

THE SECRET OF CONCENTRATION

by Rabbi Daniel Travis

Tefillah is the service of the heart. Chazal understood that a person's heart does not automatically serve Hashem. Rather, one needs to prepare his heart beforehand. How does one go about this?

Someone who prays must direct his heart to the heavens. Abba Shaul found an allusion to this halachah in the verse of Tehillim (10,17), "Prepare their hearts, Hashem, listen to their prayers" (Berachos 31a).

The Radak explains the above verse as follows: "Remove from their hearts worldly distractions, for their hearts are occupied with their poverty and distress. And You should help them to direct their hearts to You with the right intentions. Then You will listen to their prayers."

The above words offer us insight into how to achieve effective concentration during tefillah. We begin our prayers with sincere intentions, but soon after we may find our minds wandering. In order for our hearts to be focused on praying, we need Hashem's consent and assistance.

Before we enter the experience of prayer, we must first be on "good terms" with the Creator of the world. If our lives find favor in His eyes, then we stand a much better chance that He will aid us to concentrate on tefillah. Without His help and goodwill, we do not stand a chance.

Removing ourselves from transgression and physicality, Helps transport us into the world of prayer.

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