

DA'AT TEVUNOT - SECTION 3: CHAPTER 17

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

1.

Adam's physical being also suffered and diminished dramatically when he sinned [1]. Where he'd been angelic when created (Genesis Rabbah 21), beautiful, and radiant (Babba Battra 58a); where his skin had been more like a shining suit than flesh (Targum Yerushalmi Genesis 3:7); and where he was fully developed and as if 20 years old upon creation (Genesis Rabbah 14:7) -- that all evaporated when he did wrong. The same is true of us too when we're wrongful and unjust: we also suffer and are trivialized.

In any event, the harm done to him when he went wrong only affected his body and person; nothing of his soul was tainted. And the same is true of us, as well.

2.

It is important to recall, though, that our ability to harm ourselves by doing wrongful things had been in place from the first, when wrong was made possible as we'd explained [2].

For while G-d had certainly created the sort of m that would have allowed for mankind to achieve its full potential for perfection and excellence, He nonetheless lessened those means to the degree that enables us to diminish our stature, so that we would be able to elevate ourselves on our own as much as possible. (And that's so because once the possibility to be perfect was held back from man and he nonetheless achieves that, he'd prove to be even greater and nobler than he would have been had he not been faced with and overcome that resistance.

3.

We'll now go back to explain a point we made earlier on [3] to the effect that while G-d will eventually undo all wrong and injustice, still and all nothing good, right, holy or just will ever be undone. We'll expand on that, as well as on what will bring about the undoing of wrong and injustice. But that will call for a lot of profound analyses, to be sure.

Notes:

[1] See R' Goldblatt's Kabbalistic insights into this chapter in note 56 of his edition.

This chapter will refer to a lot of what had been said before, so we'll need to backtrack here in our notes. Here's the first instance of it. We referred to the "physical, financial, or social harm" that comes

upon us when we do harm (see note 1 to 3:13). This paragraph will concentrate on the physical harm done to Adam's being when his body descended from an angelic, near-perfect physical form to one like ours. It's easy enough, though, to infer the sorts of financial or social damage done to us when we do wrong by seeing examples of it each and every day.

[2] We'd been taught that "each and every thing in the world ... only exists, thrives, and acts thanks to wafts of Divine life-energy radiating toward it known as a Divine 'emanation'" (3:2:1) which is "a phenomenon that (G-d) created to do as He sees fit ... (and which) follows the rules that He set for it" (3:2:2).

It was indicated that there are different sorts of emanations: that "acts of true and full goodness, justice, and righteousness are directly and vigorously nourished by G-d's emanations ... ; but when it comes to acts of evil, injustice, and wrongfulness, G-d only enables those sorts of things to come about back-handedly, if you will, reluctantly by reducing His emanations to them to one degree or another ... (which) enables them to do what they do but doesn't ... enable them to grow or encourage them in their path" (3:3:2).

In short, when G-d created this universe "which embraces both good and evil He certainly discharged emanations to start it all off. It's just that some of them were of lower 'wattage', if you will; less potent. Those are the sorts of emanations that nourish wrong and injustice So while all of reality, humanity, and history is a product of Divine emanations, all instances of goodness are a direct and full product of them, while all instances of wrong and injustice are a product of this novel sort of lesser-emanation" (3:3:3).

[3] See 3:6:1-2.

Rabbi Yaakov Feldman has translated and commented upon "The Gates of Repentance", "The Path of the Just", and "The Duties of the Heart" (Jason Aronson Publishers). His works are available in bookstores and in various locations on the Web.