

THE PATH OF THE JUST - CHAPTER 26:1

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

The search for holiness, our final trait and nearly the ultimate reach in spiritual excellence, "begins in effort," Ramchal remarks "and it ends in recompense; it begins in striving, and ends in being given as a gift". "That's to say," Ramchal himself explains, "it begins in your sanctifying yourself, and ends in your being sanctified (by G-d)".

The thrust of this loaded statement is that what's allowed us mere mortals in this world is the right to decide to sanctify ourselves and some of the ability to achieve it, but the actual capacity to become truly holy is out of our hands and must be granted us by G-d should He see fit to. After all, holiness isn't only a talent and inner-driven goal: being beyond the course of human nature it needs to be granted miraculously.

(It's roughly analogous to the situation of someone born with the ability to be a master musician, who could follow through on that goal nobly and earnestly for many, many years, and still not fulfill his role if G-d directs circumstances against him.)

But what are you to do if you're already pious and want to expand your being towards holiness? "What all of your efforts should be directed towards," Ramchal replies, is to "utterly separating and removing yourself from all physicality, and to constantly attaching your being unto G-d" -- no small matter, indeed.

In fact, "even when you're embroiled in matters of the world for the sake of the well-being of your body, let your soul not be moved from its state of great attachment (to G-d)". May G-d grant us even the willingness to make the effort to achieve this!

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