

# A Guide to Introducing a Meditative Experience in Congregations

A Joint project of the FJMC and the Cantors Assembly

## Purpose:

This guide has been created to provide congregation decision makers with needed information to institute a Jewish Meditative experience in their synagogue on Shabbat morning in order to provide a Shabbat experience to those who either find the main service not to their liking or are searching for a more spiritual opportunity. The questions and answers that follow were designed to provide basic guidelines how to proceed. The accompanying essays seek to explain the authenticity of Jewish meditation.

## Introduction

One of the greatest challenges synagogue professionals face is how to adapt traditional worship to a population that is becoming increasingly less engaged and more distant. In an attempt to bridge this gap learner's services, rhythmic or instrumental music has in many cases been integrated into the Friday evening and Shabbat morning services. These efforts to some degree have been and continue to be successful but are dwarfed by the vast number of men and women who seek out spiritual experiences in the meditation and yoga worlds. These people are, by in large not attracted and do not find satisfying the traditional forms of Jewish worship

In an attempt to attract this growing population a number of congregations have begun to introduce guided meditations into the traditional services or to offer meditative experiences in a separate venue. Unfortunately the decision makers in the congregation, while well intended, often lack the necessary background to maximize this effort. As a result, it is common in congregations for people to attend a meditative service and immediately following the service's conclusion, leave. Rather than having introduced a successful way of engaging and integrating people into the community the congregation is simply offering a "service", filling a space, and failing to capitalize on the population it wishes to develop.

This guide attempts to address the concerns:

1. What information does a synagogue decision maker need to know if he/she wishes to introduce a Jewish meditative experience to the congregation?
2. What questions does the decision maker need to ask the prospective instructor?
3. What are the goals of this programmatic venue?
4. Is Jewish meditation authentic?
5. What can a meditative experience accomplish?
6. How does one create a meditative experience?
7. What are the concepts that this experience strives to cultivate?
8. How should said service be composed?

The material that follows is a result of a series of conversations with internationally known meditative instructors, members of the Cantors Assembly and Rabbinical Assembly who have experimented with and trained in Jewish meditative arts.

### **What Do I need to know if I wish to offer a Meditative Experience in my Congregation?**

In order to make knowledgeable decisions and introduce a meditative Jewish experience in the synagogue it is important for the decision maker to be prepared to ask a number of specific questions.

### **What do I need to know about meditation and what are the differences in the various schools of meditative practice?**

#### **The difference between Yoga and Meditation**

The study and practice of Yoga has expanded exponentially in recent years and the community may contain a wealth of perspective facilitators. There are approximately 22 different schools or approaches to yoga and hundreds of various techniques within those approaches. Some of these approaches involve meditation, some do not.

Many popular techniques in North America, such as Bikram Yoga, and variants of Hatha Yoga are primarily fitness based and involve little or no meditation or spiritual teachings. They are “mind+ body” centered. It is important to note that many certified and experienced yoga teachers have no background in leading meditative experiences.

Ideally, the program facilitator’s yogic training (if they have any) involves a “mind+body+spirit” centered approach (such as Kundalini Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raj, Dhyana Yoga, Kriya Yoga, Mantra Yoga, or Laya Yoga, Tantra Yoga).

Hatha Yoga is the most widely taught form of yoga in the Western Hemisphere and many specific disciplines of this broader form do not include meditation training. This is not necessarily a hindrance and may greatly enhance the program. These individuals are often highly experienced group leaders and confident teachers. Additional benefits of a facilitator with an advanced yogic training or practice is an expanded expertise in the complimentary and supportive fields of Physical Anatomy Alignment and Postures (Asana), and Breath work (Pranayama).

The understanding and mastery of these fields allows the guide to prepare individuals to have a compelling spiritual experience. A basic Hatha yoga form of training may not be a sufficient qualification for your program’s leader. It is essential to verify additional specific meditation and spiritual study. (Jivamukti Yoga is one example of many Hatha based training that do incorporate meditation.

#### **Meditative Schools of thought**

There are a plethora of approaches and philosophies of meditation, and thousands of specific techniques and practices. *A helpful general distinction is one of belief. Some schools of meditative thought involve belief in a deity and others do not.* Transcendental meditation involves a system of belief. Zen meditation practice does not. A congregational meditation program should be based on a spiritual belief.

It is possible that a leader with experience in facilitating certain aspects of the nonbelief forms of meditation can be beneficial to your program. They may have an ability to support participants in mindfulness practices; drawing one's mental awareness to the present moment and focusing on one's inner experience, enhancing overall contentiousness, and mental physical and emotional stress reduction.

### **What do I look for in the program's leader or facilitator?**

The role of the leader of this service is both a Spiritual guide (serving participants in developing their Spiritual Identity) and to foster community. The intent is to create an inclusive atmosphere and facilitate a spiritually meaningful experience that connects to Jewish Life.

A spiritual guide leads the service from their own psyche and consciousness. It is vital that their personal attitude and intention is clearly centered in a state of *Kavanna*. Ideally the facilitator is currently and consistently engaged in a meditative practice. The individual should exhibit a connection to and respect their own spiritual center.

*The leader must understand how to create a comfortable environment, and sacred atmosphere that compels participants to experience Kavanna, within the context of Jewish Life.* Perspective facilitators will often come from a background of yogic training or schools of meditation with specific religious affiliation. Though yoga itself is not a religion, many schools of training are intertwined with and influenced by Hindu, Buddhist, or Sikh philosophies; and often employ Mantras and Prayers from those traditions in their devotional and meditative practices.

Mantra is a Sanskrit word which translates as "to train the mind", and is an extremely effective and valued tool of meditation. It may be employed in a meditation service to cultivate *Kavanna*. However, the leader must be sensitive, aware of Jewish prayer and culture, and lead a program based on Jewish Prayers, as opposed to Sanskrit, Hindi, or any mantras and prayers from other religious paths. It is important that the leader demonstrates a conviction that each person has equal spiritual capacity and potential.

### **Should the facilitator be Jewish?**

This depends upon the culture of your community. It is entirely possible that an experienced non-Jewish meditation teacher can create a meaningful experience that enhances Jewish identity. An effective meditation facilitator requires skills outside of any specific religious training. The most important factor is that the leader be possessed with Jewish knowledge and be comfortable in leading Jewish prayers, mantras and chanting. In the event that the instructor is not Jewishly knowledgeable they can receive instruction from the Rabbi.

### **Do Musical Instruments play any role in this experience?**

There are many forms of meditation from various disciplines that incorporate chanting and music to great spiritual evocation. Depending upon your community's specific ritual practice you may look to find a leader with a background in spiritual music.

### **Is there an opportunity for study within this experience?**

Study involves analytic thought while meditation is experiential and contemplative. Leaders can introduce contemplative, thematic spiritual themes to aid the practitioner's contemplative experience in order to enhance their spiritual development. This is referred to as a Dharma talk or Dharshan (somewhat similar to a d'rash) or Satsang which is a question and answer modality

**Suggested interview questions:**

Q: What is your background of study in related fields (movement, therapists, spiritual teachers, spiritual based musicians etc.)?

Q: Do you have previous experience facilitating group meditation?

Q: Are you currently and consistently participating in your own personal meditation practice? For how long?

Q: What is your Jewish knowledge and experience?

Q: If you have no personal Jewish background and knowledge, are you willing to be taught?

Q: How specifically do you intend to create an inclusive communal experience?

Q: Are you prepared to serve as a spiritual guide for the group?

Q: Will you incorporate music and chanting?

Q: Are you experienced in facilitating meditation that incorporates Jewish Mantra, Prayer, and chanting?

Q: Are you able and willing to exclude specific symbols and idols from other spiritual and religious paths from this meditation program?

Q: Are you familiar with common physical restrictions based upon special needs of participants, and can they provide various supportive methods and modifications for practice (i.e. Common illnesses, postural limitations, pregnancy, prescription drugs etc?)

## What is Meditative Minyan?

Hazzan Joanna S. Dulkan

### Introduction:

For a number of years, I have been honored to lead contemplative morning services at a number of international conventions and gatherings both movement centered (FJMC, USCJ, Ramah, Cantors Assembly) and other (congregations, retreats, organizations, etc.). While the structure of these services varies from occasion to occasion, I always strive to integrate some or all of the following spiritual practices: yoga, mindfulness meditation, sacred chant, *niggun*, and *midrashic kavannot*. In almost all of the environments that I offer this morning service, it serves as an alternative to, rather than a replacement for, a relatively straightforward traditional egalitarian service found in a typical Conservative morning *minyan*. As a result the people who attend these separate *minyanim*, feel refreshed, invigorated, and inspired and generally report that they experienced an authentic and soul-stirring, deeply emotional connection to the *tefilot*, - to prayer.

The Meditation *minyan* experience:

A Jewishly orientated meditative experience can create a safe space for conversation and introspection focusing on the role prayer can play in our lives. For many congregants, the prayers in the siddur can be both comforting in their familiarity, but can, at the same time, feel stale and remote. Too often we pray on “auto pilot,” which is okay for some days, but not for others. A meditation service can provide a much-needed dose of *kavanna*. It reminds us that prayer can be spontaneous, innovative and highly personal. It wakes us up from routine, helping us to create a healthy engaged prayer experience. When we let it in, and validate, moments of introspection and *kavanna* in our *tefilot*, we open a window into the soul, and make a space for God to dwell.

Meditation offers permission to be silent in the company of others. For many, the opportunity to be silent together, presents a challenge: we are taught that silence is awkward or unacceptable (silence on the radio is called “dead time,”); the goal in a meditation practice is for silence to be positively *delicious*.

Taking the time to focus on breath, to turn inward and pay attention to what is happening in the mind explains one of Rabbi Akiva’s teachings, “A protective fence for wisdom is silence”(Pirke Avot 3:17).

Similarly, Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel said, “All my days I have been raised among the sages, and found nothing better for oneself than silence; not study, but practice is the main thing” (Pirke Avot 1:17).

In other words, speak less, do more because the *practice (spiritual discipline)* is the main thing. Jewish prayer is designed as a “practice”. Its words which are to be recited day in and day out, are an exercise for our souls in order to attune our minds and hearts to see the potentiality for holiness in our every moment.

A meditation service provides, first and foremost, no matter what the format, a space for contemplation without judgment. The *matbeah (cadence of praying)* cannot be too crowded in order to allow proper time for breathing, contemplation and connection to the moment at hand. This space allows participants to connect differently to the text of the siddur. When quality, rather than quantity of prayer, is emphasized, a potential for deeper connection can be realized.

Sometimes participants need permission or validation to slow down their davening: that moving through less material more deeply is acceptable as a “legitimate” prayer experience. Occasional vacations from the traditional prayer service ultimately results in more passionate knowledgeable, joyful and engaged daveners in

the long run. In the same way that people seek out palm trees, mountains, or ocean to refresh and renew their lives, a change of “prayer scenery” can inspire us to appreciate anew the world around us, to relish the difference, to live more mindful lives.

## Breath and Sound in Meditation

Mia Haber

The goal of meditation is to feel with each breath that God is in every atom of our being and in our every environment and situation. Meditative practice develops the knowing that we are all intrinsically linked in a loving flow with the Universe. Our breath, our sounds, our prayers are all waves that merge and unite with the infinite ocean of life, and connect our inner experience to the wonders of God's creation.

“Breath is the bridge which connects life to consciousness, which unites your body to your thoughts”- Thich Nhat Hanh

Most of us breathe automatically without assistance or any deliberate thought process. We mostly take this for granted but our respiratory system holds great gifts and can be regulated by our own conscious commands that impact on our nervous, endocrine, and cardiovascular systems. The gaining of awareness of breath, of how we breathe, can unite the mind and body and create a balance between the heaven and earth. Breathing connects our inner world to the outer world. It allows us to become one with the sacred and Divine.

“Prayer is when the mind is one-pointed and man talks to Infinity. Meditation is when the mind becomes totally clean and receptive, and Infinity talks to the man.”- Yogi BhaJan

When our minds are clear, we experience the peaceful loving flow of the miraculous nature of life. This is easier said than done because most of us are overwhelmed and overstimulated by information twenty four hours a day. The brain receives more than 2,000 thoughts an instant, the “excess” thoughts are stored in the sub and unconscious minds which also is the repository of all stimuli from of our life experience. It can easily be overloaded. When this occurs we become reactive, negative, and stressed certainly not the best environment to cultivate a meaningful and profound spiritual connection.

Meditating upon one's breath is a deeply healing and valuable technique that meditation practitioners rely upon to cleanse the excess thoughts and feelings from their minds. This process can often feel overwhelming or even anxiety producing, given our modern overtaxed and hyper stimulated minds to the new practitioner.

During the silent meditation process our conscious mind collects the garbage the excess thoughts and feelings that is accumulated by our sub and unconscious minds and “dumps them in order to calm the nervous systems and allow the subconscious mind to begin to clear and clean itself. Once the mind is clear, sound, mantras and prayers can change habitual negative patterns of the subconscious and bring it into focus.

Thoughts can be described as electrical waves in the brain, each with a specific frequency and vibration. These thoughts in a sense are also sounds. Sound can be likened to waves each sound having a specific frequency and vibration.

Mantras and prayers are sound waves that have specific frequencies that can help to raise one's spiritual consciousness. Incorporating sound into spiritual practice can bring us closer to our spiritual selves. Chants and songs can transform our bodies into instruments which stimulate spiritual consciousness leaving us feeling elevated, peaceful and spiritually fulfilled.

## “Is Mindfulness an Authentic Jewish Concept?”

Rabbi Aubrey L. Glazer, Ph.D.

“I am *spiritual*, but not *religious*” — so goes the standard quip that I, along with countless clergy, serving in synagogues across North America hear when a seeker crosses the threshold of our sacred institutions in search of meaning in their lives. These seekers and significant numbers of those who identify as Conservative Jews understand being *spiritual* as something which occurs in the realm of feeling and results in a depth of experience that simply being *religious* fails to provide. This is ironic as traditional Jewish sources dating back to early Talmudic times understood Judaism itself as the vehicle that provides spiritual experience. Rabbinic sages from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE were preoccupied with the questions of what one *feels* and what one *does*. They believed that everyone who lived in accordance with the Torah had the opportunity to experience God’s love. Had they failed, Judaism would not have survived and flourished in the aftermath of the Temple’s destruction.

One of the ways they approached what today we call, “spirituality” was through a concept called “mindfulness”. Mindfulness plays an important role in Judaism: it is the bridge that connects *thinking* and *feeling* with sincere *doing*. It is important to note that one often leads to the other, an example of which is prayer. Traditional Jewish sources explain that the way to broaden one’s awareness, to experience meaningful prayer and become aware of what is occurring in one’s spiritual life involves a Talmudic process known as *kavanna*. *Kavanna* is a *process* of becoming as we listen to — as we **attune** — to our hearts and direct the response outward.

The techniques for this process of “attuning the heart” are conveyed numerous times in the rabbinic literature by way of the Hebrew expression *lakhavven et ha-lev la’makom* attune the heart to the Place. This form of “spiritual consciousness-raising”, according to David Blumenthal, means performing an act with attentiveness. Blumenthal suggests there are four techniques to facilitate *kavanna*: textual awareness and understanding, the depth of need, connectedness to the prayer of others, and knowing that one stands before God. Classic rabbinic sources reinforce these descriptions and techniques of mindfulness. The Talmud tells the story of four sages who entered into an altered state of consciousness, they referred to the place where consciousness could be altered, as *Pardes*.

Four [Sages] entered the Pardes.<sup>1</sup> They were Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, *Akhair*<sup>2</sup> and Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Akiva said to them [prior to their ascension]: “When you come to the place of pure marble stones, do not say, ‘Water! Water!’ for it is said, ‘He who speaks untruths shall not stand before my eyes’ (Psalms 101:7).”

Ben Azzai gazed<sup>3</sup> and died. Regarding him the verse states, “Precious in the eyes of God is the death of His pious ones” (Psalms 116:15).

Ben Zoma gazed and was harmed.<sup>4</sup> Regarding him the verse states, “Did you find honey? Eat as only much as you need, lest you be overfilled and vomit it up” (Proverbs 25:16).

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<sup>1</sup> *Pardes* is literally “the orchard”, *bHagiga* 14b. *Rashi ad loc* explains that the sages ascended to heaven by utilizing the [Divine] Name, i.e., they achieved a spiritual elevation (*Tosafot, ad loc*) through intense meditation on G-d’s Name.

<sup>2</sup> *bHagiga* 14b, Elisha ben Avuya, called *Akhair* — the other one — because of what happened to him after he entered the *Pardes*.

<sup>3</sup> *bHagiga* 14b *Rashi ad loc* explains this to mean “at the Divine Presence”.



*Akhair* separated the roots.<sup>5</sup>

Rabbi Akiva entered in peace and left in peace [*b'shalom*].<sup>6</sup>

The one sage who remains intact was Akiva because he managed to maintain a sense of balanced wholeness [*shalom*]. By contrast, Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, and *Akhair* each in their own way became unsettled and distracted to the point of harm. This teaches us that an inability to attune to the heart occurs when focus is broken. Wholeness manifests when the inside and the outside match; when the intention (*kavanna*) and the act are fully integrated. Additional teachings of Akiva on both stillness and movement are instructive of the methods necessary to experience such balanced wholeness or *kavanna*.

“The fence for wisdom is silence”<sup>10</sup>

Such was the custom of Rabbi Akiva; when he prayed with the congregation, he used to cut it short and finish in order not to inconvenience the community, but when Akiva prayed by himself, one could leave him in one corner [of the room] and find him later in another, on account of his many genuflections and prostrations.<sup>7</sup>

Whether in the stillness of silence or in the dynamism of prostrations, it is possible to retain the heart's attunement to the Place of centeredness. Akiva's practice exemplifies what rabbinic Judaism sought to emphasize as a normal mystical experience, meaning that the spirituality one *feels* is grounded in what one *does*.

Another instructive text highlighting the rabbis' practice of mindfulness to experience attunement of the heart is articulated in the *Mishnah*:

One should never stand up to engage in *Tefillah* except in a reverent frame of mind. The early Pietists used to wait a while before praying in order that they might focus their thoughts upon the Place...<sup>8</sup>

This exploration of why one would “wait a while... [to] focus” continues in the Talmudic discussion surrounding this *Mishnah*, and details both the emotional process that one should attempt to rebalance and the mindfulness one should bring to social interaction:

Our Rabbis taught: One should not stand up to say *Tefillah* while immersed in sorrow, or idleness, or laughter, or chatter, or frivolity, or idle talk, but only while still rejoicing in the performance of some religious act. Similarly before taking leave of one's fellow, one should not finish off with ordinary conversation, or joking, or frivolity, or idle talk, but with some matter of *halakhah*.... Mari the grandson of R. Huna the son of R. Jeremiah b. Abba learnt: Before taking leave of his fellow one should always finish with a matter of *halakhah*, so that he should remember him thereby.<sup>9</sup>

Once again there is a concern here with remaining focused rather than succumbing to distraction, made possible by employing the techniques of *kavanna*.

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<sup>4</sup> *bHagiga* 14b *Rashi ad loc* explains he become insane.

<sup>5</sup> Namely, he became a heretic.

<sup>6</sup> *bHagiga* 14b, *Zohar* I: 26b, *Tikkunei Zohar: Tikkun* 40

<sup>7</sup> *bBerachot* 31a

<sup>8</sup> *mBerachot* 5:1

<sup>9</sup> *bBerachot* 31a

Though the techniques of experiencing and creating *kavanna* are important indications of how our rabbis created a normative mysticism within Judaism alignment with them is also most challenging. Consider the *halakhah* that one is required to stand still for the *Amidah* prayer, rather than recite it in transit while walking, riding, or even sitting. A discussion follows about what to do if one is riding [one's donkey] along the way and whether one needs to dismount, secure the transportation and stand for the *Amidah*. Ever the mindful pragmatist, Rabbi Yehudah the Prince argued "one should pray while one travels." Why? Because stopping to pray can be a far greater distraction than riding along the way. It would be too easy to become distracted with all the delays that would inevitably occur for anyone to fully concentrate. The Talmud concludes that since one will have more *kavanna* if one prays while riding, then one should continue along the journey in this way.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, the spiritual practice of Judaism requires attentiveness to what one is actually doing. It cannot simply become a rote exercise:

"*Kavanna* – whether it applies to prayer or living – is a mindfulness process in which one actualizes the potential in each moment. It is about becoming aware of what is meaningful to you and in you at any moment. It is about connecting to the Place inside - and opening to receiving it by focusing your attention in that direction. It is about discovering the hidden treasure within your heart and connecting it to the hidden treasure within others, within prayer, within Judaism, or within God."<sup>11</sup>

These basic rabbinic texts emphasize that mindfulness is a necessary process for *feeling* and *doing* Jewish and that the practice of mindfulness is a traditional form of Jewish practice. The Jewish communities of tomorrow that rabbis are serving today need leaders willing to look back at these sources attentively so as to facilitate direct experiences with that Place to which the heart aims at attuning.

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<sup>10</sup> bBerakhot 30a, Rashi ad loc s.v. *she'in da'to meyushevet 'alav*. Compare with tBerakhot 3:18, *Minhat Bikkurim ad loc*.

<sup>11</sup> See above n 2.

# Themes and Structure for a Meditative Shabbat Shacharit Service

Rabbi K'vod Wieder

## *Assiyah* - Body

This section of the service focuses on awakening to the Divine Presence in the body. Introductory prayers like *Modeh Ani*, *Elohai Neshama*, and the *Birkhot Hashahar* invite worshipers to bring their attention to the physical experience of the body, beginning with breath, and extending out to the limbs through simple movements. Besides the beginning of cultivating mindful awareness through attention on the body, participants are invited to open to Divine Presence or *hiyyut* that fills every cell.

## *Yetzirah* - Emotion

Through alternating rhythmic chanting and silence, verses of praise bring our attention to the energy and vibrating nature of the moment and ourselves. This section of the service focuses on opening the heart and engaging the emotions in devotion.

## *Beriyah* - Mind

The *Shema* and her Blessings engages our mind to awaken to God's Presence through contemplating three essential Divine processes: creation, revelation, and redemption. Once we bring our intention to worship together as a community through the *Barechu*, we are invited to open to *mochin gadlut* or the expanded states of mind that these themes describe.

### Creation

The liturgy expresses this theme with *Ham'chadesh b'tuvo b'khol yom tamid ma'aseh bereshit* -every aspect of our present moment experience - breath, sensation, thought comes into being at every moment through God's creative desire. The *Yotzer* prayer invites us to open to all aspects of our experience as expressions of light - not just the light of the heavenly bodies, but the primal light, the first light - the light of awareness.

#### A *Yotzer* Meditation

Bring your attention to your breath - noticing the movement of inhale as it enters your body through your nostrils or your mouth. Notice the way the body gently expands to make room for the inhale. Pay attention to the moment when the inhale reaches its maximum length and switches to the exhale, noticing the body gently contract as the air leaves it. And notice that moment when the exhale reaches its maximum length switching to an inhale (Give some time here)

Without leaving your attention to your breath, expand your awareness to include the sensations in your body - the contact between your bottom and the chair, your feet on the floor, the place where your hands rest in your lap, the distance between the bottom of your

spine and the top of your head, the space between your ears. Notice the place where the air contacts your face, your arms. Hear the sounds in the room.

As you pay attention to all aspects of your experience with a soft flexible awareness, consider the energy that is present in every cell of your body - your organs, your bones, muscles, skin. Consider the energy that is present in every molecule of air that fills this room, in every sound wave. Open to the possibility that this energy, this aliveness is filled with Divine Presence, with intention, intelligence, purpose. This energy is the primal light that gives life to each and every moment. This energy is the "*Or Chadash*" the light that brings each moment into being.

## Revelation

The essential reality that the Sinai experience describes is that all of life is in deep relationship - each one of us is an expression of One Presence. Love is what binds the relationship together. Torah most concisely expresses this reality in opening line of the *Shema*. However, our way into that experience of deep relationship happens first through realizing how God expresses it through love.

The Ahavah Rabah prayer brings our attention to:

1. The way God expresses that love through teaching us Torah, through revealing the way we can get close to Him
2. Our essential nature is worthy of relationship - *V'lo nayvosh l'olam va'ed*
3. Our desire to be close to the reality of this One Presence

After the experience of *achdut* - oneness, the *V'ahavta* paragraph orients us to the details of our lives and the love that is present in the way that we move in the world.

## Redemption

One of the challenges of transformative meditative practice is how to allow expanded states of awareness not just be "highs," but to actually help shape the person that we are becoming with the Divine qualities of kindness, justice, and compassion in an enduring way. In order to do this we have to realize in a deep way that the expanded state of oneness that we experience through the *Shema* is more real and true than the limited ego states that we experience on a day to day basis. In this section of liturgy, not only do we affirm *Emet v'yatziv*, but we recall the Exodus story culminating in the exclamation of *Mi Chamokha* and *Adonai Yimlokh L'olam Va'ed*. Being taken out of *Mitzrayim* (the narrow states of consciousness - *mochin katnut*) with an outstretched arm is another way of affirming that the state of deep relationship and oneness is not just a random experience, but what God wants, it is what our purpose is, our foundational story. In this part of our meditation service, we want to bring our attention to the 'liberated' nature of expanded consciousness and God's desire for us to inhabit it.

## *Atzilut* - Spirit

In the third section of the Guide, Rambam says that the highest form of worship is silence – For You, silence is praise (Ps. 65:2) In this part of the service, we have the opportunity to more deeply inhabit the expanded awareness of Divine Presence that our mind opened to through the *Shema*. This is the ultimate place of purification as we say in the Shabbat *Amidah*: *V'taher leebeynu l'ovdekha b'emet*.