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בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר הוּא עֹמֵל כָּל יְמֵי חַיָּוָיו.⁴
 והנה מה שהורונו חכמינו זכרונם לברכה הוא, שהאדם לא נברא
 אלא להתענג על ה' ולהנות מזיו שכינתו, שזהו התענוג האמתי והעדון
 הגדול מכל העדונים שיוכלים להמצא. ומקום העדון הזה באמת הוא
 העולם הבא, כי הוא הנברא בהכנה המצטרפת לדבר הזה.⁵
 אך הדרך כדי להגיע אל מחוז חפצנו זה, הוא זה העולם. והוא מה
 שאמרו זכרונם לברכה (אבות ד, טו): העולם הזה דומה לפרודור בפני

בְּכֹל toward what goal he should direct his outlook and his ambition — in everything that he strives for during all the days of his life.^[4]

The analysis of a person's obligations and goals begins by discussing man's ultimate purpose in creation:

Now, what our Sages, of blessed memory, have taught us is — שהאדם לא נברא אלא להתענג על ה' — and to benefit from the radiance of His *Shechinah* (Divine Presence), שזהו התענוג והעדון הגדול מכל העדונים שיוכלים — for this is the true delight, — and the greatest pleasure of all pleasures that can possibly exist. — ומקום העדון הזה באמת הוא העולם הבא — כי הוא הנברא בהכנה המצטרפת לדבר הזה — for that is the world that was created with the design necessary for this purpose.^[5]

Although man's ultimate purpose is fulfilled *not* in this world, but rather in the World to Come, nevertheless, life in this world is necessary for the attainment of man's goal:

But the path that we must traverse to reach this desired destination of ours — הוא זה העולם — And this is the meaning of what [the Sages], of blessed memory, have said (*Avos* 4:16): העולם הזה דומה לפרודור בפני

4. Man is by nature a constantly striving creature. When one formulates clear goals, he will strive harder to achieve them; a person exerts effort in proportion to his personal ambition. Also, if one is focused on a goal, he will not be distracted by trivial interruptions; but if unfocused, he will flit from task to task without direction. It is therefore incumbent upon a person to clarify his ultimate goal so that he will exert himself to achieve it. This will give direction to everything that he works at, every

day of his life (*Michtav MeEliyahu* *ibid.*).

5. The pleasures of this world pale in comparison to the true pleasure of delighting in the radiance of the *Shechinah* that awaits a person in the World to Come (*Olam Haba*). As the Gemara states (*Berachos* 17a): [*In*] *Olam Haba* ... the righteous sit with crowns on their heads, and delight in the radiance of the *Shechinah*. *Olam Haba* is a spiritual realm, for only in such a realm can man have the ultimate pleasure from the radiance of the *Shechinah*.

העולם הבא.⁶ והאמצעים המגיעים את האדם לתכלית הזה הם המצוות אשר צננו עליהן האל יתברך שמו. ומקום עשיית המצוות הוא רק העולם הזה.⁷ על כן הושם האדם בזה העולם בתחלה כדי ששעל ידי האמצעים האלה המודמנים לו כאן יוכל להגיע אל המקום אשר הוכן לו, שהוא העולם הבא, לרוות שם בטוב אשר קנה לו על ידי אמצעים אלה.⁸ והוא מה שאמרו זכרונם לברכה (ערוכות כב, א): היום לעשותם ומחר לקבל שכרם.

This world is similar to a vestibule before the World to Come. Thus, man's ultimate goal lies beyond this world, but he can reach the World to Come only by passing through this world.^[6] והאמצעים המגיעים את האדם הם — Now, the means that enable a person to reach this goal — are the mitzvos that God, blessed be His Name, commanded us [to fulfill], ומקום עשיית המצוות הוא רק העולם על — and the place for performing the mitzvos is only in this world.^[7] על — Therefore, man was placed in this world first, — כדי ששעל ידי האמצעים האלה המודמנים לו כאן, — so that through these means, which are available to him here, — he can reach the place that has been prepared for him, — which is the World to Come, — the place that has been prepared for him, — which is the World to Come, — there to be sated by enjoying the good that he earned for himself through these means, i.e., his performance of the mitzvos.^[8] והוא — This is what [the Sages], of blessed memory, meant when they said (*Eruvin* 22a) regarding the verse (*Devarim* 7:11): *You shall observe the commandment ... that I command you today to do them: Today* — in this world — is the time *to do them* [the mitzvos]; — and tomorrow — in the World to Come — is the time to receive reward for fulfilling them. It thus emerges that man's obligation in this world is to fulfill the mitzvos. And the goal toward which he should strive

6. A vestibule is obviously not a destination unto itself, but merely a passageway to a true destination; while in the vestibule one prepares for his entry into the reception room beyond. Similarly, this world is not the place of one's ultimate purpose, but rather the path that leads to *Olam Haba* and the place in which to prepare for it. As the Mishnah concludes: "Ready yourself in the vestibule, so that you may enter the reception room" (*Rambam and Rabbeinu Yonah ad loc.*).

7. The design of this world is such that it provides innumerable opportunities for mitzvos as well as challenges to their performance.

8. Performance of the mitzvos, which is possible only in this physical world, generates one's reward in *Olam Haba* and is, in a simple sense, the "currency" that enables him to enter and enjoy that world. In the ensuing paragraphs, *Ramchal* will provide a deeper understanding of the purpose of mitzvos and of man's mission in this world.

וּכְשֶׁתִּסְתַּכַּל עוֹד בְּדַבֵּר תִּרְאֶה כִּי הַשְּׁלֵמוֹת הָאֲמִתִּי הוּא רַק הַדְּבָקוֹת
 בּוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ,⁹ וְהוּא מֵה שֶׁהָיָה דוֹר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֹמֵר (תהלים עג, כח): "וַיֵּאֲנִי
 קְרִיבָה אֲלֵיכֶם לִי טוֹב"¹⁰. וְאֹמֵר (שם כז, ד): "אֶחָת שְׂאֵלְתִי מֵאֵת ה'
 אוֹתָהּ אֲבַקֵּשׁ שְׁבֵתִי בְּבֵית ה' כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֵּי וְגו' "¹¹, כִּי רַק זֶה הוּא הַטּוֹב.

in everything he does is to achieve the eternal delight of the World to Come.*

This is the basic explanation of man's purpose in the world. There is, however, a deeper understanding of the matter:

וּכְשֶׁתִּסְתַּכַּל עוֹד בְּדַבֵּר תִּרְאֶה — When you examine the matter further, you will see — *כי השלמות האמתית* — that true perfection — which is the ultimate good — *הוא רק הדבקות בו יתברך* — is nothing other than cleaving to [Hashem], blessed be He.⁹ *וְהוּא מֵה שֶׁהָיָה דוֹר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֹמֵר* — And this is what David HaMelech means when he says (*Tehillim* 73:28): "וַיֵּאֲנִי קְרִיבָה אֲלֵיכֶם לִי טוֹב" — *But as for me, closeness to God is my good* (i.e., my perfection);¹⁰ *אֶחָת* — *אֹמֵר*: "אֶחָת שְׂאֵלְתִי מֵאֵת ה' אוֹתָהּ אֲבַקֵּשׁ שְׁבֵתִי בְּבֵית ה' כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֵּי וְגו' " — and when he says further (*ibid.* 27:4): *One thing I asked of HASHEM, that shall I seek — that I dwell in the House of HASHEM all the days of my life, to behold the sweetness of HASHEM and to contemplate in His Sanctuary.*¹¹ *כִּי רַק זֶה הוּא הַטּוֹב* — For

9. The term *deveikus*, cleaving, obviously cannot mean a physical attachment to Hashem. *Rashi* (*Devarim* 13:5) explains that one "cleaves" to Hashem by emulating His ways of kindness (see also *Sotah* 14a). Further, it means that one's spiritual level is elevated by doing His Will and thereby becoming "close" to Him, as it were (*Sforno*, *Devarim* 11:22). *Ramchal* explains below, in Chapter 19, that the ultimate level of "cleaving" to Hashem in this world is when one is constantly aware of His Presence and does not stop thinking about Him and His Torah (see also *Ramban*, *Devarim* *ibid.*, and *Meshech Chochmah*, *Devarim* 10:20). Thus,

one can achieve closeness to Hashem even in this world, although the ultimate closeness is possible only in the World to Come.

10. *Ramchal* writes elsewhere (*Derech Hashem* 1:2:1) that only Hashem possesses true perfection; nevertheless, He shares His goodness by allowing people to come close to Him, as much as possible, through the study of Torah and performance of mitzvos. To the extent that they attach themselves to the Perfect One, they too gain "perfection."

11. The "House of Hashem" is the study hall, for the best way to attain *deveikus* (attachment to Hashem) is through Torah study (see *Derech Hashem* 1:4:9 and IV:2:2).

* The Gemara relates (*Shabbos* 88b) that when Moshe ascended to Heaven to receive the Torah, the angels argued that the Torah should remain in Heaven and not be given to man. They contended that its esoteric wisdom was too sublime for man, and more fitting for the heavenly beings (*Maharsha*). Commanded by Hashem to refute their argument, Moshe responded to them that the Torah contains *practical* mitzvos that can be performed only in this world by human beings. He contended, for example, that without human parents, one could not perform the mitzvah of honoring one's father and mother. Thus, the Torah itself demonstrates that it was meant for this world, which was designed for the performance of mitzvos and is the arena of achievement. The angels conceded, recognizing that the ultimate purpose of the Torah is to perfect man's ways in this world, allowing him to gain entry into the spiritual realm of the World to Come.

וְכֵן זֹלַת זֶה שִׁיחֻשְׁבוּהוּ בְּנֵי הָאָדָם לְטוֹב, אִינוּ אֶלָּא הֶבֶל וְשׂוֹא נִתְעָה.
 אֲמָנָם לְכַשְׁיוּכָה הָאָדָם לְטוֹבָה הַזֹּאת, רָאוּי שִׁיעֲמַל רֵאשׁוֹנָה וְיִשְׁתַּדֵּל
 בִּיגִיעוֹ לְקִנּוּתָהּ,¹² וְהִינוּ שִׁישְׁתַּדֵּל לְדָבָק בּוֹ יִתְבַרֵּךְ בְּכַח מַעֲשֵׂים
 שְׂתוּלְדָתָם זֶה הֶעֱנִין וְהֵם הֵם הַמִּצְוֹת.¹³

only this attachment to Him is the true “good,” אִינוּ — while anything else that people consider to be “good” — אֶלָּא הֶבֶל וְשׂוֹא נִתְעָה — is nothing but futility and deceptive nothingness. אֲמָנָם — However, in order for man to merit this true “good” of becoming attached to Hashem, the Source of True Perfection, וְיִשְׁתַּדֵּל בִּיגִיעוֹ — it is fitting that he should first toil — and endeavor through his own efforts to acquire it.^[12] וְהִינוּ — This means that he should endeavor to attach himself to [Hashem], blessed be He, in this world, בְּכַח מַעֲשֵׂים שְׂתוּלְדָתָם זֶה — through the power of actions that bring about this result of making a person close to Him; וְהֵם הֵם הַמִּצְוֹת — and these actions are, specifically, the mitzvos. Thus, the mitzvos are not merely methods for acquiring one’s place in World to Come. Rather, their fulfillment bonds a person to Hashem and that attachment is the ultimate perfection — which is the primary reward that a person receives for his efforts.^[13]

12. The verse states (*Iyov* 5:7): כִּי אָדָם לְעִמָּל יוֹלֵד, *For man is born to toil*. The Talmud expounds (*Sanhedrin* 99b): All men are destined for toil; fortunate are those who merit toiling in Torah study, and not in other endeavors. [See the Insight on p. 148.]

Hashem could have given man some form of pleasure without requiring human effort, but He chose to create man for toil, so that he would be able to *earn* the only true good. In his other works, *Ramchal* explains that Hashem structured creation so that man could earn reward, and not feel the embarrassment of

one who receives a gift he does not deserve [נִקְחָא רַכְסוּקָא] (see *Derech Hashem* 1:2:2, and *Daas Tevunos* §18 and §158).

13. This deepens our understanding of the role of mitzvos. True, they are the means by which one earns his future share in *Olam Haba*, but they are also more. The mitzvos are actions of inherent holiness and value that serve to bond a person to Hashem in this world, leading to absolute closeness with Him in *Olam Haba* (as will be explained below), and that is the ultimate goodness one can receive.*

* *R' Isaac Sher (Leket Sichos Mussar, Vol. II, p. 382)* notes that *Ramchal* here illuminates for us a fundamental difference between common currency and the “currency” of the mitzvos (see note 8). When we are paid in cash for a service, the money has no value unless it can be used to purchase something. If an item that one desires is available at a bargain price, he can choose to earn less money and will be none the worse for it. However, the reward for a mitzvah is not merely that it can “purchase” pleasure in *Olam Haba*; rather, the mitzvah itself is a direct reward, much as proper nutrition is the direct road to good health. Each mitzvah is in and of itself an act that bonds us to Hashem, so the resulting closeness to Him, which translates into one’s reward in the World to Come, is intrinsically related to the effort one invests in fulfilling the mitzvah. [See also *Derech Hashem* 1:2:3.]

והנה שמו הקדוש ברוך הוא לאדם במקום שרבים בו המרחיקים אותו ממנו יתברך, והם הם התאוות החמריות אשר אם ימשך אחריהן הנה הוא מתרחק והולך מן הטוב האמיתי, ונמצא שהוא מושם באמת בתוך המלחמה החזקה¹⁴, כי כל עניני העולם בין לטוב בין למוטב, הנה הם נסיונות לאדם, העני מצד אחד והעשר מצד אחד, כענין שאמר שלמה (משלי ל, ט): "פן אשבע וכחשתי ואמרת מי ה', ופן אורש וגנבתיו וכו'". השלנה מצד אחד והיסורין מצד אחד,

Having explained that one must exert effort to perform mitzvos in order to become attached to Hashem, *Ramchal* now expands upon the nature of that effort:

והנה שמו הקדוש ברוך הוא לאדם במקום שרבים בו המרחיקים אותו ממנו יתברך — Now, the Holy One, blessed is He, has set man in a place where there are many factors that can distance [man] from Him, blessed be He; and these are, specifically, the physical desires that are everpresent in this world, whose nature is such that if someone becomes drawn after them, he will become steadily more distant from the true good, which, as we have explained, is bonding with Hashem. — אשר אם ימשך אחריהן — whose nature is such that if someone becomes drawn after them, הגה הוא מתרחק — he will become steadily more distant from the true good, which, as we have explained, is bonding with Hashem. ונמצא — It emerges, then, that [man] has truly been placed in the middle of the most intense battle:¹⁴ — שהוא מושם באמת בתוך המלחמה החזקה בי כל עניני — for all the circumstances of the world, whether favorable or adverse, — העולם בין לטוב בין למוטב — are in reality tests for a person to overcome. — העני מצד אחד והעשר מצד אחד — There is poverty on one side and wealth on the other side. Both of these can pose challenges to a person, — כענין שאמר שלמה — in the manner that Shlomo HaMelech stated (*Mishlei* 30:9): "פן אשבע וכחשתי ואמרת מי ה' ופן — Give me neither poverty nor wealth, [but] allot me my daily bread, lest I be sated and deny [You], and say, "Who is HASHEM?," and lest I become impoverished and steal, and take the Name of my God [in a vain oath of innocence]. — השלנה מצד אחד והיסורין מצד אחד — Similarly, there is tranquility on one side and suffering on the other side,

14. Man is comprised of a spiritual soul and a physical body, each with its own desires. By following one's physical desires, one gives his body domination over his soul. As a result, the more one pursues physical pleasure, the more one will move away from holiness and his true purpose. If, on the other hand, one subjugates his body to his

soul and follows his spiritual drive, he will move ever closer to Hashem.

This "battle" is the constant clash between the soul's desire for intellectual and spiritual growth, and the body's desire for physicality and mundane pleasures. Should one satisfy his body or his soul; his lust or his values?