

THE PATH OF THE JUST

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Few works touch upon the sacred human drive to perfect ourselves, to do what's best and holiest, and to fulfill one's life goal as well as "The Path of the Just". Written by a holy man (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto) in a way that nonetheless enables even us humble and flawed souls to resonate with its message and to connect with its goals, it is an utterly unique Torah work.

For what it does so incomparably well is to lay out divine goals, to stir us to aspire for them by evoking the reward, and then to lay out the method -- both what to aim for and what to be sure to avoid in the process.

The goal? Nothing less than drawing close to G-d Almighty, both in one's lifetime and in the beyond. The reward? Achieving that in fact, in fully palpable ways. The method? Attaining the following traits: caution, enthusiasm, innocence, abstinence, purity, piety, modesty, fear of sin, holiness, divine inspiration, and the resurrection of the dead, while steering clear of their opposites.

And it's all based on the fulsome and powerful Torah verse that reads, "And now, Israel -- what does G-d your L-rd require of you, if not to revere G-d your L-rd; to go in all of His ways, to love Him and to serve G-d your L-rd with full heart and soul, and to keep all of G-d's commandments and statutes...." (Deuteronomy 10:12-13).

What we'll do in this series is quote from the book itself at times, encapsulate and expand upon the ideas when that's called for, explain Ramchal's intentions, and cite from some of his other works that address the same themes from different perspectives.

"The Path of the Just" calls for great effort, to be sure. For it demands full loyalty, it challenges our comfortable sense of self, and prods us in directions we hadn't known of beforehand. And yet we will find ourselves drawn to its call like few other works. Why?

Because somewhere deep in each Jewish heart there lays a muffled, curious melody that's somehow unnerving ... yet tantalizing, that wants to divulge secrets and to finally allow for true happiness. And it wants to be heard once and for all, before it's too late. It's the heart's song to G-d, the lyrics of which are the words of "The Path of the Just". May G-d grant us the ability to hear it out and heed its call.

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