

Part 5:  
**Meditation**  
The Soul and Reality

**T**he mind is the interface between the soul and reality.

**A**ll of us are constantly being bombarded with stimuli and sensations from the outside world, and it is our mind that processes this onrush of sensations. The mind determines which sensations are to be taken note of, then classifies and arranges them, and decides which response is appropriate to which stimulus, based on past experiences or principles.

**I**t is the mind, then, that determines how we relate to our environment. To realize ourselves in life to the fullest extent, we must provide our mind with the proper tools to process reality and relate to it. This is a fundamental purpose of Jewish meditation.

**T**hrough meditation, we take the untamed mind and train it to think in terms of images that are based on truth. By leading a subject through deeper and deeper levels of abstraction, we reach and affect deeper and deeper dimensions of the mind, thus gradually changing ourselves and the way we respond to the world around and within us.

**T**o this end, seasoned practitioners of meditation will make use of the whole range of Biblical, Talmudic, Kabbalistic, and Chassidic literature to fertilize the potent ground of their imagination and faculty of association. When evaluated in the context of Torah, knowledge of science and nature, God's creation, can also be summoned to the same end. The aim is to produce a conceptual garden of ever-evolving multi-dimensional images and insights into reality that will serve as the context and content of meditation.

### **Methodology**

**I**n Jewish meditation, we strive to understand in depth the Divine truths embodied in the Torah and in the marvels of God's creation (which in themselves bind us to God the Creator and to His Torah); we also strive to establish points of connection between them and our personal life.

**W**e enhance the potency of our meditation by *hearing* the holy words of the Torah (ideally in Hebrew, the language of creation) and simultaneously

*envisioning* the holy letters. The [twenty-two Hebrew letters](#) are twenty-two different types of flow of life-force and powers, through which all upper and lower worlds were created. Their form in writing reflects the depiction of the flow (*Sha'ar HaYichud VebaEmunah*, chapter 11).

**W**e consider/count the holy letters as we would count precious jewels, one by one. Therefore the early sages were called *sofrim*, ("counters") because they would *count* [*sofer*] all the letters of the Torah (*Kidushin* 30a).

Enamored by each letter, unable to let go and leave it in order to pass on to the next letter, we bind each letter to the next one, as one binds one flower to another, thereby creating a beautiful bouquet. True love of the letters of the Torah comes from realizing that God has, so to speak, given Himself to us in them.

**T**o this end, we will anchor each concept we present in this exposition to its source in the Torah, to specific words and phrases taken from the Bible.

## To Know God

**J**ewish meditation begins with the awareness that God has instructed us to meditate on Him and His omnipresence, in order to experience Him (i.e., to know Him) in every facet of our lives. We first commit ourselves to fulfill His command. The Torah states (Deuteronomy 4:39):

*You shall know this day and take to heart that God is God in the heavens above and on the earth below, there is no other*

**I**n the [Tanya](#), (*Kuntres Acharon* 4 (156b), the classic text of Chassidic thought, [Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi](#) concurs with the opinion of those rabbinic authorities who count this verse as one of the 613 commandments of the Torah, defining it as the commandment "to know God" by contemplating God and His continual creation of the universe.

**I**n meditation, our hearts are aroused to turn away from those egocentric pursuits that normally fill our consciousness, all being illusory states of existence. Instead, we turn toward the one, true reality, God.

**A**s is the case with regard to all human endeavors, the effectiveness of meditation is clearly a gift from God. However, we are granted free choice, which we must utilize to its maximal extent. In the case of meditation, we

must search for God from the depths of our hearts in order to be worthy of the gift of Divine revelation.

**A**dditionally, in order for the seeds of meditation to take root in the soul, to grow and bear fruit, we ourselves must become fertile "earth." This depends upon our spiritual acquisition of humility and selflessness.

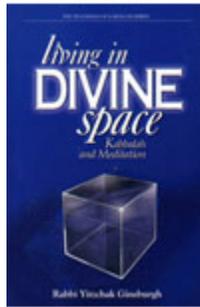
**M**any beginners mistakenly understand meditation as an attempt to clear the mind and thereby transcend the normative thought process. Clearing the mind of foreign thoughts that disturb the focus of meditation is definitely a prerequisite to entering the meditative state, but it is not the essence of meditation itself. Kabbalah and Chassidism teach that meditation involves thought, for meditation is the search to find God not only abstractly but concretely as well.

**M**editation is intended to translate Divine insight, as perceived instinctively by the Divine soul, into the context of the natural, "dark" intelligence of the so-called "animal" soul, that basic aspect of the life force that animates our physical selves. We achieve this through clear and well-directed thought, making use of precise parables, metaphors, and psychological or physical examples related to the Divine concepts that compose the essence of our meditation.

**F**or example, the Divine concept of creation *ex nihilo* ("out of nothing") might be translated into a context understood by the animal soul via the parable of the seed. By meditating on how the seed must rot in the ground, returning to a relative state of "nothing" before it sprouts into a plant, we are able to intellectually grasp the idea of God's constant re-creation of the world.

**T**hrough in-depth meditation, we refine our intellect (which in itself is a gift of God) to become a channel for Divine consciousness, allowing it to permeate our day-to-day consciousness, our normative state of being.

**W**ith all of these thoughts in mind, we will now turn to our meditation--"Living in Divine Space."



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by Harav Yitzchak Ginsburgh,  
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