

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Living the Life of Jewish Meditation: A Comprehensive Guide to Practice and Experience

Rabbi Yoel Glick

Introduction: The Path of Meditation

What do you think meditation is? How does it work?

Does meditation make you feel good? Is it supposed to make you feel good?

Do you possess spiritual intuition or soul sense?

Can you differentiate between your higher mind and your lower mind?

How do you understand the Kabbalistic concept of the Tree of Life or the body of *sefirot*?

Do you experience energies during meditation?

Why should someone do Jewish meditation rather than Buddhist or Hindu meditation?

Do you think more silence would be helpful to your personal life, to your synagogue service, or to Jewish life in general?

Part One: The Fundamentals of Daily Practice

Preparation

Why is preparation important to meditation?

What preparations in this chapter appeal to you? What preparations turn you off?

How do you prepare for meditation?

What level of preparation is the most important for your own practice? Which aspect of preparation is the hardest for you?

Is your experience different when you engage in special preparations before meditation and when you don't?

Is there such a thing as sacred space? Have you ever experienced one?

Intention

What does it mean to formulate an intention before meditation?

How does intention help you meditate? What is your own intention or spiritual focus when meditating?

Do you think that you have a strong *kavanah* in your meditation? How can you clarify and strengthen your *kavanah* in meditation?

Forging a Connection

What is the spiritual purpose of meditation?

What does having a contact or connection with your soul mean to you?

What are the different methods used in meditation to bridge the gap between the finite and the Infinite—between God and us?

Which of these methods seem to be at work in your meditation practice?

Can you feel the inner space in your mind?

How do you go about meditating? Is there any structure to your approach?

Is thinking about the three dynamic pairs of forging and energizing, striving and resting, and holding and receiving helpful in understanding how to go about meditation?

How can you integrate these three pairs into your own practice?

How do we control our mind?

Part Two: Techniques

Stilling the Mind

Do you think your mind is quiet?

Does meditating help to quiet your mind or just make it more active?

What tools can help you to still the mind?

Which of the book's approaches to stilling your thoughts works best for you?

- concentrating on your breathing
- reciting prayers
- chanting a mantra
- listening to music/singing a niggun
- the technique of Self-inquiry/*lekh lekha*?

Visualization

What are some of the sacred images that we have in Judaism?

Does visualization make your meditation come alive?

Does having an image to visualize help you to concentrate and still your mind, or does it make concentrating harder?

What images do you find easy to visualize? What images do you have trouble visualizing?

Is it easier for you to concentrate on an image, a sound or a feeling?

How do you relate to the Divine Name *Yud Heh Vav Heh* as a sacred image?

Concentration

Are you able to concentrate on the daily activities in your life? Can you apply that same power of concentration to your meditation?

What happens when your mind is fully focused?

During meditation, are you able to perceive a point of higher inner contact in your mind?

How can you increase your ability to concentrate?

Which strategy in the book works best for you?

Mantra Recitation

How do you feel about the idea of Jewish mantra? Does it excite you or feel strange and foreign?

How does the experience of chanting a mantra compare with reciting a prayer?

What are the advantages of using a mantra?

Which of the mantras in the book resonate for you?

Contemplation

What is the purpose of contemplation meditation?

Does this seem like a Jewish way to meditate?

How can you use contemplation meditation to deepen your prayer life?

How does contemplation meditation compare with visualization, concentration or chanting a mantra?

Do you feel that you are a contemplative person?

Part Three: The Life of Meditation

Holding the Link

How do you experience “connecting” with God, your soul or the Cosmos in meditation?

Do you think that it is really possible to hold on to our inner connection as we go about the mundane activities of our lives? How can you try?

Is meditation a way of life or simply a daily spiritual practice?

Which of the methods of God remembrance in this chapter appeals to you?

Merging with our Spiritual Source

What do you understand as the ultimate goal of meditation?

Which signs of spiritual illumination seem the most important to you? Which do you find hardest to believe in?

Have you ever encountered anyone who exhibits any of these signs?

Which spiritual figures in the history of Judaism or other religions most represent the ideal of a realized soul for you?

Part Four: Broader Meditation Issues

Two Paths to the Supreme

Which form of meditation attracts you—personal or impersonal?

Do you believe in a personal God? How does that personal connection manifest in your spiritual practice?

If you do not believe in a personal God, how do you connect to an impersonal God?

The Dynamics of Inner Experience

Does the Ari's explanation of the process of meditation make sense to you?

Does the Ari make the processes that occur in meditation more or less understandable?

Can you identify any of the Ari's six stages of union in your own meditation experience?

What do you think is happening in your consciousness when you meditate?

The Psychic

Do you feel that meditating has dangers? Do you know anyone who has ever had serious problems as a result of meditation?

Have you ever experienced a sense of danger or disquiet when meditating?

Having read this chapter, what would you do and say to him or her?

Individual versus Group Meditation

What do you find more productive for you—group or individual meditation?

Do you feel that a bond has formed between the people in your group after reading and working on this book together? Do you feel that this bond has a tangible spiritual component?

How do you feel about the idea of meditating as a group over the Internet? Can it work?

Individual and Collective Evolution

What do you think is your personal task in this life?

What specific people and events have played a key role in making you who you are, and in formulating how you see your place and task in the world?

What do you think is the collective mission of the Jewish people today?

How can meditation play a part in either your personal or collective Jewish or spiritual work in life?

How can you make yourself a Divine instrument in the world—a “temple” in which God can dwell?