

# DA'AT TEVUNOT - SECTION 3: CHAPTER 15

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

## Section 3, Chapter 15

1.

We're told a number of astounding things about Adam's original stature. First off, that his "heel could extinguish the sun" since it (and he) was so huge and powerful when he was first created (Tanchuma, Acharei 2). And we learn that among the other things that Adam lost when he sinned aside from his stature was the mystic glow that emanated from his body (Bamidbar Rabbah 13:11) [1].

The point is that he was as great personally and inwardly as he was bodily, and that his stature and gleam reflected that. After all, how could someone created "in G-d's image" who was the lone creature to have been crafted by G-d Himself have been of lower stature? Yet he undid all that with his sin.

Ramchal's underlying message is this, though. Consider how great we are compared to lesser beings, thanks to our abilities to think and act in well-ordered, purposeful, creative, and stunningly original ways, and compare that with Adam's greater stature than ours. Yet we lower ourselves with our wrongful and unfair deeds just as he did. Yet contrast how limited our movements are compared to angels and other supernal entities who whisk from place to place effortlessly, and compare that with the even greater stature that Adam could have attained had he not sinned. And extrapolate from there what our stature could be if we were to only do good and just things.

2.

We can infer how great Adam was by virtue of the fact that he dwelt in the Garden of Eden in his lifetime, whereas only the souls of the righteous dwell there now. We can infer it also from the fact that the food that Adam ate there was not of this world but was ethereal instead, and that he ingested it in a far more lustrous way than we ingest food. In fact, we're told that his body then was on par with our souls today, so holy was he. And yet he squandered all that, much the way we squander our opportunity for greatness.

And if we need more illustrations for his greatness before his sin, we need only see how the Zohar depicted Adam's creation and makeup: "Come and see! ... (When) the Holy One blessed be He created the world, He also included the first man, Adam.... The Holy One blessed be He crowned him

with supernal crowns and .... (formed him) from the six extremities of the world so that he could be perfect in every way. The (other) creatures trembled before Adam and feared him because he was created in the supernal form. They looked upon his form and were awestruck and afraid. The Holy One blessed be He (then) brought Adam into the Garden of Eden to enjoy its supernal delights, where he was encircled by holy angels who served him and informed him of the secrets of their Master.... In fact, when the Holy One blessed be He brought Adam into the Garden of Eden, Adam saw and peered into all the arcane mysteries and wisdom, and he was able to observe and grasp all the splendors of his Master" (1 p. 38b) [2].

And yet, his being became coarser and fleshier after he sinned, unlike Elijah and Enoch, who grew more and more angelic the greater they became [3]. How much coarser and fleshier, then, does our being become each and every day in our errors?

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[1] We're offering a foreshortened version of this part of Da'at Tevunot here, as the original seems to be rather too complex and wordy for its purposes. It also seems to take a number of pedantic stances that, while brilliant, still and all seem to detract from the points at hand. We can't help but notice that the book's commentators didn't address whole swaths of this section either, perhaps for the same reasons. The reader is advised to see the original for him- or herself.

[2] Understand of course that the Zohar is depicting him in his original state, rather than the state he could have reached had he not sinned. As such, if G-d "crowned him with supernal crowns and .... (formed him) from the six extremities of the world so that he could be perfect in every way" at that point, then his eventual state would have earned him even more supernal crowns, which would have contributed to actual perfection rather than to the potential sort alluded to here.

If "the (other) creatures trembled before Adam and feared him because he was created in the supernal form" and were "awestruck and afraid of him" at that point, we must assume that they would have been simply undone by his perfect presence in the end.

If Adam was brought "into the Garden of Eden to enjoy its supernal delights, where he was encircled by holy angels who served him and informed him of the secrets of their Master" at that point, we'd surmise that he'd have absorbed G-d's secrets in his perfected state.

And finally, if Adam "saw and peered into all the arcane mysteries and wisdom, and he was able to observe and grasp all the splendors of his Master" at that point, we'd offer that he would not only have "absorbed" G-d's splendors the way he absorbed His secrets as we indicated above, but he would eventually be absorbed in G-d own presence once he reached perfection.

[3] Elijah the prophet was active in Israel in the reigns of Ahab and Ahaziah. He was miraculously swept up to heaven in a "chariot of fire" drawn by "horses of fire" (2 Kings 2:11). The prophet Malachi foretold that Elijah would be sent by G-d "before the coming of the great and terrible day of the L-

rd" so as to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers" (see Malachi 3:23, etc.). And several great and pious individuals have been said to have been visited by Elijah and to have been guided by him in their studies (Tanna de-Bei Eliyahu).

And Enoch Son of Jared, father of Methuselah, seventh generation of the human race (Genesis 5:18-24) mysteriously "walked with G-d; then he was no more for G-d took him" (Genesis 5:23). He was among the nine righteous men who entered the Garden of Eden without suffering the pangs of death, as it's said, "he ascended to heaven on G-d's command, and was given the name Metatron the Great Scribe" (Targum Yerushalmi to Genesis 5:4). He figures prominently in Kabbalistic works like the Zohar, and in Sepher Heichalot and Heichalot Rabbati.

Thus while both Elijah and Enoch started off as mere mortals yet merited ascending to become immortals, Adam started off as a celestial being and descended into the pit in the end and failed further yet given that he could have achieved the very highest rank.

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