

הקשר היהודי שלך

Your Jewish Connection - Om Shalom...Jewish Meditation

Brought to you by the Lifelong Learning Committee

By Linda S Trapasso

As we approach the High Holy Days, we think of the year coming to a close and all that we lived through during that time. We may become contemplative and look to find G-d in a way that has more meaning for us. One way to do that is through Jewish meditation.



Jewish meditation can refer to several traditional practices, ranging from visualization and intuitive methods, forms of emotional insight in communitive prayer, esoteric combinations of divine names, to intellectual analysis of philosophical, ethical, or mystical concepts. It often accompanies unstructured, personal Jewish prayer that can allow isolated contemplation, or sometimes the instituted Jewish services. Its elevated psychological insights can give birth to *dveikut* (cleaving to G-d), particularly in Jewish mysticism. (Excerpt from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_meditation.)

A variety of approaches to Jewish meditation exists. Depending upon your emotional make-up, the circumstances and the effect you desire to create, one might suit you better than another. But whatever technique you choose, the benefits of a regular program of Jewish meditation will intensify with daily practice and delicious nuances of experience and awareness will emerge over time.

- Ecstatic chanting of verses from psalms, Torah, and prayers.
- Focusing upon a *Shviti* — a special Jewish graphic which helps induct a mystical state of consciousness.
- Meditation on the names of G-d or on the letters of G-d's name.
- Guided visualizations.
- Walking, dancing, and movement meditations; *Otiyot Chayyot* and *Ophanim* are two major forms of the latter.
- Focusing upon the levels of an external or inner flame.
- Working with the Tree of Life and *sephiroth* — where each section of the Tree flows into the next and each section (*sephirah*) concerns important characteristics that benefit from conscious cultivation.
- Attaining a state of *Ayin* — the “no-state” which is glimpsed through attention to breath and silence.
- Guided sounding of vowels or letters.
- Study of ancient sacred Jewish texts, specially designed to induce mystical encounter.
- Becoming attuned to the power of special blessings in connecting us to what mystics experience as “the river of light.”



(Above list from <http://www.tbzbrookline.org/resources/meditation/jewish-meditation-qa/>.)

To explore Jewish meditation further, have a look at these Web sites:

- Our own Laura Hegfield has a series of resources, including meditation podcasts of her own, at <http://www.shinethedivinecreativityisaspiritualpractice.com>
- The Awakened Heart Project for Jewish Meditation and Contemplative Judaism (<http://www.awakenedheartproject.org/>), which features podcasts, articles, resources, and a free email list (sign up link is on the Home page). Click Resources on the menu bar for lists of meditation centers, suggested reading, and other Web sites of interest.



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Something to Think About – High Holiday 2013

The summer flew by as usual. The list of things we had hoped to accomplish is lengthy with items left undone. No matter, we will make an autumn list. Now, the days are getting shorter and we prepare for *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. Many of us are caught off guard because these holy days seem to be so early, but as many a rabbi has been known to say, the holidays come on the same date every year...we are just looking at the wrong calendar. Whichever way we look at these *Yamim Noraim*, early or late, they offer us the opportunity to pause in the midst of our busy lives to assess the past year and plan for the one ahead.



Elaine Brody

For me, this is a time to remember and share with my children and grandchildren some of my childhood memories of holidays with my parents and grandparents. I grew up in a Reform congregation; so on the second day of *Rosh Hashanah* we would go downtown to the Orthodox Shul to visit my grandmother. We climbed the stairs to the balcony and stayed until we were sent out for *Yizkor*. Teiglach at my Aunt Dora's house, fruit and other goodies and lively conversation at Aunt Ethel's or Aunt Dolores's. I cannot say that my childhood was filled with spiritual experiences associated with the High Holy Days, but it was wonderful family time.

Now, family and friends gathering to celebrate still bring me great joy. But there are other, less tangible experiences I treasure. On *Rosh Ha-*

shanah morning, the sanctuary fills slowly until those of us on the Bima turn around after the first recitation of the *Amidah* to see the space filled to capacity with family and friends. When the congregation responds with one voice to the *Shema* as the Torah service begins, I am filled with emotion. And on *Yom Kippur*, the mournful strains of *Kol Nidre* touch a place in my soul that ordinarily resists contact.

As you make the transition from summer to autumn, I hope you will avail yourselves of the chance to step back from daily life, celebrate, contemplate, and experience renewal going forward. At this season, there is a great deal to think about.

From our family to yours,
Shana Tova,
Elaine

Jewish Meditation continued ...

- For step-by-step guidance from Harav Yitzchak Ginsburgh (he studied with the Lubavitcher Rebbe and is a noted authority on Jewish Mysticism), go to <http://www.inner.org/meditate/> and click on one of the video or audio links.
- Chabad.org has many resources on Jewish meditation from the perspective of Kabbalah (http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/361886/jewish/Jewish-Meditation.htm). Scroll down and on the right, in the Related box, are links to articles, videos, and audio.
- The Institute for Jewish Spirituality has an extensive Resource section (<http://www.jewishspirituality.org/resources/podcasts/>) listing podcasts, videos, recommended reading, and related organizations.

Jewish religious life is an engaged practice. Jewish belief and commitment manifests through action, such as performance of mitzvot, participation in religious services and rituals, helping in communal organizations, and the care and support for Jews everywhere.

Jewish meditation creates an environment in which to investigate mindfulness, prayer, yoga, and Torah study to help cultivate a closer connection to self and to G-d.

Adult Learning:

Torah Study Each Thursday with Rabbi Jon – We meet once this month – Sept. 12, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

We continue this year with the biblical book of Kings, and the classical prophets. Each week we read from wherever we left off, and follow wherever the group's response to the text takes us. You can join the group at any time.