

THE DUTIES OF THE HEART, GATE 6:7

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

There are certain clear and unambiguous signs that a person has decided to dedicate his being to fulfilling G-d's wishes. Let's explore them now and see just where our own dedication stands in the face of them.

First off, someone who would indeed dedicate himself to G-d that way would be utterly nonchalant and well-poised in the face of nearly anything worldly. After all, he'd be devoted to pleasing G-d alone and no one else, so if someone were to insult him, for example, this dedicated soul would nonetheless self-effacingly forgive the offender.

How? you ask. By recalling what matters and what doesn't. For if you or I were criticized for our choice of pens, for example, we might be taken aback for a moment but we certainly wouldn't take it to heart. Simply because it doesn't matter. And similarly, if the above sort of person would suddenly be struck by mishap or misfortune, he'd accept that all in a detached and even-tempered sort of way, too, because he'd have learned by then to accept all of G-d's decisions in his life.

He'd be remarkably blunt about himself as so few of us are, and would know only too well his own failings and blemishes. So if someone were to praise him, this trusting soul would have to laugh to himself, knowing the other side of the story; in fact, he'd consider his accepting the compliment to be another fault on his part.

Contrarily, if someone were to point out one of his faults indeed, he'd take that person to task for having only noticed that one! "There are so many others lurking in the background," he'd think, "that I'm actually embarrassed by his having noticed this one, on the chance that it might lead him to uncover all the others!" And if he were falsely accused of something he'd be stunned by the fact that he wasn't indeed guilty of what he was accused of, seeing how much wrongdoing he was actually capable of.

Finally, he'd be humble, respectful, and kind to all despite his wisdom and understanding, perhaps, and regardless of all the other gifts he might have been born with. And he'd easily find fault with himself rather than with others.

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