

DA'AT TEVUNOT - SECTION 2: CHAPTER 10

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Da'at Tevunot 2:10 (# 87 – 88 [beg.])

1.

We'd need to retrace our steps up to now in this second section of *Da'at Tevunot* to understand where we're heading here.

Ramchal set out to discuss the fact that we're comprised of two utterly antithetical elements: physicality and spirituality, and to explore how they nonetheless collaborate. He then investigated the relationship between G-d's hiddenness and His revelation and our body and soul (then he side-tracked to discuss the realm in which body and soul interact, the complexion). And he then offered that there'll be various epochs of time which the body and soul will experience together that will go on to explain things about G-d's hiddenness or manifest presence. We'll be delving into that last point here.

The first thing to know is that we'll be concentrating on great stretches of time -- ten millennia and more -- and upon great and mysterious, mystical machinations involving our bodies and souls, G-d's ever more manifest presence, and the makeup of the universe at large ¹.

There'll prove to be five such epochs of time, and Ramchal will depict the ultimate one first ².

2.

This final epoch will be the one in which the aimed-for human perfection will have been achieved. And we'll start with it, rather than with the first epoch, because it's the one that was actually formed first but then held in abeyance until it could be achieved by our own efforts which was the plan from the first ³.

The soul will utterly reign at this juncture and the body will have no say whatsoever, and will not even seem to be there for all intents and purposes, given that it will be totally subservient to the soul. In fact, the body couldn't even be said to be a "body" there and then as we know it: it will simply *exist* somehow but serve no practical function ⁴.

It makes sense that the body would be so nearly null and void then, given that it's so material, dense and dark, and rooted in the holding back of light. If it actually functioned there, that would somehow

smother and diminish the light of the soul. So the soul is allowed to be in full bloom there and then, and enabled to achieve full perfection, while the body is powerless.

Again, though, that's not to say that the body won't exist there and then -- didn't we point out that *both* body and soul are to be rewarded ⁵ which would dictate that the body would need to exist? It's just to say that the body won't function then and it will be totally subsumed to the soul to which it will be attached and with which it will be in synch. In fact, the two wouldn't be able to be differentiated from each other for the body would be "swallowed up" by the soul's pure being ⁶.

Footnotes:

¹ We're taught that reality as we know it will only last for six millennia, after which all will be *undone* then *redone* by G-d in the course of the seventh millennium (*Sanhedrin* 97b). But Ramchal draws here upon the concept of *ten* millennia that was introduced in the 14th century Kabbalistic work *Sefer Brit Menucha*, by Rabbi Avraham ben Yitzchak of Granada.

Understand of course that the term "millennium" here isn't to be taken literally, as time will no longer factor in once the world approaches the tenth "millennium" and beyond.

In short the chronology will be as follows: the seventh millennium will encompass the Messianic Era; the eighth and ninth millennia, which would best be termed the post Messianic era, will include the resurrection of the dead, the Day of Judgment; and the tenth millennium will comprise the World to Come.

² This will prove to be the World to Come.

³ That's to say that the World to Come -- the epoch of perfection -- was there from the first and will be there in the end.

This is a very esoteric theme that Ramchal often returned to again and again. See his *Ma'amar Sod HaYichud* and elsewhere.

⁴ See *Klallim Rishonim* 9.

⁵ See 2:1:2 above.

⁶ That's to say that while the body will certainly be there in the mix, it will "be almost non-existent, and will be utterly and wholly subservient to the soul" then, as Ramchal words it. In fact, Ramchal states that "it couldn't even be referred to by a name" since it would have so faint a presence, and it could "only be said to *exist*" but to "have no (other) effect" than that.

It's simply that the body will no longer have consequence, no effect, will exercise no push and pull,

and it will enjoy no significance; instead, it will be utterly deferential to the soul to which it will cling for dear life and purpose, and to which it will be wholly subsumed

As we indicated in note 5 to 2:2 above, the "body" in this context includes one's mind, personality, memories, and the like. The implication then is that there'll come a time when one's whole sense of self -will be in a state of semi-sleep and near extinction, for all intents and purposes. There'd likely be a sense of self-consciousness then but that it would seemingly be so still and passive as to hardly matter.

Perhaps -- and this is all conjecture -- it would be analogous to the feeling one has when reacting rapturously to music or lofty thought -- when the sounds or ideas overtake one's being and sense of self, and when the body certainly goes on its physiological way, the senses still work, and the brain still accepts signals, but the person wouldn't respond if his or her name was being called, and would only return to normal consciousness after some prodding. The point to remember, though, is that the immortal soul, which far transcends all this, will go on as always, and will be unaffected by any of it.