

Introduction.

PRACTICING MENTAL IMAGERY IS PRACTICING KABBALAH

The Relationship Between Spirit and the Everyday World

There are two major ways of understanding the relation between Spirit and the everyday world. In one approach, you find Spirit by drawing away from the everyday world. This is the approach of the East, and it is the approach that many popular books offer to those yearning to bring more spirituality into their lives. While these books don't say that you needn't worry about the chores, tasks and challenges of everyday life, they pay little attention to everyday matters. In these books, what is central is adopting the attitudes and perspectives that take you closer to Spirit by focusing your mind quietly away from the travails of everyday life.

The other approach to the relation between Spirit and daily life is that you move toward the spiritual by bringing it into the everyday. In this approach, mundane life is not a hindrance to Spirit; it is the path to Spirit. You do not turn your back on the chores, tasks and challenges of the everyday, but rather use them to open yourself to Spirit. This is the approach of the West – the approach of “reaching for heaven on earth” – and it is the approach in particular of the path I follow, the path of Visionary Kabbalah. Visionary Kabbalah tells us that to move toward the transcendent we must first gain mastery over our everyday concerns and difficulties.

It is here that we begin to see the connection between inner peace and Spirit. To gain mastery of ourselves in daily life with its bottomless well of challenges requires that we establish in ourselves the inner peace that comes from *balance* and *order*. In this way, gaining inner peace prepares us to open to Spirit. At the same time, the practice of Spirit cultivates inner peace.

The beauty of Visionary Kabbalah is that it offers us several easily available practices that do both – help bring us to inner peace and, at the same time, to the experience of Spirit. Its central practice is mental imagery. Through mental imagery, we enter the realm of the timeless, spaceless Divine, a realm that is always present and available to us, if we only ask. This realm, called the invisible universe, consists of many worlds of reality and beings, e.g., angels, archangels, cherubim.

In this book, I move through typical events and common challenges of an ordinary day and show how mental imagery can help us master our concerns by drawing on Spirit, the source and the essence of our being. In this way we gain inner peace. Not only do we live healthier, calmer, more assured, and more moral lives; but we also put ourselves on the path that leads to transcendence.

I should explain that the Kabbalah I practice is not the Kabbalah that has become a kind of pop hit of the moment, whose study and practice has gained many adherents, a number of them well-known celebrities. This variant is called Ecstatic Kabbalah. About two thousand years old, Ecstatic Kabbalah is based on chanting combinations of Hebrew letters during a meditational state with the aim of bringing the chanter to the transcendent experience of reach-

ing out and up toward union with God. In this union, one *escapes* the bondage of conditioning and the enslavement it brings in the time-space physical reality that we usually, mistakenly, think of as the only real world. In other words, in this approach to Kabbalah, one strives to leave behind the ordinarieness of human life and leap into the transcendent.

In contrast, Visionary Kabbalah is four to five thousand years old and derives from the ancient Western spiritual tradition of the prophets. These Biblical seers from Abraham onwards describe the revelatory experiences which came to them in their visionary practice. In this practice, visions of the Divine and the transcendent are transmitted via the *sacred language of image*. Put another way, image – and imagery – is the language of the Divine. God speaks to us through image, and we can reach God through image. It is a mutual process.

While Visionary Kabbalah is the language of the Divine it does not mean that the language of image moves us directly into transcendence. Quite the contrary. In Visionary Kabbalah, we cannot move into transcendence until we balance our lives on earth. Thus, in Visionary Kabbalah, we use image, an inner hieroglyph, to make God's presence immanent on earth. We use image to draw on the knowledge we need to live a healthy, happy, and balanced life. By applying the revelations that come through imagery, we transform both our personal lives and the world around us. Once our inner balance is secured, we can proceed up the ladder of self-mastery to make our way first to personal illumination and then to union with the Divine.

Why do I say that image is the sacred language of the Divine?

In Genesis (1:26) it is stated that we are made in the *image* of God. Image in this context represents the indestructible immortal seed we are as created by God. Thus, we bear a cosmic imprint and are open to receiving a continuous influx of Divine energy, which includes information, messages, and light. These influxes come from the invisible world, which is the true reality. Those of us who practice Visionary Kabbalah know it is a science of *revelation* – revelation that is designed to give us peace, comfort, health, and general well-being, from the simplest aspects of our lives to the most complex.

To make God immanent on earth is to bring to earth a new therapeutic impulse that allows us to create a new life, free of conditioning. By transforming our conditioned servitude into freedom, we transform the suffering that usually characterizes daily existence into a life of healing and wholeness.

We can see this process of transformation in the familiar story of Abraham and his encounter with God, about 4,200 years ago in a part of the world that had many tribes, all practicing polytheism – the worship of many gods. People sacrificed fellow humans to propitiate one or another god for whatever benefits the god presumably controlled – rain, crops, cattle, and so forth.

Abraham's encounter with God consisted of his perceiving a great invisible being who in effect said: "I will give you everything that you need on this earth to sustain, fortify, and satisfy you, including eternal health and well-being. All I need in return is your love and devotion."

Mental imagery is akin to Abraham's revelatory experience, which became the basis for the monotheistic tradition. Imagery puts us in touch with the invisible and thus, according to Abraham's revelation, with what we need in everyday life. Through mental imagery, we access the inner knowledge that helps us heal and brings us back into wholeness; we *remember ourselves* in a new way, bringing ourselves back to life from the suffering that is wearing us down.

Remembering Ourselves Into Wholeness

What does remember ourselves mean? It essentially means coming back to life – *re-membering*. We see this in the vivid story from ancient Egypt, where Isis, the goddess of wisdom, re-members her husband, Osiris. As the god of the netherworld, Osiris weighed the souls of the dead to determine where each soul would go. Osiris's brother, Seth, was so jealous of Osiris's power that he murdered his brother and then cut him into fourteen pieces, burying them all over Egypt. When Isis learned of this, she scoured Egypt to find the pieces, and after collecting them, she put together all but one of them, restoring Osiris to life.¹ She *re-membered* him. She put his members back together, a process of cosmic reconstructive surgery. Because she recalled him whole, through an act of remembering, *both physical and mental*, she brought him back to life.

¹ In the Western spiritual tradition, the woman holds the key to love, which the man learns through her, and so becomes complete.

In mental imagery we re-member and restore ourselves from the fragmentation we experience both internally and externally from the disturbing situations that surround us. We bring ourselves back to life by aligning ourselves with the truths that come to us from the invisible universe. This sacred realm knows what we need and is always available to us through mental imagery.

The revelatory way of the prophets, the systematizers of Visionary Kabbalah, is alive today in the use of mental imagery for purposes of both healing and spiritual realization. This book endeavors to show readers how to invigorate their lives in the spirit of Visionary Kabbalah. In a modest way, the book aims to give everyone the means to become a practicing kabbalist.

A Personal Note

In 1989, I published a book on mental imagery, *Healing Visualizations: Creating Health Through Imagery* (which, I am happy to say, is still in print), without a single word about Kabbalah. Many books on mental imagery take no notice of Kabbalah because the authors either have no spiritual interests or are unaware of the unique connection between imagery and Kabbalah. In my case, I did not discuss Kabbalah because I thought then that placing imagery in what to me was its true and deepest context would ask too much of readers. *Healing Visualizations* is very much a nuts-and-bolts handbook of imagery treatments for various disorders from acne to worry. In 1989, it seemed enough to me (and my editors) to maintain that imagery could alleviate physical, mental, and emotional disorders.

The world has changed. The use of imagery has gained increasing acceptance. Discussion of the spiritual realities behind the physical realities that come to us through our senses has gained a wide audience – even making some inroads in the medical community, which has begun to study the possible effects of spirituality or belief in God on health. In *Healing Visualizations*, I told only one piece of the story of mental imagery – the story of application. In *Kabbalah for Inner Peace*, I am telling the whole story – that mental imagery is the way that we can access the invisible reality; that our first aim in asking for assistance from this invisible world is to bring balance to our human lives, physically, emotionally and mentally; and that when we do this, in effect, we make God immanent on earth. We have then prepared ourselves to reach out to the transcendent.

Imagery As Prayer

All spiritual tradition speaks about two worlds: the realm of visible reality and the unseen invisible realm. The world of visible reality is the world of time, space, and physicality: that which can be measured and objectified. It is the world of material reality.

The invisible world is a different order of reality operating under different rules. It is the non-space, non-time, pandimensional or multidimensional world.

In the Western spiritual tradition, when we speak of Spirit we refer to the presence, the influence, and the priority of invisibility in our visible world of objective material reality. In this tradition, every image experience is a prayer sent up to invis-

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About the Author

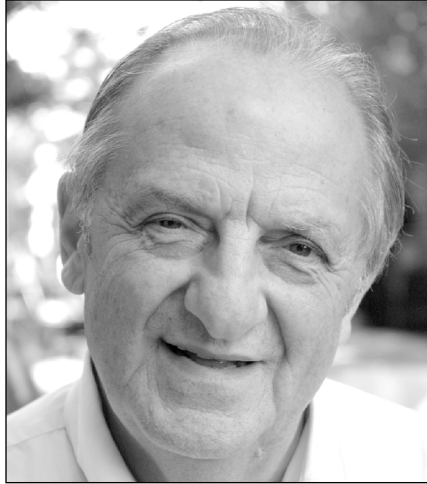


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