

THE DUTIES OF THE HEART, GATE 8:5

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

There's a question as to whether we should be introspective and dwell on the sorts of things we cited before all the time or not. After all, wouldn't that distract us from so many other things?

At bottom we're told that if we have the mental acuity that something like that would call for -- which not everyone has -- that we're to be introspective "with every blink of the eye" and "each and every breath". Why? In order to "make sure that we stand in awe and dread before G-d *all the time*", not just when the spirit moves us.

But consider the ramifications of that. It implies that we're to concentrate on G-d's presence and His interactions with us wherever we are and with whomever we're with; that we're not to only talk and interact with those others, but with G-d too, who's also there (it should occur to us)! In other words, we're to perform on two different planes at once, if you will -- speak to two different "people" at the same time while taking each one's "feelings" into account, moment by moment. Few things are as fulfilling or as difficult to do, and little has the potential to extend our boundaries as far as that.

Is that difficult? To be sure. But is it for us? Yes -- after all, we're in search of spiritual excellence, which not only calls for the above-cited mental acuity but a lot of effort and dedication as well.

But, take heart, we're assured, and don't ever think your efforts to draw close to G-d that way -- no matter how small -- are ever in vain. For Ibn Pakudah reports that even "a little from you is a lot to Him", which he then offers an analogy for.

He asks us to consider how slowly sunlight seems to move on the ground, and to then realize that "even when it seems to only be moving a foot or so on the ground" at a time that "it's actually moving many miles" in the heavens. What that means to say is that no matter how little progress we detect in our Divine service "on the ground" day after day we're to know that we've actually managed to travel many, many miles in G-d's eyes.

(Unfortunately, though, the same is true of the effect our seemingly minor transgressions make in the heavens. For they too leave deep and long impressions in the cosmos even if we think otherwise.)

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