

# DA'AT TEVUNOT - SECTION 4: CHAPTER 4

*by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman*

1.

As things stand now, the world is based on a system of Divine Justice, which is to say, an arrangement of particular rewards and punishments for specific actions that's rooted in G-d's assessments [1]. Without it, the world would return to the state of primordial "formlessness and emptiness" (Genesis 1:2). In fact, Divine Justice is one of the underlying principles of reality as we know it and one of the hallmarks of G-d's presence in this world.

As such a lot has been said about that system in the Tradition. It's affirmed for example that "G-d ... has established His throne for judgment, and He judges the world with righteousness" (Psalms 9:8-9); that He's "known for the judgment that He enacts" (Ibid. v. 17); that He "has established His throne for judgment and judges the world with righteousness" (Psalms 9:8-9); that He is "exalted through justice" (Isaiah 5:16); and that He "establishes the land through justice" (Proverbs 29:4).

The point is that it would be beneath the Creator and harmful for the world if He were to somehow allow wrongdoers to hold sway and for the righteous to be subservient to them. And it's only right that His justice reigns, and it's manifest that the good should do well and the bad should do poorly. As it's written, "The city rejoices when all goes well with the righteous, and there is joy when the wicked perish" (Proverbs 11:10). But as we all know, it doesn't always work that way.

Instead, the world seems to be over-covered by an ethical miasma, G-d seems to be "asleep", and we anxiously await the moment when we'll be able to say, "then G-d awoke as if He'd been asleep ... and He smote His adversaries back" (Psalms 78:65-66). But as we'd been learning until now, there's a reason for all that.

2.

For, had he wanted to, G-d could very well have created a fair and affable -- a perfect -- world in which only good reigned from the first. But if that were the case, there couldn't be any wrongful or harmful things there whatsoever, only good and pure ones -- as will be the case eventually, when the world will be awash in Divine benevolence and humankind will serve G-d routinely and as a matter of course [2]. So G-d allowed for wrongdoing.

But had G-d simply waited for the wrongful to have their fill of sin and for the world to return to a state of "formlessness and emptiness" as a consequence, and then simply undid the wicked, that

wouldn't have been righteous or just either. In fact, it would be very cruel indeed on His part. Instead, G-d allows for wrongdoers, but He looks forward to their repentance and ultimate well-being.

Indeed, G-d loves humanity and He allows for a process of ultimate perfection to work itself out ... albeit slowly. Despite the wait, we're assured that it will come about.

3.

It's just a fact that G-d oftentimes lies hidden in the background, while wrong and injustice seem to triumph, and the world seems to spin lower and lower. The underlying point, though, is that G-d is fully aware of all that, otherwise the whole of it would all have been undone by now.

But His intentions are benevolent, and He only has us suffer for the best of reasons, as we'd indicated [3], and He most assuredly wants the world to go on, even at its lowest reaches. For despite that, His will reigns supreme, and nothing can countervail His wishes even if wrong and evil seem to be in command (G-d forbid).

Don't misunderstand: it's clear that evil does seem to hold sway, and that the wrongful are often rewarded (or are at least allowed to get away with their mayhem). But know that there is a Divine plan at play that's rich in deep wisdom which we'll be able to catch glimpses of from time to time as we focus in these next several chapters upon the way G-d governs this world.

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Notes:

[1] See Klallim Rishonim 23 for the Kabbalistic references that apply to this and the next several chapters. Also see R' Friedlander's Iyyun 35, R' Goldblatt's note 6 (and note 62 on p. 485 of his edition), and R' Shriki's notes 104-106.

[2] That is, we'll serve Him that way rather than by conviction come upon after a struggle of faith and the subsequent decision that serving Him is the right thing to do when that wouldn't be manifest. His point here is that the appropriateness of serving G-d will be manifest once the world will have reached perfection.

[3] See 4:2 above.

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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.