

THE PATH OF THE JUST - CHAPTER 22:7

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

We'd need to show how humble we'd become in other ways, too. It would be important for us to learn to bear insult -- to accept the justifiably unflattering things said about us. We'd even need to admit to the truth of some disparaging things said about us that aren't wholly true, or are only barely so. For as the sensitive soul knows only too well, each corner of one's being is at least a bit off-kilter if not more so.

We'd also need to learn how to scorn power and authority, and the honor it bestows. After all, haven't we been advised to "Love the work but (to) detest the authority (it grants you)" (Pirkei Avot 1:10), and warned, "Honor flees from whoever pursues it" (Eruvin 13b)?

And isn't it true, as Ramchal so cogently puts it, that "authority is nothing but a terrible burden on the backs of those who bear it". After all, he goes on to say, "while you're one individual among many, you're subsumed in the many and are only responsible for yourself. But when you're placed in a position of authority and power, you're in the clutches of everyone under you, for you have to be responsible for them" as well as yourself -- so is it worth it?

At bottom, he offers, honor is worthless, and the wise would take that to heart: the very praises lauded on them by others would burden them, and when they'd hear others honoring them they'd be "abashed and full of grief not only for the fact that (as only they would know) their many faults so outnumber their good points, but also for the fact that they were now being further burdened by (having to bear with) false praise" to boot.

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