

# JUDAI AWARE

Awareness ◦ Insight ◦ Peace ◦ Life



www.judaiaaware.com

Judaiaaware — Volume 1

Winter 2014

## New Year... New You!

### A Roadmap For Positive Growth



The time has never been more right to begin a program of meditation and spiritual wellness. Modern life certainly has its fair share of ups and downs, but how much of life's turmoil's are created within our own mind? Beginning a program of meditation can help you to transform last year's repetitive, anxiousness and worried thoughts into a powerful catalysts for true and lasting positive change. True to life, before any lasting change can take place, the first step is always recognition:

### Taking The First Steps

List your personal reasons for spiritual growth:

- What does peace mean to you?
- Who's life are you living?
- Is fear stopping you from being happy?
- Are you honoring your personal obligations?
- Do you understand what true compassion is?
- What is your life, and what is your life experience?
- Do you truly know yourself?

Continued on page 6.

*"After beginning my meditation practice, I've come to realize that my repetitive thoughts were triggering fearful reactions which were emotionally harmful to my family, friends and most importantly myself .."*

- Kim Sideman



### Mindfulness At Work...

"Take Your Practice On The Road" - Page 3

### In This Issue

- New Year... New You!
- Meditation and Golf Training
- Talking to God.. or Listening to God?
- Judaism and Japan.. The Missing Link
- Lessons from Nature



**Meditating before a Golf Training Session. Setting your intention for learning.**

## Meditation and Golf Training

There is a new practice emerging in the world of Golf. The game is now being embraced not only for “bragging rights” and “who’s buying a round at the bar,” but for its ability to elevate the players sense of spirituality and connection to the moment.

Steven Browner, creator and educator at The Golf Dojo explains, “Executing a golf shot in competition or otherwise is a truly unique pursuit. It’s one of those rare events that once the physical techniques are assimilated and understood, the rest of the matter is a direct reflection of what happens between your ears, or more to the point... in your conscious mind.”

Through specific techniques of focus and physical training methods applied at The Golf Dojo, A golfer can enjoy the liberating experience of learning to play golf free from internal emotional distraction, opinions, false expectations and fear. Often, these “self-created” events rob the seasoned tournament golfer from optimal performance and the social golfer from a deeper enjoyment while playing. The practice of Mindful golf has both a calming and focused effect on the ability of a Player to execute shots while staying rooted in the moment.

The Golf Dojo experience is not “THE ZONE”. The sports concept of “The Zone” is when a player accidentally and sometimes totally by surprise experiences presence while performing their sport; unfortunately this is usually a fleeting experience. Consistent and mindful practice allows The Golf Dojo students to experience the pure game through harnessing the power of inner stillness.

Steven Browner is a sought after teaching professional who lectures extensively on the merits of The Game of Golf as a meditative exercise. He has worked with Yoga Instructors, Martial Artists, Meditation Enthusiasts as well as Golfer of all skill level. Browner is currently working on Creating a Golf Training Regimen that is very reminiscent of Japanese Kyudo or (Japanese Archery.) “Steven teaches his students that “Golf is a mirror that reflects the state of your inner mind.” “If you are angry, tight, scared, nervous, unsure ... it will show in your swing.” Learn more about The Golf Dojo at <http://www.thegolfdjo.com> or call 561-320-3656 (DOJO.).

## Golfing Zen

Students who study at The Golf Dojo range from Touring Professionals to weekend warriors. They are all embracing the new approach to the game of Golf as a meditative exercise.

Steven Browner has combined his decades of studying Japanese Martial Arts and Zen Meditation with his over 30 year love affair with the Game of Golf.

The results achieved by training at The Golf Dojo far exceed creating an elevated skill level on the course. Golf Mind awareness training and inner transformation pave the way to experience a perfect moment while swinging a Golf Club.



**Steven Browner working with a student at The Golf Dojo Training Facility in South Florida.**



## What Is ... JUDAI AWARE?

Simply put, JUDAI AWARE represents a rebirth of Spiritual Consciousness for the Modern World. From the moment we wake up to the time we close our eyes and sleep, we are inundated by ceaseless sound, chaotic activity and a heightened sense of stress or pressure. Further more, with the proliferation of technology and the animation of our personal digital self, humanity is facing a new kind of interpersonal identity crises which is taking place on a global scale.

At the dinner table, people are choosing impersonal digital communication rather than personal human contact. Families schedule time together through online calendars, and emails have taken the place of handshakes and personal sit-downs. In the palm of their hand people have gained the power of "instant gratification" and along with that a profound sense of mastery over the world they inhabit. By loosing our humanity, people are choosing to embrace a dangerous path which if unchecked may create unheard of suffering for our children and those that come after us.

We have reached a turning point in our development as a people. Together we share a karmic responsibility to remember that we are more than our technology. We are in fact "Our Brothers Keeper." We all share equal responsibility for the planet we inhabit and are entrusted to be its custodian and care taker.

The time is ripe for awakening on a global scale. Conscious awareness as well as a personal realigning of our lives purpose is just the beginning. Lasting awakening takes work, practice and patience as old habits must be broken and new ideas embraced. JUDAI AWARE is the conscious awakening of our spiritual nature which will allow the natural proliferation of technology and life to unfold in a harmonious and balanced way.

Being a teacher of Jewish Universalism, at times this newsletter as well as the practices discussed may have their origin from a Judaic Spiritual perspective, however the inner message and underlying spirit of this offering is universal. Religious affiliations, sexual orientations and political agendas aside, the time for awakening is now. The Path of JUDAI AWARE will endeavor to remind humanity that spiritual consciousness exists in every facet of our lives. Humbly I welcome you to practice and spread JUDAI AWARE together... for together we can make a difference.

### Rabbi Ivan Browner



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## **“Work Mind... Practice Mind”**

Mindfulness practice is not just for the Zafu or Yoga Mat any longer. In today's day and age, the work environment is emerging as a wonderful opportunity to further practice mindfulness training. When considering using work as a meditative practice, the type of work a person performs is inconsequential. In fact, any task can be used as a powerful transformative practice experience. Tasks ranging from gardening in nature to writing technical reports or even washing dishes are all excellent examples of working meditation training.

The trick is to become intensely aware of the exact task you are performing. Experience the moment you are in with your entire attention and focus. Feel your body performing the task with pure intension and be mindful of your breathing as well as any other sensations that might be present during the task. If performed correctly, you will feel a deepening of conscious awareness, vitality and peace; instead of the usual stress and agitation that normally accompanies a person's work day. Try bringing mindfulness into your day! You have to work... so why not work consciously?



## **Talking To God.. Or Listening?**

We as individuals spend most of our waking moments talking or communicating in one way or another. We talk with our families, co-workers, children, teachers, significant others, and most importantly ourselves. When I say we talk with ourselves, I am referring to the ceaseless inner dialog of thoughts that are our constant companions. For the most part, these thoughts occupy the largest percentage of our conscious attention.

So when we set aside a few moments out of our crazy schedule to pray, or find a quiet introspective opportunity to commune with God, “What do you think actually happens?” Well, many people follow their unconscious habit and fill that quiet sacred moment with... you guessed it, “thoughts!”

Let's try an experiment. Close your eyes and picture in your mind an event such as “what happened while you were eating breakfast this morning?” Go ahead try it. As you attempt to visit in your mind the exact situations that occurred during your breakfast time this morning, you may experience a strange phenomenon. To begin with, the mental picture of your experience may be strong in the field of your attention, but then the clarity of the images begin to fade as other non-related thoughts enter your stream of attention. Keeping a clear thought or image in our mind takes much practice and a tight ability to focus. Focusing properly takes years to master and is a skill the very few people possess to any degree of mastery.

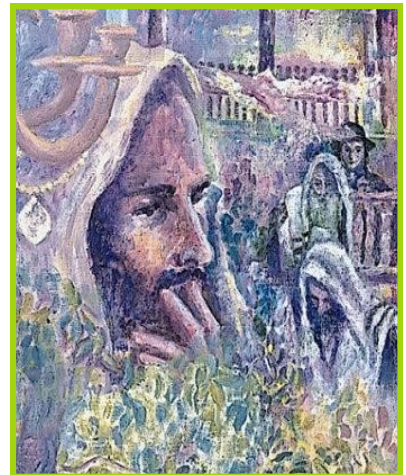
When this lack of focus interrupts our time for prayer or communion with God, we often feel unfulfilled or even guilty that our prayer experience was not deep enough. “Why should God listen to me?” or “I should be more open during prayer” are common statements people say when trying to explain their prayer experiences to others.

Continued from page 4

When people ask me if it's possible to make their prayer time more meaningful, I say "of course it is... but there is a secret!" It is at this moment when I usually put on a recording of Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata. I say to them, "Now, listen closely." After listening intently together for several minutes, I ask "What makes this piece of music so hauntingly beautiful?" After moments of silence while the person is thinking; I say, "That's Right!" "It's the silent space between the notes being played that makes this piece of music so special." These sacred moments of silence give relevance to the notes that are being played. This is the same with Prayer. It is by getting to know this silence that we begin to become aware of the presence of something profound and much more alive than sounds, thoughts or words.

In the modern synagogue environment, there is a lot of sound, words, music and activity. Everything is carefully orchestrated to complete a service in an allotted amount of time, while fulfilling all the Talmudic requirements that makes a prayer service proper. All of this outer activity and sound, coupled with the person's own inner thought activity makes it extremely difficult to successfully listen to or commune with Hashem during prayer. This is the exact reason why the mystics of old and religious scholars would spend much time in quiet meditation before they would begin their formal prayer. They were honing their ability to "listen" and direct their intention toward that silent space from which all thought emanates from. Only when they were truly rooted within that experience would they begin their prayer.

That space exists within each and every one of us and is accessible now. We all can experience the deep peace that exists beneath the incessant noise of our always thinking mind. This is the realm of insight and true communion with Hashem. It is the place where we not only speak with Hashem, but learn that Hashem is communicating with us as well. In further articles we will explore how to deepen our relationship with this vast silent realm that exists within each of us. So, I ask you... Are you talking to God... or Listening?



## The Silent Face Of Prayer

"Just as letters require the white space that surrounds them in order to be recognizable, so speech goes together with silence.

This is especially true in spiritual practice. Thus, not only speech but silence, too, is the path of hisbodedus (secluded meditation) and devey-kus (cleaving to God)."

An excerpt from the written of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov



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## New Year... New You! - continued from page 1

### Starting From Now

Now that you have taken an open and honest look at your life and asked some pretty deep questions, the next natural question is, "what do you do now?" Well, that all depends on the kind of person you are.

**Changing a habit** - Some people choose to start with changing a bad habit such as "I keep getting into argument situations at my work because I am not truly listening to my co-workers point of view." Once they have identified this un-healthy habit, they make it a point to be mindful at work and truly listen to what is being said by their co-workers. They fight the unconscious urge to jump in and interrupt before their co-worker has finish stating their opinion on whatever subject is being discussed. Recognizing and changing this habit takes courage and fortitude, but when performed with honesty and awareness, this simple act help awaken a new and more compassionate you.

**Starting with your body** – Some other people choose to start with their physical body and begin a new exercise program, or look to change their diet for the better. The body is always a good place to start when making a positive lifestyle change. After all, our body is an organic entity which stores emotional stress and tension within the organs and muscle tissue. Giving the body a positive outlet in which to release this stored stress helps create a platform of rejuvenation and healing. Yoga for example, is a wonderful practice which incorporates a balanced approach of physical exercise and mindful awareness training. If guided by an experienced and compassionate teacher, the study of Yoga can be spiritually as well as physically awakening for people of all ages and physical conditions.



Although every physical activity can be practiced as a meditation, a foundation of sitting practice is paramount to establish a deeper understanding of the minds activities within our lives. Most of the negative ideas and aspects we discover within ourselves all stem from mind created embellishment of thoughts. From sitting practice, we come to realize that thoughts are not really the problem. The brain thinks just like the heart beats. In fact, the brain works like a radio which is always broadcasting some type of signal. Thoughts become personal when our mind enters the equation. We come to understand that the mind is a powerful filter which colors the world based on our own perception. To continue with the radio analogy, the mind would be the part of thought activity which says "I don't like this station," or "I am bored with what is being played on this station." In fact, It is quite common to learn that many people are confused about the difference between the brains function and the minds purpose. Sitting practice brings into focus a clear perception of the interaction between brain and mind, and by doing so allows a person to glimpse who they are beyond their thoughts, opinions and habit energy.



## MEDITATION

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Implementing any one of these concepts is a great way to usher in the New Year and change your life for the better. Now go out and enjoy the new you and realize that you already are the person you have always wanted to be.

# Judaism and Japan...

## The Missing Link

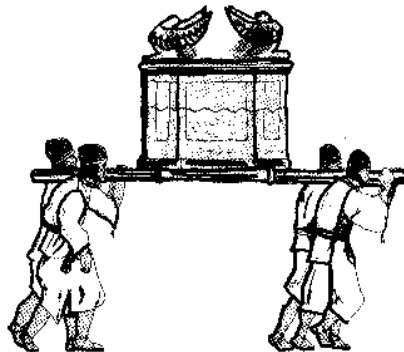


My Son and I standing in front of one of the lanterns in the Ise Shrine

In an ancient town called Ise located in the Mie Prefecture in Japan there exists one of the most amazing connections which eternally bind the practice of Ancient Japanese Style street connecting the two Ise shrines you will discover tall granite "Toro" or lanterns inscribed with the Star of David. The experience of visiting Ise last year with my family was deeply enriching, as I felt the presence of something spiritual alive within the peace of that place. The connection between Ancient Judaism and Shintoism are astounding and merge as both a philosophy and a practice in almost every facet of the Japanese experience.



## Mikoshi



Another amazing resemblance between Japanese Shintoism and Ancient Judaism is the Mikoshi. In Shintoism, the Mikoshi or (divine Palanquin) is used when transporting a Deity from the main shrine to a temporary shrine during a festival or when a shrine has been newly renovated. The resemblance between the Mikoshi and the "Ark of the Covenant" is unmistakable. The way the Mikoshi is carried, the dress of the individuals carrying the Mikoshi and even the words that are spoken as the Mikoshi is being carried are a testament to how these two spiritual traditions share a common lineage.

## Shinto Shrine and Mishkan

The Mishkan or "tent of meeting" was designed in a special way which according to tradition was taught directly to Moses from Hashem. Moses wrote down the design for the Mishkan in the first written Sefer Torah Scroll. Then how does one explain the striking similarity between the design of the Mishkan and the Ancient Shinto Shrines found in Japan?



## Lessons From Nature: Bees and the nature of Love

I've been working with bees for about four years, and just now I realized that all the work they do is fully devoted to love, they do what they do, fly in search of flowers to bring back the pollen to the hive and make honey.

Bees go into the wild, tiny as they are with no fear whatsoever of what would happen to them in their duty.

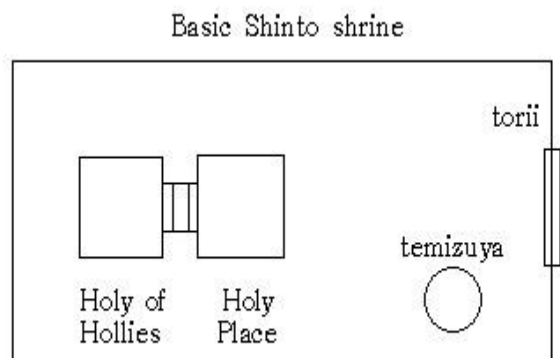
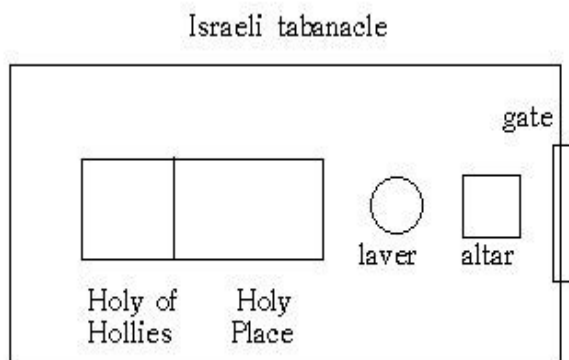
This observation made me realize that fear is the absence of love.

The bees produce honey that for me is the most delicious food on the planet, it is love, love for what they do, never stopping, never thinking on what they do, never pulling back, just pure love and in the absence of fear they produce the sweetest most healthiest gift: honey

On that thought just imagine honestly looking from our hearts, what are the possibilities that lie in front of us if we were to change the habit of fear into the ever presence of love?

Experienced by: Sofia Bastidas

Sofia is a native of Ecuador South America. She is a student of meditation, Martial Arts as well as an accomplished artists.



It was once thought that these two civilizations were developing in relative obscurity to one another, but after careful scrutiny it is quite clear that this was not entirely correct. Mendicants from the middle east must have made their way along the silk trading routes getting as far as China and Japan bringing with them knowledge of Ancient Hebrew philosophy, architecture and religious ideas. The design of the Japanese Shinto Shrine and function of the practice of Shinto Worship mimics the practices of the Ancient Hebrews people almost exactly.

As we observe the design of the Tabernacle of the ancient Jewish People to the design of the Shinto Shrine of Japan, it is clear to see that they share a common ancestry. In both Holy sites, the most Holy place is only entered at special times and by the high priest alone. The High Priest had to have spent some time of intense preparation including fasting and atoning for their shortcomings before they were at a state of purity in which they could enter the Holy of Hollies.

Once they were within the Holy of Hollies they would then pray for the people and make atonement for their sins to allow blessings to flow throughout the land.

The Spirit of Shintoism teaches that the divine essence of God dwells among the people and is close to them at all times. The Shrine was build as a place where the people could feel that closeness to the creative nature of existence within every facet of their lives. Shrines would be built in nature such as forests or mountains, as well as right in the middle of bustling city's so everywhere life existed there was a reminder that the divine spirit dwelled there as well.

When Hashem commanded Moses to build the Mishkan, it was for the sole purpose to have a place where the spirit of God could dwell among the people and be intimately connected to every part of their lives. The Jewish People and Japanese Shinto both strive to feel a close connection to the presence of the Devine and express that closeness in how they live their lives and raise their families.

In spiritual Judaism and the study of Kabbalah, this idea that the spirit of God is dwelling where every you are is more than a mere mental exercise. This truth becomes a path to awakening deep wisdom and compassion for all life. Shinto shares the same philosophy and practice spiritual Judaism, and even utilizes Hebrew or Aramaic Root Words in some of their meditative chants and prayers.

Judaism and Shintoism also share the idea that you do not need anyone to come between your relationship with the Devine. People are constantly visiting the Shinto Shrine to pray and commune the creative divine essence of life. The Shinto practices include bringing "sacrifices" to the shrine in the form of their family name or written prayer requests. It was a common practice for the Jewish People to write prayer requests and or bring meaningful freewill offerings to the tabernacle in much the same way.

There are many other similarities between Ancient Judaism and the creation of the Shinto Religion that could fill an entire book of research and study. Having been to Japan many times and spent time in many Shinto Shrines, I can say first hand that there is a definite common ground between how Judaism and Shintoism were formed. I always make it a point to honor the spirit of God's Divine creative nature when I visit a Shinto Shrine, because after all we are taught that Gold is One and his name is One.



The Robe of the Shinto Priest always has tassels which are very reminiscent of the fringes or "Tzit Tzit" that are found on the corners of the Jewish Pray Shall or "Tallit"



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