

A READING FROM THE KATHA UPANISHAD

Those wise ones who see, in the self,
the controller and the in-dwelling Self of all beings
who makes the one form manifold
have everlasting happiness: no others do.

Those wise ones who see, in the self,
the one that is permanent among the impermanent,
the consciousness among the conscious,
who, though one, dispenses the desired objects to many,
have everlasting peace: no others do.

They know that *this* is that—
the indescribable highest happiness.
How can I understand it?
Does it shine, or is it lit by another's light?

The sun does not shine there, nor the moon and stars.
Lightening does not shine there, nor alone fire.
Everything reflects its shining.
Everything is lit by its light.

(5:12-15)

A READING FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

Living alone in a secret place,
let the yogi practice harmony of mind and body,
free from desires and void of possessions,
the mind constantly engaged in meditation.

In a clean place, prepare yourself a firm seat,
neither too high nor too low,
covered with sacred *kusa* grass, a deerskin, and a cloth.
On this seat, restraining the function of your thought and senses,
fix your mind on one point,
and practice yoga to purify yourself.

Be immobile, holding body, head, and neck straight and motionless.
Rest your gaze between the eyebrows,
without attention to anything around you.
With soul in peace and all fear gone,
strong in your sacred vow,
sit disciplined, controlling your mind,
your thought set on me.

Thus constantly applying the mind to Me,
the yogi of disciplined mind attains peace of *nirvana*,
the supreme bliss which abides in me.

(6:10-15)

16.3

A READING FROM THE TAO TE CHING

Let the limits be empty,
let the center be still.
The ten thousand things rise and fall,
and we watch them return.
Creatures without number
all return to the source.

Returning to the roots is stillness;
to be still is to revive;
to revive is to endure.
Knowing how to endure is wisdom;
not knowing is to suffer in vain.
Knowing how to endure is to be all-embracing;
all-embracing means impartial.
Impartiality is royal,
being royal is divine,
being divine means at one with Tao.
One with Tao means eternal,
life without trouble.

(#16)

16.4

A READING FROM THE DHAMMAPADA

Even a single day of a life lived virtuously and meditatively,
is worth more than a hundred years lived wantonly and
without discipline.

A single day's life of a wise and contemplative person
is worth more than a hundred years lived wantonly and
without discipline.

A single day's life of one who puts out great effort
is better than a life of a hundred years
lived in idleness and sluggishness.

A single day's life lived by one who grasps
the impermanence of all conditioned things
is worth more than a hundred years lived
in blindness and ignorance.

A single day's life of one who sees the deathless state
is worth more than a hundred years
lived without perceiving it.

A single day's life of one who sees the truth
is worth more than a hundred years
of not seeing the truth.

(8:11-16)¹

16.5

A READING FROM THE SUTTA-NIPATA

Do not form views in the world through either knowledge, virtuous conduct or religious observances; likewise, avoid thinking of oneself as being either superior, inferior, or equal to others.

The wise let go of the 'self' and being free from attachments they depend not on knowledge. Nor do they dispute opinions or settle into any view.

For those who have no wishes for either extremes of becoming or non-becoming, here or in another existence, there is no settling into the views held by others.

Nor do they form the least notion in regard to views seen, heard, or thought out. How could one influence those wise ones who do not grasp at any views?²

16.6

A READING FROM THE PROPHET BARUCH

Who has gone up to heaven, and taken wisdom,
and brought her down from the clouds
Who has gone over the sea, and found her,
and will buy her for pure gold?
No one knows the way to her,
or is concerned about the path to her.
But the one who knows all things knows her,
he found her by his understanding.
The one who prepared the earth for all time
filled it with four-footed creatures;
the one who sends forth the light, and it goes;
he called it, and it obeyed him, trembling;
the stars shone in their watches, and were glad;
he called them, and they said, "Here we are!"
They shone with gladness for him who made them.
This is our God;

¹ Trans. Ananda Maitreya, adapted for inclusive language.

² Trans. Gil Fronsdal, in *Teachings*, 122.

no other can be compared to him.
He found the whole way to knowledge,
and gave her to his servant Jacob
and to Israel whom he loved.
Afterward she appeared on earth
and lived with humankind.

She is the book of the commandments of God,
the law that endures forever.
All who hold her fast will live,
and those who forsake her will die.

(Bar 3:29-4:1)

16.7

A READING FROM THE MISHNEH BERURAH

It is written in holy books that before people go to sleep at night it is proper for them to examine the deeds that they performed during the entire day. If they discover that they transgressed they should confess to it and accept upon themselves not to do it again. The common sins, especially such as flattery, lying, mocking, tale bearing and also the sin of neglecting Torah study need thorough probing. It is also fitting for people to forgive everyone who sinned against them and distressed them.

*Shulhan Aurkh, Orah Hayyim 239:9*³

16.8

A READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus said, 'So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

(10: 26-31)

16.9

FROM THE WRITINGS OF SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS

The soul united to God and transformed in God draws from within God a divine breath, much like the most high God himself. And God, abiding in the soul, breathes forth the life of the soul as its exemplar. This I take to be what Paul meant when he said: *Because you are children of God, God has sent the Spirit of his*

³ In "Book of Life," 99.

Son into your hearts, crying "Abba, Father"; this is what takes place in those who have achieved perfection.

One should not wonder that the soul is capable of so sublime an activity. For if God so favors her that she is made God-like by union with the most Holy Trinity, I ask you then, why it should seem so incredible that the soul, at one with the Trinity and in the greatest possible likeness to it, should share the understanding, knowledge and love which God achieves in himself.

O my soul, created to enjoy such exquisite gifts, what are you doing, where is your life going? How wretched is the blindness of Adam's children, if indeed we are blind to such a brilliant light and deaf to so insistent a voice?
(*Spiritual Canticle, str. 38*)⁴

16.10

FROM DELIVERANCE FROM ERROR BY ABU HAMID AL-GHAZALI

I came to regard the various seekers (after truth) as comprising four groups: the *mutakallimun*—theologians, who claim that they are exponents of thought and intellectual speculation; the *batiniyah*, who consider that they, as the party of *ta'lim*—authoritative instruction, alone derive truth from the infallible *imam*; the philosophers, who regard themselves as the exponents of logic and demonstration; the Sufis or mystics, who claim that they alone enter into the "presence" of God, and possess vision and intuitive understanding.

I said within myself: "The truth cannot lie outside these four classes. These are the people who treat the path of the quest for truth. If the truth is not with them, no point remains in trying to apprehend the truth. There is certainly no point in trying to return to the level of naïve and derivative belief once it has been left, since a condition of being at such a level is that one should know one is there; when someone comes to know that, the glass of naïve beliefs is broken. This is a breakage which cannot be mended, a breakage that is not repaired by patching or by assembling of fragments. The glass must be melted once again in the furnace for a new start, and out of it another fresh vessel formed."

(*Part Three, #1*)⁵

16.11

FROM THE POEMS OF HAFIZ

We are drunken ecstasies who have let our hearts
Go to the wild. We are musty scholars
Of love, and old friends of the wine cup.

People have aimed the arrow of guilt a hundred times
In our direction. With the help of our Darling's eyebrow,
Blame has been a blessing, and has opened all our work.

⁴ Office of Readings, 954-955.

⁵ All selections from al-Ghazali are based on the translation of Montgomery Watt, adapted for modern and inclusive language.

Oh, dark-spotted flower, you endured pain all night,
Waiting for the wine of dawn; I am that poppy
That was born with the burning spot of suffering.⁶

16.12

A READING FROM THE SACRED WRITINGS OF THE SIKHS

Were my span of life to extend to a million years,
and if I could live upon air alone,
never assailed by sleep, in a deep dark cave
where neither the light of the sun nor the light of the moon
could pierce down to distract me,
even so, my God, I could not know Your price,
nor say how great is Your Name;
true is the Formless One and Self-Existent,
on hearing the Word, one utters the Word;
if the Lord wills, then one has longing for Him.

Were I slashed to shreds and ground into pulp,
wasted by fires and reduced to ashes,
even so my God, I could not know Your price,
nor say how great is Your Name.

Were I to hover like a bird
soaring through the skies innumerable,
and vanish beyond the range of mortal vision,
self-sustained, not needing food or drink,
even so, my God, I could not know Your price,
nor say how great is Your Name.

Had I studied unmeasured loads of books,
and become the master-scholar of their lore,
and had I a pen to write with the speed of the wind,
a pen filled with inexhaustible ink,
even so my God, I could not know Your Price,
nor say how great is Your Name.

(Sri Rag)⁷

⁶ From *The Angels Knocking on the Tavern Door: Thirty Poems of Hafez*, trans. Robert Bly and Leonard Lewisohn (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), #356, 3.

⁷ From "The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs," trans. Tirlochan Singh, Jodh Singh, Kapur Singh, Bawa Harkishen Singh and Khushwant Singh (New York: Samuel Wieser, 1973), 66. Adapted for modern language.