

Rabbi David Wolpe's

Off The Pulpit

November 12, 2015

Upright Kneeling?

Menachem Mendel of Vorki said you could tell a true Jew by "Upright kneeling, silent screaming and motionless dance." Here is one possible take on that enigmatic phrase:



Upright kneeling: The Jewish posture in this world is supposed to be full, straight and proud. "Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak to you" begins God's message to Ezekiel. Yet at the same time humility, acknowledging ones's smallness before the creator, is Jewish. One needs both — upright kneeling.

Silent Screaming: When Pharaoh's daughter comes upon Moses the Torah says "Behold — a child crying." She saw him but did not hear him. Quiet for fear of those eager to fulfill Pharaoh's decree to kill Jewish children, Moses cried silently. For generations Jews did not have the safety to cry out loud. They cried, but without sound — silent screaming.

Motionless Dance: At moments, in study, in prayer, with another person, one feels great spiritual joy. The soul is in joyous motion. Yet, it is not always possible or appropriate to physically express what one spiritually feels. Sitting without a movement, one may still be dancing — motionless dance.

I would not presume to say this is what the Rabbi meant. But to me, this is what the Rabbi means.