

The Springs of Life
Haigazian, 4th June 2023
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"Guard your heart above all else, for from it flow the springs of life" (Proverbs 4:23)

When venturing towards new horizons, we hear today: "Guard your heart"! At the time of embarking on new paths of life, we hear: "From your heart, flow the springs of life"! To turn towards life or to turn within one's heart? Or both?

Have you ever seen a movie scene where a dying person struggles to say something important? Everyone leans in and tries to listen carefully to collect his final wishes and fulfill them if possible. The reading from the book of Proverbs that we have just heard is a final word, like a testament, that you listen to during your graduation ceremony, perhaps a final word that you hear together in your university before leaving. Do you have ears? Do you have eyes? A mouth, lips, feet? The text touches upon all these physical aspects, it almost sounds like a biology lesson! All these physical members of the body are visible, tangible, and external, but only the heart is internal, and it is from it flow the springs of life!

What does it mean to "guard your heart"? What are the springs of life? Don't worry, this is not an exam question, and I don't claim to have a definitive answer. Allow me to offer few insights.

First, the physical heart is naturally well-guarded, well-defended, in order to sustain bodily life. From it, as well, flows the blood and circulates in all bodily parts without which life ceases. Ribs, membranes and protective layers shield it and enable it to do its job. If the heart suffers, the entire body suffers. If the heart is sick, the whole body is sick.

However, on a human and spiritual level, how do we guard our heart? In our Eastern culture and in Semitic anthropology, the heart does not only relate to feelings, but it governs will, desire, attitudes and behaviors. It is the seat of choice between good and evil. It is the center that gives meaning to life. Guard your heart, for it is the most precious and authentic possession of a human being. The image of the sentinel can help us to reflect.

*The sentinel, or sentry, the soldier who guards the city or camp, watches the access doors to ensure that the enemies cannot enter. Regarding our heart, the entrance doors are the ears, the eyes, the senses, while the exit door is mainly our lips and our words! If these entrances and exit gates are not guarded, our inner city may be invaded! Faced with these access doors, we have to be

vigilant and alert. Am I passing what I hear, see, and feel, allowing love and truth to emanate? Are my words and actions guided by sincerity and love? This vigilant attention, which seeks peace and truth, becomes a spring of life, for both ourselves and those around us.

First strategic approach: be vigilant and mindful of what we see and hear, to keep the spring of life within our hearts and our environment.

*The sentinel, who is always on the lookout, notices the slightest movement of the enemy. This soldier is not lazy and wastes no time waiting. As soon as we feel tiredness, boredom, disappointment or frustration in the face of injustice and corruption, we must act immediately to safeguard our hearts and preventing the gradual grip of death. A wounded, polluted and burdened heart cannot freely bring forth the springs of life.

Second strategic approach: Swiftly react to the first signs of negativity and rebound with the vitality of youth.

*The sentinel warns others. Alone soldier cannot confront the enemy. First, the sentinel informs, communicates, announces, and alerts. Faced with the difficulties of life, the role of friendship becomes indispensable. While each of you each may embark on individual journey, the bonds with your true friends remain. Don't forget about that.

Third strategic approach: Never stand alone. True friends are steadfast pillars of support.

*Lastly, the sentinel is convinced of its importance and its critical function to protect its compatriots. By upholding your values, you keep your significance. Family, civic, human and spiritual values shape our life and serve as a spring of life and perseverance. It is impossible to fight for a cause that lacks personal value.

Fourth strategic approach: Stay true and faithful to your values. Our society does not require more corrupt people; there are already enough of them.

Life encompasses more than eating, drinking and working. It is the ability to act, to connect, to embrace new experiences and to have a lasting impact. If you aspire to "make a difference", guard your heart, guard its boundaries, hold on to your true friends, cling to your cherished values. By doing so, the springs of life will flow forth in abundance. Embrace the journey towards life and may God's blessing be with you.