

SENIOR PROJECT PAPER:

***A CONGREGATIONAL GUIDE TO JEWISH
MEDITATION***

BY RABBINICAL STUDENT LESLIE SCHOTZ

MENTOR: PRESIDENT EMERITA RABBI SHOHAMA
WIENER

SENIOR PROJECTS ADVISOR: PROFESSOR LIVIA
SELMANOWITZ STRAUSS

3222

CONTENTS

Purpose and Dedication - Page 1

Overcoming the Prejudice - Pages 2-5

Jewish Meditation as a Heritage - Pages 5-9

Meditation - What is it: the basics and onwards...what makes it Jewish? Pages 10-12

Educating the congregation about Jewish Meditation: Why Jewish Meditation can enhance both the kavannah and keva of Jewish prayer - Pages 12-13

Congregational Guide for Jewish Meditation - Pages 13-27

Chanting - Pages 14-19

Visualization - Pages 19-22

Textual Meditations, Blessings, & Spontaneous Response - Pages 22-27

Questionnaire - Pages 27 - 36

Bibliography - Pages 36 - 38

Footnotes - Pages 38 - 40

Additional resources for further study and inspiration - Pages 40 - 42

PURPOSE AND DEDICATION

Providing empowering and educational information about Jewish Meditation is my motivation for preparing this Congregational Guide to Jewish Meditation. Also, this guide is a tribute to Rabbi Shohama Wiener, President Emerita of the Academy for Jewish Religion. Without Rabbi Wiener, I don't know if I would have had the opportunity to pursue my lifelong dream of becoming a rabbi. Of all the rabbinical schools I had visited in New York City, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and Los Angeles over a period of twelve years, it was my contact with Rabbi Wiener that let me know that I had not only found a rabbinical school, but I had found a place where clal Yisrael could be found. I was invited to walk through a door where open arms beckoned me in. I had found my spiritual home. My goal is to recreate that spiritual home in a House of God where all are welcome. It's God's house after all. Who am I to say who can or cannot visit?

Overcoming the Prejudice

Volume 53 number 2 Winter 2001 of the quarterly of the Rabbinical Assembly and the Jewish Theological Seminary's publication Conservative Judaism contains an article entitled ' "*Energy" and Jewish Mysticism*'. In this article by Elliot B. Gertel it is said that "... the line between science fiction and science has become totally blurred in popular physics of spiritual energy." *I* In what appears to me as a disheartening and cruel tone, New Age Judaism is trashed under the guise of discrediting non-Jewish works such as the Celestine Prophecy by James Redfield. Although I do not identify as a 'New Age Jew', I am familiar with the skepticism that accompanies such New Age labeled notions such as Jewish Meditation.

Probably the reason for my original discomfort with Jewish Meditation had to do with a secular or tangential non-Jewish religious association. When I first heard of Jewish Meditation a negative image of meditation and meditators came to mind. I envisioned a group of people sitting around concentrating on absolutely nothing. Possibly there was an Eastern influence in which people chanted "OM". It didn't work for me. I just never got it. Meditation seemed beyond my grasp, even stupid, and it was something that I personally couldn't relate to. When I ventured out to take a class taught by President Emerita Rabbi Shohama Wiener, I found myself experiencing God in a most profound way. When I closed my eyes I felt light. I felt energy. No, I did not become indoctrinated into a misguided cult. My synagogue activities remained basically the same, although I was able to enjoy the service more. I felt more aware and at peace. I finally understood the concept of mindfulness.

Jewish Meditation heightened my experience of nature. It was simply just about paying

more attention to God's creation. To really enjoy life is to be able to appreciate that which God has created. At the same time that I was studying Jewish Meditation, I was also a chaplain at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. The patients there generally reflected the same sentiments which I was discovering through the catalyst of Jewish Meditation: each day is valuable. For the cancer patients, there was no longer time to live in the unending rush of everyday life. Each precious day was to be savored.

In the same semester of Jewish Meditation, I was also taking Pastoral Counseling. This was an optimum combination. My practice in Jewish Meditation made me a better listener in visiting patients. I was able to sit with patients in silence when that was appropriate. I used breathing techniques to deal with what was happening in the hospital. Most patients I visited were unaffiliated. They were not committed to the synagogue experience as integral to their everyday spiritual lives. I wished so very much that these patients could have known about Jewish Meditation. Yet, this wasn't the time to teach, yet...

The following equipped me in eventually teaching about Jewish Meditation: learning a Shalom chant which was taught in class, weekly group class practice, practicing 20 minutes a day independently, and in conjunction reading about Jewish meditation. Immediately my attitude about Jewish Meditation changed. It was to my great surprise that academic writing actually existed upon a subject that had been ingrained in my consciousness as 'mumbo jumbo'. The skeptic in me had been taught otherwise.

When it came time for me to reflect in my senior year as to what had affected me most at the Academy for Jewish Religion, it was Rabbi Wiener's class Introduction to Jewish Meditation. Jewish Meditation is not something to be ashamed about. It is

something to take great pride in. What we are dealing with is a need for educating congregants about the variety of methods for connecting to and deepening the prayer experience. What I am proposing is the idea of making Jewish Meditation another available tool for those who want to pursue it.

Although a certain number of people are able to fulfill their prayer obligations and find meaning in it as well, others may go through the motions of prayer with kavua, or fixity, leaving much room for more kavannah, or intention. The Hebrew root of 'kavannah' is 'kaven', which means 'to aim'. In the book entitled Jewish Meditation by Aryeh Kaplan, he employs the translation "directed consciousness" in regards to kavannah and points out that the line between worship and meditation is a fine line. " Many elements of the worship service are specifically designed to be used as meditations, to reach a higher level of consciousness." 2 Kaplan points out that this is true in regards to the amidah and a number of other prayers.

Upon attending my first United Synagogue New Jersey conference, I sat in a workshop with a dynamic and exciting speaker. He spoke of empowering the congregation. It was inspiring. I approached this rabbi in order to speak to him after a wonderful workshop. Another man had approached the speaker first. The workshop participant spoke from his heart saying how a group in the synagogue desperately wanted to start a Jewish Meditation group.

Immediately the rabbi let out a condescending gasp. He related words to the effect as follows, "Oh, I don't know about that TM stuff. It's silly and worthless." At that point I didn't want to publicly embarrass the rabbi, but I knew I had to let the congregant know more. I explained how Rabbi Shohama Wiener (at that time) was President of the

school where I study, The Academy for Jewish Religion. Jewish Meditation is her specialty. I explained that Jewish Meditation does exist and that there are congregations where it is practiced. If it hadn't been for the Introduction to Meditation class I had taken, I could not have validated that man and the congregation that he represented. I am ashamed to say that I could have been another ill-informed person rolling my eyes back in disgust.

So how did this skepticism about Jewish Meditation happen? The public relations on Jewish Meditation was not favorable for me and I suspect the same is for others as well. Negative connotations of meditation and/or mysticism are being transformed into positive viable modes of prayer. The idea of meditation as a legitimate form of religious expression, has become more and more accepted in professional associations. A booklet entitled Professional Chaplaincy: its role and importance in healthcare includes The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, The Association of Professional Chaplains, and The National Association of Jewish Chaplains along with others. The booklet points out that the activities of professional chaplains include prayer, meditation, and reading of holy texts.

Jewish Meditation as a Heritage

"Gershom Sholem, a twentieth-century scholar, felt that the early Kabbalists did not differentiate between meditation and contemplation." 3 Avram Davis, founder of the Chochmat HaLev school and practice center of Jewish meditation in Berkley, California points out that early Kabbalists, Tannaim, and Amoraim referred to tefillah in an ambiguous way. According to Davis these early teachers did not clearly distinguish

between what we call prayer and what we call simple meditation today.

"Nevertheless, Jewish mystics have always been drawn to practices of introspection, contemplation, and seclusion (hitbodedut). They point to the fact that the revelation of the Torah occurred when Moses was alone on the mountain for forty days. Moreover, many prophets practiced seclusion, including Elijah and Elisha.⁴

Pirke Avot 1:17 "The Talmud quotes Shimon the son of Rabban Gamliel as saying, "All my days I grew up among the sages and I have not found anything better for oneself than silence."⁵ Abraham Abulafia (thirteenth century) said, "...[C]hoose a lonely house where none shall hear thy voice. Sit there in thy closet and do not reveal thy secret to any man.'⁶ "The names of well-known teachers who took solitary retreats include Isaac Luria, the Baal Shem Tov, Chaim Vital, the Kotzker Rebbe, Joseph Karo, and Rebbe Nachman of Breslov."⁷

Is it possible that 'speaking silence' contains the mysteries of creations? Ezekiel 1:4 contains "... Ezekiel's prophetic vision 'A storm wind came out of the North....and from its midst [came] the appearance of an electrum (chashmal) in the middle of the fire'. "⁸ In Chagigah 13b of the Talmud it " ...says that we should divide the word 'chasmal' into two parts: chash, which means 'silent', and mal, which means 'to speak'. This is the speaking silence which holds the mysteries of creation." ⁹

"Most medieval religious commentators, such as Maimonides, Nachmanides, and the students of Rabbi Yonah of Gerona, assume that we need meditative intention in prayer"¹⁰ In Guide for the Perplexed, Maimonides instructs us to train the mind to focus on the Divine at all times. "Maimonides suggests starting a meditative practice by focusing on the unity of God during the Sh'ma and then, after several years, proceeding to more

advanced practices." *11*

Why do some find the current accessibility of a Jewish practice dating back three millennia to be a fad? In the book Meditation from the heart of Judaism edited by Avram Davis, Jewish meditation is said to have been reserved only for elite Jews. "...[T]he need for meditation has been growing ever more acute, especially over the last decade. As we leave the post-Holocaust period, the horrors of those years are being healed by new tools of personal and group development." *12*

Jewish Meditation is surely not a fad since reference to Jewish Meditation can be found in the Tanakh. "The greatest number of terms in the Bible concerned with prayer, meditation, and contemplation are to be found in Psalms. From biblical times down to the present day, psalms have played a central role among the disciples of kabbalism and meditation." *13*

The term 'Kabbalah' was in use since the 13th century CE. It was a secret tradition transmitted from teacher to pupil. "The Kabbalists date the principle conceptions of the Kabbala back to the earliest times - back to Moses and even to Abraham and Adam." *14* A chief work is the Zohar composed by Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai in about 150 CE. Rabbi Luria, born in the 16th century, systemized the Zohar. "In 1700 Israel ben Elizer, known as the Baal Shem Tov, or Master of the Good Name"...rekindled a highly emotional, intuitive relationship with the Creator....In contrast to the complex mystical discourses of Rabbi Luria and the other Safed kabbalists, the Baal Shem Tov presented his teachings through stories and parables of simple elegance." *15*

Rabbi David Cooper quotes Moshe Idel. "Some of the writings of the Jewish mystics

clearly indicate that much of their Kabbalah came through contemplative experience. For example, in the sixteenth century, Eleazar Azikri, a member of the kabbalistic circle of Moses Cordovero in Safed, stated that Hitbodedut (isolation) was 'helpful to the soul seven times more than study, and according to one's strength and ability, he or she should concentrate and meditate one [entire] day a week." **16**

Some people might cringe at the thought of giving up precious time to do....nothing. Just as Hillel was challenged to teach Judaism while his questioner stood on one foot, skeptic meditators may crave a 'one foot meditation.' Shabbat and times for davenning are built in times to cease work. Yet the idea of stopping what we are doing to relax seems to many like either a luxury or a very boring idea.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel acknowledged in his book entitled The Sabbath, that technical civilization is a conquest of space. Time is a sacrifice so that "the power we attain in the world of space terminates abruptly at the borderline of time...[T]ime is the heart of existence." **17**

"The higher goal of spiritual living is not to amass a wealth of information, but to face sacred moments." **18** Judaism sanctifies time by setting aside the Sabbath as holiness in time. If we accept Heschel's premise that perfect rest is an art, then possibly we can approach the notion of Jewish Meditation as a tool which can teach us how to learn the art of perfecting 'rest'.

In Psalm 19 contemplation of Torah is seen as a way to relate to God. Tehillim 19:15 is as follows: "Yihyu l'ratzon imrei fee v'hegyon libi lifanechah Adonai Tzuri v'Goali". "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart find favor before You God my Rock and my Redeemer." Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by

Brown, Driver, and Briggs defines 'hegyon' as meditation as derived from 'higayon' defined as resounding music, meditation, musing.

Although 'hegyon' is defined as meditation, the word meditation as a practice may be best understood by means of our heritage of Jewish mysticism. Through the received tradition of Kabbalah, Jews have been empowered with a way to come closer with God.

Since the time of the great kabbalists of Safed, meditation has been a highly developed tool for looking into our hearts, for fostering positive change both spiritually and in the conduct of our everyday lives, and for bringing the Light of the Creator into our hearts, our minds, and even the physical locations we occupy. For many people, meditation is probably understood as a relaxation method - and this may be an accurate description of some forms of meditation.

But Kabbalah views meditation much more proactively. Meditation takes us deep inside ourselves for an encounter with the true purpose of our lives, and what we must do to accomplish that purpose both now and in the years to come. Kabbalistic meditation does not transport us to some tranquil cloud far removed from the world's challenges. Instead, meditation shows us the reality of those challenges, stripping them of the negativity that so often attaches to them. It's a cliché to assert that problems are really opportunities, but it's also a great truth. Bringing that truth clearly into our awareness is one of the most valuable benefits for the meditation experience. 19

Meditation - What it is: the basics and onwards...what makes it Jewish?

The English word meditation comes from the Latin, *medi*, which means center.

In Hebrew *hitbonenut* means contemplation. This is to be alone. Shlomo Carlebach, may his memory be for a blessing, called it holy alone-ness. ²⁰

So what it is about Jewish Meditation that makes it intrinsically Jewish? "The inaugural breath is a cry of silent breathing, and the discreet letter *heh* is the only one in the Hebrew alphabet that does not require any part of the mouth in order to pronounce it. It is pure breath. Each exhalation is a *heh*, a breath, a prayer. Already, breathing is praying!" ²¹

"As regards meditation, this is the stage that is above that of prayer. Words spoken here are not those which use the common language of prayer uttered by everyone, as was the case with the psalms. Here the kabbalist invents his prayers in the course of solitary retreat in the forest or into nature. This is called *hitbodedut*, 'isolation'. This meditation is still practiced today in the mystical group of Breslov Hasidim...

The solitary mystic meditates in silence on his life and his behavior. He is in the process of returning to himself (*teshuva*) and often dissolves in tears...." ²² An example of *hitbodedut* is the Prayer of Rabbi Nathan of Nemirov who was a disciple of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav. It is spoken at the midnight ceremony of *tikkun hatsot*.

The mystic blames himself for the loss of the Temple in Jerusalem and becoming distanced from the divine presence.

Hitbodedut meditation means "to go" or "be alone". It is a leave taking with which to be alone with God. Rabbi Lew teaches about the transformation that can happen after being alone. An example given is transformative experience through biblical encounter. When Moses asks God's name at the burning bush, the answer is

"Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh". "I will be what I will be." Later God is known as yod hay vav heh. Both indicate the absolute unconditional Being. In Hebrew there is no word for "to be" except God. Meditation approaches this sense of Absolute Being in the present tense. ²³

Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, of blessed memory, said "Prayer is the time when I speak to God as the Creator of the world. Meditation is when it is clear to me that God is my closest friend, that God is even closer to me than my own breath."²⁴

The UAHC (Union of American Hebrew Congregations) website gave the following definition of meditation. *Meditation is a spiritual practice deeply rooted within the Jewish tradition. It is a way to still the body, quiet the mind, and open the soul to deeper levels of consciousness. Jewish meditation was practiced by prophets, rabbis, and sages in the past; to this day, it is a path to holiness. Linked to our sacred texts, language, and images, meditation has an important and legitimate place alongside other modes of Jewish observance, including prayer and the study of Torah.*

Jewish meditation assumes many forms, such as focusing on a letter, a word, or one's breath; repeating a biblical verse; and using music and song (both liturgical chant and niggun) to induce a meditative state. Jewish meditation includes the contemplation of texts and the beauty and enormity of creation; mindfulness; and other techniques that focus our attention on God. ²⁵

Conservative Rabbi Alan Lew of Congregation Beth Shalom in San Francisco is the author of One God Clapping: the spiritual path of a Zen rabbi. In his book, he relates his journey from Zen meditation to Judaism and how he became a teacher of Jewish Meditation. So, how does one start a Jewish meditation practice?

In Meditation from the Heart of Judaism, Rabbi Lew says that it is important to sit with other people. Communal address to God is best. It is important to learn the technique of meditation from knowledgeable people. Three things to be learned include: how to hold your body, how to relate to your breath, and how to learn discipline. 26

Educating the congregation about Jewish Meditation: Why Jewish Meditation can enhance both the kavannah and kevalah of Jewish prayer.

Rabbi Alan Lew believes that simple awareness meditation has the ability to open people to normative Judaism - to Shabbat and to daily prayer. Jewish Meditation is slowly becoming integrated into the congregational life of the synagogue. Rabbi Lew reported that seven of the eight largest Conservative synagogues in northern California had regular meditation groups.

In April of 2002, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations held a Meditation Kallah: Jewish Meditation and the journey to Sinai. At the retreat they helped to develop or deepen a Jewish contemplative practice. Integration focused upon the categories of body, mind and soul. Soul represented meditation, prayer and music. Mind included the wisdom of Jewish spiritual teachings. Body offered yoga and walking meditations. The purpose of the retreat was to explore the role of meditation within the context of liberal Jewish personal and communal practice. Silence and meditation were taught to deepen prayer experience. Mindfulness was taught to enrich study.

Rabbi David Cooper says, "It is important to note that sitting quietly is precisely the opposite approach to that of normative Jewish learning, which engages the mind in complex problems and analyzes every facet of an argument in extraordinary detail." 27

Rabbi Cooper speaks of the altered state of consciousness which opens gates of

penetrating insight. He speaks of Westerners who experience Buddhism, Hinduism, Sufism, or other contemplative traditions. The transformed state of mind is so overwhelming that at times a meditator will "convert" to a new religion. According to Rabbi Cooper, contemplative experiences can open new gateways into one's original spiritual heritage. That was Rabbi Cooper's experience into the depths of Judaism. He says that the commentaries to the Torah became alive and his study of Kabbalah took an entirely different turn. 28

These pages are devoted to a practical guide for teaching Jewish Meditation in a congregational setting.

CONGREGATIONAL GUIDE FOR JEWISH MEDITATION

The following includes three types of meditation suitable for congregations. They are:

1- chanting followed by silence, 2- guided visualizations, and 3- textual meditations and blessings with spontaneous responses.

Basic before starting a meditative exercise is to find a quiet, comfortable room in the synagogue which is free of distractions. Be attentive to various health concerns including properly ventilated spaces and comfortable chairs or mats. Each of us in our lives will likely find ourselves differently abled regarding our health. Others, of course, are born with different health abilities. Is the space 'wheel chair accessible' and accessible to people who can't walk up steps? Be open to other needs of congregants. Just as certain exercises are not suitable for people with physical limitations, meditation may not be suitable for people with psychological or emotional limitations. If one has trouble with psychological grounding in everyday life, then meditation may not be a complementary practice for that

person.

Be aware that in a congregational setting there may be different levels of comfort and experience. No one should feel forced to do a meditative exercise that s/he doesn't feel inclined to do. One can choose to listen, observe or leave. The main idea is to be open to learning new ways. Feedback is appropriate after a teaching exercise.

CHANTING

Rabbi Shefa Gold, who has much experience in teaching Jewish chanting, says that "Chanting with the context of contemplative silent practice creates a space in which the power of the chant deepens and evolves, allowing its potential to unfold in silence." ²⁹ Chant is developed from the text and is a meditative process. It is important to note that ... "[t]he most powerful moment of the chant happens in the silence that follows its conclusion" ³⁰

Before beginning this exercise, explain that we will be sitting in one position with our eyes closed for twenty minutes. Focus on breath will also be important. One technique is to breathe in through the nose and exhale through the mouth. After the initial chanting period, focus upon proper breathing will be important. It would be beneficial for the group to spend a few moments learning and practicing how to properly inhale and exhale. Although breathing is done automatically in one's everyday busy lives, this simple life affirmation is important for centering and control. Sometimes in anxiety producing situations, we forget how to breathe normally. Unconsciously the breathing can become strained or shallow. When we take the time to relax, it is good to

know how to take a real breather!

Chanting can be done with or without instrumentation. Rabbi Shohama Wiener has taught her students with the use of a guitar. While strumming Am and G, we would chant the word "Shalom." I have used this technique in various congregations with success. Shalom is a Hebrew word known by most congregants. Therefore, we are beginning with a sense of proficiency and comfort. The sound of the word itself lends itself to chanting. The sound of the first part of the word is open, breathy and lends itself to louder reverberation - "Shah". The second syllable "lom" is closed and resonates on the lips in a more quiet introspective way. The syllable "lom" takes on broader world inclusive meaning in the outside world of meditation since it sounds like "om". It is comforting that the "lom" is part of a Jewish word.

"In the Sefer Yetzirah, the shin and mem are described as two of the three 'mother letters'...The shin has the sound of s or sh, and ... of all the letters in the alphabet has the closest sound to white noise. White noise is a sound that contains every possible wavelength, and is usually heard as a hissing sound. On an oscilloscope, the s sound would appear as a totally chaotic jumble with no structure whatsoever... The opposite of white noise is pure harmonic sound. This is the hum, like the sound of a tuning fork. On an oscilloscope, this would appear as a perfect wavy line, the epitome of order and regularity. This is the sound of the mem...The Sefer Yetzirah says that the shin represents fire, while the mem represents water." *31*

The repetitive chanting can be done for 10 minutes with 10 minutes of silence following. The participants have their eyes closed and stay in one position. Once the chanting has been completed after 10 minutes, the focus is upon breathing and freeing the mind of

extraneous thoughts. Personally, when I chant and stay silent, I see 'light' with my eyes closed. Those lights, or different colored 'energy' makes me feel connected to God in a way I never connected before practicing Jewish Meditation.

In a group situation, with eyes closed, there is a virtual silence. Quiet breathing can be heard, but there may not be a true sense that there are others in the room. It is a state of mind. In a group meditation, I have felt that we have the ability to connect as pure souls. Often people are distracted by the appearance of others. Our unconscious judgment and assumptions may follow. With eyes closed in silence, without visual or aural distraction, we as a group have the ability to connect to God together in a God space. For me it has been a powerful experience.

Rabbi Shefa Gold, an accomplished musician and rabbi, has combined her musical talent with her rabbinical abilities. The following includes a long list of "Shefa's Chants" which can be used for Jewish Chanting.

1. **Ma Gadlu** - Ma Gadlu ma'asecha Yah, m'od amku mach'sh'votecha (How great are your works, God: How very deep are your designs.) *Psalm* 92:6
2. **Shiviti** - Shiviti Shechina l'negdi tamid. (I place the Divine Presence before me always.)
3. **Echad** - V'ikvotecha lo noda'u. (Your footsteps were not known). *Psalm* 77: 20
4. **Silence is Praise** - L'cha dumiya t'hila. (For You, silence is praise). *Psalm* 65:2
5. **Baruch She'amar** - Baruch She'amar v'haya ha-olam. (Blessed is the One who spoke, and the world came into being). From the morning liturgy
6. **Uzechah** - Tziva Elohecha Uzecha. (Your God commands your strength.) *Psalm* 63:29
7. **Achasiti**- Yah Elohai b'cha Achsisit. (Yah, Oh God, in You I take refuge). *Psalm* 7:2

8. **Kol Dodi** - Kol Dodi hiney zeh ba. (The voice of my beloved; Here it comes!)
Shir Hashirim
9. **He'emad'ta** - He'emad'ta l'har'ri oz. (You have made my mountain strong) Psalm 30
10. **Alive today!** - V'Atem Ha-D'vekim ba-Yah Elohechem, Chayyim Kulchem Ha-yom.
(And You who cleave to Yah your God, you are all alive today) *Devarim*
11. **Yah Elohai L'Olam Odecha.** (Yah my god forever I will thank You) Psalm 3
12. **Me-olam ad Olam, Ata El** (From world to world, You are God)
13. **Hineni, Osah et atzmi merkava l'Sh'china** (Here I am, transforming myself into a chariot for Divine Presence)
14. **Dom La'Yah V'hicholel Lo** - (Be still and wait for God)
15. **Odeh Yah B'chol Libi** (I will thank God with my whole heart)
16. **Hayom Im B'kolo Tishma-u** (Today, if only you will hear God's voice)
17. **Kamti ani liftoach l'dodi** - I will open to You, my beloved. Will you open, open to me? Shir HaShirim
18. **Aneni Yah Elohai, Ha-irah Aynai** (Answer me Yah, My God, enlighten my eyes)
19. **Gam zeh l'tovah** (Also, this is for the Good)
20. **Va'anachnu n'varech Ya, me'ata v'ad olam, Halleluyah.** (And we will bless God from now until Eternity) Ashrei from liturgy
21. **B'Orech nirey Or** (In Your light we see light) Psalms
22. **Modah Ani L'fanecha** (I gratefully acknowledge You (Your Face) from the Morning Liturgy)
23. **Elohai N'shama Shenatata bi, T'hora Hi** (The Soul breath that You have placed in me is pure)
24. **V'Chayay Olam Nata B'tocheynu** (Infinite Light is planted within us) Torah service
25. **Ki Ata Ta-ir neri** (For You light my flame) Psalms
26. **Ana El Na R'fanah la** (Please God, please her please) Chumash

27. **Im keyn, lama zeh anochi?** (If so, why me?) Bereshit
28. **Baruch Yah Tzuri** (Blessed is God, my Rock) Psalm 144:1
29. **Hashiveynu Elecha v'nashuva** (Let us turn to You, and we will be turned)
Lamentations
30. **Raba Emunatecha** (How great is Your faithfulness) Morning Liturgy
31. **Yancheyni b'ma-agley tzedek.** (He leads me on paths of righteousness)
32. **Aneini Be'emet Yishecha** (Answer me with your liberating truth)
33. **Libi uv'sari y'raneneu l'El Chai** (My heart and my flesh sing to the Living God)
34. **Ashrei adam bote-ach Bach** (Happy is the one who trusts in You)
35. **Kol Atzmotai tomarna: Yah, mi Chamocha** (All my bones say: Yah who is like You?)
36. **Ba'erev yalin bechi, v'laboker rina** (In the evening one goes to sleep crying, but in the morning, rejoices) *Psalm 30*
37. **Nachamu, nachamu, nachamu ammi** (Comfort, comfort, comfort, my people)
Isaiah
38. **Ashrei yoshvei Beytecha od y'Halleluchah** (Happy are those that dwell in Your house, they keep on praising You) *Psalm 145*
39. **Adonai Li, v'lo ira** (My Lord is with me, I will not fear) Adon Olam from Liturgy
40. **Yisu Harim Shalom La'Am** (The mountains carry peace to the people) *Isaiah*
41. **Ashira, v'azameira - ura k'vodi** (I will sing and chant - arise my Glory) *Psalm*
42. **Yishakeyni min'shikot pihu** (He kisses me with the kisses of his mouth) Song of Songs
43. **Karov Ata Yah** (You, oh God are so close) *Psalm*
44. **Re'ach nichoach l'Yah** (A sweet savor unto God) *Leviticus*
45. **Ki' l'olam chasdo** (For His mercy is forever) *Psalm*

46. **U'shavtem mayim b'sason, mimainay ha'y'shua** (Draw waters in joy from the wells of Salvation)
47. **Kosi r'vaya** (My cup overflows) *Psalm 23*
48. **L'hithalech lifney Elohim b'or haChayyim** (Walk before God in the light of life)
49. **Ahava Raba Ahavtanu** (With such a great love You have loved us) Liturgy
50. **Lev Tahor b'ra li Elohim** (A pure heart create for me, God) *Psalm 51:12*
51. **Natata simcha v'libi** (You have put joy in my heart) *Psalm 4:8*
52. **V'ahavta l're'echa kamocha** (Love your neighbor as your self) *Leviticus 19:18*
53. **Eh'yeh imach, I will be with you, Let us go up to the House of God** *Bereshit 35*
54. **Nishmat Kol Chai tivarech et Shimcha** (The Breath of all life blesses Your name)
Liturgy
55. **Ma Yakar Chas'd'cha Elohim** (How precious is Your love, God) *Psalm 36*
56. **Yeylech Na Adonai b'kirbeynu** (Please God, walk within our midst) *D'varim*
57. **Mah Norah Hamakom Haze** (How awesome is this place) *Bereshit*
58. **Va'esah etchem al kanfei n'sharim va'avi etchem eylai** (I lifted you up on eagles wings and brought you to Me) *Exodus*

The above list was distributed by Rabbi Shefa Gold at a workshop she taught entitled "The Spiritual Practice of Chanukah."

In Jewish Meditation: a practical guide by Aryeh Kaplan, he explains visualization as an important discipline. The technique of visualization is the ability to control the images which one sees when the eyes are closed. "To begin a visualization meditation, just close your eyes and relax, allowing the images in the mind's eyes to settle down." 32 Rest assured that this is a process which takes time. At first it may not be possible. With patience and perseverance success is likely.

VISUALIZATION

When a leader is speaking a visualization exercise to the group, it is important that the leader's speaking voice be pleasant and projected so that all in attendance can hear it.

"By contrast, the earlier mystics conceived of meditation as an actual visual process, of 'seeing' the Chariot and the Palaces so that they could understand the workings of the upper world.' 33

One of the students at the Academy for Jewish Religion, Joyce Reinitz, who has devoted much study to learning the tradition of Jewish Visualization, has composed and shared her own Jewish Visualizations. At one of my first adult education classes I happened to share one of Joyce's Visualizations. One of the students in the class was the rabbi's wife of the congregation. She said to me "We need more of those..."

The following was part of a maariv service at The Academy for Jewish Religion retreat held in the Fall of 1999 entitled 'Experiencing the sacred through the prism of the arts.'

Imagery for the Nighttime Shema/ Seeking the Protection of the Archangels

By Joyce Reinitz

Close your eyes and exhale a nice long exhale releasing all the tensions of the day.....take a short inhale and then exhale again, a nice long exhale, clearing and cleaning your inner space. Now, breathe easily and regularly.

See the setting of the sun...unveiling the darkness of the night. Enter the darkness Listen to the silence.....hear all the sounds that weave its velvet fabric.

Can you hear the hush of the stars as they settle into their places in the heavens ?... Creating the nighttime canopy.....

How VAST is the universe!.....How magnificent!

Can you sense a presence near you on your right? A quiet breath, a gentle wind ?... A color, a sound, a smell the soft touch of an angel's wing ?

....
This presence is Mee-cha-el, who calls out "Who is like God?? Feel the protection of this messenger.

Breathe out.....Can you sense a presence near you on your left??.....

This is Gav-ree-el , the malach/angel of strength. Gav-ree-el stands strong beside you offering courage.....

Two angels: Mee-cha-el on your right and Gav-ree-el on your left.....

Breathe out A bright light shines before you..... Feel the warm glow on your face.....this light is U-ri-el, brightening your path.

3 angels..... Mee-cha-el, the messenger, on your right, Gav-ree-el,, provider of courage on your left and U-ri-el shining before you. ...

Breathe out.... Can you sense a supporting presence behind you ?..... Feel the gentle touch of the wings of Raphael, angel of healing.

4 Angels encircle and protect you.....

Breathe outA cloud of light shimmers above you..... Shekinah, the Divine presence. Invite this glow to slowly descend Enveloping you with love. You are surrounded by four angels.....crowned with God's

Presence.....Shekinah.....God's protection.

You can keep this with you as you go forth into the night.....tonight.....and always.

(Pause) When your are ready: slowly come back....breathe out and gently open your eyes.

TEXTUAL MEDITATIONS, BLESSINGS, & SPONTANEOUS RESPONSE

Jewish learning is such a sacred venture that there is a special blessing to say before study of holy texts. The following is a transliteration which does not specify God's names, but instead gives a close sounding alternate. Once God's name is pronounced in the formula it is then considered a real blessing. Once a blessing is uttered the action follows, otherwise the uttering of God's name becomes one said in vain. Also, once God's name is written in Hebrew, the document containing the name becomes holy and cannot be thrown away. It is buried instead in a genizah. Consult a rabbi for the exact pronunciation of the substitute blessings of God's name written here.

The blessing said before study is Baruch Ata Adoshem Elokeynu Melekh Haolam Asher Kidshanu b'mitzvotav vitzivanu la'asok b'divrei Torah. Two translations of the Hebrew are as follows. The first is a more literal translation. Blessed are You, Lord, King of the universe Who made us holy with His commandments and commanded us to be occupied with words of Torah. The second is an alternative contemporary translation. "Source of All Life, making us holy through Your commandments and commanding us to immerse ourselves in study." ³⁴

In The Path of Blessing: Experiencing the Energy and Abundance of the Divine by Rabbi Marcia Prager, teaches that the six words of a Hebrew blessing 'Baruch Ata Adoshem

Elokeynu Melekh Haolam' become a stepping stone which invites us to discover the infinitely abundant Presence of God "... [A] simple Hebrew blessing is a powerful thing - a one-minute, deeply meditative exercise exploring the nature of the Creative Force we call God and the dynamic relationship between God, human consciousness, and the unfolding universe." ³⁵

"Remember: the deepest purpose of study is not just to gain knowledge or erudition or to stockpile intellectual ammunition for learned conversations. The real purpose is to discover the Light in ourselves through the medium of the sacred texts." ³⁶

Introducing a niggun before a study session, can raise the consciousness of the group to a higher spiritual plane. "The important aspect of nigon, "melody", is the emotional state it produces or that one produces through chanting it. Each vowel and each consonant are full of meaning. At the moment of meditation on the nigon, it is important to meditate on the meaning of the letters that one is chanting and become imbued with the emotion that they can produce." ³⁷

The niggun has its roots in the Chasidic tradition. Chasidic rabbis such as Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach z"l and Rabbi Meir Fund have used the niggun in group settings as a way to create a sacred space. The niggun may have words, but is generally a wordless melody. A rabbi who went to school with Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach in Germany told me that the students would gather around their head rabbi, the rosh yeshivah, for a learning session. Many times the head rabbi would point to Shlomo and say, "Shlomo, sing us a niggun."

In the context of congregational meditation, the singing of a niggun is another way to involve the group in a form of Jewish Meditation. Velvel Pasternak has produced a

number of books which include niggunim. His publication company is Tara Publications which is also known as JewishMusic.com. In introducing a niggun, it is good to sing it through once. Since niggunim generally have two parts, sing each part separately in the teaching phase. Sing the first part. In the repetition, encourage the group's participation. Then sing the second part. Once again it is in the repetition that group participation is appropriate. Then the official niggun singing can begin. This is a way to raise the spiritual energy of the group in a traditionally Jewish way.

The singing of the niggun prefaces the actual study session. The blessing for immersing oneself in study can be said at this point. Selections from The Path of Blessing would be a great tool for teaching about the power of blessing in of itself. Rabbi Prager has filled two hundred twelve pages with an inspirational and academic study of the first six words of the blessing formula.

Study can be taken from a combination of sources. Possible sources of study are the liturgy and the Tanakh. In a meditative study session taught by AJR President Emerita Rabbi Shohama Wiener the focus was upon Moses' health and strength in old age and that they can be for us, too. In a progression the following concepts are studied from the Tanakh, the liturgy and a complementary source regarding healing. They are: creation including the creation of light, Moses' prayer for healing on behalf of his sister Miriam, Moses' death after a long life, the idea that prayers can be answered, the prayer that we say on behalf of a sick person, the bedtime Shema, and a passage from Bernie Siegel's book Love, Medicine and Miracles.

Her selected teachings from Torah are as follows:

1- **Genesis** 1: 1-4 The focus is upon the beginning of creation including the creation of light. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Now the earth was unformed and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters. And God said: 'Let there be light'. And there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good..."

2- **Numbers** 12: 13 "And Moses cried out unto the Lord, saying: Please God, please heal her."

3- **Deuteronomy** 34:7 "And Moses was a hundred and twenty years old at his death; His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated."

4- **Isaiah** 38: 1-5 "In those days Hezekiah was sick awaiting death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amotz came to him and said to him: So says the Lord: 'Set your house in order; for you will die, and not live.' Then Hezekiah turned his face to the way and prayed to the Lord, and said: 'Remember now, O Lord, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart, and have done that which is good in Your sight.' And Hezekiah wept greatly. Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying: 'Go, and say to Hezekiah: So says the Lord, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add unto your days fifteen years.' "

5- Misheberach prayer from Liturgy - May Who blessed our forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses and Aaron, David and Solomon - may He bless and heal The sick person (insert Hebrew name) son or daughter of (person's mother's name) Because (name of supplicant) will contribute to charity on his/her behalf. In reward For this, may the Holy One, Blessed be He, be filled with compassion for him/her

To restore his/her health, to heal him/her, to strengthen him/her, and to revive him/her.

And may He send him/her speedily a complete recovery from heaven for all his/her organs and all her blood vessels, among the other sick people of Israel, a recovery of body and a recovery of spirit (on Sabbath and festivals add: though the Sabbath/Festival prohibits us from crying out, may a speedy recovery come) quickly in a short time. Now let us say: Amen.

6- The Bedtime Shema -Master of the Universe, I hereby forgive anyone who angered or antagonized me or sinned against me - whether it was against my body, my property, my honor, or against anything of mine; whether it was accidental, willfull, careless, or on purpose; whether it was through speech, deed, thought, or notion; whether in this transmigration or another transmigration. I forgive every Jew. May no one be punished because of me. May it be Your willl, Adoshem, my God and God of my ancestors, that I may not sin any longer. Whatever sins I have done before You, may You blot out in Your abundant mercies, but not through suffering or bad illnesses. May the expressions of My mouth and the meditations of my heart find favor before You God, my Rock and my Redeemer.

In the name of the Lord our God of Israel: may Michael be at my right, Gabriel at My left, Uriel before me, and Raphael behind me; and above my head the Presence of God.

6- From Love, Medicine and Miracles by Bernie Siegel, MD.

" God has given us free will to make love and life meaningful. This creates a critical risk because we now have the ability to destroy our universe if we choose not to love.

However, it is only in this critical time that the archetype of the miracle can appear. When one believes in love and miracles divine intervention can occur.

We have an infinite number of choices ahead, but a finite number of endings. They are destruction and death or love and healing. If we choose the path of love we save ourselves and our universe.

Let us choose love and life."

The above three techniques listed above are how to teach Jewish Meditation apart from formal prayer. Rabbi David Zeller uses a Four Worlds based Jewish meditation technique. This is incorporated into the worship experience. In preliminary prayers the focus is upon the World of Action and the physical body. In P'sukei D'zimrah, the Psalms, the World of Formation let the focus be upon the 'emotional body'. In the Sh'ma the World of Creation focuses upon 'the mental body'. In the Amidah, the World of Emanations focuses upon the 'spiritual body'

QUESTIONNAIRE

A questionnaire was asked to five Jews who participate in Jewish Meditation. Four participated in Jewish Meditation in a congregational setting. One is a rabbinical student at the Academy for Jewish Religion. Two are cantors ordained from the Academy for Jewish Religion. One is a cantor in a Reconstructionist congregation. The other cantor leads prayer in an egalitarian but traditionally Conservative congregation in which no musical instruments are used on Shabbat. In this Conservative congregation, the rabbi integrates meditational techniques into the prayer service. In the Reconstructionist synagogue, a special meditation service is held once a month.

Two who were interviewed have been meditating for over twenty years each in

various Jewish congregations. One is a teacher. The other is a learned student.

The teacher expressed that education is much needed for teaching rabbis as to how Jewish Meditation can enhance prayer. In her experience, most rabbis view Jewish Meditation as a threat to their congregations. The student interviewed said that it has been the Lubavitch who have been most open and welcoming to teaching Jewish Meditation. The irony is that every time Jewish Meditation is offered, there are swarms of unaffiliated Jews who show up, according to the student who has been studying for over twenty years.

The following is the questionnaire directed to the Jewish Meditation participants.

JEWISH MEDITATION QUESTIONNAIRE

1- Have you ever used Jewish Meditation in a congregational setting?

2- How long have you been meditating?

3 - How is the meditation Jewish?

4 - Do you think that Jews can benefit from Jewish Meditation?

5 - Do you believe that Jewish Meditation enhances Jewish prayer?

6 - Do you consider Jewish Meditation a form of Jewish prayer?

7 - Do you have suggestions for making Jewish Meditation accessible to Jewish congregants?

8 - Do you see Jewish Meditation as a way to draw in new congregants?

The responses were as follows:

Case 'Aleph' - Academy for Jewish Religion rabbinical student Sara Jamison

- 1- No, I do not use Jewish Meditation in a congregational setting. It is personal.
- 2- My entrée into meditation was a year ago and it affected my life. It helped me to connect Judaism to a concrete tool, which I have with me all the time. For me, Jewish Meditation is a way to connect to God.
- 3- What makes meditation Jewish is God's name (Hebrew). When I think of God's name I think of the life affirming breath. The breath is the first thing God did to bring life to people. God is as close as our breath. I wish I had a deeper way to make it Jewish. The Chasidim embraced Jewish Meditation. It is a calming way to focus.
- 4- [Inadvertantly, this question was not asked.]
- 5- I think of the Ashrei. It is a good focus for breathing and reflection. Also, The Shemonah Esray is enhanced through Jewish Meditation. Think about it. Jewish Meditation is the very essence of the Hebrew word for prayer - l'hitpalel - meaning both prayer and self-examination.
- 6- Jewish Meditation as a form of Jewish prayer is a mystery. It is something beyond

us. It is our breath. It is the source of life.

- 7- Regarding suggestions for making Jewish Meditation more accessible for Jewish congregants, people need to know that meditation is Jewish! Rabbis must show them what it is. Just as rabbis teach Torah, there needs to be a teaching of some form of a brief meditation. Maybe the place for teaching it is in the classroom.
- 8- When people get the information, you never know if Jewish Meditation will be a way to draw in new congregants. I hate to think that the negative stereotypes regarding Jewish Meditation will outweigh the positive benefits.

Case 'Bet' - Academy for Jewish Religion Cantor Barbra Lieberstein serves the Reconstructionist congregation named Kehillat Shalom located in Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, New York. She leads the congregation with Rabbi Arthur Schwartz.

- 1- Jewish Meditation is practiced in a congregational setting once a month.
- 2- In my five years with the congregation, I sometimes participate in the once a month Meditation service. It depends if its my rotational weekend to be there since I am a part time cantor.
- 3- The meditation is Jewish since we use the liturgy which is Jewish and Jewish prayers.
- 4- The Jews who benefit from Jewish Meditation are those that have a need for it.
- 5- Jewish Meditation does not necessarily enhance Jewish prayer.
- 6- I do not consider Jewish Meditation a form of Jewish prayer.

7- I do not have suggestions for making Jewish Meditation more accessible

to Jewish congregants since I am not sure there is a great need.

8- Jewish Meditation in our congregation tends to draw in the same few people.

It is the same core group. It hasn't drawn in new congregants.

Case 'Gimmel' - Academy for Jewish Religion Cantor Rena Shapiro serves

The United Synagogue affiliated Temple Beth El congregation located in

Poughkeepsie, New York. She leads the congregation with Rabbi Jonathan Case.

1- Absolutely, we use Jewish Meditation in a congregational setting. We use it

In the Shacharit Shabbat service. Meditation is used in the warm up section.

It helps get into the space for prayer. People often don't know how to pray.

It is part of the entry to prayer. It sets the stage. It is used right before a small

teaching. In place of the morning blessings and prayers we have a niggun.

We are guided by the rabbi for relaxation to let all the cares go away. We

are to sit comfortably. It is a time to put the siddur down, relax the shoulders,

and close your eyes. People are invited to do this only if they are comfortable

doing so. Some are not comfortable, therefore it is optional. The meditations vary.

It can be a simple song. I use two or three melodies. Sometimes it is a physical

relaxation followed by a focus upon a word, letter, or color. The idea is to

push intrusions out of the way to make room for prayer. Intensified focus

is upon the Sh'ma, the word Shalom, Adonai, or our own thoughts. We are

invited to turn to a nice thing that happened to which we are grateful to God.

You can formulate your own prayer to speak to God, otherwise just listen

And pause in silence. When it is time to get ready to return, I use the same melody.

- 2- The first time I meditated was with Rabbi Shohama Wiener in the Introduction to Meditation class that she taught at the Academy for Jewish Religion. We have been using Jewish Meditation in the services of the congregation for a couple of years.
- 3- Meditation is Jewish because it gets us into a space to pray. There is a tradition with the kabbalists which makes meditation Jewish. There were Chasidim who were whirling dervishes. They worked themselves into a frenzy in their praise to God. It is an altered state.
- 4- Jews can benefit from Jewish Meditation. There are people who are wrestling with God and illness. In a monthly healing service which I co-lead, we meditate through musical repetition. People are searching. Jewish Meditation aids in that search by the comfort it can provide.
- 5- I think that Jewish Meditation enhances Jewish prayer. You can't compare. Some do not click into the meditation. If you're open to it, then yes. Elat Chayim is a place which draws people to Jewish Meditation. It is not a new idea anymore. Others don't click into it.
- 6- Sometimes, Jewish Meditation can be a form of Jewish prayer. Prayer is any experience which puts people in touch with themselves and a Greater Being. It doesn't have to be chanting the amidah from the siddur.

- 7- Regarding suggestions for making Jewish Meditation more accessible for Jewish congregants, we integrate Jewish Meditation into the Shabbat morning service. It is a prelude to a study session after the Psukei D'zimrah. We thought our numbers would grow, but there was no change at that hour. It just happens to be who is there. It is not a big draw.
- 8- In reference to seeing Jewish Meditation as a way to draw in new congregants, that's a hard one. Jewish Meditation is one of a gamut of possibilities to draw upon. It is part of a complex unit. It is not yet the main one. The movement for Jewish Meditation is expanding. In a traditional Conservative congregation it is still seen as foreign. It is not a priority.

Case 'Dalet' - Roberta Flatow. She is an experienced student who has been practicing Jewish Meditation for over twenty years. She lives in Queens, New York and has travelled to various places of worship including the shul of the Rebbe Menachem Schneerson, of blessed memory. Roberta has studied with many experienced teachers including Rabbi Shneur Zalman Stern who was sent from the Lubavitcher Rebbe to teach a special form of meditation known as 'hitbonenut.' Roberta has also studied with Mindy Ribner who received a special ordination to teach meditation from Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, of blessed memory. Another teacher Roberta has studied with named Judy Talit is interviewed next. First the interview with Roberta.

- 1- I have meditated with a group that visits various congregations. We have been to The Chabad of Port Washington and to Temple Beth Shalom in Roslyn.
- 2- I have been practicing Jewish Meditation for over twenty years. There is an amazing

Jewish Meditation group in Queens. Since I live in Queens it is convenient.

- 3- A particular form of Jewish Meditation that I have studied is hitbonenut. Rabbi Zalman Stern started to teach to groups in 1990. He learned it from a rabbi close to the Rebbe. The Rebbe believed that Jewish Meditation can transform the world. It is a way to connect to HaShem in another space. It is a way to transform the world. Meditation has Jewish roots. It started with Avraham Avinu. After Sarah, Avraham married Keturah. Her children went off to the east. They took the gifts of their father with them.
- 4- Jews can benefit from Jewish Meditation. One of the biggest problems in Judaism is between the different groups. Jewish Meditation is a unifying force for everyone. It connects our hearts and souls to HaShem. When we do Jewish Meditation, Jews from all backgrounds come: Chabad, Reform, non-affiliated, Conservative, and even the Orthodox who were skeptical were open to the teaching of Rabbi Stern. Jewish Meditation provides deeper meaning and helps with stress. Those who had no affiliation Wanted to learn more about Judaism after meditating. One unaffiliated Jew decided to learn more about Judaism. Eventually his non-Jewish wife converted.
- 5- Regarding Jewish Meditation enhancing Jewish prayer, if you do hitbonenut meditation before davenning, the whole quality is uplifted. Meditating helps with kavannah, the focusing. It is like you are in a different world.
- 6- Jewish Meditation as a form of Jewish prayer: For Shlomo (Rabbi Carlebach z"l) davenning was meditation through music. In his shul the movement and music made prayers into meditation.

7- Suggestions for making Jewish Meditation accessible for Jewish congregants:

Mindy Ribner intersperses meditation in the prayer service.

8- Jewish Meditation is definitely a way to draw in new congregants. More shuls need to need to do Jewish Meditation programming. People come as soon as we hold these Jewish Meditation teaching sessions. It is not valued enough. The idea is just to announce it. People who were never connected to a shul became interested in joining a congregation. The Jewish Meditation provides a way for people to be connected. Joining the shul becomes a sideline to their interest. It has been the Chabad who have been the most open. Conservative, Reform and Orthodox shuls have not.

Case 'Hay' - Judy Talit. She and her husband founded The Center for Jewish Meditation and Healing in 1981. They are situated in Roslyn, New York. Judy explained that she and her husband had studied Eastern Meditation prior to 1981. Something was missing. She and her husband then learned about Jewish Meditation. "We received a blessing from the Lubavitcher Rebbe to teach Jewish Meditation. We wanted to get college kids out of cults back to Judaism. What happened instead was that middle aged housewives were showing up to the teaching sessions. I have been teaching for over twenty years. I lecture in synagogues, do workshops, run classes, and do guided meditation." Judy Talit visits various places to teach Jewish Meditation.

1- Yes, I have used Jewish Meditation in a congregational setting.

2- I have been meditating since 1975.

3- The meditation is Jewish because it contains specific tools based in Torah.

The biblical references are to Jewish Meditation. Kabbalistic techniques employ

Hebrew letters and prayers. It is a Torah concept.

- 4- I obviously believe that Jews can benefit from Jewish Meditation.
- 5- I absolutely believe that Jewish Meditation enhances Jewish prayer.
- 6- Jewish Meditation can be a form of Jewish prayer, although it can be the other way around.
- 7- Regarding suggestions for making Jewish Meditation accessible to Jewish congregants, educate the rabbis about the benefits so that they can see why it doesn't threaten the whole concept of Judaism. It would be better than separating Jewish Meditation from Jewish congregational life. Jewish Meditation is there to help people pray in a focused way.
- 8- I absolutely see Jewish Meditation as a way to draw in new congregants. Many people became affiliated with synagogue life through The Center for Jewish Meditation and Healing. We are based in the Torah mitzvahs.

Bibliography

Berg, Michael. The way: using the wisdom of the Kabbalah for spiritual transformation and fulfillment. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2001.

Bischoff, Dr. Erich. The Kabbala: An Introduction to Jewish Mysticism and its secret doctrine. York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, Inc, 1985, 1998.

Brill, Rabbi Alan. "The Hierarchy of Jewish Meditation" from Meditation from the heart of Judaism. Edited by Avram Davis. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 1997.

Center for Jewish Meditation and Healing, Roslyn, New York. Judy Talit and her husband are the founders. The phone number for contact information is 516-248-4899.

Cooper, Rabbi David A. God is a Verb: Kabbalah and the practice of mystical Judaism. New York, Riverhead Books, 1997.

Gertel, Elliot. ' "Energy" and Jewish Mysticism. Conservative Judaism. Volume 52. Number 2. Winter 2001. A publication of the Rabbinical Assembly and the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an appendix containing the biblical Aramaic. Based on the lexicon of William Gesenius. As translated by Edward Robinson. Edited by Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1906, 1951.

Kaplan, Aryeh. Jewish Meditation. New York: Schocken Books, 1985.

Lew, Rabbi Alan. "It Doesn't Matter What You Call It: If It Works, It Works". Meditation from the heart of Judaism. Edited by Avram Davis. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 1997.

Maimonides, Moses. The guide for the perplexed. . Translated from the Arabic by M. Friedlander. New York: Dover Publications, 1986.

Meditation from the heart of Judaism. Edited by Avram Davis. Woodstock: VT: Jewish Lights, 1997.

Ouaknin, Marc-Alain. Mysteries of the Kabbalah. Translated from the French by Josephine Bacon. New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 2000.

Prager, Marcia. The Path of Blessing: experiencing the energy and abundance of the Divine. New York: Bell Tower, 1998.

Professional Chaplaincy: its role and importance in healthcare. Edited by Larry VandeCreek D.Min. and Laurel Burton Th.D. The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, The Association of Professional Chaplains, The Canadian Association for Pastoral Practice and Education, The National Association of Catholic Chaplains, The National Association of Jewish Chaplains, 2001.

Reinitz, Joyce. Imagery for the Nighttime Shema/ Seeking the Protection of the Archangels.

Ribner, Mindy. "Keeping God Before Me Always". Meditation from the heart of Judaism. Edited by Avram Davis. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 1997.

Robinson, George. Essential Judaism: a complete guide to beliefs, customs, and rituals. New York: Pocket Books, 2000.

Rosen, Jonathan. The Talmud and the Internet : a journey between worlds. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000.

Scholem, Gershom. Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism. New York: Schocken Books, 1941.

Siegel, Bernie S. Love medicine & miracles: lessons learned about self-healing from a surgeon's experience with exceptional patients. New York: Harper & Row, 1986.

To Life! L'Chaim!: Prayers and blessings for the Jewish home. Edited by Rabbi Michael Shire. San Francisco, CA : Chronicle Books, 2000. P 22

Union of American Hebrew Congregations website . "Meditation Kallah: Jewish Meditation and the journey to Sinai." <http://uahc.org/growth/medkallah/>

Zeller, Rabbi David. "A splendid way to live". Meditation from the heart of Judaism. Edited by Avram Davis. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 1997.

Footnotes

- 1 Gertel, Elliot. ' "Energy" and Jewish Mysticism.' P 3
- 2 Kaplan, Aryeh. Jewish Meditation. P 50
- 3 Davis, Avram "Jewish Meditation Today and Its Obstacles" in Meditation from the heart of Judasim. P 83
- 4 Cooper, Rabbi David. God is a Verb. P 216
- 5 Cooper, Rabbi David. God is a Verb. P216
- 6 Scholem, Gershom. Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism P 136
- 7 Cooper, Rabbi David. God is a Verb. P 216
- 8 Cooper, Rabbi David. God is a Verb. P 216- 217
- 9 Cooper, Rabbi David. God is a Verb. P 217
- 10 Brill, Rabbi Alan. "The Hierarchy of Jewish Meditation" in Meditation from the heart of Judaism P 90
- 11 Brill, Rabbi Alan. "The Hierarchy of Jewish Meditation" in Meditation from the heart of Judaism. P 94
- 12 Davis, Avram. "Introduction: The Heart of Jewish Meditation" in Meditation from the heart of Judaism. P 11

- 13 Oaknin, Marc-Alain. Mysteries of the Kabbalah P 182
- 14 Bishschoff, Dr. Erich. The Kabbala: Introduction to Jewish Mysticism and its secret doctrine. P 1
- 15 Berg, Michael. The way: using the wisdom of the Kabbalah for spiritual transformation and fulfillment. P 31
- 16 Cooper, Rabbi David. God is a verb. P 5
- 17 Heschel, Rabbi Abraham Joshua. The Sabbath. P 3
- 18 Heschel, Rabbi Abraham Joshua. The Sabbath. P 6
- 19 Berg, Michael. The way: using the wisdom of the Kabbalah for spiritual transformation and fulfillment. P 208-209.
- 20 Zeller, Rabbi David. "A splendid way to live". From Meditation from the heart of Judaism P 112
- 21 Oaknin, Marc-Alain. Mysteries of the Kabbalah P 172
- 22 Oaknin, Marc-Alain. Mysteries of the Kabbalah P 186
- 23 Lew, Rabbi Alan. "It Doesn't Matter What You Call It: If It Works, It Works". Meditation from the heart of Judaism. P 44-45
- 24 Ribner, Mindy. "Keeping God before me always". From Meditation from the heart of Judaism. P 71
- 25 Lew, Rabbi Alan. "It Doesn't Matter What You Call It: If It Works, It Works". Meditation from the heart of Judaism. P 50-51
- 26 Cooper, Rabbi David. God is a verb. P 4
- 27 Cooper, Rabbi David. God is a verb. P 5
- 28 Union of American Hebrew Congregations website. "Meditation Kallah: Jewish Meditation and the journey to Sinai."
- 29 Gold, Rabbi Shefa. "That this song may be a witness: the power of chant". From Meditation from the heart of Judaism. P 133

- 30 Gold, Rabbi Shefa. "That this song may be a witness: the power of chant". From Meditation from the heart of Judaism. P 136
- 31 Kaplan, Aryeh. Jewish Meditation. P 129
- 32 Kaplan, Aryeh. Jewish Meditation. P77
- 33 Robinson, George. Essential Judaism: a complete guide to beliefs, customs, and rituals. New York: Pocket Books, 2000. P
- 34 To Life! L'Chaim!: Prayers and blessings for the Jewish home. P 22
- 35 Prager, Marcia. The Path of Blessing: experiencing the energy and abundance of the Divine. (front jacket of book)
- 36 Berg, Michael. The Way. P 204
- 37 Oaknin, Marc-Alain. Mysteries of the Kabbalah. P 177

Additional resources for further study and inspiration

Ariel, David S. The Mystic Quest: an introduction to Jewish mysticism. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1988.

Bachelard, Gaston, The poetics of space: the classic look at how we experience intimate places. Boston: Beacon Press, 1958, 1964, 1994.

Begley, Sharon. "Religion and the brain" pages 50-58 of Newsweek May 7, 2001 feature God and the Brain: how we're wired for spirituality. newsweek.msnbc.com.

Berg, Rabbi. Kabbalah for the Layman. Volume I. Los Angeles, CA : The Kabbalah Centre, 1993.

Bischoff, Dr. Erich. The Kabbalah: an introduction to Jewish mysticism and its secret doctrine. York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, 1985.

Cooper, David A. Renewing Your Soul: a guided retreat for the Sabbath and other days of rest. USA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995.

Cooper, David A. Silence, Simplicity, and Solitude. New York: Bell Tower, 1992. Pp 59-73.

Davis, Avram Dr. and Manuela Dunn Mascetti. Judaic Mysticism. New York: Hyperion, 1997.

Davis, Avram. The Way of Flame: a guide to the forgotten mystical tradition of Jewish meditation. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 1996, 1999.

Elkins, Dov Peretz. Jewish Guided Imagery: a how-to book for rabbis, educators and group leaders. Princeton, NJ : Growth Associates, 1999, 1996.

Epstein, Perle. Kabbalah: the way of the Jewish mystic. New York: Doubleday, 1978.

Fifty-Eighth Century: a Jewish renewal sourcebook. Edited by Shohama Wiener. Northvale, NJ : Jason Aronson, 1996.

Frankiel, Tamar & Judy Greenfeld. Entering the Temple of Dreams: Jewish prayers, movements, & meditations for the end of the day. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2000.

Frankiel, Tamar & Judy Greenfeld. Balancing Body, Mind, and Spirit through Traditional Jewish Prayer, Movement and Meditation. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 1997.

Gottlieb, Freema. The Lamp of God: a Jewish book of light. Northvale, NJ : Jason Aronson, 1989.

Hudson, John. Instant Meditation for Stress Relief: breathing techniques and mental exercises for an immediate sense of calm and well-being. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2001.

Idel, Moshe, Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah. New York: State University of New York Press, 1988.

Ivdu Et Hashem B'Simcha: serve the Holy One with joy: a siddur for spiritual renewal. Edited by Rabbi David Zaslow. Ashland, Oregon, 1997. (?self published)

Jacobs, Louis. Jewish Mystical Testimonies. New York : Schocken Books, 1976.

Kaplan, Aryeh. Meditation and the Bible. Northvale, NJ : Jason Aronson, 1995, 1978.

Kaplan, Aryeh. Meditation and Kabbalah. Northvale,NJ : Jason Aronson, 1995, 1982.

Kramer, Chaim. Crossing the Narrow Bridge: a practical guide to Rebbe Nachman's teachings. New York: Breslov Institute, 1989.

Kushner, Lawrence. The Way Into Jewish Mystical Tradition. Woodstock,VT: Jewish Lights, 2001.

Rosenberg, Arnold S. Jewish Liturgy as a Spiritual System: a prayer-by-prayer explanation of the nature and meaning of Jewish worship. Northvale, NJ : Jason Aronson, 1997.

Schacter-Shalomi, Zalman. Paradigm Shift. Northvale, NJ : Jason Aronson, 1993 p 258

Schacter-Shalomi, Zalman. Sharei Hitbonenut: some materials on Jewish meditation. 1999. Published by Yesod, ALEPH Alliance for Jewish Renewal and Nathan Cummings Foundation. Available through ALEPH Beit Midrash.

Scholem, Gershom. Kabbalah. New York: Meridian: New American Library, 1974 p369

Shapiro, Rabbi Rami M. Minyan: ten principles for living a life of integrity. New York: Bell Tower, 1997.

Soncino, Rabbi Rifat. 6 Jewish Spiritual Paths: a rationalist looks at spirituality. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2000.

Trees, Earth, and Torah: a Tu B'Shvat anthology. Edited by Ari Elon, Naomi Mara Hyman, and Arthur Waskow. Philadelphia, PA : JPS, 1999.

Voigt, Anna. Simple Meditation for everyday relaxation and rejuvenation. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2001.