

“Two Passages”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

One passage from the Talmud and one from Hasidic literature:

A favorite saying of the Rabbis of Yavneh was: I am God's creature and my fellow is God's creature. My work is in the town and his work is in the country. I rise early in the morning to my work, and he rises early in the morning for his work. Just as he does not presume to do my work, I do not presume to do his. Will you say that I do much and he does little? We have learned: one may do much or little, but it is all one so long as he directs his heart to heaven. (Talmud, Berachot 17a)

Martin Buber offers this Hasidic teaching:

It will not do to tell one's fellow what way he is to pursue, There is a way of serving God by study, another of serving Him by prayer; one by deeds of lovingkindness towards others; there is a way to be pursued by fasting and there is one to be pursued by eating. All of these are right ways to the service of God, but each is to observe well toward which his heart inclines him. Thereupon he is to be active upon that way with all his might.