

THE DUTIES OF THE HEART, GATE 6:6

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

The sort of people who'd reflect upon what we pointed out last time and take it all to heart would be expected to be different from you and me. And indeed they would be. They'd tend to concentrate upon certain specific things and to exhibit some very laudable traits that you and I might not. But they'd still need to advance further yet to follow through on their will to succumb to G-d's wishes.

They'd need to dwell on how bounteously generous G-d has been to us all by placing us in the unique position we humans are in. After all, we have it within us to strive for spiritual excellence unlike any other entity, which enables us to break free of our bonds and soar upward. Most of us don't give thought to that and settle instead on the crunch of breakfast, rush of lunch, and heat of dinner. But those individuals would do well to dwell on it if they're ever to catch sight of G-d in course of things and to hear out His charges.

They'd also be encouraged to learn to resign themselves to the exigencies of life and to accept every happenstance G-d provides them with courage and grace. For while everyday experience sometimes seems to be a reckless driver whose antics force us to hold on to the rails for dear life, it's actually all part of G-d's plan and thus serves as a chance to sense His Being.

We'd expect you to "speak kindly to others, judge them favorably, and never insult them", if you'd decided to surrender to G-d's wishes for you, and "to forgive them if they speak against or insult you -- even when you don't deserve it", as Ibn Pakudah put it. First off because, after all, it was He who placed them in your path for His own good reasons. And secondly because perhaps the greatest aid to surrendering is the sort of self-transcendence you'd exhibit by acting that way.

And you'd be urged not to be "one way on the outside, while another inside" as he put it -- to profess a willingness to take things as they come while actually being unconvinced. But, how do we ever avoid that? Just "plan your activities well, appropriately, in a balanced way and consistently", we're told, and *consciously* set out to truly "do them in a spirit of surrender and humility."

We'll continue along these lines next time.

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