

## Lesson 1.2 – The Purpose of Creation

**1.2.1 – The Goodness of Creation** – The first chapter introduced us to the idea of the “unknowable God” who preexisted Creation as we know it, in a perfectly Divine and unchanging realm, void of any finite concepts such as time and space.

As we mentioned, Ramchal began with the subject of the God the Creator, as this was the most “general” topic in his scheme of learning “from the top down.” All else follows from this point and will have some association with Creation, just as all the commandments given from God proceeded from the first, the “introduction of God” as Sovereign of the universe, as mentioned in lesson 1.1.

Ramchal begins this chapter with the declaration that Creation had a purpose, and that purpose was so that God could bestow His goodness/perfection to something “other than Himself.” This is another “general” fundamental principal to understanding God and Creation, and must be understood as such.

By examining the Creation account in Genesis, Chapter 1, we see a two-part process; a) God creates something, and b) God examines what He created and sees that it is “good” (Hebrew: “Tov”).

The verses from Genesis, chapter 1 are as follows:

**1:4** - And God saw the light, that it was **good**

**1:10** - And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was **good**.

**1:12** - And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was **good**.

**1:17,18** - God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was **good**.

**1:21** - So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was **good**

**1:25** - And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was **good**.

**1:31** - Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was **very good**. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

God calls creation “good”, but good compared to what? As Ramchal states, *“Other things may be said to have perfection [goodness], but it is only relative to something less perfect.”*

This correlates to another principle stated in 1.2.2 – *“God therefore decreed and arranged that creation contain elements of both perfection and deficiency...”* Therefore, we see that the goodness of creation (before the “fall of mankind”) is perfectly balanced with “deficiency”.

**Only God Is Good** – Ramchal makes it a point to emphasize, that although God’s “intent” is to bestow His true perfection upon Creation, only God Himself is truly good. Yeshua made this clear, emphasizing that God is One (i.e., the declaration of the “Shema,” found in Deuteronomy 6:4), and that God alone is good:

**Matthew 19:17a** – *So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God."*

### **Emulating God to Attain Goodness/Perfection**

Ramchal next mentions a spiritual principle that will be developed further into the study. The “closer” one is (becomes) to God, the more they can “partake” of God’s goodness/perfection and therefore themselves be considered as such. As stated in Deuteronomy, “...that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days...”<sup>1</sup>

Although Ramchal does not get around to specifically mentioning “man” as the subject in this context (until the last paragraph of this chapter), we know that only man has this ability, which is in fact his purpose in life.

This is exactly as was instructed by Yeshua:

**Matthew 5:48** – *Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*

Ramchal states in another of his works that this perfection that man is to strive for may be understood through both Scripture and reason. (This is a similar argument to Paul’s used in Romans 1):

***The perfection I speak of is implicit in Scripture and in reason. It is: being joined to the holiness of the Blessed One, and enjoying the apprehension of His glory without hindrance, barrier, or impediment. In Scripture (Isaiah 58:14): "You will then regale in the Lord...", (Psalms 140:14): "The just will sit before Your countenance...", and many, many others in a similar vein. The Prophets and Hagiographa are replete with these for all to see. "Consult the Book of the Lord and read." And in the words of our sages of blessed memory (Berachoth 17a): "In the World to Come there is neither eating nor drinking ... but the righteous sit with their crowns on their heads and bask in the splendor of the Divine Presence." In reason: The soul is nothing other than a portion of the Lord on high. Being so, its only desire is to return and cleave to its source and apprehend it, just as it is the nature of any generated object to aspire to its source. And the soul has no rest until it has achieved this union. But, as to the exact nature of this attachment and this union, we are powerless to understand this as long as we are in the midst of imperfection. But this very fact permits us to discriminate our imperfections. For just as we understand that perfection is this union, so we understand that imperfection is any removal from it and any barrier that comes between ourselves and the Blessed One which keeps us from uniting with Him as we could in its absence. And this is the defect that we must strive to rid ourselves of in order to attain the aforementioned perfection.***<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 30:20

<sup>2</sup> From *Da'ath Tevunoth* (The Knowing Heart), Rabbi Moshe Chayim Luzzatto

"How" man is to strive, for this perfection will be discussed in great detail further in this study. For now however, we will point to the second half of the verse cited earlier:

**Matthew 19:17b** - ... *but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

### **Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil**

Ramchal further states, "*The purpose of all that was created was therefore to bring into existence a creature who could derive pleasure from God's own good...*"

Adam and Eve did not know *either* good or evil, *as we now do*, before eating of the tree. Evil was not created at the "fall" of man, but as we stated earlier, deficiency (i.e., evil) was inherent at the foundation of creation (remember it is the tree of the knowledge of good **AND evil**).

It is for this reason that the work of the Messiah is accomplished at the beginning of creation as is stated in Hebrews "...*although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.*"<sup>3</sup> Thus Yeshua is presented in Revelation as the, "...*Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*"<sup>4</sup>

The inherent deficiency in creation and its remedy are alluded to in the Talmud:

*"Seven things were created before the world was created, and these are they: The Torah, repentance, the Garden of Eden, Gehenna, the Throne of Glory, the Temple, and the name of the Messiah."*<sup>5</sup>

When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree, Scripture says, "*Then the eyes of both of them were opened...*"<sup>6</sup> Opened to what?

Before Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree, there was a perfect balance of "good" and "evil", there was no distinction between the two. At the moment they partake of the fruit of the tree, "...*they knew that they were naked...*"<sup>7</sup> That is, they saw the deficiency in creation, they saw "evil" apart from "good."

As stated in the Zohar:

"AND THE EYES OF BOTH OF THEM WERE OPENED. Rabbi Hiya says, their eyes were opened to the evil of the world"<sup>8</sup>

This of course causes us to consider the idea that the "fall of man" was "built into" God's plan. This is not simply saying that "God knew it would happen," but rather that it was a necessary and "planned" event (by God), in order for man to become what God wanted man to become.

**1.2.2** – Ramchal states that, "*God's perfect wisdom, however, decreed that for such good to be perfect, the one enjoying it must be its master.*" As will be discussed in detail later on, to "master good" one must also "master evil." To better understand this concept, we turn to Scripture.

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<sup>3</sup> Hebrew 4:3

<sup>4</sup> Revelation 13:8

<sup>5</sup> Talmud - Mas. Pesachim 54a

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 3:7

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 3:7

<sup>8</sup> Soncino Zohar, Bereshith, Section 1, Page 36b

Again, we find an elaboration of this idea in another of Ramchal's works:

*In His sublime wisdom, however, He knew that for this good to be complete it should be received as the fruits of one's labor. For then the recipient would feel himself the proprietor of that good and would not be shamefaced in receiving it, as if he were receiving charity. As it is said: "One who does not eat of his own is ashamed to look at his benefactor" (Yerushalmi, Orla 1:3). ...*

*... That the Holy One Blessed be He, could certainly have created man and the entire creation completely perfect. What is more, this is what He would have been expected to do; for inasmuch as He is the quintessence of perfection, it is only natural that His acts be perfect in themselves. But since His wisdom decreed that man be allowed to perfect himself, He created him imperfect, constraining, as it were, His own perfection and His exceeding goodness from manifesting themselves in full measure vis a vis these creations. Instead, He shaped them in that format which would further the end desired by His exalted wisdom ... And every particular limitation that we note in His creatures reflects not the extent of His ability, God forbid, but what His will decreed ... This is the principle: The Blessed Lord, as it were, circumscribed Himself. That is, He circumscribed His ability in fashioning His creatures, so that they were formed not in accordance with His powers but in accordance with His desired end.<sup>9</sup>*

One of the first people given this insight, was someone who truly needed it, Cain, the son of Adam and Chavah (Eve):

**Genesis 4:7** – *If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.*

The idea of us mastering evil and good, is reiterated in the first of John's letters in the New Testament. As mentioned, the ideas of good and evil (and thus mastering them) are linked to God's commandments (His Torah) which in the New Testament is often called "the Law," and its abrogation called "lawlessness."

John emphasizes our task in mastering evil and good. He defines the "righteous person" not simply as someone who "believes" a certain way, but as one who "practices righteousness" (i.e., becomes a hearer and a doer of Torah).

**I John 3:4-9** – *Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.*

We see the idea of perfecting ourselves reflected in Paul's writings as well:

**Romans 6:12-13** – *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*

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<sup>9</sup> From *Da'ath Tevunoth* (The Knowing Heart), Rabbi Moshe Chayim Luzzatto

In the same letter, Paul reminds his audience that those who are "of the Spirit" (Hebrew: "Ruach") are "subject to the law of God" (to perfect ourselves by walking according to Torah as Yeshua Himself walked, i.e., 1 John 2:3-6):

**Romans 8:5** – *For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

Paul's letter to the Philippians contains one of his more emphatic statements on how we are to live, making a point to state that we are by no means perfect upon "making a decision" to follow Messiah (i.e., to follow Torah as He taught). Paul explains that we are on a path to "walk" a certain way (Hebrew: our "Halakha"), humbly trusting in God that we will be "saved," and encouraging his audience to follow his personal example. (Compare this to John's statement of the "righteous person practicing righteousness," in 1 John 3:4-9 (above), as well as the entirety of "James" [Jacob's!] letter in the New Testament.):

**Philippians 3:10-21** - *That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Messiah Yeshua has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Messiah Yeshua. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Messiah: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame--who set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*

Ramchal states, *"He must be the one who has earned it for himself, and not given it accidentally [or by chance]."*

This idea is also drawn from the Creation account. Here we are told, that after the "fall", man was dispatched by God, to live in a physical world, where he would be able to know and choose between good and evil, and working toward re-conforming himself to the image of God in which he was formed:

**Genesis 3:22** – *Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" -- therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life."*

Regarding man's spiritual work, Ramchal adds, "*By clinging to the elements of perfection, this unique creature would make itself resemble the Creator...*"

This concept is also mentioned in John's epistle, where we are told to make ourselves pure, as "we will be like Him":

**I John 3:2-3** – *Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

**1.2.3** – In this paragraph, Ramchal further discusses the idea of us working on "being perfect" as God is. He says, "*Therefore, even though the Root of perfection cannot be attained, all true perfection is ultimately derived and transmitted from this Root.*"

The New Testament points us to Yeshua the Messiah as being the most perfected of beings, and as such is our example to follow. (Note the idea of Messiah being such an example is consistent with Orthodox Judaism. The argument is simply over whom the Messiah is.)

Yeshua taught this of Himself. Note the similar use of a plant as metaphor as compared to the language used by Ramchal. God is the Root in Ramchal's analogy, He is the vinedresser in Yeshua's. Yeshua is a vine coming from that Root/Vinedresser. We are the branches. Our work in avoiding deficiency and striving for perfection is our fruit. His Words (Torah) are our guide to accomplishing this:

**John 15:1-8** – *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.*

Paul reaffirms Yeshua as being our earthly example:

**Romans 8:29** – *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

Ramchal comments on the "*unique creature which stands balanced between the elements of perfection and the elements of deficiency, which in turn are the result of God's illumination or concealment.*" (This creature being man, as he soon states clearly.)

Man's work is thus at the same time twofold. He is to avoid deficiency and he is to seek perfection. As we will explore later on, the 613 commandments of the Torah are considered as divided into 365 "negative" commandments and 248 "positive" commands. The former point man away from deficiency, the latter toward perfection. (See Sidebar on Positive and Negative Commandments.)

Ramchal further states, "*The more elements of perfection (i.e., Torah) this creature (man) incorporates into itself, the stronger will be his association and bond to God.*"

The above statement addresses the concerns of gentile followers of Yeshua, who may wonder why they should take on more of the commands of the Torah. (i.e., "Do I HAVE to do those things?") God gave these commands for the purpose stated above by Ramchal. (Although we may not initially understand "how this works.") This subject will be further addressed later in this study.

**1.2.4** – Ramchal states, *"God therefore decreed and arranged that creation contain elements of both perfection and deficiency, as well as a creature with equal access to both."* (See sidebar on the "Four Worlds.")

Turning to Genesis we see:

**Genesis 2:9** - *And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

**Genesis 2:16** - *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

Only with the onset of Creation does deficiency (i.e., "evil") appear. Evil did not exist prior to Creation, as there was no aspect of differentiation as only God existed. As such, there was no "concealment of His illumination" as Ramchal defines as *"elements of deficiency."*

This also brings us to another point. As Creation contains both elements of perfection and deficiency, the Torah given at Sinai was given for man to deal with life in this world – to avoid sin ("deficiency"), and to draw closer to God (perfect himself).

*"See, I have set before you today life and **good**, death and **evil**, in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply..."<sup>10</sup>*

*"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and **death**, blessing and cursing; therefore choose **life**, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days..."<sup>11</sup>*

**1.2.5** – Finally (!) Ramchal gets around to saying what we've been waiting for, *"This primary, essential creature is man."*

Again, we turn to the Creation account, where God establishes man alone in this role:

**Genesis 1: 26** - *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

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<sup>10</sup> Deuteronomy 30:15-16

<sup>11</sup> Deuteronomy 30:19-20