

A READING FROM THE KENA UPANISHAD

If you think, 'I know it well,'
 then you know the form of Brahman just a little—
 that part of it which is you
 and that part of it which among the gods.
 I think you should investigate further that unknown part.

I do not think, 'I know it well.'
Nor that I do not know;
I know and I do not know as well.

Whoever among us says, "I know," knows nothing;
 but those who claim nothing, know.

It is known by one to whom it is unknown;
 the one by whom it is known—that one does not know.
 It is not known by those who know well;
 it is known by those who do not know.

It is really known when it is realized by awakening to it,
 and thus one gains immortality.
 Through one's own self¹ one finds power;
 through wisdom one finds immortality.

If one has realized it here, there is truth;
 if one has not realized it here, great destruction!
 The wise, having realized it in every being
 and renounced the world, become immortal.

(2:1-5)

A READING FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

Those who have not controlled the mind and senses are not wise,
 nor can they meditate.
 And there is no peace for one such as this.
 Without peace, how can there be happiness for them?

For when one allows one's mind to be attached to the senses,
 it destroys one's judgment like a storm destroys a ship.

Therefore,
 withdrawing the senses from their objects
 leads to steadfast judgment.

¹ Skt. *atman*.

Just as the sea gathers the waters,
so that it fills yet remains undisturbed,
so those also find peace
into whom desires flow without disturbance
—not those who go after desires.

Those who have given up all desire
and move about free from attachment,
who have overcome ego,
find peace.

This is divine realization.
Whoever reaches it has overcome delusion.
Whoever abides in it, even in the final moment,
gains the bliss² of Brahman.

(2:66-68, 70-72)

4.3

A READING FROM THE TAO TE CHING

The Tao is an empty vessel—
it is used but never filled;
and so deep
it is the source of ten thousand things.
Blunting the sharpness,
untying the knot,
softening the glare,
merging with the dust,
hidden deep but ever present.
I do not know whose child it is.
It was here before the emperors.

(#4)

4.4

A READING FROM THE SAMYUTTA NIKAYA

What, now, is the Noble Truth of the Path that leads to the extinction of suffering?

To give oneself up to the indulgence in sensual pleasure, the base, common, vulgar, unholy, unprofitable; or to give oneself up to self-mortification, the painful, unholy, unprofitable: both these two extremes the Perfect One had avoided, and has found out the Middle Path, which makes one both see and know, which leads to peace, to discernment, to *nirvana*.

² Skt. *nirvana*.

It is the Noble Eightfold Path, the way that leads to the extinction of suffering, namely:

right understanding,
right thought,
right speech,
right action,
right livelihood,
right effort,
right mindfulness,
right concentration.

This is the Middle Path which the Perfect One has found out, which makes one both see and know, which leads to peace, to discernment, to enlightenment.³

4.5

A READING FROM THE DHAMMAPADA

Mindfulness is the path to immortality.
Negligence is the path to death.
The vigilant never die,
whereas the negligent are the living dead.

With this understanding, the wise,
having developed a high degree of mindfulness,
rejoice in mindfulness,
delighting in the domain of the Noble Ones.

These awakened ones,
dedicated to meditation,
striving actively and vigorously,
attain *nirvana*, the ultimate security.

The fame and fortune of the one who is vigorous,
aware, unsullied,
acting with consideration and restraint,
become ever growing.

The wise, by vigor, mindfulness, restraint, and self-control,
create for themselves an island
which no flood can submerge.

Don't lose yourself in negligence!
Don't lose yourself in sensuality!
For it is the mindful and meditative
who will experience supreme happiness.

(2:1-7)⁴

³ Trans. Nyanatiloka, in *Teachings*, 40

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF EXODUS

Then Moses went up to God; the Lord called to him from the mountain saying: "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and prepare for the third day, because on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people."

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightening, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled. Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord had descended upon it in fire... Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin." Then the people stood at a distance, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

(Ex 19:3a, 10-11, 16, 18a; 20:20-21)

FROM THE SAYINGS OF THE HASIDIM

We do not know even how we are supposed to pray. All we do is call for help because of the need of the moment. But what the soul intends is spiritual need, only we are not able to express what the soul means. That is why we do not merely ask God to hear our call for help, but also beg him, who knows what is hidden, to hear the silent cry of the soul.⁵

A READING FROM THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Jesus said,

'You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord." But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let your word be "Yes, Yes" or "No, No"; anything more than this comes from the evil one.

'You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

'You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous

⁴ Trans. Ananda Maitreya, adapted for inclusive language.

⁵ From Buber *Rungs*, 27.

and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax-collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? ... Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

(5:33-47)

4.9

FROM A TREATISE BY SAINT HIPPOLYTUS

When we have come to know the true God, both our bodies and our souls will be immortal and incorruptible. We shall enter the kingdom of heaven, because while we lived on earth we acknowledged heaven's King. Friends of God and coheirs with Christ, we shall be subject to no evil desires or inclinations, or to any affliction of body or soul, for we shall have become divine. It was because of our human condition that God allowed us to endure these things, but when we have been deified and made immortal, God has promised us a share in his own attributes.

The saying "Know thyself" means therefore that we should recognize in ourselves the God who made us in his own image, for if we do this, we in turn will be recognized and acknowledged by our Maker.

(*"On the Refutation of All Heresies," Cap. 10, 33-34*)⁶

4.10

A READING FROM THE QUR'AN

God—there is no deity but Hu,
the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting Source of all Being.
No slumber can seize Him/Her nor sleep.
All things in heaven and earth belong to Hu.
Who could intercede in His/Her Presence
without His/Her permission?
He/She knows what appears in front of and behind His/Her creatures.
Nor can they encompass any knowledge of Him/Her
except what He/She wills.
His/Her throne extends over the heavens and the earth,
and He/She feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them,
for He/She is the Highest and Most Exalted.

(2:255)⁷

⁶ *Office of Readings*, 101.

⁷ Camille Helminski's explanation of *Hu*: "*Hu*: the pronoun of Divine Presence. All words in Arabic have a gender grammatically ascribed to them as they do in French and Spanish, etc. Although *Allah* is referred to with the third person masculine pronoun *Hu* (*Huwa*), it is universally understood that *Allah's* Essence is beyond gender or indeed any qualification. In this translation occasionally *Hu* will be used and sometimes 'He/She' in an attempt to avoid the mistake of attributing human gender to That which is beyond all our attempts at definition, limitless in subtle glory." (*Light of Dawn*, 5, footnote 30)

FROM THE POEMS OF MIRABAI

The colors of the dark one have penetrated Mira's body;
 all the other colors have washed out.
 Making love with the Dark One and eating little,
 those are my pearls and my carnelians.
 Meditation beads and the forehead streak,
 those are my scarves and my rings.
 That's enough feminine wiles for me.
 My teacher taught me this.
 Approve me or disapprove me:
 I praise the Mountain Energy night and day.
 I take the path that ecstatic human beings have taken for centuries.
 I don't steal money, I don't hit anyone.
 What will you charge me with?
 I have felt the swaying of the elephant's shoulders;
 and now you want me to climb on a jackass?
 Try to be serious!⁸

FROM THE PRAYERS OF THE SIKHS

Those who believe in power, sing of God's power.
 Others chant of God's gifts as messages and emblems.
 Some sing of God's greatness and gracious acts.
 Some sing of God's wisdom, so hard to understand.
 Some sing of God as the fashioner of the body.
 Destroying what God has fashioned, others praise God
 for taking away life and restoring it anew.
 Some proclaim God's existence to be distant,
 desperately far from us.
 Others sing to God as here and there,
 a Presence meeting us face to face.

To sing truly of the transcendent Lord
 would exhaust all vocabularies,
 all human powers of expression.
 Myriads have sung of God in innumerable strains.
 God's gifts flow in such plenitude
 that we weary of receiving what he bestows.
 Age to age unending we live on God's bounty.
 Carefree, O Nanak, the Glorious Lord smiles.

(Morning Prayer #3)

⁸ Robert Bly's version in Stephen Mitchell's *The Enlightened Heart*, slightly altered.