

מְסִירַת-נֶפֶשׁ יֵשׁ לְכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָל

Self-Sacrifice Every Day, and the Walls That Are Not There

THE TEACHING

Every Jew has self-sacrifice (מְסִירַת-נֶפֶשׁ) every day and every hour: giving hard-earned money to tzedakah (צְדָקָה), and battling stray thoughts in prayer (תְּפִלָּה).

Each person's obstacles (מְנִיעוֹת) are only as great as he can bear, and Hashem is hidden in the obstacle itself. The greatest is a mind and heart divided from Hashem or the tzaddik; the answer is to cry out. And a parable of the Baal Shem Tov about walls that are not there.

MAIN POINTS

- Money is the soul: of the worker the Torah says “וְאֵלָיו הוּא נִשְׂא אֶת-נַפְשׁוֹ” (דברים כה:טו), “for it he risks his life.” You toiled and took risks to earn it, and now you give it for Hashem.
- And in prayer, as the Midrash HaNe’elam teaches: “כִּי עָלֶיךָ הִרְגָנוּ כָּל-הַיּוֹם” (תהלים מד:כג), “for Your sake we are killed all day.” Prayer is a great war with thoughts and confusions (בְּלִבּוֹלִים), and clever ways to escape them.
- Everyone thinks his obstacles are bigger than his friend's. But each person has obstacles only according to his strength (כֹּחַ), what he can bear if he wants. And truly there is no obstacle: Hashem Himself is clothed in it.
- The greatest obstacle is of the mind (מְנִיעַת הַמֶּחֶ): you may break through and travel to the tzaddik, and still, if your heart has questions (קְשִׁיּוֹת) and crookedness against him, that blocks you more than anything. So too in prayer: “לִבִּי סָחָרָחַר” (תהלים לח:יא), “my heart goes round and round.”
- Then cry out to your Father in Heaven with a strong voice, from the depths of the heart, and He hears. The letters of קְשִׁיָּא, a question, are the initials of “שְׁמַע ה' קוֹלִי אֶקְרָא” (תהלים כו:א), “Hear, Hashem, my voice when I call.”
- The Baal Shem Tov's parable: a king hid a treasure and surrounded it, by illusion (אֲחִיזַת-עֵינַיִם), with many walls. Some turned back at once, some broke one wall and stopped at the next. Then the king's son said, “all the walls are only illusion”, and walked through them all.
- So all the obstacles and temptations are walls around the treasure of יִרְאַת-שָׁמַיִם, and in truth they are nothing. The main thing is “לֵב חָזַק וְאַמִּיץ”, a strong and courageous heart; then money and family pressures are all as nothing.

A PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY · OUR OWN REFLECTION

Your daily tzedakah and your hard-won prayers are real self-sacrifice. When a wall rises in front of you, remember it was made to your size, and Hashem is inside it. Cry out, and walk on.

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