

# THE DUTIES OF THE HEART, GATE 9:5 - PART 3

*by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman*

And finally, we practice Torah-sanctioned abstinence from \*within\* in the following ways. Overall, by limiting our concerns for and interactions with the world (other than when it comes to earning a living and being with family). That's to say that we're to learn to dissociate ourselves to a degree from our mundane surroundings in order to focus on growth and spiritual excellence.

We're not to seek out physical pleasures or relaxation per se (other than for health purposes, or in order to go on with our spiritual efforts with renewed vigor), nor are we to try to control others (which many find to be a great and hearty, though cruel personal delight), or to be arrogant.

Yet we're enjoined to only practice this in order to draw close to G-d, rather than "for the sake of a good reputation", which is to say, rather than to be known as a pious individual when you're not (just imagine the high arrogance of such hypocrisy!).

We're warned again, though, not to "go beyond the limits set by Torah in our abstinence" and to thus never fast on the Shabbat or on Holy Days and New Moons, for example, in the mistaken belief that it would only be logical to be as transcendent and as unworldly as possible on such special days. And we're likewise cautioned not to refrain from "our G-d-given obligations to be fruitful and multiply" and to thus marry and procreate, though we're reminded to act according to the standards that the Torah delineates.

In the end, we're told to "minimize our worldly cravings" by reflecting on the fact that we might very well be "about to leave (the world) this evening", knowing full well how precarious life is, and how short-lived even our greatest dreams often are. And we're reminded to be introspective in order to keep a perspective on things; to "abandon hope of ever getting what others have", when all that leads to is vain strife; to "trust G-d and be satisfied with His decrees and judgments"; and to realize that all of The Duties of the Heart explicated in this book are in fact paradigms of abstinence.

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