

# THE PATH OF THE JUST - CHAPTER 13:4

*by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman*

"The point is this," Ramchal says, "since everything in this world is potentially gravely threatening" to your spiritual well-being when misused, then "how can you not praise someone who wants to escape from or avoid all that?" That is, how could you blame the truly sensitive soul for trying to steer clear of mishap (though he'd be doing without something that would be technically alright to partake of)?

These lofty beings would likely be saying to themselves, "It would simply cost me too much of my hard-earned spiritual blood and muscle to have this", and they'd simply do without that nearly-wrong thing in the dream of ultimately doing with so much more.

Remember though that not all of us are expected to achieve this level of abstinence (as we said above). After all, "if it's true that abstinence is such an essential and important thing, then why didn't our sages ... have us all abstain from more and more?" as Ramchal worded it. They didn't because "our sages only instituted the sorts of protective fences that the majority of the Jews could abide by" (Baba Kama 79b) and most of us can't make do with less than we're actually permitted to have.

"Most people simply can't be pious," Ramchal goes on to say, so "it would be enough for them to be righteous" and live by all we'd studied in this work to now. But "those lone individuals among our people" -- the very few -- "who want to merit (full and hard-earned) closeness to G-d, and to make meritorious those others who are dependent upon them by their merit, have to live by the laws of the pious-- these abstentions-- which those others cannot live by" and which they wouldn't at all be expected to. As such, we're fortunate to have those few pious souls who can live on that level among us; we derive our spiritual well-being from their efforts.

In fact, "this is the way G-d chose it to be"; it's not a sorry fact that speaks disparagingly about the lowliness of our generation (or of earlier ones about whom this was also true). As "it's simply impossible for a whole nation to be of one spiritual type" ... as "there are all sorts of people ... (but) there will at least be found some special individuals who could completely prepare themselves" for this degree of devotion, and who should.

These then are the parameters of the sort of "good abstinence", as Ramchal terms it, that these special souls should strive for. They should "take nothing from this world ... other than what they'd absolutely need" to get by, to be reasonably content, and to be healthy.

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