

CHABAD LUBAVITCH OF CHAUTAUQUA

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Kabbalah and Meditation – Joy - Week 5 – 2021

1. “One should embark on worship only in an earnest frame of mind.” (Talmud, Berachot 30b)
 - a. *Rashi*: [This means] “humility”.
 - b. Tanya: This is the state of *teshuvah tataah* - the lower level of return that is reached by the contriteness of a penitent heart.
2. “One should embark on worship only with joy.” (Talmud *ibid*, 31a)
 - a. Tanya: The individual is to begin his preparations for prayer by achieving a state of bitterness of spirit, [but] he is expected to begin his actual prayers in a state of joy. - Since prayer is an expression of *teshuvah ilaah*, the higher level of return.
3. A person must rid his mind of any worries that would otherwise trouble or disorient him during prayer. Accordingly, our sages advise, “A person should always enter (into a synagogue) a distance equivalent to two entrances, and only then begin to pray.” In other words, upon coming in from the “outside” (from his physical and material concerns), a person should not hasten to pray immediately. Rather, he ought to wait until he discards and dispels his earlier concerns, so that they won’t disturb him. (This explanation is written in Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim sect. 90) (Kuntres Hatefila, 11)
4. What is meant by [proper] intention?

One should clear his mind from all thoughts and envision himself as standing before the Divine Presence. Therefore, one must sit a short while before praying in order to focus his attention and then pray in a pleasant and supplicatory fashion.

One should not pray as one carrying a burden who throws it off and walks away. Therefore, one must sit a short while after praying, and then withdraw. The pious ones of the previous generations would wait an hour before praying and an hour after praying. They would [also] extend their prayers for an hour. (Maimonides, Laws of prayer 4:16)
5. When praying, one must concentrate in his heart on the meaning of the words that he utters with his lips, as it is written, “Prepare their hearts; let Your ear be attentive.” (Psalms 10:17) One should picture himself as if the Divine Presence abides before him and arouse his concentration and remove all the thoughts that disturb him, until his thoughts and concentration are clear while he is praying. He should consider that if he were speaking in the presence of a king of flesh and blood, he would marshal his words and concentrate on them thoroughly so that he would not falter; how much more should he prepare himself when facing the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, before Whom one must concentrate on one’s thoughts as well. For before Him, thought is like speech, since He examines all thoughts.
6. And indeed, this was the practice of the pious men and the men [distinguished by their] deeds: they would [sit in] solitude and concentrate on their prayers until they reached a state in which they rose above material consciousness and their intellectual spirit was dominant, and they attained a rung approaching that of prophecy.
7. If another thought occurs in the midst of prayer, one should remain silent until that thought ceases. If one cannot focus on the simple meaning of the words, he should at least think, while praying, about things that humble the heart and direct his feelings to his Father in Heaven. He should not think about frivolous matters.
8. Before praying one should ponder upon the exaltedness of G-d, blessed be He, and the lowliness of man, and remove [all thoughts of] mortal pleasure from his heart. (Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 98:1)
9. For concerning the realm of holiness it is written: (Chronicles 16:27) “Strength and gladness are in His place”; and likewise, (Talmud, Shabbat 30b) “The Divine Presence abides... only in [man’s] joy,... and the same joy is required for the study of the Halachah.” (Tanya, Ch. 31)

10. “Because you did not serve G-d with happiness and a glad heart... And you will serve your enemies..”
(Deuteronomy 28:47-48)
11. And the humble shall increase their joy in the L-rd, and the impoverished people shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. (Isaiah 29:19)
12. A light is sown for the righteous, and for the upright of heart, joy. Rejoice, you righteous, with the L-rd, and give thanks to His holy name. (Psalms 97:11-12)
13. Serve G-d with joy (Psalms 100:2)
14. Serve G-d with joy. Ba'al Shem Tov: The verse is saying that Joy itself is a way of serving G-d.
15. It is considered a great Divine service to serve HaShem with joy. (Maimonides, Sefer Mada)
- Depression is not a sin. But what depression does, no sin can do. Happiness is not a Mitzvah, but where happiness can reach, no Mitzvah can reach. (Chassidic saying)
 - It is a great Mitzvah to be constantly happy. (R' Nachman of Breslav)
 - Joy breaks through all barriers. (Sefer Hamamorim 5657)
16. Do not focus on what you need, rather, focus on what you are needed for. (Rabbi Schneor Zalman of Liadi)
17. Now when one contemplates deeply and at length on this matter of G-d's true unity, his heart will rejoice with this faith; his soul will be gladdened by it to the point of rejoicing and singing with all his heart, soul, and might. For this [faith] is tremendous—when it fills one's mind, it actually constitutes [an experience of] the closeness of G-d.
This, in fact, is the whole [purpose] of man and the purpose for which he, and all the worlds, both upper and lower, were created: that G-d should have such a dwelling place here below...
[Man's faith in the unity of G-d fulfills this goal. For when G-d's unity is revealed in the mind and heart of men, this world becomes an abode for G-d; He is revealed there just as one reveals himself completely in his own home.]
How great is the joy of a common and lowly person when he is brought close to a king of flesh and blood who furthermore lodges and greater still dwells together with him—not in the king's palace but in his (the commoner's) home!
How much more, infinitely more, [ought one to rejoice] in the nearness of the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, and in His dwelling together with man in this physical world, man's “home.”
So it is written: “For who is the man who dares to approach Me?” says G-d.” (Jeremiah 30:21)
[Yet in one's awareness of G-d's unity and through self-nullification before Him, one does come near to G-d. Furthermore, G-d thereby dwells with him and within him.]
For this ability to experience and to be absorbed in G-d's unity, it was instituted [by the Sages] that one should render praise and thanks to G-d's Name each morning, saying:
“How fortunate are we! How good is our portion, [how pleasant our lot,] and how beautiful our heritage!”
In other words, just as a person rejoices and is glad when an immense fortune falls into his possession—by inheritance, through no toil of his own, similarly, and infinitely more so, ought we to rejoice over the inheritance which our forefathers bequeathed to us.
This [inheritance] is the true unity of G-d—that even here below on earth, there is nothing else besides Him alone, and this is His abode among the lowly beings of this physical world...
This is the meaning of the verse, “Let Israel rejoice in its Maker” (Psalms 149:2) Whoever ...ought to rejoice in the joy of G-d, Who is happy and joyous with His abode among the creatures of the lower spheres... (Tanya Ch. 33)

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