

# THE PATH OF THE JUST - CHAPTER 4:2

*by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman*

Even when we're earnest and honest about striving for betterment, most of us are feisty when it comes to criticism. We cringe, blink hard, rummage through a catalog of excuses, and lash out at it no matter how valid the remark.

But there are some rare individuals who for the most part only need to be tapped on the shoulder when they go off the mark, told something like, "I'm sorry, but that's just not right", and they immediately stop. For, while we all know that, "there is not a righteous man on earth who does (only) good and never sins" (Ecclesiastes 7:20), these souls -- whom Ramchal referred to above as "those who fully understand (what matters most)" -- react quickly and succinctly to their slip-ups while we somehow turn our backs on ours.

At bottom, such individuals would only need to be reminded that "wholeness alone is what should be longed for, nothing else", which they had apparently forgotten for the moment; and they'd only need to be gently told once again that "nothing is worse than the lack of wholeness and what keeps it back from us".

That's to say, they're to be tenderly set on course again -- the only path they care to follow in the end, anyway -- and once redirected they'll stay the course. They might need to be reminded that "the means to wholeness are good deeds and good personality traits", in order to specify just which right direction they're to head, but that would be enough. For their having strayed off-course for the while "would be a great sorrow and misfortune for them".

These are very precious souls, and are among the greatest among us. They're as human as we and thus imperfect; but unlike us, they're just naturally drawn toward piety and utter goodness rather than toward this and that, and they're simply flabbergasted and undone when they slip.

The very greatest among them (for there are degrees on those lofty heights, too, you understand) quite literally fear sin rather than frown upon it. Such people will always be cautious, but the rest of us would have to be motivated to caution in other ways.

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