

DA'AT TEVUNOT - SECTION 7: CHAPTER 8

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

1. An obvious question that needs to be asked is what exactly was the point of prophets being shown images: why didn't G-d simply tell His prophets right out what He wanted them to pass along to the Jewish Nation?

On one level it comes to this, Ramchal says: "G-d wanted to reveal (things) to people in human terms" -- that is, in ways that would be understood by all, not just the most sophisticated of us, and in ways that would touch us emotionally. And since "people would (best) 'see' (i.e., understand) the celestial influences and G-d's (generous) ways by means of the images" that the prophets told them about, He granted them just those sorts of depictions since they would exemplify the message being sent.

That's to say, if G-d would have had His prophets simply report that He loves us and is bounteously generous, the best of us would accept that at face value and be moved to change. But most of us simply don't function that way. We need to be stunned into action, and are thus best moved by dramatic images (which artists, writers, and advertisers know only too well). So we'd be far more affected by being told about a fountain or a wellspring in Heaven that would gush forth fresh water, for example, than by a statement of Divine love and effulgence.

So G-d "translated" His "influences and ways into mundane images that stand for and symbolize" His ways, since that's what would work best. But that's just one explanation.

2. Ramchal says it's also true that "the very way that G-d chose to 'translate' His influences into mundane terms affects our very existence" and makeup, and he offers examples of that. G-d chose to grant us actual eyes so as to have us understand that G-d observes us. That explains why the Torah often speaks of G-d's eyes (as in, "And Noah found favor in the eyes of the L-rd" [Genesis 6:8], "His eyes are on the ways of mortals; He sees their every step" [Job 34:21], etc.).

And along the same lines, G-d saw to it that our eyes would be comprised of different shades and hues -- to illustrate the subtly various ways He governs us (as such, the whites of our eyes represent G-d's graciousness, the dark represents His judgment, and the more colorful band represents the more nuanced combinations of graciousness and judgment).

"The same is true of the content and quality of all things in this world, as well as of their taking one

form under one circumstance and another in another" he adds, "they're all beholden upon G-d's decisions to 'translate' transcendent matters into mundane phenomena".

As such, "this principle is a major source of human reality" and helps to explain, for example, why we're comprised of left, right, and center aspects; why we stand on two feet, have doubled limbs and organs for the most part; and it goes a long way toward explaining everything else about our physical makeup (to say nothing of our spiritual makeup). It's all there to express cosmic truths [1].

(So, rather than the opinion that the sages drew examples from our physiology to explain Heaven, the truth of the matter, it's now clear, is that our physiology explains things about Heaven.)

Note:

[1] For Kabbalistic references to this chapter see R' Friedlander's Iyunnim 60, R' Shriki's note 183, and R' Goldblatt's note 44.

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