

THE DUTIES OF THE HEART, GATE 6:10

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

In the end we'll find that there's a world of spiritual and everyday advantages to surrendering to G-d's will and wishes.

First off, there's the sure peace of mind and simple joy that comes with being satisfied with your lot in life, and with realizing that we each have exactly what G-d Almighty wants us to. For once you know that, you can eat whatever comes your way, wear whatever you find, and be content with everything. Those who never learn that lesson, though, are often gruff and huffy, and put-off by nearly everything.

You can far more easily bear with the sorts of reverses and burdens that befall each one of us when you're humble enough to accept G-d's decisions in your life, while you can't help but be fearful and unable to bear them when you assume that it's *you* who is to answer for everything.

It's far easier to love and to be loved when you learn to acquiesce to others humbly and are willing to take others to heart rather than assert self loudly. And like the sage cited by Ibn Pakudah who learned this secret said when asked how he came to be so beloved, you too would tend to say, "You know, I never met anyone I didn't assume to be better than me in some way. If he was a greater sage, for example, then I'd assume he was also more G-d-fearing than I. If he was a lesser sage, then I'd assume he'll be judged more leniently than I, since I transgress knowingly while he only transgresses inadvertently. If he were older than I, then I'd assume he has more merit than I since he came into the world before me and was thus able accrue more of them. If he were younger than I, then I'd assume he'd sinned less than I had by now. If he were equal to me in age and in wisdom, then I'd assume he was probably more pleasing to G-d than I, for while I know full well all the sins I've committed, I don't even know if he'd committed any at all. If he were wealthier than I, then I'd assume he used his wealth to serve G-d, give charity, and help the poor better than I can. And if he were poorer than I, then I'd assume he was more humble than I".

You also manage to accrue more wisdom when you acquiesce to others, since you're willing to be drawn to sages and heed their advice; you serve G-d more diligently and zealously, taking less credit for what you do and meaning only to please Him; and lastly, you merit great favor from on High.

Ibn Pakudah seems to end this gate with a sigh, though. For he counsels us to follow through on all we'd learned here and to not give up on it "just because you see others neglecting it." Indeed, the truth be known, self-assertion is the banner-call of modernity and its great ideal, and humility is seen as a rut one falls into while sliding downward. But people of abiding faith who strive for spiritual excellence and yearn for closeness to G-d know better. And they're nourished by the benefits cited above day after day.

And he ends with the prayer that "G-d in His mercy and lovingkindness teach us all the way to serve Him".

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