

DA'AT TEVUNOT - SECTION 2: CHAPTER 4

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Da'at Tevunot 2:4 (# 72 [cont.] - 75)

1.

What enable the soul to purify the body are the soul's native power, inner incandescence, and the loftiness of its source ¹. So great is all that, in fact, that the soul could actually *instantaneously* elevate and perfect the body when we're born. But we'd lose our *yetzer hara* and free will accordingly, and be angelic and full of light and the knowledge of G-d from the first, which are not G-d's intentions.

Indeed there'll come a time when "the land will be as full of the knowledge of G-d as water covers the sea-bed" (Isaiah 11:9), when "I will take away (your) heart of stone ... and give you a heart of flesh (instead)" ² (Ezekiel 36:26), and when the soul will become even more exalted than the angels. But that's not to happen yet. The soul is thus like the moon whose light was initially diminished ³ but will be restored in the future ⁴.

The soul is thus "dimmed" now, if you will; muted and diminished. Yet it also can't be *too* diminished or it wouldn't be able to do what it must do in the meanwhile, to say nothing of what it must do in the future. But that's another matter ⁵.

2.

So, while the soul is naturally able to grow more and more splendidous with each mitzvah we do here, it's still and all held captive while in the body and forced to face the challenges of the *yetzer hara*. But it will reach something of its potential in the Afterlife, thanks to those mitzvahs, which will then enable it to purify the body further in the course of the resurrection of the dead ⁶, after which the two will experience the world to come ⁷.

The soul does enjoy an elevation in our lifetime with each good thing we do but that elevation is largely imperceptible ⁸ even though it manifests itself in certain exalted individuals ⁹.

Footnotes:

¹This chapter is surprisingly redundant in the original. R' Yoseph Spinner attributes that to a number

of (superfluous) additions which were made after the first edition; and we'd offer that some of the redundancy is due to the fact that Ramchal purposefully set out to encapsulate his points at the end. So we've shortened and reordered it to make for easier reading.

²I.e., a new inclination toward goodness rather than a *yetzer hara*, according to Rashi there.

³See *Chullin* 60b.

⁴See Isaiah 30:26.

⁵See 1:2:3 above about G-d muting His own abilities, if you will, for our sake; also see 1:14:3, 1:15:3. The point is that the soul must be set just-so, so as not to overwhelm or "underwhelm".

⁶See *Derech Hashem* 1:3:12.

See *Clallim Rishonim* 6* for discussions of the Kabbalistic implications of this chapter which touch upon G-d allowing a bit of His being (known as the *Kav*) to return to the cosmos after having "removed" Himself from it (i.e., after the *Tzimtzum*) much the way the soul is restored to its luster in the course of the resurrection of the dead after having been dimmed.

⁷ A lot isn't being said here. For just as the "body" being spoken of here isn't the body alone, as we'd indicated above, the "soul" depicted here is also a multi-faceted entity. See Ramchal's discussion of the various aspects of the soul in *Derech Hashem* 1:3:4, and see *Nephesh Hachaim* 1:15 about the complex interactions of the various aspects of the soul. Also see *Eitz Chaim*, *Sha'ar Ha'akudim* Ch. 5 for a discussion of the fact that what happens on one level happens on all of them. All of this underscores the complexity and fluidity of the "soul" and the "body", and their interactions. The point of the matter is that the combination of the two is entirely too complex for a simple understanding,

⁸This is a subtle lead-in to the discussion of G-d's hiddenness to follow.

⁹See 2:2:2 above.