

THE PATH OF THE JUST - CHAPTER 15:4

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Let's touch on something we're drawn to day after day which often presents a spiritual challenge: food. Assuming the food in front of us is kosher, that it hadn't been stolen, that we aren't responsible for doing something else at the time, and given that today isn't a fast-day, we're encouraged and even obliged to eat if we're hungry.

But the soul striving for piety would want to make do with the simplest of foods, he or she wouldn't want to fuss with it and would only want to eat and go on serving G-d other ways. The rest of us, though, would spend more time choosing what we'd eat and would fuss with it. Let's see how Ramchal would convince us that it's just not worth the bother.

He underscores just how short-lived the pleasure we'd get from eating something good-tasting is -- it only lasts from the time it takes to pass "the length of your gullet ... (then go to) your stomach" when "it's completely forgotten".

Given that, he goes on, doesn't it stand to reason that "you'd be just as full eating stuffed swan as you would be eating coarse bread?" So why bother making the extra effort and taking the time and energy away from doing more important and holy things?

Then consider the more serious risks. Just think of all "the diseases you could expose yourself to by your diet", or of "the feeling of heaviness or dull-mindedness" that comes from eating too much rich food. All that being true, aren't the "disadvantages real", "serious and long-lasting", and aren't "the apparent benefits a sham" and "short-lived" at best? So, how could any "intelligent person endanger himself for the minute benefits that might accrue ... through (eating) them"?

Take this all to heart, be honest with yourself and "free yourself from the entrapment of all the foolishness" that comes from caring too much about food, and "you'll no longer be seduced by its so-called pleasures". Do that on a regular basis and you'll eventually train yourself to only "take from the world what you absolutely must" and no more.

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