

THE DUTIES OF THE HEART, GATE 10:7 - PART 1

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

We come close now to the end of this gate and to our study of "The Duties of the Heart". And there's no better way than to depict the demeanor of those who do indeed love G-d, heart and soul.

As Ibn Pakudah portrays it, those who love Him to that extent "know their G-d and realize that He's pleased with them, that He guides, directs and sustains them, and that He controls and is in charge of everything". It's also clear to them that "all their activities and movements depend on G-d's decree and will, so they no longer prefer one thing to another and they trust instead that He'll choose the best and most appropriate course for them."

These great and lofty souls want nothing better than to "please Him with all their heart and mind, and they stop yearning for things of the world and its boastings" and "they look instead, both wholeheartedly and with the full force of their souls, for help and courage from G-d to keep their thoughts fixed on His service."

They likewise "praise and thank G-d for all their accomplishments But when their plans to do good don't come to fruition because of circumstances, they absolve themselves from them before G-d and decide to do them when they can, and they await the time G-d will prepare for them (to do them in fact)" -- unlike those of us who brood when our plans fall through and our best of intentions are waylaid. Those who truly love G-d "forsake worldly affairs and the more rank concerns of their bodies ... , and only involve themselves in them when they have to" and they "apply their souls and hearts to Torah study and to the service of G-d in order to honor and aggrandize Him instead, and in order to observe His mitzvot."

How do such individuals appear to others? Are they otherworldly and odd looking? Not at all, we're told. "They may seem shy" at first, because they're more contemplative and focused than most of us, "(but) if you were to speak to them they'd prove to be sages. For they'd know the answer to whatever you might ask them", since they commune with G-d. And "you'd find them to be uncomfortable with and baffled by worldly matters, since their hearts are full of the love of G-d and they want none of the things others desire", but they'd certainly be welcoming and lucid.

There's even more to be said about them, though.

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