

THE PATH OF THE JUST - CHAPTER 11:13

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

"Up to now" Ramchal inserts here, "I have addressed those mitzvot that I perceive are most people's downfalls"-- that is, the mitzvot we need to concentrate on most of all because they're the ones whose mark we most often miss. So we delved into dishonesty, deception, promiscuity, verbal abuse, fraud, disparagement, revenge, profaning G-d's name, Shabbos observance, and more.

But there are other, more inward phenomena we'd need to improve, too, if we're to perfect our beings and achieve "innocence".

These are decidedly more difficult, as they touch the core of our beings, and they don't just depend on changing our actions so much as altering our perspective on things and resetting the inner "dials and valves", if you will, that affect our inner climate. They're also difficult because "anytime you struggle to do something beyond your nature" and to bend the soul past its outer reaches, which is what growth is all about in the end, "you are then engaged in a great battle" which you just might not win.

(In fact, the story is told in "The Duties of the Heart" [5:5] of a battalion of soldiers who were returning from war and bemoaning the difficulties of combat, who then came upon an old sage who chided them. "You've just come back from ... a minor battle" he said, "but you're about to fight a great one". "What great battle is that?" they asked, and he replied, 'The battle against the yetzer harah' which would do its best to have us fall into meanness and egotism.)

Here then is a list of the more "common and problematic personality traits" that we'll be concentrating on for the rest of the chapter: arrogance, anger, jealousy and untoward desires.

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