

# DA'AT TEVUNOT – SECTION 1: CHAPTER 7

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

*Da'at Tevunot* 1:7 (# 38 - 40 [beg.])

1.

Ramchal had said that everything will eventually play a role in the revelation of G-d's *Yichud* -- including our having been created flawed, and the reality of sin and wrongdoing. But that begs the question, though, of why flaws like injustice, wrongfulness, and sin exist in a perfect G-d's world in the first place <sup>1</sup>? Ramchal's point will be that it all has to do with the makeup of G-d's *Yichud* as opposed to His other traits <sup>2</sup>.

2.

It comes to this: when we talk about human traits we speak of them in diametrically opposite terms or in shades of gray. We depict people as good, bad, or somewhere in-between; as brilliant, foolish, or in-between, etc. Yet, for the most part, we can't really talk about G-d's traits that way <sup>3</sup>. For, while we can cite His wisdom, for example, we can't legitimately speak of His "foolishness" or variations in-between; and while we can likewise cite His righteousness we can't speak of His "wrongfulness" or anything in-between there either. For, as a perfect Being, G-d is wholly wise, righteous, and the like.

We can, though, posit shades of gray when it comes to one of G-d's traits -- His rule <sup>4</sup>. We can acknowledge that His rule is sovereign, or we can cite examples of things that *seem* to show that it's limited <sup>5</sup>. This is what sets G-d's *Yichud* apart from all of His other traits.

3.

So, *in order to prove just how supreme His sovereignty is*, G-d first allows for wrongdoing to exist, which seems to show that His rule is limited <sup>6</sup>. And once this possibility exists, G-d could then show that He's in fact utterly in control of everything by *undoing* wrongdoing <sup>7</sup>. Wrong, injustice, sin and the like thus serve a vital and well-intended end which is the unveiling of G-d's utter sovereignty, and they exist because they serve G-d's purposes.

In fact, the reality of G-d's utter sovereignty, as opposed to His perceived limitations, is central to our religious and ethical life. It allows for free will <sup>8</sup> and for our subsequent reward or punishment <sup>9</sup>. G-d's

*Yichud* is, in fact, the most defining of His traits in the world <sup>10</sup>. All of His other traits are actually subsets of it <sup>11</sup>.

In short, G-d purposely allowed for all wrongdoing, injustice, and evil to exist from the first, and He'll eventually undo all of that, as we'll see. For, "imperfection had to be allowed to appear at first" Ramchal explains, in order "to allow for it to be undone" in the end.

The revelation of G-d's *Yichud* thus not only goes to explain why there's wrongfulness in the world, it's also the central theme of all of existence.

Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup> This question was discussed in 1:2:3 where it was pointed out that the world was created flawed so that we might perfect ourselves and it on our own (see there). But there'll prove to be a deeper reason for it as we'll now see.

<sup>2</sup> Focusing the discussion here on G-d's "traits" in this chapter is confusing. What's being referred to here are G-d's ways of interacting with the world, as we'll see.

<sup>3</sup> That is, *as a rule*, we really can't explain G-d's interactions with us in nuanced terms: He's wholly this or that.

<sup>4</sup> I.e., His way of interacting with us as the universal administrator.

<sup>5</sup> Those who make the five errors discussed in chapter 1:5 do that, as when they speak of G-d working in tandem with some other entity, etc.

<sup>6</sup> That is, it seems to show that people can thwart His wishes.

In other words, G-d initially interacts with us in a way that seems to indicate that He's "vulnerable" and less than almighty.

<sup>7</sup> Which He'll eventually do, as we'll see in the next chapter.

The next two themes in the original offer brilliant but decidedly tangential insights into the difference between human thought and G-d's own, and into the idea that G-d accommodates His actions to our intellectual limitations in order to allow us to grasp something of His ways. Ramchal also discusses the idea that G-d could very well have created an utterly different reality than the one He did -- an utterly un-linear one without clear cause and effect, without logical underpinnings. While all of this is astounding to consider and consequential in our understandings of the universe, it's still-and-all out of place in the discussion and would draw us away from the vital point at hand.

It's nonetheless clear that all of this is tangential since Ramchal says "let's return to the subject at hand" right afterward. So, we'll be bypassing that discussion here so as to allow for an easier explanation of the very important and complex point about G-d's *Yichud* which is central to *Da'at Tevunot* and Ramchal's worldview.

See note 5 to 1:3 above which speaks to much of this when it speaks of the centrality of the idea of G-d's *Yichud* in relation to G-d's "accommodating Himself" to the reality of the world as we know it.)

<sup>8</sup> After all, if we mistakenly believe that G-d's reign is limited then we can also mistakenly believe that we can go against His wishes and suffer no consequences.

<sup>9</sup> As a consequence of our reactions.

<sup>10</sup> I.e., G-d's interacting with us initially in a seemingly limited capacity then ultimately in an absolute capacity is, in fact, the most defining reality of our interactions with Him.

<sup>11</sup> His sovereignty, we're reminded here, implies that "no one else (but He) is in control, and (that) no one can oppose Him or thwart His wishes". It follows then that His other traits like wisdom, which is defined in our text as His ability to "know how to fully and correctly conceive of things", and His righteousness which is defined here as the capacity to "act (only) beneficially to all", thus contribute to His ability to reign supreme -- and beneficently, which is also His intention, as we were taught in 1:1:3.

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.