

Yikrah b'Shmi – Call Upon My Name

by HaRav Ariel Bar Tzadok

Chapter 11

Meditative Practices

"It is well known that in all matters of meditation, one must be alone with nothing to disturb his concentration. A man must meditate using his entire essence, actually separating his spirit from his body. He must become as if he has left the physical world entirely, he must be completely spirit. The more one separates from the physical (conscious) world, the more his meditative ability will increase.

If one should hear someone calling him, or just talking, anything that can disturb concentration, even a thought in his mind about the physical world, these will prevent his soul from clinging to that above. He will not be able to achieve anything. For a man cannot partake of the upper holiness, as long as he has even a hair's breath of connection to the physical world.

*For this reason is prophecy or reception of the Holy Spirit called a trance, or dream in vision. Therefore, even if one is prepared and able to receive the Holy Spirit, if he does not condition himself to separate his soul from his body completely, the spirit cannot dwell on him. **This then was the secret of the sons of the prophets, that musical instruments were used (see 1 Sam. 10:5), for by the beat of the music and the melodious voice, they were able to slip into a trance, the souls separating (from the physical); then would the singer stop. The sons of the prophets would then stay in their trance and prophesy. This then is the first way.***

The second way requires a man to separate from all things that can interfere with his concentration. For the first way only separation from the physical is referred to, which naturally inhibits concentration.

Now we must concern ourselves with the "spiritual" things that inhibit meditation; these be the powers of uncleanness which comes from our inclination to do evil, which surrounds every man. This power is strengthened through our sins. Therefore the one who wishes to meditate must first separate from his sins, and then be careful not to repeat them or add to them. He must then accustom himself to be separate from the natural negative characteristics of men, such as anger, anxiety, being demanding, needless speech, and the like. When the aura of the soul is thus rectified, be it from sin or negative traits, only now is the power of uncleanness nullified, so that one can be united with the holiness above. At this time one separates from the physical world as outlined in the first step. After this will he be able to draw himself the holy union.

The second way which requires a man to separate from the powers of uncleanness, is by his own actions of turning his ways, separating himself from ugly characteristics".

Sha'arei Kedusha - Pt. 4. Gate 2 - R. Haim Wital

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As I have pointed out earlier, YHWH exists as an autonomous reality whose existence can be experienced by appropriately aligning our inner and outer selves with the general sefirotic structure. This sefirotic structure of ten sefirot divided into three columns right, left and center, is the "image of G-d" in which man was created. Only by returning to his original sefirotic pattern/shape can man channel the Atzilutic sefirotic influx into the Asiatic earth plane ego-consciousness. It must be remembered that as there is a general pattern for the sefirot, so there is a specific unique pattern correlating the sefirotic subdivisions that make up the individual human psyche.

The first step one must take in approaching YHWH is the development of a very strong sense of self. The seeker's Asiatic level ego-consciousness must act like an anchor, strong and stable so as to receive and assimilate the expansions that will come due to the introduction (and thus necessary assimilation) of Yetziratic and Beriatric contents. In order to properly focus upon this, the meditation requires full attention to the process. For only with full concentration upon what you are doing, thus knocking out any hindrances (which act as contaminants) can the mind fully settle on the "I" within and not upon the "not I" which comes from the outside. The more one can thus block out external stimuli from the physical senses, the more one has the ability to see oneself as separate from those things which tend to confuse our identity of self. The finding of the "I" within is step one in all Merkava meditation and practice. The loss of the true knowledge of self is referred to in Kabbalah as the exile of Shekhina, which is Malkhut, the tenth sefirah, the source of Asiyah and thus Asiatic level ego-consciousness. By one finding one's I/Self, one acts to restore the Shekhina (G-d's presence which dwells within us) to its place and glory.

The centering within one's self upon the "I" consciousness necessitates the breaking of outside attachments and letting the "I" go free, out of exile. This level of awareness is not an intellectual exercise but an intuitive experience. While your thoughts are aware of what you are experiencing, the experience itself is not triggered by the biological functions of the body, this including any stimuli from the senses to the brain. The experience of "I" consciousness comes from within one's sense of being, of knowing that "I AM" and whatever personal, unique significance this is to each individual. YHWH is "active being". We try to come into contact with our own being, thus aligning it (by being aware of it) and allowing it to channel the "active" aspect of being into our own selves, the higher Self (the Beriatric neshama) and the lower self (the Asiatic ego-consciousness, Nefesh), these becoming united with the source, the active being YHWH, the Atzilutic sefirotic reality. All creation follows a set pattern. Everything has within it five worlds and ten sefirot. This pattern is thus imprinted upon every micro-section of the whole.

By finding the "I" within us, which also is formed by and true to the supernal pattern, we become intuitively aware of the pattern and thus the direction to proceed for further development. Psychologically, we say there is a teleological direction to psyche development. There is a "something" in the unconscious that knows what is uniquely right for that single unique individual and guides that life and consciousness accordingly so as to achieve its pre-patterned purpose. Submission to this (with qualifications) leads to individuation and enlightenment. Rejection and rebellion to the inner pattern leads to strife and turmoil in inner and outer life.

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By being true to the "I" within, a person starts to be true to the great "I AM" who is YHWH. Submission to this truth then becomes an emancipation and freedom. Rejection of this is bondage and darkness. Those things which are in-congruent with the uniqueness of the individual soul contaminate that soul. These contaminations are religiously referred to as sin. These must be repented of, meaning turned away from, purifying the soul from all external *"not I"* factors that confuse the Asiatic ego-consciousness perception of self. Repentance, *Teshuva* in Hebrew, means returning. This is a returning to the true "I" of the universe which is YHWH. This is accomplished by first returning to the "I" within, which is the Shekhina. This explains why we are so strongly admonished to separate from all our sins. For unless we separate from all the *"not I's"* how can the true "I" recognize anything about itself. In order to receive, one must become a receptacle, and who is it that receives? "I" do! If the "I" is not known, then how can one know if "I" have received or not. This is a hazy focus. By knowing the true "I" within, one is able to focus on the "I" of the universe. This is the meaning of opening Asiatic ego-consciousness to Atzilutic influx.

It is written, "YHWH, Torah and Israel are one." (Zohar III, 273A). The soul of collective Israel and thus the "I" within of every Jew comes from the very essence of the Torah. Our Sages teach us that every Jewish soul, every individual "I" is a manifestation of one of the letters within the Torah. It is for this reason that Torah study is essential, for it allows us to find ourselves. Torah study unlocks the "I" within. Never become deceived into believing that your individual "I" will be something other than a Jew or guide you to do something forbidden by Torah. Torah is our collective "I". Though it is in the form of a book external to us, Torah is the blueprint and pattern of the Jewish soul. If you are a Jew, then you are the Torah. Torah study will thus reflect back to you inner awareness and awakening, allowing you to find the "I" within.

Asiatic ego-consciousness defines the "I" within the context of the physical world. For example, "I" am a husband or wife, a father or mother, "I" am a doctor or lawyer, "I" am rich or poor. Identity at the Asiatic level is defined by relationship to an external, a title and not by being. Instead of being who you are, you identify yourself by what you have i.e. a title or function. Yet, you do not cease to be if your title ceases. You continue as who the "true you" really is.

Yetziratic consciousness are those emotional aspects experienced by the ego which guide the Asiatic picture of self. These emotional forces guide the "I" to be "I" and not *"not I"*. Each one of us has a uniquely different emotional makeup, some more strong, others less so. Each temperament is based upon the individual needs that have been recognized at the higher level of Self. One's emotions always reflect the position with one's "I", for good or for bad. So the concept of self in the physical plane is Asiatic consciousness. The emotional state which rocks our Asiatic ego consciousness like a boat on a stormy sea is Yetziratic consciousness.

Both, identity defined by externals and rocking emotions, which challenge the *"not I's"* of self, must be transcended in order to achieve Beriatric consciousness, this being the intuitive awareness of the higher Self. At this level beyond external definition, beyond emotional attachments each person must confront the self-made realities of how one has defined and structured his/her world and existence. This is the level of Beriatric consciousness, the level

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of the higher Self. Here does the unique picture of the individual unfold to know the true "I" or Self. Yet, this too is not the end, for remember, the ten sefirot of Beriah, the world of the "I" /higher Self, cloak yet another higher reality, that of Atzilut, the level of the Divine. Only by achieving Atzilutic consciousness can Beriatic consciousness be understood. By achieving Beriatic consciousness one can achieve knowledge of what the individual "I" is, but only within Atzilutic consciousness can we understand why this "I" is "I" and why the "I" is not "not I". This consciousness reveals the true unity in the apparent diversity in our world. This allows the individual not only to respect his own uniqueness, but that of others as well. For at the source, YHWH of Atzilut, all things are united. Only in the Source can the Source be experienced and perceived in all parts of the whole. The whole, is of course the general pattern YHWH. With this introduction can we now discuss specific practices.

"One must be clean of body, purified from all uncleanness. One's hands must clean of all theft, robbery, or bribery, even as the verse says "Who shall ascend into the mountain of the YHWH or who shall stand in His holy place? He that is clean of hands and a pure heart" (Psalm. 24:3-4). One must thoroughly check deep into oneself and be of "a pure heart". For only then "He shall receive a blessing from YHWH" (Ps.24:5), which is the level of prophecy, as it is written "And he took up his discourse" (Num. 23.7) and join his spirit with above. Afterward shall the fountain flow below. First one must dwell on the mitzvot and their revealed meanings following with a little of the secrets of G-d. One must study Torah, perform mitzvot, separate from needless talk for the entire day. One must go to the mikvah, wear white garments, be in a clean place, and be far from uncleanness, from all corpses, or cemeteries. One must separate from all sorrow, sadness and pain, and be completely clothed in joy. One must separate from the physical and rise his consciousness from level to level until he reaches the seventh level of Aravot. Upon Aravot shall you picture a great white curtain and written up it is the name YHWH, written in thick block Hebrew, each letter as large as a mountain, white as snow, start by uniting the letter Yod with the letter Hey, then Hey back with Yod; Vav with Hey, then Hey with Vav... then Vav with the final Hey and lastly the Final Hey with Vav". Sha'arei Kedushah Pt. 4

We have already discussed the necessary physical and psychological preparations for approaching "the gates of righteousness". It is written one must be of clean body purified of all uncleanness, both physical and internal. Physical cleanliness is achieved through bathing or a mikvah. Internal cleaning is a cleansing from all foreign psychological elements, which we have already discussed. The first steps towards achieving Merkava consciousness is to first learn to relax. As in many meditative systems, relaxation is of the body and the mind and achieved through deep, full breathing. This allows ease in withdrawal from external stimuli that distract the process of introversion. Unlike other systems, there is no initial need for any specific body position during meditation. Therefore, one can sit or lie down. The essential thing is to be comfortable and to wear loose, comfortable clothing with nothing to inhibit deep breathing. Deep rhythmic breathing is most important because it allows an abundance of oxygen into the brain allowing for deeper, clearer thinking, which is most conducive to establishing a trance consciousness. Rhythmic breathing is breathing in and out at a moderate, yet steady pace. You can set your own pace in accordance to your personal physical makeup. Usually a 4 count or a 12 count is recommended.

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Once you are comfortable, sitting or lying down, breathing rhythmically, allow your mind to contemplate holy Torah. The Kabbalistic meaning of the mitzvot is recommended, but there are other topics as well, such as the shapes and meanings of the Hebrew letters, the order of the Sefirot etc..... The best contemplations will differ from person to person. Find what is personally most inspiring, which makes you feel closer to YHWH, G-d of Israel. After this lecture I have included an excellent introductory prayer with which is good to start. Its purpose is for the purification and crystallization of thought. Once this is achieved, **allow your full attention to be caught up in your thoughts.** This is the technique for introverting attention off of external stimuli. Try to remain absolutely still; do not scratch an itch, don't twitch, swallow naturally. **Discipline yourself to forget your body. Allow it to go limp. Keep your mind alert and sharp by contemplating holy Torah.** Feel yourself as just you, as the "I" within, as if your body is asleep and your mind is awake. Now is the time to ascend to Atzilutic consciousness.

Start by picturing the letters YHWH in your mind's eye. Visualize each letter, as big as a house, clearly, boldly, encompassing the entire realm of your vision, completely surrounding you. See them first in the black block form as is common in print, and then allow the letters YHWH to do as they will. Remember YHWH is autonomous. He does not exist only in your head. YHWH and His Name are one, so by you visualizing and focusing YHWH before you in your mind's eye, you have actually brought an aspect of His Presence before you. YHWH will thus act and communicate with you as you are able to receive.

Keep YHWH before you, always. This means while in this state of contemplation, concentrate completely upon the letters, one at a time, and all together. Unite one letter with the next, then the next, etc. Allow your mind to freely associate with each letter. Do not be alarmed if the letters start to take human characteristics like faces, arms, legs and voices. The letters will actually talk to you. At first you might believe this to be just your imagination. At first, it might be; but let it continue, you never know what your imagination can channel. In time, as your experiences grow and mature, you will be able to distinguish the sheer fantasy of imagination, which is klipah, from true Atzilutic influx breaking into Asiatic plane earth bound ego-consciousness. This knowing will be an intuitive one, maybe beyond what words can describe. Just keep visualizing YHWH over and over without ceasing. YHWH will not hold back good.

One important aspect of this meditation is correlating the letters with the rhythmic breathing. Remember Yod is Abba (Father), the first Hey is Imma (Mother), Vav is Z.A. (the son) and the final Hey is Nukba (the daughter). Yod and Vav are masculine, active whereas the two Heys are feminine, passive. While inhaling picture the Yod as blinding, tingling, radiantly warm white light. Breathe it in through your nose. Feel it permeate your whole being. Feel the Yod opening up your Atzilutic center, within the right lobe of the brain. Exhaling through the nose, feel now the Hey radiating throughout your being, like a mother surrounding you. Release with your exhalation all impurities from your spiritual system. Next upon inhaling, again rhythmically, at a count of 4 (to start) feel the Vav filling your being, energizing you with strength and vigor, giving you a pure and clean heart, true, complete, mature and balanced. Keep the image of the Vav radiating white light like the Yod, crystallized in your mind. Finally, exhale on the 4 count, concentrate and feel your body being cleansed and recharged by the power of the final Hey. Feel the Hey encompass you like a lover,

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comforting and caressing you. Feel the Hey as a cool, comfortable sky blue light enveloping you.

Repeat this process of inhaling and exhaling of the letters twenty six times: Inhaling on Yod, exhaling on Hey; inhaling on Vav, exhaling on Hey. Each two breaths is one cycle of YHWH. The number of breaths is only a guideline. Twenty six is suggested because it is the numerical value of YHWH, but any other number is also good. Don't worry if you lose count, the number is not as important as the state of consciousness it induces.

Allow your body to relax and grow limp as your rhythmic breathing relaxes you. Some perform this exercise with their eyes open, others close their eyes. Either way is fine, just try not to fall asleep. For we are trying to attain that level of consciousness that is between sleep and being awake. It will take a little practice until one can successfully and regularly enter this state.

As you are breathing and visualizing the letters, it is best to internally hear the sound of the letter names. So as you breath in the Yod, say or hear in your mind the word "Yod", so that the sound and image correlate. Do the same with all the other letters.

It is at this time, with the letters and their sounds firmly in your inner vision that you may begin to freely associate, imagine if you will, with the letters. They have a life of their own into which they will invite you. Their colors and shapes may change and they might talk to you. Within your mind, without losing your rhythmic breathing, talk to the letters, ask them for meaning and guidance. They will respond in ways in which will amaze you, and sometimes puzzle you. Ask again, do not be deterred. Things will happen all in their own time.