

THE PATH OF THE JUST - CHAPTER 1:4

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

"The point is this," Ramchal puts it quite succinctly: "We were not created for our situation here in this world" as we tend to think, "but rather for that in the World to Come." For at bottom "our situation here", in this world, is merely "the means to attain the one due us in the World to Come", which is actually "our goal."

He then cites several statements from our sages in fact that "liken this world to a place and time of preparation, and the next world to one of rest and the ingesting of the already-prepared" as he puts it.

We're told for example that "this world is like a vestibule to the World to Come ..." and that we're to thus "prepare (ourselves) in the 'vestibule' to be able to enter the Banquet Hall" that is the World to Come, our ultimate goal (Pirkei Avot 4:16). It's said that "today", this world, was created, "to do them (the mitzvot) and tomorrow" that is, the World to Come, was created "to receive the reward for them" (Eruvin 22a). It's taught that only "one who struggles on the Eve of the Shabbat", that is, in this world, "will 'eat' on Shabbat", i.e., will delight in the World to Come (Avodah Zara 3a). And it's said that "this world is like the shoreline" that the traveler sets out from "and the World to Come is like the sea" which is his aim (Kohelet Rabbah 1).

Now, some might argue otherwise and say that we were indeed created for our situation in this world, however short-lived it is, but Ramchal disagrees. How could anyone ever think that -- after all, "what is our life here in this world? For who is truly happy or tranquil in this world?" he points out. "We suffer from all sorts of woes, illnesses, pains and inconveniences" in this life, and "after all that (all there is, is) death", or so it seems to those who'd think we were created for this world alone. And not only is that so, but it's likewise true that "not one in a thousand finds that the world fills him with true contentment or peace-of-mind. For even if that rare individual were to live to one-hundred, he would nonetheless eventually be taken away from the world", and find himself back at step one -- utter annihilation and apparent purposelessness.

So we were clearly created for our situation in the World to Come.

Ramchal then offers a tantalizing piece of evidence. "If in fact the purpose of our life was to meet the needs of this world, then it wouldn't have been necessary for G-d to have breathed into us a soul as exalted and distinguished" as the one we have, which is "greater than the angels themselves" he reveals (see Adir Bamarom pp. 261-262). Understand of course that the "soul" spoken of here isn't the

life-force that all animate beings have, but rather our immortal numinous spirits (see Derech Hashem 3:1).

"Nor would G-d have placed within us a soul which finds no gratification in the things of this world" if our goal was this world alone, he continues. For the sages likened our circumstances here to that of "a city-dweller who married a princess and who, though he may bring her the best in the world, could never impress her for, after all, she is a princess" (Kohelet Rabbah 6:7). For even if you were to supply the soul "with all of the pleasures of the world, it would be unfazed by them" Ramchal says since "it's one of the celestials", and thus it knows the delights of the World to Come that are so much greater than those of this world (see Da'at Tevunot 70).

Hence it follows that "the sole purpose of our creation was to be our situation in the World to Come." And that we were granted the lofty soul we have because it alone "is fitting for the Divine service by means of which we can accrue (so exalted) a reward" (see Da'at Tevunot 71 and Derech Hashem 1:3; also see Adir Bamarom pp. 122-123 and Igrot Pitchei Chochma v'Da'at for more on the complex and absorbing connection between body and soul).

Text Copyright © 2007 by [Rabbi Yaakov Feldman](#) and **Torah.org**