



Compassion Practice for Tishrei

As we approach Yom Kippur, take some time to sit in stillness and imagine yourself as the High Priest journeying into your own Holy of Holies. You can continue this practice after Yom Kippur, and adapt it to your own preferences and style.

Pause. Breathe. Set your intention to unite with the infinite, vast, spacious Source within and all around.

Enter your inner sanctuary through the sense gates of your retaining wall, your body. Sense what it's like to be in a body. Observe prominent and subtle sensations of weight and lightness, heat and coolness, motion and stillness, pulsation and solidity. Touch in with your breath. Feel the aliveness of energy and life force pulsing through your body. Touch in with each of your senses, noticing what it's like to touch, taste, see, smell, and hear. Cultivate a sense of gratitude for being an integral physical cell in the earthy organism of Mother Earth.

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Now travel inward to your altar, your heart. Allow yourself to feel what it's like to have emotions. Notice the subtle and sometimes stormy stream of emotion. What are you feeling right now? Can you touch, taste, smell, see, or hear what you're feeling, or is the experience of feeling more subtle? Where does it manifest in your body? Cultivate a sense of gratitude for your heart, which is one with the great Heart of the world. Make an offering on the altar of your heart. Which animalistic, self-cherishing tendencies would you like to offer in the fire of a loving heart? Offer them on the altar of your heart, and imagine them dissolving. Feel what it's like to be free of self-cherishing, even if only for a moment.

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Now enter the *Kodesh*, the Holy Cathedral of your mind. Observe your thoughts, more subtle and mercurial than emotion. One thought gives rise to the next, becoming enmeshed in a never-ending influx of mental effluence. Some thoughts are pleasant, some are unpleasant, and some are just neutral. But they are all just visitors in the Cathedral of your mind, popping up like the flames of the Menorah, and dancing like igneous fire in the lamp of your mind. Watch them come and dissolve, like the incense on the inner altar. Where do they come from? Where do they return to? Is there a brief empty space between them? Are they not like waves in the ocean or clouds in the sky; the very gateway into the vast, unfathomably deep ocean of Awareness Itself? Are they



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not the curtain

concealing the Holy of Holies on the other side, beyond mind?

of the ego,

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Now ask yourself, how do I know that I have a body, a heart, and a mind? Where are these phenomena arising if not in the field of awareness? But is awareness something I can touch, taste, feel, smell, or hear, or is it the Subtle of the Subtle, without color, form, or limit? Is awareness a thing that has delineated edges and boundaries, or is it vast, spacious, and formless, like wide open space? And does awareness discriminate, or does it simply meet everything that arises in its ken as pure knowing, dissolving any boundaries between the knower and the known? Rest in this spacious, vast, formless field of pure Knowing. Feel it enveloping your whole being with total acceptance. This is the vast emptiness that the Kabbalists and Chassidim call *Ayin*-beyond change, beyond form, beyond thought. You are one with your Source, your true Self. All that is one with this Source. Awareness is never separate from thought, feeling, or the sensory world of the body-heart-mind and our planet. This is the Holy of Holies, as close to you as your own body, heart, and mind, peering through all your experiences like the radiant rays of the sun. Confess any sins internally and surrender them into the warm, radiant brilliance of *Ayin*, the immutably pure essence of your own being that was present and unsullied even as you went astray. Feel yourself being purified, cleansed, renewed, and restored. From *Ayin*, all *chidushim* come into the world; you can begin the work of recreating yourself anew, drawing from a vast wellspring of infinite possibility.

Pause. Breathe. Set your intention to allow the light of this infinite, vast, spacious Source to shine through your mind, heart, and body and to reshape you in 5775. Allow this infinite ocean of compassion to shine through you to all beings.

Go in peace.

Throughout the rest of the month, set aside some time each day to ask yourself if the light of awareness is ever **not** shining through all of your experiences. Especially when you are suffering, remind yourself that the vast spaciousness of the Ocean of Awareness is always accessible and near at hand, holding your pain in the enveloping embrace of Pure Love that is YHVH, Being Itself.