

# OHR YISROEL, RABBI SALANTER'S LETTERS - PART 30:7

*by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman*

R' Salanter makes a number of very cogent and deeply insightful remarks in his excursion spoken of above which we'll come to now.

His first is that despite our efforts to be rational about ourselves and about the world around us, we will "always be human". That's to say that we'll always be emotional and pulled here and there by self-serving intentions and drives. For unlike angels, it's "virtually impossible for us to purify our minds and strip it of all emotional pulls" when analyzing and hoping to better ourselves. All kinds of subjective considerations come up, including irrational attractions to or revulsions from one thing or another. So it's extremely difficult for us to be honest with ourselves.

So what are we to do, given that? At bottom we're still and all to use our analytical skills when dwelling on our character, for that's ultimately the best way to arrive at truth. And we're to know that "if one dedicates his heart and soul to purifying his thoughts as best as he can, then he has fulfilled the decree to 'pursue justice'", despite the often contradictory reality.

In truth, "it's hardly likely that absolute purity (of mind and intentions) is at play when it comes to legal decision-making or to one's own understanding of his situation," nonetheless the best solution is to "foster a sure degree of the fear of Heaven". For that alone will "ensure that one will always suspect that he might not have fulfilled his obligation to be intellectually honest" and will keep him on course to the best of his abilities.

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