

Meditation and kaballah based on work of rabbi aryeh kaplan

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Meditation and Kaballah Based On Work of Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan Meditation is the cornerstone of Kabbalah's spiritual work. Just like other spiritual traditions, there are several types of meditation with different intended goals and methods. The major forms of Kabbalistic meditation include contemplation, nothingness, conversing with God, visualization, and mantra meditation¹. The paper will explore the following major types of meditations, which include mantra, visualization, and nothingness based on Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan writings and his book " Jewish Meditation." In his book, Kaplan seeks to reveal the geneses of meditation in the Bible. He speculated that, during the biblical times, many people (over a million) were involved in regular schools of meditation and meditative disciplines².

Mantra Meditation

Mantra meditation is best-known meditation today. Mantra is an Eastern term that denotes a word or phrase that is repeated severally in a meditative exercise. The immediate result of mantra meditation is relaxation of the body. In this meditation, when the body relaxes more, the mind becomes more active. It is more like the body releasing some energy which the mind can make use of it. Mantra meditation is an excellent relaxation technique. Thus, several psychologists have created religious neutral types of mantra meditation to instigate relaxation response. Mantra meditation works mainly through habituation³. The first reference to mantra form of meditation is found in the primary text of Merkavah mysticism called Heykhaloth Rabbatai. The text dates from the Talmudic times. In this text, mantra is seen as the first phase in the discipline of chariot. It seems that biblical verses or Zohar or Talmud selections were used as mantras in later Kabbalistic schools⁴.

Visualization

Visualization is a crucial discipline in meditation because individuals learn how to control images seen when they close their eyes. When one is capable of controlling these images, he will learn how to maintain an image in the eye of the mind. Visualization meditation begins by one closing his eyes, taking a relaxing position, and permitting the images in mind's eyes to stabilize⁵. A crucial aid in visualization is the object's name to be visualized. Another significant aid is to begin visualization exercise with observational meditation. Kabbalah texts that deal with meditation have talked extensively about visualization. For instance, Sefer Yetzirah denotes two processes depicting the letters hewing (chatzivah) and engraving (chakikah)⁶.

Nothingness

Nothingness is an advanced form of meditation and cannot be used by beginners. It cannot be practiced without a spiritual master's guidance. It cannot also be practiced when the individual is alone⁷. The first stage to visualizing nothingness is to try to visualize transparent, pure, empty space that lacks background color. Kaplan indicates that he found this technique helpful for experiencing God's presence. Although this method entails visualizing the transparent empty space, the item imagined is still space and not nothingness. Nothing is what an individual sees behind his head⁸. Thus, whatever is seen behind the head is nothingness. To visualize nothingness can take many years because it is not an easy discipline. It seems that the same method was utilized as an originator of prophecy in the Bible. Several references to prophecy and voices seem to appear from behind⁹.

Works Cited

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