

Hassidic Teachings on Contemplative Prayer

These translations of original sources are from *Your Word is Fire* by, Art Green & Barry Holtz

1. “People think that they pray **to God**. But this is not the case. For prayer itself *is* of the essence of God!”—**Reb Pinhas of Koretz**

2. “When you want to pray to God for something, think of your soul as part of the Divine Presence, like a raindrop in the sea. Then pray for the needs of the Divine Presence. You can have faith that your prayer will benefit the Divine Presence. Then, if you are properly attached to the Divine Presence, this influence will also be transmitted to you.” (**Maggid Devarav le'Yaacov**)

3. “**The Purpose of all prayer is to uplift the words, to return them to their source above.** The world was created by the downward flow of letters: Our task is to form those letters into words and take them back to God. If you come to know this dual process, your prayer may be joined to the constant flow of Creation—word to word, voice to voice, breath to breath, thought to thought.”---The words fly upward and come before him. As God turns to look at the ascending word, life flows through all the worlds and prayer receives its answer. All this happens in an instant and all this happens continually; Time has no meaning in the sight of God. The divine spring is ever-flowing: make yourself into a channel to receive the waters from above.” —**Maggid of Mezerich (Or Torah 58b-59a)**

4. “ Whatever you see or experience in life let it remind you of the Holy One. If you experience love, let it remind you the love of God. If something frightens you, let it awaken in you the feeling of awe before the divine Presence.” —**Baal Shem Tov**

5. “As a person prepares to pray, and recites the words: ‘O Lord, open my lips and let my mouth declare Your praise.’ The Shechinah (divine presence) enters him/her. Then it is the Presence herself who transmits his/her voice: it is she who utters the words through him/her. One who knows in faith that all this happens within him/her will be overcome with trembling and with awe.”—**Maggid of Mezerich (Maggid Devarav leYaacov 14a)**

6. In prayer seek to make yourself into a vessel for God's Presence. God, however, is without limit; "Endless" (Ein Sof) is His name. How can any finite vessel hope to contain the endless God? Therefore, see yourself as nothing (ayin): only one who is nothing can contain the fullness of the Presence. --**Maggid of Mezerich (Magid Devarav le'Yaacov 69a)**

7. Tikkunay Zohar 43 **identifies the image of the ladder in Jacob's dream with Prayer as a means of ascending the four worlds.** The Midrash (quoted in *Yalkut Reuvani* and *Megaleh Amukot* 1) recounts an oral tradition that the ladder in Jacob's dream consisted of four steps, which, according to the mystic Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz, known as the "Shelah" (1560-1630), embodied the Four Worlds of the Kabbalah.