

## Meditation in the Bible

The study of meditation can be very long, involved and overwhelming for the beginner. First, because there are so many different types of meditation, and secondly because there are so many different thoughts, opinions and interpretations of what could be meant by the word meditation or how it could or should be practiced. In this brief article I aim to help you consider two things:

- 1) Some Bible references to the word meditation
- 2) Some Bible references to experiences that Biblical characters had that may have been brought on by various forms of meditation
- 3) Not all Bible references clearly indicate that the only biblical form of meditation consists of meditating on scriptures

All Bible references will be using the NIV translation.

When it comes to the word *meditate* or *meditation* we're dealing with a word that, believe it or not, did not originate as an English word in the 20th Century in Western Civilization.

We're dealing with a word that has been translated from other languages over centuries. It is an ancient word. It is a word that is older than the scriptures themselves. In fact, in Genesis 24, it says of Isaac...

*"Now Isaac had come from Beer Lahai Roi, for he was living in the Negev. He went out to the field one evening to meditate, and as he looked up, he saw camels approaching."*

Clearly he was not going out to meditate on the scriptures, because there were none yet. The Hebrew word used here is translated *to stroll*, and scholars even say that the meaning of the word here is unclear.

I find that absolutely fascinating. Not that the meaning is uncertain to scholars, though that is interesting as well, but that the word for meditation is *to stroll*. Why is that fascinating to me? Because I like to go for walks. I like *to stroll*. Why do I like to stroll, to go for walks? Well, what does everybody say about going for walks? What does it do for you?

It helps you to *clear your mind*.

Interesting, don't you think? Meditation as a form of clearing your mind...in the Bible.

The next time we see the word *meditate* in the Bible is in Joshua 1:8. It says...

*"Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."*

Wait a second. Does God actually want people to be prosperous and successful?

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It appears so, but that's a story for another time.

So, what I see in this verse is that, by this time the Hebrews actually have been given the Law, and in *this case* the emphasis is on meditating on the Book of the Law.

All the rest of the uses of the word *meditate* or *meditation* are in the book of Psalms. In these instances, another translation of the word meditate is *to mull over*, in other words *to think it over*, *to contemplate it*, *to chew on it for a while*, or (an idea for a translation that I particularly like) *to dance with it*.

I guess you could say this whole article is a bit of a meditation in that respect.

The authors of the Psalms often refer to the *meditation of my heart*. What were those authors referring to when they said *my heart*? Interesting.

Sometimes, as in the case with Psalm 39:3 and 77:3 it seems that meditation is associated with something unpleasant.

In fact there are several references to meditation in Psalm 77.

In verse 12 it says he will meditate on God's works and God's mighty deeds. Not his *words*, but his *works*. For example, nature - or creation. Creation is certainly one of God's works.

The rest of the Psalms mostly talk about meditating on God's laws, decrees, statutes, etc. and occasionally mention meditating on his works and deeds.

It seems, then, that there are a few ways meditation is used in the Hebrew scriptures...

- 1) To clear the mind, or *to stroll*
- 2) To *mull over* or contemplate the works of the creator, in other words *creation*
- 3) To *mull over* or contemplate the Law, or God's decrees and ordinances

Here is a list of all of the Bible verses (in the NIV translation) that contain the word *meditate* or one of its derivations...

Genesis 24:63, Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:2; 19:14; 39:3; 48:9; 49:3; 77:3, 6, 12; 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148; 104:34; 143:5; 145:5

I find it interesting that there is no mention of the word meditation in the writings of the gospels or the other New Testament letters.

So, that is how we see meditation *explicitly* in the Bible, but what about *implicitly*?

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There are a few interesting passages that I'd like you to consider. These passages don't necessarily infer that the author was meditating, but it's uncertain how they received these revelations. Let's have a look...

First is Isaiah's vision in Isaiah 6. Isaiah has a vision of the Lord in his temple, and Isaiah receives some instructions. The Bible says nothing about what he was doing - praying, meditating, etc. when he received this vision, just that he received one. Whatever he was doing...it was working!

Second is Peter's revelation in Acts 10:9-11, which says...

*"About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners."*

In this passage, Peter begins by praying, but however he was praying, or for whatever reason, he fell into a trance. In other words, he was no longer praying. He was in a state where he was able to receive divine revelation...and he did!

Third is Paul's description of his divine revelations in 2 Corinthians 12, where he says...

*"I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows — was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell."*

He's speaking in third person here, but later reveals that he was speaking of himself. He's not sure if he was even having an out-of-body experience. All he knows is that he heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell.

Wow. That's pretty mind blowing! What kind of state was he in when he received those revelations that were so amazing he couldn't even put them to words? How did he get into that state of being able to receive those revelations?

Fourth is John's vision on the island of Patmos. In Revelation 1:10, before being told a number of revelations, John says...

*"On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet..."*

It doesn't say he was praying. It doesn't say he was mulling over scripture, which would've been kind of funny since he was in the process of writing scripture! It simply says he was "in the spirit." What does that mean? How did he get there?

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As you can see, there are a lot of things to...*mull over* here. Clearly we have just scratched the surface of meditation as it is seen in the Bible.

Maybe, at this point, it would be best to just take a breath, be present in the moment, and be thankful that answers are available to us when we truly listen to the Spirit.

Thank you for downloading this and giving it a look.

~~~ About the Author ~~~

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