

THE DUTIES OF THE HEART, GATE 8:3 - PART 1

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

It's become clear that introspection at bottom is the act of taking stock of what we've been granted and thanking the Supplier. But just imagine all the instances in life we could dwell on to do that! So since we couldn't possibly feature all of them we'll focus on thirty of the most fundamental of all. This too will obviously take us quite a while but it will prove to be very helpful and enlightening -- if we take each one to heart.

The first instance to consider, obviously, is our birth. Ibn Pakudah asks us to reflect upon the fact that we each came from out of nowhere to life itself "not as a result of our merits, but simply because of G-d's generosity, goodness, and kindness". How true. For each one of us could simply have never been, and nothing we'd done beforehand would have guaranteed us existence or deemed us indispensable. G-d's love and generosity alone allowed for us to be, and we have a lot to be thankful for, for that alone.

So we're charged to thank G-d outright for that privilege by reflecting upon the following. "Just imagine you were thrown out into the street by your mother as an infant" Ibn Pakudah offers, "and a passing stranger took pity on you, brought you home, and took it upon himself to raise you. Imagine how obliged you'd be to him ... !" That's all the more so true when it comes to G-d. We'd do well to use that as a model for how freely we should be giving our thanks to Him.

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