

DA'AT TEVUNOT - SECTION 2: CHAPTER 11

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Da'at Tevunot 2:11 (# 88 [cont.])

1.

Whereas the soul will reign supreme in the ultimate epoch, as we saw ¹, it will nonetheless have less and less of a presence the further down along the five epochs of time we go, when the body will have more ².

And so the next epoch downward -- the second -- is the one in which the body will actually be more manifest, while the soul will be less active and somewhat demeaned then ³.

The body's situation then would be like that of someone having a vague and general memory of things, like "someone who'd had a lot of troubles" in his life who nevertheless had only a "vague recollection of them" then, and whose mood was somehow "dampened", as Ramchal himself puts it here in the text. That's what we'll experience when the soul won't reign supreme any longer, and it would experience a sort of "heaviness of heart", if you will, "without quite knowing why" ⁴.

2.

While the body will manifest itself indeed in the third epoch downward, it will only be able to do so to a degree ⁵.

The body will be manifest in the fourth epoch downward ⁶, but it will be "like the soul is in the world (now) -- (which is to say,) a foreigner of sorts", as Ramchal puts it. That's to say that the soul will hold sway and the body will have to obey it. But the body would have to follow the "customs of the land" ⁷.

In other words, Ramchal offers, the body's situation then would be like Moses' was when he stood atop the actual and physical Mount Sinai yet dwelt in Heaven, if you will, at the same time, when even though he was still very much alive and a physical entity he nonetheless didn't eat or drink the way one would act in Heaven ⁸.

3.

It's in the course of the fifth and lowest stage, however⁹, that the body is in its full flower and is "like the master of the house", Ramchal says, with all of its faculties intact¹⁰.

But there are potentially two degrees of that stage. The body could function on an animalistic level¹¹, or it could function on a holy one with noble and pure intentions¹² (as would have been the case had Adam and Eve not sinned). After all, we all need to eat and drink and the like, but we could do those things in a holy way¹³.

Footnotes:

¹See 2:10 above.

²It's clear that a lot is being alluded to in this chapter rather than spelled out. We'll do our best to provide some of what's hinted at here.

The first thing is that the ultimate epoch cited above corresponds to the World to Come (see note 1 to 2:10 for the laying out of the chronology here as well the footnotes below). While there *will* be a body then, it will be a very subtle and hardly-detectable material but non-material and porous sort of body.

Now, given that the "body" under discussion isn't just the physical self, but the personality, sense-of-self, etc. as we'd been indicating in our notes here all along, it seems reasonable to conjecture that this refers to the idea that while one's immortal soul will be manifest in the World to Come, one's sense-of-self, self-consciousness, self-awareness, and personality will only be amorphous at best or perhaps even negligible *but present nevertheless*.

³This corresponds to the Day of Judgment.

⁴That is, the self will be able to recall its life and its sins and their consequent sorrows then, but at a certain remove. And it would consequently be able to assess those sins and itself more objectively, in keeping with the spirit of the Day of Judgment.

⁵This corresponds to the time of the resurrection of the dead, when the sense-of-self will be stronger, but it will be secondary to the sense of *soul*.

⁶This corresponds to the messianic era.

⁷Ramchal cites *Breishit Rabbah* 47:5 which says, for all intents and purposes, "When in Rome, (the body would have to) do as the Romans (i.e., souls) do" (see *Baba Metziah* 86a as well).

⁸That is, the self will be so stunned by its radical change of circumstance in the messianic era that it

could do nothing other than to acquiesce to its reality.

⁹This corresponds to the world as we know it now.

¹⁰As now, when we're sure that we're in charge of our circumstances and we believe that we needn't acquiesce to our soul's needs.

¹¹Giving in to the body's needs alone and the ego's satisfactions.

¹²Acknowledging the ego and body's needs, but dedicating them to Heaven, the way we're expected to act on *Shabbos*, when we eat well while nonetheless sanctifying the meals through *Kiddush* and with the sense of the holiness of the day in mind all of the time (see Ch. 26 of *Messilat Yesharim*).

¹³Ramchal has presented things from the highest level downward which makes it more difficult to grasp his points, so we'll now present them from the lowest level upward.

The lowest level would be our current experience, where the body, as well as our sense-of-self or ego, hold sway and the soul is in check. His final point is that we can draw upon the soul even in this lowest of circumstances by living a physical life that's still and all rooted in spiritual goals, otherwise we'd be nothing better than animals.

Things will then begin to change in the next, messianic era in that the soul will be more prominent while the sense-of-self and ego will begin to be less important in our minds and in reality. That will be all the more so true with the approach of the day of judgment then the resurrection of the dead, when the sense-of-self will grow more and more negligible, and the soul will shine more brightly and assertively. And the ultimate experience will be in the course of the World to Come, when we will experience just the barest, slimmest sense-of-self in the face of the fullest most robust reality of the soul -- and the presence of G-d -- possible.