

רְצִיצָא דְמִית בְּיַעוּתָהּ, הֵיכָא נִפְק רֹחָא

The Chick in Its Shell

THE TEACHING

One of the shortest Torahs. The elders of Athens asked Rabbi Yehoshua:

“רְצִיצָא דְמִית בְּיַעוּתָהּ, הֵיכָא נִפְק רֹחָא”, a chick that dies in its shell, where does its spirit go out? He answered: “בְּהֵינּוּ דְעָל”, where it came in.

Rebbe Nachman reads the chick as the tzaddik (צַדִּיק), who gives over his soul (מַסִּירוֹת נַפְשׁ) in prayer (תַּפִּלָּה), and the question as where in prayer he must give it most.

MAIN POINTS

- A chick is an אֶפְרוֹחַ, like the tzaddik: “יִפְרַח בְּיָמָיו צַדִּיק” (תהלים עב:), “in his days the tzaddik will flourish.”
- The shell, בְּיַעוּתָהּ, hints at בְּעוּתָהּ, his entreaty: the tzaddik makes himself as if dead and gives over his soul “בְּצִלּוּתָהּ וּבְעוּתָהּ”, in his prayer and entreaty.
- The answer, “where it came in”: wherever stray thoughts (מַחֲשַׁבוֹת זָרוֹת) come into him in the middle of prayer.
- They carry sparks of holiness (נִיצוּצֵי הַקִּדְשָׁה) that he must raise up, and there above all he must give over his soul.

A PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY · OUR OWN REFLECTION

When a stray thought breaks into your prayer, you have not failed. You have found the very place where the prayer needs your whole heart.

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