

THE DUTIES OF THE HEART - GATE 6 INTRODUCTION

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Nothing sets the spiritually gifted apart from the rest of us more than their utter lack of hubris and arrogance. For indeed nothing wreaks more spiritual havoc than the sort of loud and brusque assertions of self we're accustomed to voicing.

So if we're ever to achieve true spiritual excellence we'd need to learn how important it is to abide by the decisions of and surrender to forces greater than ourselves, and most especially to G-d Almighty. That is, not only to be humble of person and less than self-assertive, but to actually set self aside and surrender to the other's will.

(G-d only knows, though, how unmodern and backward that sounds to us! But it's nonetheless a basic and immortal truism that's emphatically propounded by people whose spiritual accomplishments we most admire. And it implies neither naivete about the harm others can do to you when you act that way, nor the healthy need to assert self at times; but this will all be touched on later in this gate.)

Ibn Pakudah explains that he'd decided to elaborate on this trait now, right after having discussed dedicating our deeds to G-d, simply because it "hampers your progress and more seriously inhibits your deeds" than arrogance. And nothing "prevents all that" better than surrender, which is the antithesis of arrogance and "the very root of Divine service".

So we'll offer the following in the course of this gate: a definition of just what "surrender" is, the various instances in which we practice it, what causes a person to surrender himself to another's will, when it's propitious to practice it and when not, how to acquire the trait for yourself, practices to be followed by those who surrender, when surrender is possible and when it's not, whether it follows on the heels of other good traits or vice versa, whether it's possible to be self-assured and to surrender at the same time, and a list of the material and spiritual benefits to surrendering.

This series is dedicated to the memory of Yitzchak Hehrsh ben Daniel z"l, and Sara Rivka bas Yaakov Dovid, z"l.

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