

THE DUTIES OF THE HEART , GATE 4:5 - PART 1

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Now that we've learned the best ways to trust G-d's decisions about things, we're going to take a little test. We'll look at the various attitudes that people who truly trust G-d exhibit and contrast them with those most others do, and we'll ask ourselves which camp we ourselves fall in. The honest soul will be stunned, I assure you.

First, people who trust Him "accept G-d's judgment in all things and thank Him for both the good and the bad", in Ibn Pakuda's words. After all, it's He alone who knows what's truly for the good and what's not, since only He has all the information one would need to have to know that. The wise take that to heart -- even when the outcome doesn't sit well with their heart -- and trust in G-d's wisdom. While the rest of us who think "we're" in control "boast when things go well ... and become flabbergasted when they go badly", as he puts it, simply because we forget about G-d's presence.

Second, those who trust G-d are always "relaxed and ... tranquil in times of trouble". For indeed, they realize that G-d surely knows what He's doing, and that something's inevitably going on in the background that we're not aware of which will somehow or another have things work out for the best in the end. The rest of us, on the other hand, are "always burdened, worried and aggrieved, regardless of whether things go well" for us or not. For indeed, when things go badly we become morose, and when things go well we're still and all "dissatisfied with our lot -- and want even more" due to our misplaced trust in the worldly rather than the Divine.

Third, those who trust G-d don't depend on their career itself to earn them their livelihood. They see their original choice of a career as "a decision they'd made to serve G-d" rather than as a form of self-definition, as so many of us do. If they happen to do well in their work "they thank G-d for that -- but they don't love their profession any more so as a consequence"; while if they happen to do poorly they still and all "know that they only earn a living when and how G-d wants them to". The rest of us, though, trust in our careers themselves. So if we do well we praise our choice of career, while if we do poorly we "give up on it and despise it", as if the career itself had failed us.

Fourth, when the people who trust G-d find that they have more money than they need they "spend it generously and goodheartedly on things that please G-d". After all, there'll be more coming eventually. The rest of us, though, "never have enough" so we're reluctant to spend our money on anything or anyone other than ourselves -- which is a degree of self-absorption that's deeply rooted in distrust of G-d.

We'll continue along these lines next time.

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