

DA'AT TEVUNOT - SECTION 1: CHAPTER 15

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Da'at Tevunot 1:15 (# 48 middle - 50)

1.

Despite the daunting reality of G-d's seeming absence in this world, bear in mind that His ultimate aim is to disclose His presence and sovereignty, and to make it clear that His having concealed it in the first place was a means to reveal it in the end¹. For, though His hiddenness allowed for the system of right and wrong², G-d will ultimately bring everything to a state of perfection³ and shower *all* with His beneficence⁴.

And so eventually the whole murky system of right and wrong that G-d established here for the meanwhile will be undone, and all will be set right; for the 6,000 year-long period of spiritual trial and error will have played itself out, and G-d's presence will be manifest along with all the perfection that will follow in its wake. In fact, G-d is consequently always affecting, shifting, and arranging things and circumstances here and now to bring that day about, and every single day brings us closer to it⁵.

As the prophets affirmed, "You have (always) done great things ... O L-rd my G-d. For Your wonders and Your thoughts are for (i.e., directed toward) us" (Psalms 40:6), "You (G-d) have dealt wondrously; (You have conjured) devices (for the revelation of Your *Yichud*) from long ago" (Isaiah 25:1), and "G-d ... devises means so that anyone who is banished (as a consequence of his sins) will not be cast from Him (in the end)" (2 Samuel 14:14).

2. Understand though that the whole process -- G-d's hiddenness and His eventual revelation -- had to follow a measured course of action. For as Ramchal puts it, "G-d certainly didn't want to adopt a system of right and wrong for a certain amount of time, then abandon it and set up another one in which His sovereignty would reign in one fell swoop, like someone who regretted what he'd done (and seemed to have changed his mind)".

Instead, G-d wanted to bring the change about from "within" in such a way that His sovereignty would simply *evolve* out of the system of right and wrong we experience now. And then the experience of perfection and G-d's *Yichud* would be revealed, and the two eras⁶ will stand in clear contradistinction to each other, as we'll see later on.

3.

The truth is that G-d interacts with us even now *both ways at the same time*. As we all know, He now allows for reward and punishment ⁷, and thus judges and rules accordingly; yet at the same time He unobtrusively and covertly allows His inherent benevolence that will eventually lead to perfection to permeate the world as well ⁸.

Interestingly enough, G-d seems to allow Himself to be swayed by, or to even be subservient to our actions and ethics in the here and now, and to thus reward or punish *in reaction to us* rather than His own penchants ⁹.

But know that while G-d certainly judges our actions and responds to them measure for measure, and He has innumerable ways and agents to administer justice¹⁰, nevertheless He is still in actual fact bringing everything to the state of perfection ¹¹.

That's not to deny the fact that He still-and-all has purposely held back His sovereignty from the world, created us imperfect, and has us endure more darkness than light in a world of wrong and injustice. It's just that the fact remains that He will manifest His full benevolence and sovereignty in due course and will bring us to the state of perfection that is our destiny. For, the revelation of G-d's *Yichud* is the truth that simmers beneath the surface of things that roils more and more resoundingly and comes closer and closer to the top ¹².

Footnotes:

¹That is, G-d purposely hid His presence, which then has us yearn for it, which makes its appearance the greatest favor He in His beneficence can grant us. As there's no greater gift than a need fulfilled; and there's no greater need than the one for G-d's manifest presence.

See *Clallim Rishonim* 6 for a discussion of the Kabbalistic themes underlying this chapter. In short, after G-d hid His presence as a consequence of the *Tzimtzum* (see note 7 to 1:1, note 6 to 1:3) He left a mere "Trace" of His presence behind (see note 7 to 1:14). At a certain point He reintroduced a fuller stream of His presence termed the *Kav* (or "Line") which enables more and more of His presence to appear, so as to affect the perfection referred to in this chapter. The interplaying of the *Kav* and *Reshimu* is what's depicted here, and it's a central theme in Ramchal's thoughts. See his *Assarah Orot* 7.

²Within which some enjoy and deserve G-d's favor and others don't.

³See 6:6 below for discussion of the state of perfection.

⁴Let's clarify this. We all see the need for reward and punishment in this world, given that there's

right and wrong which should be reacted to appropriately. But there simply won't be a role for any of that once everyone is dazed and stunned by the stark reality of G-d's presence and sovereignty: that reality will simply undo wrongdoing (and thus punishment). And that is what we're heading toward .

⁵That's to say that every seeming impediment, every "sideswipe" and "curve ball", will prove to have been perfectly timed, fully appropriate, on-target, and imperative. For it will be found that absolutely *nothing* was independent of the process of revelation, nothing irrelevant to it; everything said, thought, done, and planned was a part of it all, along with each nuance and shade-of-a-nuance. The underlying point is that the great redemption and revelation of G-d's sovereignty is indeed on its way, whether we know it or not. Have faith, for the great mystery will be solved, and the knottiest of puzzles will be unraveled right before your eyes.

⁶I.e., "before" and "after" the revelation of G-d's sovereignty.

⁷Ramchal terms this His "values-based rule" (G-d's other means of interaction is termed His "*Yichud*-and perfection-based rule" as we'll see in the note 12 below).

⁸We could perhaps liken G-d's *Yichud*-mode to our autonomic nervous system and His values-based mode to our voluntary movements. The autonomic nervous system controls various vital bodily functions on its own and without our input, and sees to it that we thrive (sometimes even despite ourselves). Our voluntary movements, on the other hand, follow our dictates, right or wrong, and can either better or even undo us. In much the same way, it's G-d's *Yichud*-mode that always sees to it that we thrive -- more so, that we perfect ourselves; while His values-based mode allows us the freedom to better or harm ourselves.

⁹Ramchal remarks in the text here that this in fact explains statements that seem to deny G-d's sovereignty such as Psalms 68:35, Deuteronomy 32:18, (see *Eicha Rabbah* 1:33 about these two verses), Zachariah 3:9, and Jeremiah 50:20.

His point seems to be that it's as if G-d wasn't G-d at all so much as a servant to a higher force than Himself whom He's to answer to, if you will -- right and wrong. But the truth is that G-d does indeed work on two levels at the same time: He allows Himself to "acquiesce" to His own creation's demands on the one hand, but He also sees to it that His own will is the last word, as the mode of acquiescence will eventually be undone and G-d's sovereignty will indeed manifest itself -- as soon as G-d decides it should.

¹⁰In fact, that goes far to explain the odd and surprising roles we find ourselves in from time to time as we act as G-d's agents for others, unbeknownst even to ourselves; and it also accounts for the utterly unexpected appearance of so many things in our life.

¹¹ Ramchal also remarks in the text that all of this explains the statements, "I, G-d, do not change" (Malachi 3:6) and "I have never changed" (Zohar 3:281a), which mean to say that even though G-d may seem to acquiesce to others' wishes now, nonetheless His native sovereignty will be apparent in the process of time.

¹² The *Neshama* asks the *Sechel* at this point in the text to encapsulate his main points here. We'll present his words in this note rather than above to avoid redundancy.

"G-d manifests two traits in this world: a values-based rule and a *Yichud*-and-perfection-based one. The values-based rule necessitates (the existence of both) right and wrong which all good and bad phenomena depend on, and it's rooted in G-d's hiddenness and (innate) benevolence, and in His concealed perfection.

"The *Yichud*-and-perfection-based rule (on the other hand) is the trait that will (eventually) bring on the perfection of all created things (even when they don't deserve it) and is rooted in G-d's inherent benevolence. (The latter) functions regularly though clandestinely in the presence of the values-based rule so as to bring everything to perfection (in the end), and it's rooted in G-d's inherent pure benevolence. Despite its hiddenness it never fails to shine goodness upon us. (In short,) while His values-based rule is (now) manifest and outright, (G-d's full and perfect) sovereignty is hidden and concealed (though certainly with us all along)."