

Daas Tevunos

1- Our obligation to understand Hashem's interaction with the world

1.1- The thirteen principles of faith

-It is a religious duty to believe that all 13 fundamentals of Emunah are true

-All 13 must also be understood and make sense to the best of our abilities

-The purpose of the *sefer* is to explore four of the thirteen

- Hashem's involvement in the world (השגחה)
- Reward and punishment (שכר ועונש)
- The coming of Moshiach (ביאת המשיח)
- Resurrection of the dead (תחיית המתים)

1.2- Challenge of understanding these four principles

-These four are at odds with what one observes in the world

- The world appears to not be under control ח"ו
- It is unclear what Hashem wants of his creations
- It is unclear where history is heading
- It is unclear what the ultimate intention is for creation

-This exploration will touch on very difficult subjects such as why the good suffer and the evil prosper

1.3- There are answers!

-Hashem runs the world with justice, hence we can find answers to these questions

-Nevertheless we will only be able to gain a general understanding of the principles, but not be able to apply it to specific instances

2- The purpose of creation

2.1- Reason for creation

- What we can understand with our limited tools

- Hashem is the absolute of good

- Hashem wanted to give of His goodness to another (חק הטוב להיטיב)

- Hashem wanted to do the highest form of good, ie. that the recipient earns it for himself without shame (נהמא דכיסופא)

- The method Hashem gave for us to earn this good is for a person to perfect himself and the world
- This is his work (זכותו)
- This in turn is also his reward, to enjoy the perfection he achieves forever after (שכרו)

2.2- What is perfection (שלמות)

- Perfection means being connected to Hashem (דביקות)
- Numerous psukim and teachings of chazal demonstrate this
- Also makes sense: Neshama is a “part of Hashem” (חלק אלוקה ממעל), greatest desire is to journey back to reconnect with Hashem
- We can’t really understand what this connection with Hashem will be like, only in general terms
- By elimination we can understand what the imperfection (חסרונות) are, ie. anything which distances us or disconnects us from Hashem

2.3- An imperfect world

- Hashem created us as imperfect beings in an imperfect world
- Hashem could have made a perfect world
- By definition Hashem *should have* made a perfect world, since he is perfect
- He “restrained Himself” and made it imperfect to give us the “job” to perfect ourselves and the world
- He also “restrained Himself” to create a world proportional to our needs rather than proportional to His capacity, which is infinite

2.4- The perfection we will experience is limited

- Hashem wants us ultimately to connect to and experience His perfection
- Even so we will only experience a certain aspect of His infinite perfection
- This experience will give us all the ecstasy of our reward, even though it is a drop in the ocean of His infinite perfection

3- Purpose of creation- Revelation of Hashem’s Oneness

3.1- Only aspect we can understand

- The history of the world juxtaposed with what is promised by the Neviim reveals a single message- Hashem’s Oneness
- This is the only aspect of Hashem that we can gain a clear understanding of
- (This is because Oneness has an extrinsic definition –What He isn’t rather than what He is)

- All other aspects of Hashem, such as His wisdom, power etc. are infinite
- Since they have intrinsic definitions (what He is), we cannot begin to grasp them
- Consequently, it is forbidden for us to delve into understanding them

3.2- Oneness can and must be understood

- Oneness is the single attribute of Hashem that we can gain a full understanding of
- It follows that we are obligated to know and fully integrate this knowledge without any doubts
- This is the essence of all *emunah*
- וידעת היום והשבות אל לבבך כי ה' הוא האלקים בשמים ממעל ועל הארץ מתחת אין עוד
- This is the function of the unfolding of all of history, as is described in Parshas Haazinu
- ראו עתה כי אני אני הוא
- This is the purpose of all of the promises of the special destiny of the Jewish people
- והיה ה' למלך על כל הארץ ביום ההוא יהיה ה' אחד ושמו אחד
- This is the function of all creation and the entire passage of history
- By understanding the concept of Oneness we can begin to understand the necessity and context of every detail that takes place in the world

3.3- A deeper look at the concept of Oneness

- Oneness seems like a simple concept- there is no other
- On a deeper level it means that there is no other power or controller, that there is no other force guiding the world except Him, that there is no obstruction or impediment to His will at all

3.4- Five corrupt ideologies

- This understanding counteracts various corrupt outlooks which exist among idolaters, ignorant people, other nations and rebellious Jews

1- **Classic Avodah Zarah**- Hashem retreated from the world and left it in the hands of “middle management”, the stars and celestial forces. Consequently the idolaters set up systems to worship these intermediaries. (**Middle management**)

2- **Satanism**- There are two equal forces which run the world, a force of good and a force of evil which are in constant tension. (**Two shopkeepers**)

3a- **Laws of nature**- Hashem left the world and it now runs according to natural laws. The strongest man succeeds- כחי ועוצם ידי. One's behavior has no effect or consequence. (**Shopkeeper is gone- Survival of the fittest**)

3b- **Predeterminism** - Hashem left the world and it now runs according to predetermined system or mazal. Everything is predefined, one's efforts or behavior have no effect.
(**Shopkeeper is gone- left a vending machine**)

4- **Christianity**- Hashem had no choice but to reject the Jewish people because of their sins, and had to choose another nation. (**Hashem's hands were tied**)

5- **Rebellion**- Rebellious people who think they can affect Hashem by channelling the forces He created against Him (**Hashem can be challenged**)

3.5- Elimination of these ideologies

- A correct understanding of Hashem's oneness eliminates all of these approaches

1- He alone supervises His creation with direct supervision, one cannot negotiate a special deal with the intermediaries

2- Not only are there no other force in the world, but he in fact created the forces of good and evil

3- Nothing happens in his world that is not his direct wish, nothing is natural, coincidental or predetermined

4- He made the rules, He can break the rules. He is able to forgive and is not bound by the actions of anyone

5- The forces He created cannot be used against Him. He made them and He can override them at will

3.6 Emunah and Emes

- In our present reality, we know this to be true through Emunah

-Ultimately this clarity will be demonstrated by the unfolding of history as described by the Neviim

- By understanding this ultimate plan, we can begin to understand the events unfolding in our world