

DA'AT TEVUNOT - SECTION 3: CHAPTER 20

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

1.

We have been offered a lot to explain the zigzag of the forces that play themselves out in the course of things -- both good and bad -- but we have not delved much into the sources of the flow and its motivators. And in fact, that is where our people come in [1].

We have always known that G-d loves our people deeply, referring to us as His children [2] likening us to His beloved [3], dwelling upon us [4] and rejoicing in us. But in point of fact, G-d delights in and is gladdened by all of creation [5], and He never ceases to shower His goodness upon the world time after time, allowing emanation upon emanation to flow upon it so as to draw it closer and closer to perfection.

But He is especially enamored of the Jewish Nation; still and all the rest of the world benefits when He showers us with His love.

2.

Understand, though, that there is a drawback to that for the other nations, unfortunately. Because when we are unworthy of G-d's abiding love because of our sins, and He turns His back on the Jewish Nation, G-d then grows angry with all of creation. And then everything goes terribly sour.

But we are taught that G-d always takes note of the actions of the righteous and of the wrongful, as He had from the very first when He decided to create the universe [6]. Yet we are also told that despite the actions the wrongful were bound to take, G-d still and all decided to create the universe regardless, and to rectify it all in the end.

But what finally confirmed G-d's decision to create the universe was the sheer joy He knew He would experience seeing all the good that the righteous were sure to do, which would allow for His great emanations, and would prevent them from being withheld when the wrongful would sin.

That in fact has been the pattern ever since: G-d has always allowed the actions of the righteous to bring on His beneficence. It is Ramchal's point here that it is we Jews and our righteous deeds that allow for that emanation and encourage G-d's joy, if you will. For our mitzvot and acts of generosity allow the world its sustenance and well-being; our goodness acts as fresh air and warm food for the world [7].

3.

Thus we see that had G-d taken the actions of the wrongful alone into consideration there would have been no world. But since the actions of the wrongful -- and the reality of wrongfulness itself -- will be undone in the end, as we'd learned, G-d created the universe through the merit of the righteous which will endure forever. And He allowed for His beneficence to expand. So it is clear how central a role our people play in the great machinations of Heaven and Earth, as well as in G-d's attitude toward the world.

Ramchal then concludes this chapter with the following: "We've thus fully provided all (the information) we needed to in order to enable one to understand the creation of wrong" and the reasons behind it. What he would need to do next, he explains, is illustrate how G-d will eventually "rectify all wrong and remove it from creation" so "all of creation can be utterly and ultimately rectified in the World To Come". So we will turn to this momentous topic next.

Notes:

[1] That is, while G-d is the ultimate Source of all blessings, we'll discover that our own righteous actions are the next-highest source, the driving-force behind the blessings.

[2] "You are G-d's children" (Deuteronomy 14:1)

[3] As our people acknowledge when we call out to Him and He says, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is upon me" (Song of Songs 7:11).

[4] "All Your wonders and thoughts are for us" (Psalms 40:6), "I (G-d) turn towards you (alone)" (Leviticus 26:9).

[5] "G-d will rejoice in (all) His works" (Psalms 104:31).

[6] See R' Greenblatt's kabbalistic insights into this chapter in his notes 9 and 12. Also see R' Shriki's note 91.

[7] That's not to deny that we sin, sad to say, and that we often don't live up to G-d's expectations. Nonetheless, once the mitzvah-system had been set into place and fixed as the mechanism by means of which G-d's blessings are able to shower upon the world, that mechanism functions despite us. As such, each and everything we do that's a mitzvah -- or that happens to fit into a mitzvah category, or is a mitzvah but is only done haphazardly, unknowingly, or partially -- feeds that mechanism and helps rectify the world by degrees.

For we're taught that "Even the most unworthy of you are as full of mitzvot as there are seeds in a pomegranate"(Sanhedrin 37a). That means to suggest that even if one doesn't ordinarily set out to follow the mitzvah-system, still and all when he eats something that happens to be kosher, when he happens to nap on Shabbat and thus refrains from forbidden tasks on that day without his own realization, and the like, all that triggers the bounty that flows from the mechanism G-d has set up known as the mitzvah-system. We're also taught that "The pious of the nations of the world have a

place in The World to Come" (Hilchot Teshuvah 3:5), which indicates that non-Jews also contribute to the mitzvah-system knowingly (as when they observe the Seven Noachite Mitzvot) or unknowingly when they act ethically, lovingly, reverently, etc..

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.