

CHAPTER 1:6 THE CREATOR

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

1:1:6

We'll end off our foray into the nature and make-up of G-d here and then venture into less utterly transcendent though lofty spiritual realms, including the nature of our own beings; the meaning of our lives; what G-d expects of us; and how our righteousness or wrongfulness affects us personally as well as the entire world, the Jewish year, the Jewish day, and so much more.

Ramchal offers one last insight into G-d's being here and then sums up the entire chapter by encapsulating the six facts about G-d that we'd do well to dwell on and take to heart if we're ever going to understand this world and His ways in it.

His last point is that it's likewise important to know that there's only one G-d. This isn't simply the idea that there's only one Creator and L-rd of the universe, which most people of faith accept as true. His position is that G-d is *necessarily* that by dint of the following fact.

Everything in this universe is a product of a more comprehensive phenomenon, rule, or being that explains it, overrides it, and allows it to exist ¹. As such, G-d Almighty is the one overriding and comprehensive Being behind the existence of the universe without Whom nothing could exist or be explicable.

So while Ramchal had already shown that G-d's existence "depends on nothing else" and that He exists "of His own volition" ², his point here is that G-d is unique in that ³, and that "everything else depends on Him" for its existence and all else, and "cannot exist on its own" ⁴.

Thus the six facts about G-d we'd need to recall are that He exists (1:1:1), He's "whole" (1:1:2), His existence is imperative (1:1:3), He's utterly Self-sufficient (1:1:4), He's "simple" (1:1:5), and, as we just saw, that there's only one of Him ⁵.

Notes:

¹ An abstract example would be the fact that the unrelated numbers 907 and 6,322 (to pick any two at random) are both a product of the fact that there's a linear number system, without which they wouldn't make sense or exist. And a concrete example would be the fact that all parts of a painting are a product of the entire painting, and only exist because the painting itself does. This principle

also explains all laws of nature, of physics, etc.

² See 1:1:4 and 4:4:1.

³ There's another way that G-d is unique. He alone determines what will happen in the end. See 4:4:1; *Klach Pitchei Chochma* 1 (in Ramchal's own commentary there); and *Da'at Tevunot* 36. While this is a very important point and is central to Ramchal's thinking, he nonetheless didn't expand upon it in "The Way of G-d".

Some would suggest that Ramchal is indicating another unique aspect of G-d: that only He exists and nothing else has autonomous existence. While this idea (referred to as "Panentheism" -- not Pantheism which is a wholly other idea and heretical) is cited in a number of illustrious works of Jewish Mysticism (see *Sefer Tanya* 1:48 and all of the second section there; *Nephesh HaChaim* 3:2-8; *Pitchei Sha'arim*, *Netiv HaTzimtzum* 6; etc.), and while it's erroneously recorded as the gist of 1:1:6 in all Feldheim editions of "The Way of G-d" in their sidebar, Ramchal never spoke of this idea.

There's one way, though, that one might legitimately claim that this is Ramchal's intention here. There's another version of the line which we've translated as "everything else depends on Him" and "cannot exist on its own". Using that alternative text, R' Aryeh Kaplan translated the phrase to read "all other things ... *partake of Him* and do not have *intrinsic existence*". While that's an elegant way of expressing Panentheism, still-and-all no other version of the text of "The Way of G-d" (including R' Y. Spinner's, which is based on the original manuscript, and doesn't even cite R' Kaplan's version as an alternative reading) uses this alternative text.

⁴ See *Ma'amar HaChochma* as well as *Yesodei HaTorah* 1:4.

⁵ A final point. *The Way of G-d* is set out like a tree. It starts with a seed, sets out roots, and extends upward and outward. The "seed" has been this chapter, which discusses G-d's make-up. All that follows is an offshoot of it. So, always keep this chapter in mind and dwell on it often. For without it -- without G-d and what we know of Him -- nothing else makes sense.

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.