

CHAPTER 5: THE DIFFERENT REALMS AND THEIR SPECIFIC SITUATIONS - PARAGRAPH 7

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

And the whole system of goodness and evil that G-d decreed for the world ¹ is also rooted in the Transcendent Forces, from where it flows downward ². G-d set up the Transcendent Forces in the particular order and with the specific qualities they'd need to bring about the various "damages" and "repairs" ³ necessary for goodness and non-goodness to exist ⁴.

In order for true goodness to exist G-d's "face" must be allowed to shine upon a Transcendent Force, and in order for true evil to exist G-d's face must be withheld from it ⁵. In fact, goodness is a product of the "repairing" of the Forces while evil is a product of their being "damaged".

Footnotes:

1. See 1:2:2,4.

2. Since, as we've been saying, the Transcendent Forces are the backdrop behind everything that happens here on earth, it follows then that they're also the backdrop behind both goodness (which is understandable, given that G-d is loving and benevolent and that He manifests that through the Transcendent Forces) and evil (which seems counterintuitive, given that evil seems to be so far beneath G-d and the Transcendent Forces, but see note 4 below). In any event, since goodness and evil play out in the theater within which we humans act out our lives, it stands to reason that both our moral and immoral actions would all be so intensely rooted in the Transcendent Forces.

But in order to understand that we'd also need to know that

3. G-d purposely created an imperfect world in which adjustments to the status quo would necessarily need to be made from time to time. That's to say that there are times when certain "damaged" (or, off-the-mark) phenomena need to be "repaired" (or, set back on course) in order to keep the entire system intact.

4. Ramchal speaks of "non-goodness" here rather than out-and-out evil because actual evil doesn't exist in the upper realms: they only allow for the possibility of evil to exist in the world and don't actually manifest it. See Da'at Tevunot 100-106, 114 and Klach Pitchei Chochma 80 for the Kabbalistic explanation of this theological conundrum.

5. The idea is that G-d turns His "face" toward something (i.e., He gives it His full and loving attention) when He favors it and turns away from it when He disapproves of it. It's based on the phrase "May G-d bless you and keep you; may God shine His face upon you and be gracious to you; may G-d turn His face toward you and grant you peace. (Numbers 6:24-36).

This isn't merely a poetic rendering of G-d's "feelings" -- it entails a lot of Kabbalistic fine points. See 4:6:10 below as well as Da'at Tevunot 158 and Klallim Rishonim 28 for more on it.

The point of the matter is that goodness is a natural product of a healthy and full connection with G-d while evil is a product of its opposite.

Rabbi Yaakov Feldman has translated and commented upon "The Gates of Repentance", "The Path of the Just", and "The Duties of the Heart" (Jason Aronson Publishers). His works are available in bookstores and in various locations on the Web.