

The history of Jewish Meditation

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"The key ingredient to true faith is a clear imagination. The intellect is limited by its knowledge. Faith only starts where the intellect can no longer go. By means of a pure imagination we can soar to heights of faith and come close to our Creator". ([Tinyana 8](#))

Much of the below was gleaned from classes I heard from [Rabbi Daniel Katz](#) of [The Elevation Project](#).

Most people think that meditation practices are sourced in newer religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, when in fact Judaism, the oldest religion known today, is nothing less than saturated with meditation and consciousness teachings. It's no exaggeration to say that much of the meditation practice

studied today is sourced in Judaic writings. So, why has it been a secret until now and why is it suddenly being revealed?

Throughout the writings of the Prophets one clearly sees that prophecy was only reached from a state of meditation. The Talmud (Megillah 14a) states that there were 1.2 million prophets who shared their prophecy throughout our history. It is inferred that scores of other prophets existed, who simply didn't share their revelations. Unfortunately, at the very beginning of the Second Temple era the desire for spiritual connection was leading the Jews astray. The lust to worship idols and draw out their spiritual energy was ruining our overall relationship with Hashem, so the sages made a bold move. They used their powers to remove the lust for idol worship, knowing full well that our holy spiritual connection of prophecy would be lost as well.

So how does one connect to Hashem when his main technique of spirituality is removed? The answer is that the Torah went into exile. This means that the Torah has a unique dynamic relationship with the Jews. When we change, the Torah changes to meet us. This doesn't mean that the laws or the practices of the Torah change, but our interface with it changes. At the time when prophecy ceased, the Greeks were coming into power, with their rationalist and analytical ideas, so Hashem revealed a new aspect of the Torah, which was focused primarily on analyzation. This was the beginning of Jewish debating, opinion and the study of the the Talmud.

The study of Jewish law continued to grow from the Babylonian exile until approximately 1740/1840, when the [Baal Shem Tov](#) realized that on a national level we were too used to thinking about the Torah intellectually, and we almost completely lost the Divine language of experience (Tzavaas Harivash #80). This resulted in the Jewish people learning text superficially, without understanding its deeper meditational influence and references. But that's not all he noticed, there was another change too. It used to be that

people naturally understood their life's purpose, know as their *shoresh neshama*. But as time went on throughout our exile, the Baal Shem Tov saw (Shaar Hayichud Vhaemuna) that there was an inter-inclusion of the souls, called *Hiskalilus*. Everything was mixed up now and even the simple people wanted to experience the Divine, a phenomenon that never existed prior to. This is because Hashem started to exponentially hasten the coming of the redemption, as is stated in Isaiah (60) "*B'ita Achishena*" ("in it's time, I will hasten it"), which the Zohar predicts to mean specifically from around the eighteenth century. In order to meet the needs of the changing Jewish souls, the Baal Shem Tov began to reveal the secrets of the Torah and meditation, which were lost, hidden, shunned and exiled. The path of *Chassidus* is no more and no less than the path of prophecy being re-revealed in our generation.

But from that time in the 18th century, the Divine revelation didn't only start to ramp up from the Torah's side. The discoveries of science, technology and psychology also began to burst forth at an unprecedented speed and accuracy. This dual revelation of science, from the bottom up, and Torah, from the top down is the fulfillment of that same prophecy predicted in the Zohar (Parshas Vayera). The Torah writes regarding the flood in the times of Noah (Genesis 7:11) "**on this day, all the springs of the great deep were split, and the windows of the heavens opened up**". The Zohar explains that there will be a similar two-way flood of consciousness that will reoccur in the final redemption. "The springs of the great deep" will be the knowledge that science reveals, and "the windows of Heaven" will reveal the consciousness of the Divine in the Torah path. When these two paths meet, the world will be flooded with knowledge and consciousness of the Divine. This is happening now and, please G-d, we should merit to see the end, when the whole world will proclaim Hashem's unity, Amen!

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