

DA'AT TEVUNOT - SECTION 1: CHAPTER 11

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Da'at Tevunot 1:11 (# 43 - 44)

1.

But, why would we need to focus on G-d's revealing His *Yichud* as the most important factor of all? Wouldn't it be enough to reiterate the points made early on that G-d wanted to be utterly benevolent to us so He made it possible for us to earn our own rewards for our efforts rather than be granted them gratuitously, and thus allowed for right and wrong, the freedom to choose either, and the subsequent reward or punishment ¹? Aren't those the most important things to concentrate on?

The truth is that it's in fact essential for us to focus on the fact of G-d's *Yichud*. After all, we'd already seen prophetic statements that G-d would ultimately redeem our people whether we deserve it or not ², and that He'd eventually undo the *yetzer hara* and have us serve Him without the option not to -- which implies the end of free choice and reward and punishment ³.

2.

But aren't we always supposed to be free to be either righteous or wrongful ⁴? And won't the righteous enjoy good as a consequence of their choices, and the wrongful suffer harm as a consequences of theirs? That's the way it's always supposed to be, isn't it? And hasn't G-d established a system of justice that will always be in place?

The truth is that we're taught in the Torah, the books of the prophets, and in the words of our sages, that that's not so. Free choice will eventually be withdrawn ⁵ and there'll eventually no longer be any wrongfulness in the world.

It thus follows that reward and punishment and everything that hinges upon it aren't G-d's ultimate goals -- *the eventual all-embracing rectification of the universe and perfection are His ultimate aim* ⁶. What's important to realize, though, is that G-d interwove the two, and used the current system of reward and punishment as a means of eventually achieving rectification and perfection, as we'll explain later on ⁷. Again, the point is that G-d's revelation of His *Yichud* is the central theme of all of creation.

3.

Now, there'll obviously be two major epochs of time involved in all of that: the one in which G-d conceals His *Yichud* and the one in which He finally reveals it; and there'll also be a transitional period between them⁸ which we'd need to concentrate on as well. And we'd need to know what would be expected of us in the course of each and what we can expect in return.

Footnotes:

¹ See 1:1.

² That's to say, if we'd need to *deserve* redemption, who can be sure that it would happen in the end, given that we'd be free to do *or not do* the sorts of things that would earn it for us? Yet we've been assured by G-d Himself, through His prophets, that we'd indeed be redeemed! So, there'd obviously need to be something that could supersede free will and merits -- and that's the role that G-d's intention to eventually reveal His *Yichud* and sovereignty plays.

See 1:4 above and 1:15 below, as well as *Adir Bamarom* pp. 211-212.

³ R' Yoseph Spinner remarks that Ramchal is explaining one of the major teachings of Kabbalah at this juncture: that aside from the system of reward and punishment lies the "inner (loftier, concealed) and more fundamental" one of G-d's own plan to rectify the universe which supersedes reward and punishment.

For, as the Kabbalists explain it, there are six Heavenly realms (termed *Attik*, *Arich Anpin*, *Abba*, *Imma*, *Zeir Anpin* and *Nukveh*). While the system of reward and punishment is derived from a relatively lower realm (*Zeir Anpin*) the eventual rectification is rooted in the highest and loftiest of them all (*Attik*).

⁴ That is, isn't free will an essential and firm aspect of reality? No, it isn't, Ramchal is offering. In fact, it's limited even now. See Rambam's *Sh'mone Perakim* Ch. 2 where he points out that we haven't even any control over our inner organs now, for example, or over sudden thoughts that occur to us or the like. And we're sometimes (though rarely) not even free to make ethical choices (see Ch. 8 there and *Hilchot Teshuvah* 6:3). It's also important to point out that we're also only free to make choices when it comes to the mitzvah-system (*Sh'mone Perakim* Ch. 2), so we can decide to accede to G-d's wishes for us to eat in a kosher restaurant or not, for example, but the matter of our being in a neighborhood that has one may *not* be in our hands. So free will is clearly limited even now.

⁵ See 1:8 and note 8 there.

⁶ See 6:6 below.

Now, some might rashly ask why we'd need to bother to accede to ethics now given that right and wrong are destined to be undone in the end. But suffice it to say that just as no right-minded person suffering from a terrible fever would go about conducting his business as usual knowing that antibiotics will come to his rescue in a week or ten days, we likewise can't deny the consequences of our actions now despite the fact that we'll eventually be "well".

⁷ See 1:14 and 1:17 below.

⁸ See 1:15 below.

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