



DA'AT TEBUNOT - RABBI MOSHE HAYYIM LUZZATTO

Rabbi Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto was born in Padua, Italy to wealthy parents in the early years of the eighteenth century. Just thirty years after the death of Baruch Spinoza and Shabbtai Zevi. The Jewish world into which he was born was still reeling from both the unsettling tides of the Enlightenment and the storms of a false messiah. The old structures were crumbling in the heights of the enlightenment and confusion regarding how to transition traditional beliefs and understandings into the new age was ever-present. Paradigms were shifting and Jewish thought was forced to shift with it. The 18th century was among the most volatile of the modern era; it was the century that saw the American and French revolutions, the Copernican revolution, Kantian philosophy, and technological upheavals like the steam engine. The scholarship in Torah during the late 17th century had been quite affected by the major breaches like those of Spinoza and Zevi in their own respects and great confusion about fundamental principles filled the Jewish world. Luzzatto was more than just a gifted poet and writer, he was a prodigy and excelled in his studies. Luzzatto sought to reconstruct and rejuvenate the fundamentals and principles of Jewish knowledge so that they would be more accessible to the Jewish world and bring clarity and enlightenment to the public.

In this excerpt from his book, *Da'at Tebunot*, written as a dialectic between the soul and intellect discussing the fundamentals of Judaism, Ramhal, as he is known, speaks of man's role in this world and the purpose of creating human beings.

(12) Said the **Intellect** - What needs to be clarified first, is the concept of the existence of Man and the service required if him, to know the ultimate goal of it all.

(13) Said the **Soul** - This is certainly a concept that requires much contemplation to understand all of its components clearly.

(14) Said the **Intellect** - The core foundation, upon which the entirety of the structure rests is that the Divine Will wished that a person should achieve wholeness for himself and all that was created for his sake, and that itself *should be his merit and reward*.

(יב) אמר **השכל** - אך מה שצריך לברר ראשונה, הוא ענין מציאות האדם והעבודה המוטלת עליו, לדעת מהו התכלית הנרצה בכל זאת:
(יג) אמרה **הנשמה** - זה ודאי ענין שמבקש עיני הרבה להבינו על בוריו בכל חלקיו:
(יד) אמר **השכל** - היסוד הראשון שעליו עומד כל הבנין הוא, שרצה הרצון העליון שיהיה האדם משלים את עצמו ואת כל הנברא בשבילו, וזה עצמו יהיה זכותו ושכרו. זכותו - לפי שנמצא שהוא מתעסק ויגע להשיג השלמות הזה, וכשישיגהו - יהיה נהנה רק מיגיע כפיו וחלקו מכל עמלו. שכרו



His merit - since he is involved and toiling to achieve this perfection, and when it is achieved - he will enjoy the fruit of his labour and his rightful portion from all of his work. **His reward**- at the end he shall be perfected, and he will enjoy its goodness forever.

(15) Said the **Soul** - This is a foundation that has many points, and I eagerly await hearing what you shall build upon this foundation, for then I will retroactively discern what is included in it. But I will first ask - Is there a reason why the Divine Will desired it to be so?

(16) Said the **Intellect** - The reason is simple, and it is dependent on the answer to a different question, that is, why did the creator wish to create [at all]?

(17) Said the **Soul** - Answer for the both of us, something that will answer both [questions]:

(18) Said the **Intellect** - What we can understand in this respect is that God is surely the ultimate Good. Of the definition of 'good' is to bestow good upon others, and that is what God desired, to create creatures so that He may make good for them, for if there is no recipient of the good, there is no bestowment of good. However, in order for His bestowment of good to be absolute, He knew in His divine wisdom that the recipients should receive it as a result of their own exertion, because then they will be masters of that 'good', and there will be no carryover of embarrassment when they receive the 'good', like someone who receives charity from another. And concerning this they said (Jerusalem Talmud, Orlah, chapter 1, law 3) "someone who eats of another is embarrassed to look him in the face":

(19) Said the **Soul** - The reason sits well with me.

- שהרי סוף סוף הוא יהיה המושלם, ויהיה מתענג בטובה לנצח נצחים:
(טו) אמרה הנשמה - זה יסוד שכולל פינות רבות, והנני ממתנת לשמוע מה תבנה על היסוד הזה, שאז אבחין למפרע מה נכלל ביסוד הזה. אך דבר אחד אשאל תחלה בכלל, היש טעם למה רצה הרצון העליון בדבר הזה?:
(טז) אמר השכל - הטעם פשוט, והוא תלוי בתשובת שאלה אחרת, שהיא, למה רצה הבורא ב"ה לברוא נבראים?:
(יז) אמרה הנשמה - תשיב אתה לך ולי מלתא דשויא לתרווייהו:
(יח) אמר השכל - מה שנוכל להשיג בענין זה הוא, כי האל ית"ש הוא תכלית הטוב ודאי. ואמנם, מחק הטוב הוא להטיב, וזה הוא מה שרצה הוא ית"ש - לברוא נבראים כדי שיוכל להטיב להם, כי אם אין מקבל הטוב אין הטבה. ואמנם, כדי שתהיה ההטבה הטבה שלמה, ידע בחכמתו הנשגבה שראוי שיהיו המקבלים אותה מקבלים אותה ביגיע כפם, כי אז יהיו הם בעלי הטוב ההוא, ולא ישאר להם בושת פנים בקבלם הטוב, כמי שמקבל צדקה מאחר. ועל זה אמרו (ירושלמי ערלה פרק א, הלכה ג), "מאן דאכיל דלאו דיליה בהית לאסתכולי באפיה":
(יט) אמרה הנשמה - הטעם מתישב בלבי. עתה השלם דבריך:

Questions to consider:

1. Does the reasoning of the Intellect resonate with you? Are there issues with his reasoning?
2. Could there truly be a 'purpose' to Creation if God is not controlled by will?
3. Does this answer align with what you have come to know of Torah principles?