

CHAPTER 4:6 MAN'S STANDING IN THIS WORLD, AND THE SPECIFIC WAYS AVAILABLE TO HIM

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Derech Hashem -- The Way of G-d 1:4:6

"The root of Divine service" Ramchal declares here ¹, "lies in your constantly engaging yourself with your Creator ² and comprehending that you were created to attach yourself onto G-d ³, and were placed in this world ⁴ to prevail over your *yetzer harah* ⁵, subjugate yourself to G-d ⁶ through reason ⁷, overturn your physical cravings and inclinations ⁸, and to apply all your activities to this end ⁹ without ever wavering from it ¹⁰."

Notes:

¹ Though it hadn't been our practice to do this till now, we're about to present a literal translation of the entire paragraph, since it serves as a singularly vivid and pithy statement of the meaning of life.

In fact, a faithful student of truth and wisdom would do well to safeguard this paragraph for him or herself, and to set it aside in a cozy spot close to the heart. For what we're about to read is a gift outright -- a veritable recounting of the realizations the soul had before entering the world. If you find yourself somehow *not* taken by what's stated here, then you'd do well to reconsider your vision of the ideal life and wait another five years before re-reading it. (I myself have read it again and again for decades now and have always been bedazzled by the brush with ultimate truth that it is.)

To put it into context recall that this statement is offered on the heels of our discussion about our inner and outer conflicts, about the great sway physicality holds over us, about the challenges presented us by that situation as well as the great spiritual victory it allows for, and about the great remedy for all that which is the mitzvah-system. And recall too that it sits in the midst of the chapter that focuses upon "Human Responsibility".

We'll try to explain each phrase as we come to it as succinctly as possible. As such, this first phrase "The root of Divine service" means to express the idea that what life is, all in all, is service to G-d rather than to self.

Ramchal raised the idea of dedicating what you do to the service of G-d in a number of places, including 1:4:7, 9, 2:2:1, 4:9:2 below; *Messilat Yesharim*, in the introduction and in Ch. 1 and Ch. 19;

Derech Chochma; and in *Sefer Kinat Hashem Tzivaot*. Also see *Berachot* 63a and Rambam's *Shemoneh Perakim*, Ch. 5.

² That Divine service "lies in your constantly engaging yourself with your Creator", for unbeknownst to most, we're to foster an intimacy with G-d that's rooted in catching sight of Him and hearing out what He says all the time.

³ For "you were created to attach yourself onto G-d" at bottom -- nothing else. Everything else we do is either ancillary or disruptive, and every other attachment we have is non-adhesive in the end and piteous in comparison.

⁴ And you "were placed in this world" specifically, where things are meant to get done and where goals are meant to be met.

⁵ So as "to prevail over your *yetzer harah*" which is to say, to set self in hand, overcome all extraneous indulgences and charge ahead despite all other promptings.

⁶ And to then "subjugate yourself to G-d" rather than to glitz.

⁷ "Through reason" rather than through whim.

⁸ To "overturn your physical cravings and inclinations" in your quest for closeness to G-d to cravings for and inclinations toward Him instead.

⁹ To "apply all your activities to this end" alone, as this is your supreme mission after all.

¹⁰ And you're to do that "without ever wavering from it" for a goal is a goal, and alacrity and dedication alone is what leads us to it.

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.