

CHAPTER 2:2 THE PURPOSE OF CREATION

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

1:2:2

We come upon a most astounding fact of Divine intent and human purpose here. Ramchal declares that it was G-d's intent that the recipients of His goodness -- that we -- be *personally responsible* for His benevolence rather than just passive recipients of it!

That's to say, we're to earn it rather than inherit it or "get it in the mail" so to speak -- to be proactive in our growth and ascent, initiators of our own spiritual well-being, and we're to use our freely made decisions to do good things in order to earn G-d's favor ¹. Otherwise, Ramchal adds, G-d's goodness would be flawed on some level, when we learned that G-d wanted to grant us perfect goodness ².

He then goes on to point out that by indeed making use of our free will and playing an active role in our own growth, we thus achieve *something* of G-d's perfection, and become closer to Him accordingly.

That is, we ourselves thus become free agents like Him. Now, there's a whole order of difference between our free will and His, to be sure. Ours had to be implanted in us by G-d, while His is inherent. And we're only free to make ethical and mitzvah-based choices (i.e., we can't decide to fly for example, or disappear, etc.) which does indeed have a profound effect upon the course of things here and beyond, but it nonetheless doesn't compare to G-d's absolute freedom of choice.

Nonetheless the fact that only we humans and G-d are free agents -- while angels, animals, vegetables, minerals, etc. are not -- points to a unique kinship between G-d and ourselves. And it enables us to be holy and righteous, and to derive credit for having made the right choices.

G-d thus created a system of achieving either perfection or settling for flaws (by doing right or wrong things) ³; a being who'd be able to choose either option (i.e., ourselves); and a system to achieve perfection or accrue flaws (i.e., the mitzvah system thanks to which we achieve a degree of perfection by following through on the positive mitzvot or we accrue flaws by engaging in prohibitions). And He thus granted us the means to be free agents and thus emulate Him to a degree, and to attach onto His presence and fully enjoy His benevolence.

Notes:

¹ See Ramchal's *Da'at Tevunot* 18, *Klallei Pitchei Chochma v'Da'at* 1, *Kinat Hashem Tziva'ot*, *Klach*

Pitchei Chochma 4, and *Adir Bamarom* p. 393. Also see *Emunot v'De'ot* (introduction to Ch. 3); *Zohar* 2, 163b; *Pardes* 2:5:3, and Ari's *Likutei Torah, Ha'azinu*, p. 28.

Our free will is to be discussed again in 1:2:4 and in some depth is the 3rd chapter of this section.

² See 1:2:1 for G-d's utter and perfect benevolence.

But, why would G-d's benevolence be less-than-perfect if we weren't free agents? While Ramchal doesn't explain it here, he does in some of the other works cited in note 1. He says that if we were granted out-and-out charity we'd experience what's termed "the bread of shame" (based on the statement in T.J. *Orlah* 1:3 that "One who eats something that isn't his own i.e. that he himself didn't earn is ashamed to look in his benefactor's face"; also see *Tosephot* on *Kiddushin* 36b, *Ritvah* on Rosh Hashanah 9b, and R' Yoseph Karo's *Magid Maisharim, Breishit, 14 Tevet*).

The point is that we're to proudly and justifiably earn our reward rather than receive it shamefacedly as charity. Otherwise G-d's generosity would be malevolent to a degree rather than wholly benevolent.

Ramchal defines "shame" in *Adir Bamarom* p. 252 as the experience of perceiving something as either being above oneself or beneath him: see his remarks there.

³ This begins to explain why there's wrong and injustice in the world. The subject of wrong comes up in very many places in Ramchal's writings including but certainly not limited to *Klach Pitchei Chochma* 30, 33, 37, 44, 45, 47, 53, 63, 83, and 108; *Da'at Tevunot* 96-133; and below in 1:2:5, 1:3:6, 1:5:7-9, 3:2:8, 4:1:3, 4:4:1,9, and 4:9:1.

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