

Dvar Torah Outline — Derashah on *Derech Hashem*, Chelek I, Perek 5 (End of Ot 1 into Ot 2)

Abstract

Rabbi Shulman explains the Ramchal's distinction between human beings and animals: although both possess a physical life-force, only man is a true composite of two utterly different creations—body and a supernal soul. He develops how this makes man the “ladder” connecting spiritual and physical realms, paralleling the role of the Beit HaMikdash as a “neck” between head and body. Rabbi Shulman then begins Ot 2, emphasizing the limits of human imagination regarding spiritual realities and introducing the core principle of spiritual “roots” (כחות נבדלים) that cascade down through a chain-like השתלשלות, enabling both human relatability and genuine free will.

I. Man as a unique composite: soul and body

A. The Ramchal's core claim at the end of Ot 1

- Rabbi Shulman reads: man is “discerned and separated” from all other creations.
- Man is **מורכב משני מיני בריאה נבדלים לגמרי**—a compound of two totally distinct types of creation:
 - **הנשמה העליונה** — the supernal soul
 - **הגוף השפל** — the lowly body
- This combination is **not found in any other creature**.

B. Avoiding a major mistake: animals are not “like humans”

- Rabbi Shulman highlights the Ramchal's warning: **don't confuse animal life with human spirituality**.
- Cultural application:
 - Contemporary society tends to blur the line (treating pets as “babies,” equating animal and human worth).
- The Ramchal's framing:
 - **Animals' נפש is physical**—refined physicality, but still material.
 - Modern analogy offered: complex biological systems (nervous/endocrine feedback loops) unify “meat” into a living organism.

C. Man shares the animal life-force—but also has something categorically different

- Rabbi Shulman notes: humans also have the same physical animating principle “insofar as man is an animal.”
- The crucial addition:
 - יש באדם נשמה עליונה... נבדל מן הגוף לגמרי
 - The soul is a separate spiritual creation, distant from the body, yet **bound to it by Hashem's decree** for a purpose discussed earlier.

D. Purpose of binding opposites: avodah and elevation

- Rabbi Shulman prompts the class: why is the soul connected to the body?
 - Answer developed:
 - The soul's task is to **refine/elevate** the body.
 - This creates **בחירה חפשית** (free choice) and meaningful **work**.
 - Reward becomes justified because man reveals Hashem's perfection by transforming the physical.
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II. Man as the “ladder” connecting worlds (9:00)

A. Man as creation's central linchpin

- Rabbi Shulman explains why the Ramchal insists on man's uniqueness:
 - It's not only ethical differentiation from animals, but a metaphysical role in creation.
- Midrashic symmetry:
 - Creation is balanced between “upper” and “lower” realms.
 - Man must incorporate both so the universe doesn't tilt entirely spiritual or entirely physical.

B. Adam's formation as the paradigm

- Rabbi Shulman describes the Midrash: Hashem forms man from **dust** and breathes in **spirit**—uniting opposites.
- Man becomes the “connector” between realms.

C. Yaakov's ladder as an image of האדם

- Rabbi Shulman cites Yaakov's dream:
 - “סלם מצב ארצה וראשו מגיע השמימה”
(A ladder set on the earth, whose head reaches the heavens.)

- He explains (in the name of מפרשים):
 - The ladder is **Yaakov himself**, and by extension, **man**—a conveyor between heaven and earth.

D. Beit HaMikdash as “neck”: another connector model

- Rabbi Shulman references Yosef and Binyamin’s reunion and Rashi’s comment on crying on the “necks.”
- The Beit HaMikdash is compared to a צוואר (neck):
 - A neck connects **head** (spiritual) to **body** (physical).
- Parallel takeaway:
 - Just as the Mikdash links realms, **man’s mission** is to connect and elevate.

E. Everything else becomes secondary to man’s mission

- Rabbi Shulman summarizes:
 - Physical things can be **elevated up** through man.
 - Spiritual influence can be **channeled down** through man.
 - This “connecting” is what man is meant to do.

III. Beginning Ot 2: the limits of grasping spirituality (12:31)

A. Physical reality is familiar; spiritual reality is not

- Rabbi Shulman reads:
 - Physical creations and their “laws” are known to us.
 - Spiritual matters are difficult to depict because they lie beyond ordinary imagination and experience.

B. Why spiritual matters are hard to understand

- Rabbi Shulman draws out the class discussion:
 - We can’t see or directly interact with spiritual entities.
 - Human cognition is trained on **physical data**, so it struggles to conceptualize non-physical realities.
- He notes a nuance:
 - The soul may interact with spiritual realms, but the human mind still has difficulty accessing and understanding that dimension clearly.

C. We rely on מסורת and prophetic knowledge

- Rabbi Shulman explains the Ramchal's method:
 - We speak about spiritual realms **only as far as tradition allows**.
 - He previews later material (Chelek III):
 - The soul can sometimes transmit information upward/downward:
 - dreams
 - רוח הקודש
 - נבואה (prophecy)
 - Illustrative anecdote:
 - Rabbi Shulman shares a family story about a dream predicting a baby's gender and name as an example of such phenomena.
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IV. The principle of spiritual “roots” and chain-like descent (17:00)

A. “For everything below, there is a כוח above”

- Rabbi Shulman reads and explains the Ramchal's major יסוד:
 - For every entity in the lower world, there exist **כחות נבדלים** above that correspond to it.
- He locates them in a framework of “worlds” (as he presents it):
 - בריאה — in כחות נבדלים
 - יצירה — in מלאכים
 - עשייה — in physical beings

B. השתלשלות: the step-by-step cascade

- Rabbi Shulman explains the term **השתלשלות** using the Ramchal's metaphor:
 - Like **rings of a chain**: **ונקשרים זה בזה כטבעות השלשלת**
- He develops classroom analogies:
 - “Steps/stairs” rather than a seamless ramp: discrete levels you can stand on.
 - Steps have both “rise” and a stable “run” (place for the foot), allowing comprehension and movement.

C. Roots and branches: not always one-to-one

- Rabbi Shulman addresses a question:
 - If everything physical has a spiritual root, does every spiritual force map to something physical?

- He answers with a tree analogy:
 - Every branch is nourished by roots, and roots nourish something—yet the mapping may involve combinations, not strict one-to-one correspondence.
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V. Why Hashem uses intermediaries instead of acting “directly” (28:00)

A. Question posed: why not create “straight” from Hashem to the physical?

- Rabbi Shulman raises the philosophical issue:
 - Why have spiritual roots and layers (מלאכים, כחות נבדלים, etc.) rather than direct divine action?

B. Reason #1: upward reach and human partnership

- Rabbi Shulman develops Jeremy’s idea:
 - A graded system allows human action to **reach upward**, step-by-step.
 - Without intermediate structure, we could not “work” reality meaningfully (e.g., tending a garden to improve outcomes).
- He restates a prior analogy:
 - If everything appeared miraculously in response to blessings, human endeavor would have no meaningful place.

C. Reason #2: free will through “screens” and plausible causality

- Rabbi Shulman adds the complementary reason:
 - Multiple layers function like **מסכים** (screens/masks).
 - People can attribute outcomes to intermediate causes (angels, nature, conditions) and **stop there**—creating space for הבחירה.
- Contrast with ancient/modern errors:
 - Ancient: attributing unexplained phenomena to “gods.”
 - Modern: attributing everything to physical causality and refusing to ask “what stands behind the causes.”

D. The ideal: adult faith—seeing causes and the Cause behind them

- Rabbi Shulman frames a goal of the Ramchal's project:
 - Not simplistic faith of ignorance, but mature faith:
 - understand causal chains
 - then infer divine conduct “behind” them
 - He ties it to the book's opening purpose:
 - translating basic אמונה into **deep understanding**.
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X. In Summary

- Rabbi Shulman explains the Ramchal's sharp line between animals (physical life-force) and humans (a unique גוף-נשמה composite).
- Man's purpose is to function as a “ladder” linking worlds, paralleling the Beit HaMikdash as a “neck” between head and body.
- Spiritual realities are hard to grasp directly, so we rely on מסורת and prophetic tradition, with later discussion of dreams/רוח הקודש/נבואה.
- The Ramchal's model of סדר השתלשלות and כחות נבדלים describes a chain of descent that enables both human relatability and genuine free will through layered causality.