

THE DUTIES OF THE HEART, GATE 8 INTRODUCTION

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

We came upon a number of profound realizations about ourselves in the last gate that touched upon who we are, how much we matter and all that we effect, as well as what we're capable of being (see Ch. 3 there). So it should be clear to us just how important reflection and introspection are, given all the insight they provide us.

But there's a difference between reflection and introspection. For as we discovered in the gate that discusses it (Gate Two), reflection focuses upon the broad and abundant world around us; while as we'll soon learn, introspection focuses upon the deep and teeming world *within* us and upon our spiritual standing. We'll also discover how important it is to practice it if we want to come to true spiritual excellence and to realize yet other vital truisms. And there's yet another important element to it: it always takes G-d's presence into account.

So we'll start off by defining introspection, then explore whether there's only one way to do it, in what instances we're to practice it (and there'll prove to be a *world* of them), what it does for us, if there are times we should avoid it, and what we're to do after engaging in it.

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