

לענין המחשבות זרות שבתפלה

Stray Thoughts in Prayer

THE TEACHING

What should we do about stray thoughts (מחשבות זרות) that come in the middle of prayer (תפלה)? Rebbe Nachman's answer: keep walking.

Every single thought is “קומה שלמה”, a complete structure, a whole form with a head and limbs. A stray thought in prayer is a קלפה, a force of the other side, and it too is a whole structure.

MAIN POINTS

- The way to beat them is not to look at them at all: pray in order (בסדר) and don't turn around to look behind you. Then they leave on their own.
- As a person goes forward in his prayer he knocks them down: “לזה חותך יד, ולזה חותך רגל”, “cutting off the hand of one, the foot of another.”
- Picture a war: a soldier must pass through a crowd of killers and ambushers. If he is a mighty warrior (גבור), he does not stop to fight each one; he strikes them down as he walks through.
- Prayer is exactly the same. When you strengthen yourself to keep praying in order and not look at them, you defeat them entirely, or cut them down limb by limb.

A PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY · OUR OWN REFLECTION

Fighting a stray thought head on gives it attention. When one comes, don't argue with it: move forward to the next word, and that takes its power away.

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