

# THE DUTIES OF THE HEART, GATE 7:6

*by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman*

But, what in the world would ever inspire us to do teshuva? After all, it seems to go against the grain to admit to being wrong and having to change; for nothing gratifies the human heart more than being right and simply staying in place. In fact, though, we'll find that four things would move us to teshuva.

The first (and most altruistic) thing would be the stark, vital, and quick realization of G-d's presence in the world and His all-embracing benevolence, and of how compelled we feel to worship and draw close to Him again in light of all that. After all, if it occurred to me that the person I admire most and whom I depend upon loved me despite my failings, I'd want to better myself in full appreciation of that. And that's all the more so true if I'd realized that of G-d Almighty and my connection to Him.

The second (which, like the others to follow, are more self-serving but valuable anyway) would be our recalling all the portentous and baleful things the prophets had said in the past about the fate of the wrongful, and the selfsame things more contemporary seers, sages and holy ones say (since each age has its dispatchers of G-d's directives, its own guides and spokespeople).

The third thing would be our own realization of how much the wrongful suffer; and how we might be affected that way, too, if we continue doing things we'd need to repent for. (Do very bad people manage to do very well despite it? Of course they do. But all sorts of things, large and small, public and private, inward and outward, go wrong in a person's being, life, and encounters that people tend to slough off as "bad luck", "setbacks", "utterly unexpected circumstances" and the like that are actually cumulative instances of payback for very bad moral choices.)

And the fourth thing would be your realizing how your \*own\* ongoing large and small, public and private, inward and outward woes and vexations are a consequence of your wrongdoing! (How shocking a realization that can be; how jolting and eloquent an instance of self-disclosure!) While this may be the least altruistic prod of all, it's effective nonetheless, as long as it leads to true heartfelt teshuva in a spirit of contrition and remorse.

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