

# DA'AT TEVUNOT - SECTION 5: CHAPTER 2

*by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman*

1. We humans are the one element of creation that has the potential for stupendous personal growth and greatness... as well as for clawing lowliness and degradation, the truth be told. As we're taught, "If you (humankind) are meritorious, the angels will say 'You come before everything else in creation!' If (on the other hand) you're ignoble, the angels will say '(Even) the mosquito comes before you!'" (Vayikra Rabbah 14:1). For, while wildlife and animals could never rebel against G-d and His values, humankind certainly can [1]. And conversely, we have the wherewithal to cling onto G-d's Presence and to be pious.

And our people have the greatest potential of the lot, thanks to our having been granted the Torah. But we also have the terrible potential to fall to the ground and debase ourselves, too. That's why the Jewish Nation has been likened to both "the stars of the sky" (Genesis 26:4) and "the dust of the earth" (Genesis 13:16), given that we have it within us to either soar heavenward or to fall to the ground (see Megilah 15a).

That's because like the rest of humanity, we too have been granted the highest promise, yet we have also been granted the catastrophic resources to lapse (as Adam and Eve did) -- but to eventually raise ourselves upwards and to assume our rightful high station.

2. If you'll recall, Ramchal had underscored a number of times that the goal par excellence that all of history and all of the movements of the heavens are set to achieve is the revelation of G-d's supreme sovereignty -- that supernal era when all wrong and injustice will be overturned to right and justice [2]. But that could obviously only come about with the introduction of wrong, and with its being overturned eventually.

Given that, Ramchal offers a profound insight here. As he words it, it's "the yetzer harah itself" that allows for wrongdoing, and it also -- ironically -- "allows for its own (eventual) rectification". After all, without it, we couldn't do wrong, and couldn't ultimately do right by undoing the wrong we'd have done with the proddings of the yetzer harah. And so it's the yetzer harah's own "(initial) ruination that will prove to be its (eventual) rectification", as Ramchal puts it, for the yetzer harah's ruinous makeup will have played a role in the great upsurge of goodness and holiness that will come about in the end.

3. That having been said it's nonetheless true that while essentially great, mankind is still and all like the moon that waxes and wanes, and needs the sun for its illumination. For we need to cling onto G-d's presence to shine and reach our full potential in much the same way.

There's just one last point for now regarding our people's spiritual sustenance, and that's the following. Ramchal assures us that G-d's beneficence is directed toward our people most especially; as we have been charged with G-d's own Torah and thus know how to draw close to Him through it. Thus a lot of that Divine beneficence is directed toward enabling us to cling onto Him indeed -- if we take advantage of the opportunity.

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*Notes:*

[1] See 1:8:3 (and note 6 there), 1:11 (and various notes there), and elsewhere in this work for lengthy discussions about the free will that enables us to make either choice.

See Klallim Rishonim 26-27 for the Kabbalistic references contained in this chapter; R' Goldblatt's notes 20, 22 as well as his note 77 on pp. 486-487 of his edition; and R' Shriki's notes 130 and 131 (the latter of which is most enlightening with reference to the subject discussed in the note below).

[2] See the first note to 1:5 above and elsewhere for discussions about G-d's sovereignty. The notion of all bad and evil being transformed to goodness in the end is a major theme in Ramchal's more esoteric writings to be sure, but it's only cited in Da'at Tevunot at this point (though see 3:6:1 above and elsewhere here for discussions of the undoing of wrong, which is a separate though an obviously related issue).

We won't delve into the profound notion of the transformation of wrong to right here simply because Ramchal doesn't, for one thing, but also because of the depth and breadth of its implications which raise a number of serious issues that wouldn't abide with just a few remarks.

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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.