

Jewish Mysticism & Mindfulness Meditation ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 Last night, I gave a whole riff on the Jewish meditation tradition, and I ended with this

00:00:25 Lurianic Kabbalistic concept of what a human being or a human soul is, which I find delightful

00:00:36 since it literally maps one-to-one with the way that I present the meditation techniques.

00:00:49 If we want to define broadly the self, that would be body-mind experience.

00:00:58 So in that case, in terms of the standard categories, it's touch, feel, image, talk.

00:01:07 But then as you pay very close attention to any of those or any combination, you begin

00:01:16 to notice the presence of change.

00:01:23 And the more you pay attention to rates of change, the more you're also paying attention

00:01:31 to what might be called underlying forces.

00:01:34 This is basic, actually basic Newtonian physics.

00:01:39 Don't have to get esoteric with quantum or relativistic.

00:01:46 Invisible force fields can be detected in terms of how they impact accelerations.

00:01:54 As you're noticing rates of change, you get a sense that there is a kind of fundamental

00:02:05 and impersonal doing that sort of pervades the physicality of the body, the emotionality

00:02:14 of the body, the mental processes.

00:02:18 Zen master Rinzai talked about wu-wei zhen ren.

00:02:25 I love that expression.

00:02:33 The true person, the authentic person that everyone has within them that has no fixed

00:02:45 position whatsoever.

00:02:48 And I just screwed up, started to write my own name instead of...

00:02:53 Well, same character.

00:02:55 The true or authentic is zhen in Mandarin, shin in Japanese.

00:03:04 So wu-wei zhen ren, mui no shinjin in Japanese pronunciation.

00:03:11 That true person within us that has no fixed position, in other words, isn't a thing, but

00:03:17 is a doing.

00:03:20 And I'm not sure if it was Rinzai or another Zen master that talked about the invisible

00:03:27 hand inside the puppet.

00:03:31 And would you believe it?

00:03:33 Some of the Kabbalistic masters had exactly the same metaphor.

00:03:39 As you're paying attention to that expanding, contracting, vibrating field that moment by

00:03:51 moment is churning the body-mind-self into existence in a cleft, producing a cleft within

00:04:05 which it arises, which is totally the Kabbalistic theme, you become aware that that activity

00:04:12 wells up and subsides.

00:04:14 It comes from a one rich nothing.

00:04:20 In other words, you start to notice how there's a rising and then there's a neutralizing to

00:04:29 a kind of nothing, and then there's an absolute continuity between the gone and the next arising.

00:04:38 So there's a continuum.

00:04:41 This is non-dual awareness.

00:04:43 There's a continuum between the nothing, the polarization of the nothing, the arising of

00:04:52 physical, emotional, and mental self, and then the reabsorption of that back into the

00:05:01 energy that then flatlines again.

00:05:04 When you reach the point where that is an absolute continuous process, then you're doing

00:05:13 pretty good in your practice.

00:05:16 And when you reach the point where that happens as you're bopping around in the world taking

00:05:22 care of business, then you're doing really, really, really good in your practice.

00:05:28 In fact, that gets you up there to the zen master, the beginnings of the zen master class

00:05:39 of meditator.

00:05:41 So I have you look at physicality in the body, emotionality in the body, the mental images

00:05:49 and internal talk that are the mind, then the underlying flow, and its vanishing into

00:05:58 the one zero.

00:05:59 Because all vanishings, all zeros are uncreated, equal.

00:06:09 They're all the same zero.

00:06:12 Therefore to the extent that you're anchored in that, your belly button and

the belly button

00:06:20 of any other piece of creation overlap.

00:06:28 And you share the same belly button, you share the same womb, and therefore you have a sense

00:06:34 of the fraternity and sorority of all of creation.

00:06:40 Would you believe it?

00:06:43 According to the Kabbalistic notion of what a human being is, what a soul is, a soul,

00:06:51 that's the word that they often translate, but I think it's really what a person is.

00:06:59 The soul is called naran chai.

00:07:02 You have the physicality of the body, then you have the emotionality of the body, ruach,

00:07:08 then you have above that, neshama, which is the mental process.

00:07:14 So that's image talk.

00:07:16 Touch, feel, this is image talk.

00:07:21 Underlying all and pervading all of that is chai, the impersonal energy that would correspond

00:07:28 to what I call flow, but what in China they might call chi and so forth.

00:07:37 And it is emphasized by the Kabbalists that these last two, even though they pervade the

00:07:45 person and the person is in intimate moment-by-moment contact with them, they are not part of human.

00:07:56 They are the part that links the human to the source.

00:08:02 Specifically chai is this kind of energy and yechida comes from the root echad, meaning

00:08:09 one.

00:08:11 It's the one, the one what?

00:08:14 The one nothing.

00:08:16 The one belly button.

00:08:19 The one zero that is the source of the molding force.

00:08:27 It's where it comes from, it's where it goes back to.

00:08:30 So that's the gongs, that's the vanishings that I have you label.

00:08:35 So if I were to have you say, okay, we're going to work in the body, mind, self, and

00:08:42 we're going to note touch, feel, image, talk, and we're also going to note flow and vanishing,

00:08:51 flow and gone, we would be essentially using the Lurianic Kabbalistic formulation.