiritual growth. These experiences are designed to be specifically in line with the areas that

the individual needs to improve on, as a father who wishes to promote the child's growth. G-d's trials to individuals may be in the form of wealth or in the form of suffering. Generally, the greater the need for correction, the more severe the trial (though the truly wicked receive the reward for their few good deeds in this world, as G-d knows that they do not respond to correction). In addition, suffering for the righteous is very often a means of encouraging them to reach even greater heights, though it can be that they are bearing the misdeeds of a generation, or that their afflictions fulfil a yet-not-understood niche in the wider eternal scheme of the Creation, or those people have reincarnated souls whose pain is in line with their conduct in previous lives. The Ramchal explains that though it seems that a righteous person's torments in this world are out of line with his exemplary good conduct, all is redressed in the next world, where a person's treatment is strictly in line with his deeds and his true circumstances that are known only to G-d. In all these cases, G-d acts as a father concerned with his children: giving them what is needed now with an eye to their long term physical and spiritual future.

This level of Hashgacha P'ratis, the Ramchal explains (Derech Hashem: Providence 4) is a privilege to Klal Yisrael. Their experience of willingly

participating in the Revelation at Mount Sinai gave them the capacity to accept the Torah and its demands: "Moshe brought the people to meet G-d, and they positioned themselves at the foot of the mountain" (Sh'mot 19:17). As the Yom Tov Amida expresses it: "You, our King, brought us to your service". The Ramchal (Da'at Tevunot 8:3) explains that by being prepared to accept the Torah and meeting G-d at the foot of the mountain, G-d gave them the capability of observing the Mitzvot. And through that, they would be able to proceed to ultimately improve the Creation, thus being a partner with G-d, and worthy of his guidance at an individual level: "as a father chastises his son", being one of His individual circle. And, the Ramchal emphasizes, a non-Israelite has the possibility in sharing the destiny of the Israelite people in the Afterlife by joining the Israelite people (converting), or working positively with them. 🌱📖