

# THE DUTIES OF THE HEART, GATE 5:6

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Dedicating our actions to G-d comes down to making sure that everything we do is done in the service of G-d (see 5:1), *including what we think*. So we'll explore the implications of that fact then end this chapter with Ibn Pakudah's final points.

First off let it be said outright that *all* our actions are first cut-to-size, mixed together, stirred, cooked, seasoned, then served-out by our minds beforehand. Not a single thing we do is raw or roughcast. So it behooves us to pay close attention to our thoughts, assumptions, and expectations; for everything we do and say, everything we become, and the very station of our souls depends on them.

But few of us know what we're thinking at any given moment. We may know what we *tend* to think about one thing or another, or under certain circumstances; but we're often not aware what we're thinking right now. Indeed, all sorts of ideas -- high and low -- slosh about in our minds all the time, and an array of words spill out of our mouths again and again, without a thought given to what lies behind it all. But if we're ever to achieve true spiritual excellence we'd need to know what we're thinking (and feeling) to determine if it resonates with our spiritual goals or not.

It follows then that we'd first need to learn to "read our own minds", so to speak. Then once we do that and uncover the impetus behind what we do, we'd need to learn how to nourish all that with the kinds of thoughts, aspirations, and dreams that will lead to spiritual excellence.

Ibn Pakudah ends this lengthy chapter (and gate) with the following sage advice: "Don't overlook what I've encouraged you in" here in this chapter, "for while I have gathered together *most* of the things likely to prevent you from dedicating your actions to G-d, a nearly endless number of offshoots from them. So be as cautious as you can to wholly dedicate your actions to G-d".

"Try as hard as possible to purify your actions ... and see to it that when it comes to Divine service you don't act like the bird who laid an egg, set it down to warm on the ground without paying attention to it, and then saw other animals destroy it before it had a chance to hatch" -- which is to say, do your best but take care not to abandon your efforts in midcourse as so many do.

Ibn Pakudah then ends with the following prayer: "May G-d in His mercy include us among those He considers upright, who act for the sake of His great name. Amen."

Copyright © =\$year by [Rabbi Yaakov Feldman](#) and **[Torah.org](#)**

[Subscribe](#) to *Spiritual Excellence* and receive the class via e-mail.