

THE PATH OF THE JUST - CHAPTER 3:4

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Our inability to see the big picture and the truth in full is tantamount to our walking through a huge convoluted maze all the time.

As Ramchal evokes the image, the maze would be like the kind that was actually constructed hundreds of years ago by the wealthy for entertainment. Each one was comprised of "row after row of walls, with identical small paths between each one". And the whole set-up was purposely put together "to confuse and confound" a participant who "couldn't see ... whether or not he was on one of the direct paths" since he'd "never entered into the maze before or reached the rotunda, its goal".

The difference of course is that the participants in that maze would choose to play the game, while the maze that has come to be our way of living has chosen us, or so it seems.

Like the people in this maze game, we too never know what we'll encounter, and we likewise hope against hope to escape failure (and injury) and to find our way out. For we also have never been through this before; and besides -- as Ramchal makes the point now -- we're blinded by our yetzer harah and thus closed off to clarity and insight into our actions. For the yetzer harah baffles us all the time, it has us follow paths of false hope and faulty calculation, and it convinces us to squeeze our uneasy and square selves into round and awkward situations that threaten our very souls. But the truth is that there is a way out, as we'll see.

Ramchal advises us to seek out the advice of someone "who would have already reached the rotunda himself (and) could see all the paths before him" and who would be able to pick out the right one for you to take. Only such a person -- only someone who had already managed to overcome his yetzer harah and to reach his full spiritual potential -- "could ... say, 'That's the path to take'".

And the path those more experienced souls would invariably tell us to take, Ramchal offers, is this one: to "constantly, consistently ponder ... (and) consider the true path according to the rules of the Torah you should take (in life). Then contemplate your actions and decide if they agree with that or not". In other words, always take stock of your ways, as we were told at the beginning of our discussions of caution, and see if they conform to the truth or not as best as you can. And then affirm the right and stick to it, while steering clear of the wrong.

Do that, he assures us, and "you'll find it easy to ... set your ways straight."

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