

THE PATH OF THE JUST □ RAMCHAL'S INTRODUCTION PART 3

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

People who value Torah wouldn't deny the fact that we're each bidden by G-d to draw close to Him, nor could they claim that the idea isn't an essential teaching of the Torah. "For were you to ask" them yourself, Ramchal offers, "they would each surely affirm that that was essential" to the Jewish Faith, and that none of us should avoid it. So why do so few of us concentrate on it in fact, and thus settle for spiritual mediocrity in the process?

But it goes back to what Ramchal said at the beginning; it's simply because the idea is so straightforward and inarguable that many otherwise fine and fully-observant people just don't dwell on it. But there's a price to pay for that negligence, no matter how innocent, as we'll soon see.

Interestingly enough, as Ramchal says elsewhere, what has us overlook this fundamental element of our faith is simply the fact that we don't concentrate on the sorts of texts that feature it.

He asserts that our people have been essentially ungrounded in our spirituality ever since the Holy Temple was destroyed and the greater part of our wisdom was snatched away from us. As a consequence of that we've stumbled about in the dark haphazardly, and are seemingly no longer able to see the light.

He offers (and many others agree) that the only solution is for us to delve into the heart and soul of the Torah, its mysteries; for it's there that G-d and the sorts of things we'd need to do to draw close to Him are discussed. He contends that our doing that will enliven our spirits once again (Ma'amar Vichuach Choker u'Mekubal, pp. 32-34) and will lead us onto the path of piety, which is the thrust of this work.

The price we pay for not delving into all this, he stresses, is the fact that it has nearly gone by the waysides. In fact, "the studying of ... the holy books concerning (all this) has been left in the hands of those of a less subtle mind". And "it has reached the point where when one sees someone trying to become pious, one can't help but assume that he's of a coarser nature" -- fanatical, perhaps; or non-conventional and anti-social, as we'd put it today.

And as a result, neither the more conventional bright and sensitive Jewish souls nor the "coarser" ones get it right -- the former because they don't expose themselves to such things, and the latter because they go about it wrong. For "it has come to appear to most that piety is dependent merely upon the recitation of many Psalms and long, convoluted confessions; upon assuming difficult fasts" and upon all sorts of extremes that simply don't "sit well with reason or the intellect."

So he'd advise us that we'd need to step back and reconsider our commitments; and to determine for ourselves how much of a role G-d and reasoned spiritual excellence play in our lives.

Text Copyright © 2007 by [Rabbi Yaakov Feldman](#) and **[Torah.org](#)**