

THE PATH OF THE JUST - CHAPTER 9:4

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Confident that he'd explained "enthusiasm" well enough, Ramchal prepares to leave it up to us now, assured that "the wise will become wiser yet and will take in what they can" to succeed.

Now, there's some reason to think that the trait of "enthusiasm" should have come before "caution" rather than vice versa, as had been laid out in The Path of the Just. After all, wouldn't we be expected to head out zealously from the first and watch out for snares after the fact? But Ramchal argues otherwise.

"It's only right that 'enthusiasm' should follow 'caution'" he declares, "for all in all a person can't be enthusiastic if he isn't first cautious".

For, "someone who hasn't set it in his heart to be cautious in his actions, and to reflect upon service to G-d and its principles" from the beginning -- that is, the person who hadn't first reflected on drawing close to G-d and set that as the core of his life's work -- "would find it hard to be both enveloped by love and longing for Divine service and enthused with a yearning for his Creator". Why? Because he'd "still be stuck in the attractions of the physical world, and would go about doing the very things that just naturally keep him away from all this" since he hadn't set his goals straight. He'd easily be waylaid by lovely earth and lose sight of shimmering Heaven.

As it's only "after you will have opened your eyes to take a look at your actions and to be cautious in them, and to reckon the worth of mitzvot versus sins", which is all part of drawing close to G-d, that "you will find it easy to keep from doing harmful things and will ... be enthusiastic about the good".

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