

THE PATH OF THE JUST - CHAPTER 14:2

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Not only would the righteous choose to abstain from certain common pleasures and to always be more halachically stringent as we'd said; they'd also agree to certain other restrictions.

But once again the point needs to be made that these farther-reaching and very consequential sorts of abstentions are not at all required of the rest of us; they're beyond the ordinary. Yet we could learn a thing or two from them, which we'll try to underscore.

The type of abstentions we're about to enunciate are the sort that those who would want (and are qualified) to be pious would follow because they're in keeping with their dreams of a truer and deeper degree of closeness to G-d than we can imagine or would strive for. (In fact, if we decided to abide by these practices to the degree the pious would, our actions would be deemed off-the-mark and we'd justifiably be advised to stop.)

The pious would "seclude and detach" themselves "from the company of others" as often as possible, and would "direct (their) heart" instead to more and more Divine service. That's to say, they'd live apart from the main stream of society and would spend their days and nights with G-d alone, in private worship and reverie. (One could easily see how the great majority of us should be discouraged from following that path. Still and all we might seclude ourselves occasionally -- at certain times of the day, once a month perhaps, on especially challenging occasions, etc., but always with the intent of drawing upon the experience as nourishment for when we're back in the thick of things.)

But Ramchal is quick to point out that even the pious shouldn't go too far in this. He advises them to be sure to "join in with good people for the amount of time you'd need to study Torah (, to pray,) or to earn a living" as we all must, but to then "go in seclusion in order to attach yourself to G-d and to come to understand the way of goodness and the true way to serve G-d".

And he adds the following additional example of abstinence which we too would be wise to follow. He advises us all to acclimate ourselves to speaking less and to avoiding small talk, and to "not look beyond (our) own environs", that's to say, to not envy others for what they have, and to not muse about the unfeasible and unlikely.

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