

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

*by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman*

Then we're to dwell on how often we lay all our hopes and dreams on the few, lean years we're given in this world rather than on the eternity that can be ours. "Try to extract the love of this world from your heart" we're advised, "and replace it with a love of the world to come". For not a single one of us can love both life in the here-and-now and life in Heaven's bosom. But that's not to say that we're to abandon the here-and- now entirely, G-d forbid, as we'll see.

The best way to live, we're taught, is to discipline our drives, use our faculties to concentrate on G-d's Torah, and reject the raw and brutish. Yet we're also to enjoy "healthful, appetizing foods and drinks, ... and (to) be sensitive to what's good for us and what we need". For the point needs to be made (again and again) that we're not to abandon the physical or to despise it -- just to not spoil our bodies silly. And to balance the body's appetites with the soul's.

For "if you mean to improve your body by paying attention to it alone, you're bound to overlook the betterment of your soul; while if you mean to keep your soul alive by paying attention to \*it\* alone, then you're bound to overlook your body's needs". So, "pay attention and be sensitive to the body and don't neglect what's important for it", but provide your soul with the nourishment it needs, too.

We're then asked to dwell on how seriously we take the fact that we stand in G-d's presence all the time. After all, we tend to disregard Him despite His supreme sovereignty, while we'd never disregard a powerful and prestigious mortal we were standing in front of. But our values are skewed, for what person with any wisdom whatsoever doesn't "realize how unable a king (or anyone else of authority and power) is to fully enforce his decrees, how slow he is to recompense, how remote he is from (his charges), how unable he is to notice them and how thoroughly preoccupied he is with his own affairs to care about them?" unlike G-d who's omnipotent, just, immanent, omnipresent, and compassionate.

So, Ibn Pakudah challenges us to truly become aware of G-d's presence in our lives. After all, "how long can a person rebel against Him" by avoiding Him, "when he knows that G-d is watching over ... him, outside and in?".

Now touching on a subject most of us don't really bear well, Ibn Pakudah then suggests we reflect upon how we contend with trials and tribulations. And he suggests that we somehow learn to "happily accept things as being from G-d, and (to) resign ourselves willingly to G-d's judgment" rather than resent them. But he then offers that we're also only to "resign ourselves to things \*when

it's appropriate to\*", which is surprising, since we'd have expected him to say that we're to resign ourselves to \*every\* circumstance. So, let's explore his point here.

He contends that there are different sorts of resignation to sad circumstances, and that it's important to know the difference. For there are instances in which we draw closer to G-d by submitting ourselves to those sorts of sad circumstances, and others in which we draw \*away\* from Him by doing that.

For sometimes we suffer as a consequence of our misdeeds. And if we simply resign ourselves to \*those\* sorts of trials and tribulations, then we're bound to draw away from G-d. After all, if we're comfortable with what goes wrong with us because we've strayed from G-d, we're hardly likely to do what it takes to draw close to Him.

Yet other times we suffer in order to be challenged to grow (since pain either toughens and strengthens or it wears-down and weakens, depending on your reaction to it). If we \*honestly\* determine that that's why we're suffering rather than for our misdeeds (which calls for a lot of introspection), then we're advised to indeed resign to that reality. Since both the transcendence we'd have achieved and our resignation to G-d's will itself will elevate us in the end.

---

Text Copyright © 2005 by [Rabbi Yaakov Feldman](#) and **Torah.org**