

# THE PATH OF THE JUST □ RAMCHAL'S INTRODUCTION PART 2

*by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman*

As everyone knows, there are average people, bright ones, and then there are truly brilliant individuals. Bright people understand things well enough, intuit things fairly well too, and they can grasp new and even complex thoughts reasonably quickly. Brilliant people, though, understand deeply, intuit on an uncanny level, and they can fully grasp wholly new and intricate thoughts. And we're duly enamored of brilliant people.

It's also known that there are fairly "scattered", inattentive people; focused ones; and then there are truly alert, attuned individuals. Focused people are not only bright and rigorous enough in their thinking, they're also fixed onto a specific goal; and while they spend a good part of their time in achieving it, they also tend to concentrate on other, lesser goals which draw them away from their major one. Truly and fully attuned individuals, on the other hand, hone in on their primary goal and dovetail everything else they do into achieving it, until they actually and triumphantly realize that goal. But they're rare, and sometimes their goals are far from lofty.

And then there are truly rare brilliant and attuned individuals with laudable goals. The truth of the matter is that while many of us are bright to one degree or another and focused to a point, we're far-and-away not focused enough on ultimate goals. In fact, most of us couldn't even enunciate ultimate goals. But we get ahead of ourselves.

Ramchal addressed the gist of this in his Introduction and indicated that a person couldn't help but notice that there are a lot of "intelligent, enlightened, aware, and informed people" out there. And they seem to "expend a great deal of their energies on reflection upon and examination of" all sorts of things. Some concentrate on "the minutia of the various sciences, and upon subtle scholarship", and "concern themselves with questions of cosmogony or physical science". Others concentrate upon "astronomy or mathematics" or the arts. And some individuals focus upon "the learning of the holy Torah" and either "involve themselves in the give-and-take of Talmudic argumentation (pilpul), in homiletics (drush), or in the deciding of practical law (halacha)".

The implication he'll soon make, though, is that while they're all concentrating on one thing or another, they're all nonetheless somehow missing the point. None of them appear to be attuned to what matters most of all, no matter how brilliant and focused they are.

For as Ramchal put it elsewhere, what's required of each one of us is to delve into the depths of things (Vichuach HaChacham v'haChassid), and to realize that our goal is to draw as close to G-d as we

can (Derech Chochma) rather than to accrue knowledge per se, or brilliance and attentiveness unto itself.

Indeed, as he put it in this Introduction, "few of (us) concentrate" unfalteringly on what matters most (and here's where he lays it all out): on "honing our Divine service, loving and revering G-d, clinging unto Him", and on achieving piety. And we have consequently paid a great price for our distractions from this most vital goal.

And in fact, the great and ominous notion that each one of us is bidden to achieve spiritual excellence by serving G-d in high love and deep reverence, by clinging onto His presence, and by practicing out-and-out piety will prove to be the essential message of The Path of the Just.

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