

THE DUTIES OF THE HEART, GATE 4:4 - PART 4

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Now onto the fourth area in which we're to trust in G-d's decisions for us. And it touches upon our Divine service -- i.e., the mitzvot we do.

We're faced with an interesting puzzle right from the outset as far as this is concerned. If, as we've been saying, it's G-d's will that's carried out in the world in the end, and the greater part of wisdom involves catching sight of that -- then, is it *G-d* who fulfills the mitzvot He charged us to, or do we ourselves?

It's a heady concept, indeed. After all, G-d bestowed the mitzvah system upon us to better ourselves and our world, He granted us the maturity and freedom of being needed to follow through on it -- and yet it's a forgone conclusion that G-d determines everything that happens in the world, *including* whether we'll fulfill mitzvot or not!

So, where does *my* will begin and G-d's will end? Where do I come in and G-d "step aside", if you will? We'll find that there's a point past which we indeed haven't any control ... but that we do in fact have control right up to it.

Let's start by citing something we offered earlier in this chapter. A question arose as to whether we should even bother earning a living in light of G-d's decrees, and we determined that it would be wrong to simply sit back, because G-d wants us to be active in this world. Well, the same principle could be applied to fulfilling mitzvot, as we'll soon explain.

Ibn Pakudah asserts that three things happen whenever we do something or another: we first decide to do it, we then determine to do it in fact and start out to, and then we actually do it -- or we don't manage to. His point is that all we have control over is the first two, but that we haven't any control over the last -- over whether something will indeed come about or not -- for that's in G-d's hands. Indeed, who among us hasn't decided to do something, set out to do it, and failed miserably despite his or her own best efforts *for no apparent reason*? The solution to that enigma lies in the fact that G-d didn't want that thing to come about. (And the opposite is just as true. Many have decided not to do something, affirmed in their minds that they wouldn't, yet did it anyway all because of G-d's decree.)

Well, the same goes for our mitzvot. It's we who decide to do or not do them, and to follow through on that, but it's G-d who brings our decisions to fruition. So, it would be wrong to depend upon and

trust G-d's role in our decisions and plans to fulfill a mitzvah, since it's we alone who do that. Where we should trust G-d is His own decisions about whether our intentions are fulfilled or not.

Thus it would be wrong to simply "sit back" in this instance, too, and let G-d decide if we'll do a mitzvah or not. Because G-d wants us to decide to, and to try to follow through on it.

Know, however, that if you *do* manage to fulfill the mitzvah you set out to, you'll be rewarded for deciding to serve Him and for managing to. But if you don't manage to, you'll still in all be rewarded for the right decision.

An interesting side-point to all this is that you can never know what course to follow when it comes to material things -- what's right to do or what's wrong, what's in your best interests or not, etc. So it would only be wise to do what you have to do, ask G-d for help and guidance, and then take a deep breath and trust in His decisions about the outcome. But when it comes to your spiritual life, the opposite is true. For you can easily determine what's right or wrong and the like, with the Torah's help. So it would be *wrong* to trust in G-d's decision on the spot about what you should or shouldn't do.

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