

THE PATH OF THE JUST - CHAPTER 26:6

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

"Precious reader," Ramchal says at the end of this work, "you know as well as I that I haven't exhausted all the requirements for piety in my book, and that I haven't said all that can be said about the subject. But that's because there is no end to the matter, and we cannot fathom the extent of it". In fact, the brevity of "The Path of the Just" speaks to both that fact and to the genius of its author who was able to allude to so much in so few words.

"All I have done", he offers, "is mentioned some small part of all the particulars of the beraita upon which I have based this book. (As such, this work) is a beginning which will allow for further investigation into these matters" on our part.

That having been said he then proposes this profound statement: "It's obvious that each person must be directed and guided (in this pursuit of piety) according to his own field of endeavor and his concerns. For, the path to piety for the one whose sole occupation is Torah study is different from the one for the laborer, which is itself different from the one for the professional person. And that goes as well for all the other differentiating factors between people, each of which is its own path to piety".

His point is that everyone engaged in a halachic, moral, legal, and worthy life-style can manage to be pious -- not only Torah scholars. For while the latter are more inclined to achieve it, given their ability to draw inspiration from the Torah itself, everyone can in the end. It's just that each must pursue piety in the context of his life-style.

But "that isn't because piety (itself) changes -- it's the same for everybody: it involves doing what brings satisfaction to your Creator. But since the individual participant (and his context) changes, the means to bring him to that end must necessarily be particular to him." As a consequence we see that "a humble laborer could be as thoroughly pious as someone who never stops studying Torah. As it's said, 'Know Him in all of your ways, and He will straighten your path' (Proverbs 3:6)."

And Ramchal ends this work with this prayer, which we can only reiterate: "May G-d, in His great compassion, open our eyes to His Torah. May He teach us His ways, lead us upon His path, and make us worthy to bring honor to His name and satisfy Him".

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