

DA'AT TEVUNOT - SECTION 3: CHAPTER 18

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

1.

Despite all that we had learned until now, there is still something deep in the marrow that simply wonders about things sometimes. Ramchal himself enunciates the hesitation for us. He offers that anyone who looks honestly all around him cannot help but notice that everything seems to be isolated from everything else and set apart, and utterly dissociated from any sort of universal purpose or goal [1].

"Everything seems to be a thing unto itself," as he words it, "with a goal of its own", and is apparently "self-sufficient and independent". And everything seems to have been "created for its own ends", meant to "fulfill its own mission and nothing else".

Still and all, as Ramchal points out, even the most cynical among us cannot help but notice a definite hierarchy throughout the universe, in that everything seems to follow an orderly system of sorts from up on-high down below, from upper echelon down to foot-soldier [2].

So, on that level at least everything is apparently connected to everything else [3]. In point of fact, that is the most profound way things can ever be connected, as it speaks to everything's relationship to G-d Almighty and to other things.

2.

Aside from being interconnected, everything likewise plays a role in the great cosmic objective G-d has set in place of the revelation of His sovereignty. And while there are certainly "innumerable elements" involved in that objective including "all the very many components of the cosmos", they are all truly "connected to each other, and (function) in the order that Divine Wisdom wants them to so as to achieve that great aim of creation".

What is to be underscored at this point most importantly is the fact that this includes the reality of wrong, evil, and injustice; although it seems incongruous, they too serve a function in G-d's universal objective.

Now, there is a wealth of things to be said about this, all of which is deep and momentous, considering that it touches on all of creation and the point of it all. In short, though, it touches on the Talmudic statement that "Everything G-d created in His world was for the sake of His Glory" (end of Pirkei Avot) as we will see.

Notes:

[1] See Klallim Rishonim 15; R' Goldblatt's notes 1, 5, and 6 here, and his note 57 on p. 484 to his edition; and R' Shriki's note 88 for Kabbalistic insights into this chapter.

[2] Of course that is so both on metaphysical and worldly levels, in that there are leaders and followers, providers and consumers, superiors and inferiors of all sorts and in all realms.

[3] That is to say, while everything seems to be separate from everything else laterally (i.e., they all seem to go about doing what they do alone and independent of each other), things nonetheless are clearly connected longitudinally in the ways we indicated in note 1.

His point is that while everything on earth seems to lead a life of its own, that is only apparently so. For like children who have left home to make it on their own, everything seems to be independent and self-sufficient, yet nothing can deny its roots and sources, and everything clearly needs to come "home" from time to time until it comes to function in a "parental" capacity to another, lesser individual.

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.