

DA'AT TEVUNOT - SECTION 2: CHAPTER 9

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Da'at Tevunot 2:9 (# 85 – 86)

1.

The idea that G-d's manifest presence is epitomized by our souls while His hiddenness is epitomized by our bodies is clear enough. And the one that G-d's interactions with the world are epitomized by the fact that body and soul are interlinked is clear enough, too. But where can we actually catch sight of the body and soul's interactions, as we were told we'd need to concentrate on as well?

2.

Ramchal's point is that there's actually a plane upon which our body and soul manifestly function together, and that's our facial complexion ¹.

After all, aren't the dead and the living differentiated by their complexions ²? Can't we tell when a person is ill or not by his complexion? And don't our feelings and deepest thoughts manifest themselves on our complexions -- as when we smile, frown, seem pleasant, etc.?

In point of fact, the complexion is the property of neither our body nor soul alone. For the body couldn't manifest a complexion without a soul nor can the soul manifest one without a body. Hence, our complexion is truly a product of the union of the two ³.

And we dare not belittle the complexion, as it touches upon a very important phenomenon ⁴.

3.

When they envisioned things, the prophets drew an analogy between what they "saw" and He who fashioned it, as when they saw images of G-d's presence (or absence) playing themselves out in various ways: as when G-d exhibited Himself as a warrior, for example, as a merciful elder and the like, as our sages explained (*Chagigah* 14a).

For the prophet would envision something and then ruminate upon it so as to try to understand what that vision said about G-d's hiddenness or revelation, or the combination of the two.

So for example a prophet might envision "the appearance of a man up above" (Ezekiel 1:26) with a body and a soul, and a complexion expressing the combination of the two that perhaps expresses

cordiality, gladness, anger, or the like. The prophet would then use that "information" to figure out what G-d was about to do in the world, whether He was about to exhibit His benevolence or judgment, His closeness or distance ⁵.

So, just as a sensitive individual can catch sight of another's soul by the effect it has on that person's face, a prophet could likewise "catch sight" of G-d's intentions and feelings by the effect it has on His "face" in a vision ⁶.

Footnotes:

¹ Ramchal refers to the "face's radiance" in the text, which is an odd turn of phrase. But as we indicate, the phenomenon he's depicting is what we term our "complexion" or "skin tone" which is the surface upon which our emotions, etc. appear (as when we blush, glow with pride, and the like).

² I.e., Aren't the living full of coloration and the dead pale and waxy looking?

³ The ancient mystical study of the human face and its tell-tale signs termed "physiognomy" (which is not actually the subject under discussion) is discussed at length in that section of the Zohar known as *Raza d'Razin* at 2:70a–75a, as well as in *Zohar Chadash* 56c–60a. The Ari was especially able to read souls through marks on a person's forehead.

⁴ Ramchal is referring to the point he'll be making below about prophets and their visions, but he's also alluding to a number of Kabbalistic concepts.

At bottom, it has to do with the phenomena we cited in note 1 to 1:15 and at the end of note 6 to 2:1. And it refers to the fact that the mere "Trace" of G-dliness left behind after the *Tzimtzum*, which represents the body and G-d's hiddenness, then interacts with the "Line" introduced afterwards, which represents the soul and G-d's manifest presence, upon the "Face" and "complexion" of *Adam Kadmon*, which then expresses things about G-d's "feelings" and will.

The underlying point is that what happens here, in our realm, happens upon the uppermost realms, too, albeit on a whole other order of circumstance. For Man is said to be an *olam katan*, a miniature version -- a microcosm -- of the entire universe. Each element of the universe is said to correspond to an element of man and vice versa. See *Avot d'Rebbi Natan* (31, 92), *Chovot Halevovot* (2:4) and elsewhere for illustrations.

So by reflecting deeply and sensitively on the structure and makeup of humankind we can come to understand something about the interplay of body and soul, and we'll also come to catch sight of some of the interactions between G-d and the world.

⁵ In other words, if a prophet envisioned G-d's "face" as bright and shiny he'd understand that G-d was pleased with His people and was openly drawing closer to them; whereas if he envisioned G-d's

"face" as dark and murky the prophet would then understand that G-d was unhappy with His people and was hiding from them.

⁶See *Klach Pitchei Chochma* 31, as well as Ramchal's *Biurim L'Sefer Otzrot Chaim*.