

Dvar Torah Outline — Hashgachah לית, Olam HaBa, and the Refining Role of Gehinnom (Ramchal, Ot ד-ה)

Abstract

Rabbi Shulman explains the Ramchal's framework of **השגחה כללית** as a system of spiritual "accounting" that ensures every deed is addressed, enabling true דביקות with Hashem in עולם הבא. He develops how Divine justice and kindness require multiple "arenas" of payment—this world, Gehinnom (and related post-life afflictions), and the ultimate world—so that most souls can be refined rather than annihilated. Rabbi Shulman then goes deeper: suffering is not only bookkeeping, but a process that changes the person's inner spiritual reality, because mitzvot and עבירות become internalized as perfection or spiritual opacity.

I. Defining השגחה כללית as "bookkeeping" in Hashem's governance

A. The basic definition

- Rabbi Shulman defines **השגחה כללית** as **accounting**: tracking "pluses and minuses" across humanity.
- This is "universal across the board"—a general system, not individualized prophetic insight.

B. Who can reach דביקות and who is destroyed

- Rabbi Shulman states the principle:
 - Only someone **clean of רע** can reach **עולם הבא / דביקות**.
 - Only someone **devoid of any טוב** is utterly destroyed.
- This generates the need for multiple "payouts" in different contexts.

C. Review of the prior model: payment in this world

- Rabbi Shulman summarizes what was discussed previously:
 - **רשעים** receive reward in this world for their few mitzvot.

- עבירות receive punishment in this world for their few צדיקים.
 - Purpose: no one “gets away with anything,” and no one is denied reward.
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II. Hashem’s added kindness: another purification pathway beyond ייסורים של עולם הזה (1:00)

A. Why an additional path is needed

- Rabbi Shulman explains: Hashem’s kindness “decreed to save more people,” not limiting outcomes to a simplistic “follow the majority” rule (רשע vs. צדיק).
- The Ramchal introduces: “שימצא עוד מין צירוף”—another refining process.

B. Who qualifies for this added purification

- This path helps only those who can still be purified:
 - People in whom evil is dominant (רוב רע) such that **in this world ייסורים** may not suffice,
 - But **not** so dominated by evil that they must be annihilated.
 - Rabbi Shulman describes this as an “inner kernel” of goodness that remains salvageable.
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III. Gehinnom (and related post-life afflictions) as רחמים: refining “majority-bad” people (3:30)

A. “A whole new category” of suffering

- Rabbi Shulman notes the Ramchal frames Gehinnom (and other post-life ordeals) as **not of this world ייסורים**.
- He briefly mentions additional categories discussed in sefarim (e.g., חיבוט הקבר) and other frightening forms of cleansing, though he keeps the discussion general.

B. The goal: saving more souls for עולם הבא

- In Rabbi Shulman's framing:
 - handle cases where a person is **mostly good** with a minority of bad.
 - Gehinnom enables refinement even where a person is **mostly bad**, as long as they are not completely rotten.

C. "How hard is it to be deleted?"

- Rabbi Shulman emphasizes: total annihilation is rare; one must be overwhelmingly evil.
 - He introduces a key hinge-point (per Rambam): eligibility for עולם הבא depends fundamentally on **belief in the עיקרים**.
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IV. Rambam vs. Raavad on י"ג עיקרים and a "wrong address" parable; חלק לעולם הבא; (5:31)

A. Rabbi Shulman's presentation of Rambam

- Rabbi Shulman explains Rambam's position:
 - One must believe in **all** חלק לעולם הבא. י"ג עיקרים to have a share.
 - If one believes them—even as a sinner—he can be purified (Gehinnom) and still attain a share.

B. Explaining "מומר לתיאבון"

- Rabbi Shulman distinguishes the sinner who believes from the heretic:
 - A person may sin due to desire/addiction, not ideological rebellion.
 - Such a person may still fundamentally "want" to serve Hashem—his core belief remains intact.

C. Raavad's challenge

- Rabbi Shulman presents the Raavad's question:
 - How can it be that a great צדיק who mistakenly believes Hashem is corporeal loses עולם הבא,
 - While a wicked person who affirms the principles keeps a share?

D. Rabbi Shulman's משל: the husband with the wrong address

- Rabbi Shulman's parable:
 - One husband is imperfect but knows who his wife is.
 - Another is an exemplary husband—but he keeps going to the **wrong woman's house**.
- Nimshal:
 - Wrong beliefs mean one is “davening to the wrong address” and building “relationship” with a false conception—no true דביקות.

E. Contemporary edge-cases raised (briefly)

- Questions arise about:
 - **תינוק שנשבה** status for the uninformed (including those raised in non-observant movements).
 - Whether someone “knowing of Judaism's existence” removes that status.
 - Rabbi Shulman flags it as important but outside the main thrust of the session.
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V. Three arenas of דין: this world, Gehinnom/עולם הנשמות, and עולם הבא (20:00)

A. “והנה נמצא הדין מתחלק לשלשה חלקים”

- Rabbi Shulman summarizes the Ramchal's structure:
 1. **עולם הזה** — certain rewards/punishments paid out here
 2. **עולם הנשמות / גיהנום** — post-life purification
 3. **עולם הבא (after תחייה)** — the primary and ultimate reward

B. Interactive examples Rabbi Shulman elicits

- Paid in **this world**:
 - Punishment for the **minority sins** of צדיקים.
 - Reward for the **minority mitzvot** of רשעים (money, power, prestige).
- Paid in **Gehinnom**:
 - The sins of those who are mostly bad, yet still redeemable.

C. “Not binary”: payments can be mixed

- Rabbi Shulman acknowledges the system can be “mixed and matched,” not a simplistic either/or.
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VI. What we cannot know: the פרטיות of Hashem’s judgment (23:01)

A. General principles vs. personal accounting

- Rabbi Shulman stresses:
 - We know the **general** הנהגה (“the קוטב הכללי”).
 - We do not know the allocation for any specific person: how much is paid in each realm.

B. Only Hashem can compute the full moral-spiritual calculus

- Rabbi Shulman explains why:
 - Only Hashem knows the true nature of actions, their consequences, and all relevant factors (difficulty, background, context).
 - Human judgment cannot access that “endless calculation.”
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VII. The end-goal of the system: assembling a purified collective for eternal דביקות (26:30)

A. The telos: “לקבץ קיבוץ שלם”

- Rabbi Shulman explains the Ramchal’s bottom line:
 - Hashem’s plan aims to gather a fully refined collective—those who become “perfectly righteous” after purification.
 - This collective is established eternally in closeness to Hashem, “without breakage.”

B. Why earlier stages are necessary

- Rabbi Shulman explains: the multi-stage structure (this world, עולם הבא, עולם הנשמות) exists to “prepare and enable” that ultimate state.

VIII. Going deeper (Ot ה): ייסורים are not only bookkeeping—they change the person’s spiritual reality (28:30)

A. The motivating question: how can suffering “remove” an עבירה?

- Rabbi Shulman asks:
 - Beyond “you paid for it,” what does it mean that ייסורים erase wrongdoing?
 - He connects this to themes of תשובה and אלול.

B. Contrast with תשובה’s transformative power

- Rabbi Shulman reviews classic categories:
 - זדונות נעשים כשגגות תשובה מיראה:
 - זדונות נעשים כזכויות תשובה מאהבה:
- He then asks: what is the mechanism for ייסורים?

C. The Ramchal’s יסוד: actions become internalized

- Rabbi Shulman explains the deeper metaphysics:
 - **Good deeds** create within a person (body and soul) a “מציאות שלמות ומעלה”—real perfection and elevation.
 - **Bad deeds** create “מציאות עכירות וחסרון”—spiritual opacity and deficiency.
- Key point Rabbi Shulman emphasizes:
 - This is not merely a “ledger in Heaven”; the “record” is the person himself.

D. Exact proportionality

- Rabbi Shulman highlights: the deficiency internalized is **precisely measured**—“not less and not more”—matching the nature of the עבירה.

E. A vivid image: “spiritual biometrics”

- Rabbi Shulman imagines that if one had the right “goggles,” one could perceive a person’s spiritual wholeness or fractures—an embodied record of deeds.
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In Summary

- Rabbi Shulman defines **השגחה כללית** as universal spiritual bookkeeping ensuring every act is accounted for.
- Hashem's kindness creates multiple arenas of payoff—**עולם הזה**, **עולם הנשמות/גיהנום**, and **עולם הבא**—so that most people can be refined rather than destroyed.
- Belief (especially the **י"ג עיקרים**, per Rambam) is presented as a crucial threshold for maintaining a relationship with Hashem and thus eligibility for eventual purification.
- The Ramchal's deeper layer: mitzvot and עבירות are not only "credits/debits" but become the person's inner spiritual reality—perfection or opacity—so ייסורים function as real refinement, not mere punishment.