

THE PATH OF THE JUST - CHAPTER 5:5

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

And finally, you're hardly likely to be cautious and purposeful in your service to G-d if your circle of friends runs in the other direction. For as Ramchal puts it, "even after the need for Divine service and caution become self-evident to a person" and he sets off in the right path, "he'd still-and-all might slacken-off ... so his friends wouldn't ridicule him and to fit in with them".

Indeed, we all want to fit in, in the end. Not a single soul is happy being alone for long. Indeed, the very holiest among us have had their friends, even if they only saw or spoke to them occasionally and spent the greater part of their time communing with G-d and delving into His Torah.

For friends validate our opinions and they confirm our place in the cosmos while easing our fears and allowing us hope. So, when our friends seem to veer off from where we're headed, we're likely to pause and reconsider. After all, we'd always trusted them, and now they seem to think we're somehow off the mark; should we change?

The point is, have the wrong friends and you'll veer from the path of truth; have good and wholesome friends, and your search for spiritual excellence is all but assured.

In sum, we're advised to be cautious in order to draw close to G-d and to perfect our beings (Ch. 2) by setting aside time for conscious reflection upon our actions and ways (Ch. 3); by realizing what's incumbent upon us (Ch. 4); and by steering clear of over-concern for worldly things, sarcasm, and bad company (Ch. 5).

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