

THE PATH OF THE JUST - CHAPTER 9:2

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

In fact, not only shouldn't we assume we're entitled to ease and repose in this life, but the truth is that we were placed in this world to work assiduously, to accomplish and to achieve. In fact Ramchal suggests that we should forever liken ourselves to "soldiers ... in rank" who constantly "eat hurriedly, sleep fitfully, and who are always ready to move about at any moment" in their mission.

Now, it would do us well to digress a bit here to lay out Ramchal's more esoteric explanation of our need to actively accomplish things. For while most of us understand the real-world costs of laziness, few of us know just what drives us to act in the first place. And as is true of so many other things, this too is rooted in our existential situation here, as we'll see.

We're told that our spiritual station is far below Adam and Eve's. Pure as they were (at first) all they had to do to perfect existence, as G-d wanted them to, was to raise all worlds on high, and to "complete the metaphysical process that G-d Himself began with creation". And they'd thus nullify the yetzer harah for all time as was meant to be. Then everything would have been perfected.

In effect, all they had to do then was to "accept holiness" upon themselves from on high in a very simple, almost reflexive way. That's why they were only given one mitzvah (to not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil). But they were unsuccessful.

Our forefathers were then handed the mantle. But they couldn't be quite as passive about it as Adam and Eve, and so they were handed several mitzvot in the hopes that they'd have been successful, but they weren't quite. So we their descendants have subsequently been made to actively and vigorously seek out perfection by means of pursuing all 613 mitzvot (Adir Bamarom pp. 29-33).

In any event, Ramchal adds that "when you accustom yourself to this path" - - to considering yourself always on the march -- "you'll find that the workload will be lightened for you" thanks to your attitude, and you'll always progress.

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