

DA'AT TEVUNOT - SECTION 4: CHAPTER 5

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

1.

To be sure, G-d Almighty, whose will is absolute and who is aware of everything and its consequences, allowed for wrong and injustice just as much as for goodness and beneficence; they are all part of His plan. He likewise allowed for the triumph of right over wrong in society and within the human heart that enables wrongdoing to be withstood and overcome, and for justice and righteousness to exist [1].

Indeed, had G-d allowed wrong and injustice to prevail so utterly that He would have come to despise humanity and this world, and to thus reject it outright, the world and its opportunities for possible excellence and justice would be undone. G-d would simply have destroyed it. And it would have been as if it had never been. That is, it would not simply be erased, if you will -- indeed all "record" of it would be destroyed, and it would never have been. Instead, the world goes on, and G-d's will is done.

2.

Fortunately, though, G-d will eventually interact with us on a whole other level. There will come a time when the world will have achieved perfection, as we'd indicated, when the entire order of things will be nothing like it is now. Wrong and injustice will simply not exist, the cruel need to injure will no longer sit deep in the human heart and soul, no one will either harm or be harmed.

The world will be wholly and eternally rectified, and ready for this other order of governance. Since wrong and injustice would have ended, there will no longer be a need for the pursuit of justice. Everything will be mercy-, love- and compassion-based. Whatever holiness and goodness that is hidden-away now in the darkness of our world will be manifest then when "G-d's Glory will be revealed" (Isaiah 40:5).

3.

The truth remains, though, that that's not the case now. And it has occurred to nearly all of us that perhaps the world should be destroyed (G-d forbid) as it stands now; that it doesn't deserve any of the great mercy G-d displays upon it now by allowing it to go on; that it should be judged honestly in light of its crimes, oppressions, and raw cruelties. Given the state of humanity and the ways of the world now, with so many "wild forest beasts" foraging about, as Ramchal terms them, perhaps that

opinion is right; perhaps G-d shouldn't continue to bestow His mercy on it by allowing it to go on in its cruel, cruel ways. But it does go on indeed, simply because G-d wills it to.

In a way, though, G-d has all-but willed away the world even now; for the goodness and mercy that G-d bestows by allowing the universe its existence is still and all a very slim, shrill and attenuated fraction of His true mercy and loving-kindness. Would that we could enjoy the full flow of G-d's tender mercies in our daily lives, and bask in His effulgent light. Instead, all we do is endure, though no one should take any of that for granted, to be sure. But the bare and thin kindness He allows the world, given its injustices and cruelties, is enough to allow for life as we know it and its own short-lived, cold breezes. And that's enough to forestall the return to the state of "formlessness and emptiness" we'd alluded to earlier.

Nonetheless, if we were to take a step back and catch sight of the various stages in which G-d has governed the universe in either a concealed or revealed manner we'd notice a distinct pattern, Ramchal points out. At bottom there are five stages in all, as we'll see, from beginning to end.

Notes:

[1] Much of what is enunciated in this and the previous chapter has been spoken of before, and more than once at that. See note 4 to 3:5 above for an encapsulation of much of it.

Ramchal's purpose in these chapters, though, is to dramatize the human experience in the course of all these Divine machinations. His essential point herein -- as it has been throughout this work -- is to assure us all that G-d has His reasons for what He does, there is a Divine plan behind everything, the good will be rewarded, evil will be undone, and G-d will reveal His presence in the end.

The truth be told, there are very few among us who don't need to hear that again and again, so it's our contention that while some readers might be put off by the repetition, a hungry inquisitive soul cannot help but delight in his "favorite dishes" being served again and again.

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.