

THE PATH OF THE JUST - CHAPTER 23:4

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

The second thing we'd need to reflect on if we're to become truly humble is the volatility that is human life: how one's life can spin about in a moment. After all, everything changes in this world, and while some of those are happy changes, many simply are not and one never knows.

Consider the undeniable fact that "a rich person can easily become poor, a ruler can quickly become a lay-person, and an honored person can suddenly become despised", Ramchal points out, and the like. Given, then, that "it's so easy (for one's situation) to quickly turn into something that's so abhorrent to him at this point, how can one possibly be proud of his current, so very tenuous situation?" Ramchal offers; how can one ever be proudly sure of his or her standing?

Other things can go wrong, too, G-d forbid, he goes on to point out: "an illness can suddenly strike that would force you to ask for other people's help" or to accept charity, which might have always gone against your grain. All sorts of pains and sorrows could come your way "that would force you to seek out help from certain people whom you'd be reticent to even offer a hello to in the street" at this point, whom you'd nevertheless need to humble yourself to. The point of the matter is that we're never ever on sure ground; each moment is a thin veneer of shifting plates beneath our feet. So it would do us well to be humbly aware of that all the time.

We'd also need to consider our ongoing relationship with G-d and our service to Him, and our current standing where that's concerned. Why, just consider "how often you disregard (His mitzvahs) or are lax in them". Keep that alone in mind "and you simply cannot grow haughty".

And we'd all need to "recognize the fallibility of human knowledge, how liable it is for error and untruth, and how it's more often wrong than right" despite the intellectual vistas any one of us might have crossed. That being so, "you should constantly ... try to learn from all people and take advice" in true humility, rather than assume you're right simply because it occurs to you that you are.

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