

A READING FROM THE KATHA UPANISHAD

There is a city with eleven gates
 whose ruler is the Unborn One,
 whose consciousness is unflickering.¹
 They go beyond sorrow who meditate on that,
 and when freed from it, are truly free.

This indeed is that!

As the goose in the clear sky,
 as wind in middle-air,
 as fire at the altar,
 as a guest in the house,
 in a mortal, in the gods,
 in law, in the firmament,
 water-born, cow-born,
 law-born, mountain born,
 supreme...

All deities worship that one who sits in the middle,
 leading the breath outward and pulling the breath inward.²
 When this possessor of the body who rests in the body
 is unloosed and set free from the body,
 what remains here?

This indeed is that!

(5:1-4)

A READING FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

Those who are happy in themselves
 enjoy within themselves the delight of the soul,
 and even so are illumined by the inner light.
 Such yogis, identified with Brahman,
 attain Brahman, who is all peace.

Those seers whose sins have been purged,
 whose doubts have been dispelled by knowledge,
 whose undisciplined mind is firmly established in God,
 and who are devoted to the welfare of all beings,
 attain Brahman, who is all peace.

¹ This refers to the human body, "the city with eleven gates."

² Skt. *prana* and *apana*.

To those wise ones who are free from lust and anger,
who have subdued their mind and realized God,
Brahman, the abode of eternal peace, is all-present and all-around.

Shutting out all thoughts of external enjoyments,
with the gaze fixed on the space between the eye-brows,
having regulated the outgoing and ingoing breaths flowing in the
nostrils,³
those who have brought the senses, mind and intellect under control—
such contemplative souls, intent on liberation,
and free from desire, fear and anger,
are ever liberated.

Having known Me in reality as the enjoyer of all sacrifices and austerities,
the Supreme Lord of all the worlds,
and the selfless friend of all beings,
my devotee attains peace.

(5:24-29)

13.3

A READING FROM THE TAO TE CHING

Favor and disgrace are warnings.
Honor and distress visit the body.

What does it mean, “Favor and disgrace are warnings”?
Seeking favor is degrading,
alarming when it is gotten,
alarming when it is lost.

Favor and disgrace are warnings.

What does it mean by “Honor and distress visit the body”?
Only the self embodies distress.
Without a self to embody it,
there could be no distress.

Honor your body as much as the world,
then you can be trusted to care for all things.
Love the world as your very self,
then you can truly care for all things.

(#13)

³ Skt. *prana* and *apana*.

A READING FROM THE DHAMMAPADA

There is no burning for those who have completed the journey,
 who are free from sorrow and all else,
 and have destroyed all ties.

The mindful exert themselves.
 They are not attached to any home.
 They abandon home after home
 as swans leave a muddy lake.

They who do not hoard,
 who take a right view of eating,
 who are focused on deliverance and void,
 leave no trace, like the path of birds in the sky.

Those who are free from obsessions,
 who eat simply and are clear-headed, focused on liberation,
 leave no trace, like migrating birds in the sky.

(7:1-4)

FROM THE WRITINGS OF DOGEN-ZENJI

Look! There was one who was enlightened with the sound of a bamboo being struck and another who clarified his mind upon seeing peach blossoms. Is the bamboo bright or dull, deluded or enlightened? Are peach blossoms shallow or deep, wise or foolish? Although flowers blossom year after year, not everyone who sees them is enlightened. Enlightenment and clarity of mind occur only in response to the sustained effort of study and practice. Endeavoring in the way ripens the conditions of your practice. It is not that the sound of the bamboo is sharp or the color of the blossoms is vivid. Although the sound of the bamboo is wondrous, it is heard at the moment it's hit by the pebble. Although the color of the blossoms is beautiful, they do not open by themselves but unfold in the light of springtime. Studying the way is like this. You attain the way when conditions come together . . . A stone is turned into a jewel by polishing. A person becomes a sage by cultivation. What stone is originally shiny? Who is mature from the beginning? You ought to polish and cultivate yourself.

from *Shobogenzo*⁴

⁴ Trans. Tanahashi, *Enlightenment Unfolds: The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Dogen* (Boston: Shambala, 1999), 127.

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

My child, do not let these escape from you sight:
 keep sound wisdom and prudence,
 and they will be life for your soul
 and adornment for your neck.
 Then you will walk on your way securely
 and your foot will not stumble.
 If you sit down, you will not be afraid;
 when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.

(3:12-24)

FROM THE WRITINGS OF RABBI JACOB BEN ASHER⁵

It is taught that one who prays must concentrate the heart. ... One must concentrate on the words that leave the lips, depicting the Divine Presence right in front of you, as it is written, "I have placed God before me at all times."⁶ You must arouse the concentration, removing all disturbing thoughts so that the mind and concentration in prayer remain pure.

This is the way of the saints and people of deed. They would meditate,⁷ concentrating on their prayer until they reached a level where they divested themselves of the physical and were overcome by the spiritual. In this manner, they were able to reach a level close to that of prophecy.

*(Tur, Orach Chaim 98)*⁸

A READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

As Jesus sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'⁹ For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

(9:10-13)¹⁰

⁵ Rabbi Jacob ben Asher was a legal codifier of the 13th-14th century.

⁶ Psalm 16:8

⁷ Hb. *hitboded*.

⁸ In *Meditation and the Bible*, 12, adapted for inclusive language.

⁹ Hos 6:6

¹⁰ See Mk 2:18ff., Lk 5:27ff.

13.9

FROM A TREATISE BY DIADOCHUS OF PHOTICE

We must maintain great stillness of mind, even in the midst of our struggles. We shall then be able to distinguish between the different types of thoughts that come to us: those that are good, those sent by God, we will treasure in our memory; those that are evil and inspired by the devil we will reject. A comparison with the sea may help us. A tranquil sea allows the fisherman to gaze right to the depths. No fish can hide there and escape his sight. The stormy sea, however, becomes murky when it is agitated by the winds. The very depths that it revealed in its placidness, the sea now hides. The skills of the fisherman are useless.

Only the Holy Spirit can purify the mind: unless the strong man enters and robs the thief the booty will not be recovered. So by every means, but especially by peace of soul, we must try to provide the Holy Spirit with a resting place. Then we shall have the light of knowledge shining within us at all times.
(On Spiritual Perfection, Cap. 6)¹¹

13.10

A READING FROM THE QUR'AN

Always remember the blessings
 which God has bestowed on you,
 and the solemn pledge by which He bound Himself
 when you said, "We have heard, and we pay heed."
 And so, remain conscious of God:
 truly, God has full knowledge of what is within hearts.

(5:7)

¹¹ *Office of Readings*, 227.

FROM THE POEMS OF KABIR

The one whose name is unsayable.
 Why sing a *ramain* to him?
 The meaning—
 Something like a traveler on a boat,
 and holding and letting go,
 moving while sitting.
 The body stays,
 but don't confuse nature with dress.
 Mind still. Don't talk.

Mind goes without body,
 Body goes without mind.
 Mind and body one:
 Kabir says—there's a swan!

(*Bijak* #51)¹²

FROM THE PRAYERS OF THE SIKHS

If I remember God I live,
 if I forget him I die.
 Hard, very hard it is indeed to contemplate God's name.
 If one hungers after God's name
 in that holy hunger God consumes all pains.
 True is the Lord!
 True is the Lord's name!
 O Mother, how can the Lord be forgotten?

(*Evening Prayer 3a*)

¹² Trans. *Bijak*, *ibid.*, 88.