

# DA'AT TEVUNOT - SECTION 3: CHAPTER 1

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*Da'at Tevunot* 3:1 (# 96 - 97)

1.

Probably the most vexing problem of all is why evil, injustice, and wrongdoing exist in a world created by a good and benevolent G-d, who expects and enables us to be good and just! After all, what purpose does wrong and injustice serve? Why did G-d allow for them in the first place and why does He let them go on?

Ramchal set out to explain a lot of this effulgent theme in this chapter which serves as an introduction to *Da'at Tevunot's* next principle: reward and punishment and the existence of wrong.

2.

The first point Ramchal makes to settle all of this is that we need to recall that man's role in this world is to serve G-d by rectifying all wrongdoing in the world <sup>1</sup>. His second point <sup>2</sup> is that wrong will be undone in the end <sup>3</sup>. Then he gets into some of the details.

As to rectifying all wrong, we're expected to undo it from within ourselves at first and then from our surroundings <sup>4</sup>. After all, we're told that "each person is obliged to say, 'the world was created for my sake'" (Sanhedrin 37) <sup>5</sup>. And he cites a parable: Once there was a huge boulder in the middle of a road that was obstructing things. So the king ordered that it be chipped away piece by piece in the meanwhile and that he'd do away with it for good in the end (*Yalkut Shimoni, Hoshea 532*) <sup>6</sup>.

Let's first explore the makeup, limits, and consequences of wrong, the source of its great power, and what will eventually undo it.

3.

The first thing to assert is that wrong was created outright and intentionally from the first by G-d <sup>7</sup>, and for the express purpose of testing our mettle and providing us with a basis for Divine service <sup>8</sup>. The second thing is that there wasn't even a hint or indication of its existence <sup>9</sup> or anything like it <sup>10</sup>. For G-d Himself is utterly good and perfect, and anything that's good is somehow connected to Him;

but wrong is the exact opposite of Him, and it had no connection to Him before it was created<sup>11</sup>. Yet He could still and all create it because He's utterly omnipotent and could thus even create something as utterly antithetical to His own being as it<sup>12</sup>!

And He saw to it that wrong would be undone in the end and that it would have the limitations, makeup, and laws He wanted it to have. After all, it was created so that the righteous who would have been successful in conquering it themselves would be rewarded for that<sup>13</sup>.

Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup>The point of the matter is that wrong thwarts all of that, so why does it exist? This section of *Da'at Tevunot* delves into all of that and explains just how undoing wrong and injustice enables us to enjoy the profound reward of closeness to G-d. And that reward and its opposite, punishment, are what will be concentrated on here (see Ramchal's Introduction above).

There's a shorter discussion of the matter in 1:2, 1:6-10, and 1:14.

<sup>2</sup>Which will come up shortly.

<sup>3</sup>That alludes to the fact that it will eventually be undone (see 3:6, 11 below and *Derech Hashem* 3:2:8) *whether we have a role in that or not* (though there will certainly be a grand and occult reward for those who helped undo it).

<sup>4</sup>We're reminded of what R. Yisroel Salanter once said that when he was a young man he wanted to improve the world, but he found that it was too hard to do that so he tried to improve his people. When he found he couldn't do that he began to focus on his town. When he couldn't do that he tried to improve his family. Then he finally began to realize that the only thing he could ever improve would be *himself*, and he perceived the fact that if he had improved himself long ago, that he could have made an impact on his family, they and he could have made an impact on their town, which could have improved his nation, and he could indeed have improved the world.

<sup>5</sup>That is, *everyone* is challenged to improve his world.

<sup>6</sup>Again the point is that we're to do our part, but that in the end G-d will see that it succeeds.

<sup>7</sup>Thus its creation wasn't a mistake, an afterthought, or the creation of any other being.

<sup>8</sup>That is, if wrong wasn't there to serve as a nemesis and opponent, what challenges would we meet and how could we ever grow better in the face of it (which is the aim of Divine service after all).

<sup>9</sup> Before creation.

<sup>10</sup> And yet it was somehow created by G-d, as we'll now see.

<sup>11</sup> That is, wrong is so diametrically opposite to G-d and was such an innovation that (literally) came out of nowhere that its creation is completely inscrutable. Yet we're assured that G-d created it indeed and with good reason.

<sup>12</sup> See *Adir Bamarom* p. 396.

<sup>13</sup> See *Clallim Rishonim* 12 for the Kabbalistic bases of this chapter and more, and see 3:3 below for a discussion of how wrong managed to have been created by a benevolent and loving G-d after all.