

MIDRASH

The Practice of Visionary Seeing.

As a Jewish mystic Yeshua was a visionary wisdom teacher. He saw and taught a wisdom that came to him from beyond space and time. His methodology for teaching was the traditional means for transmitting wisdom in Oriental cultures through proverb, aphorism, parable, mythic narrative, and poetry, rather than through propositional statements of truth. To receive wisdom from his visionary teachings, therefore, we need a new methodology different from the normal linear processes of Bible study based in exegesis and historical-critical research.

Typically we attempt to reason our way to truth. The Oriental traditions and their texts suggest something else entirely. Filled with metaphors, aphorisms, parables and poetry these texts challenge rational thought, suggesting the use of another cognitive function or organ, the heart and not simply the mind. They require an inner ear of hearing and an inner eyes of seeing that allow us to hear the Voice of the Angel of their Revelation coming to us from the Imaginal world. We must learn to exercise our heart (or kardial) function to process the worlds of divine meaning that are available to us from along the vertical axis. The ancient methodology used to engage these sacred texts and their multiple meanings through the heart was called Midrash which was a group process that permitted the beauty of wisdom to flower within the circle of interpreters.

In a new application of Midrash we have discovered that the pairing of verbal wisdom texts, rich with their metaphors, accompanied by visual illuminations propel us beyond the literal, linear mind to a deeper and more powerful non-linear seeing, understanding, and application of its wisdom. The sacred meaning of a text is never singular as though there is one correct meaning, but multiple and many faceted to meet the needs of all who listen and seek to understand. Here is a synopsis of this Midrashic process applied in our day:

- Wisdom gathers and is heard in circles of pilgrims and seekers.
- Wisdom is not owned by any one person but is gathered, shared and exchanged between open hearts.
- Seeing images that illuminate the many metaphors of a sacred text opens another portal of understanding through the contemplative gaze.
- Twining text and image takes us deeper than rational, exegetical interpretation combining both *Lectio* and *Visio Divina*.
- Any dead ends, trouble and confusion that we experience in this process are transitory states and if allowed and held take us beyond what we already know.
- The practice of being in a simple embodied state builds the capacity of the circle to deepen and challenges us to get beyond 'right' answers, or beyond certainty and judgment to a place of complete openness.
- Midrash is a practice that evolves and will be strengthened over time.
- Compassion, love and silence emerge as the frenzy to understand relaxes into a quiet letting be and a deep listening. Emotions arise and are held in the acceptance of Presence. Nothing needs to be fixed.
- Midrash transforms the usual mind from an instrument of determining right and wrong interpretation into an open mind capable of deep discernment.
- Midrash takes us from emotional reactivity into the silence of the heart where joy and laughter bubble up in the midst of deep listening
- Insight arises from the most unexpected quarters, and deep intimacy emerges among the participants.
- Wisdom lights up the circle of hearts and in this way sacred texts become a living transmission in the present moment.
- Practice in rounds allows for cross pollination, the gathering up of different voices into a palpable field of living Presence. Beauty arises in and through this cycling process and becomes a source of soul-healing.

- Midrash allows the mind and heart to hold, trust and even delight in contradictions knowing that in time an even deeper wisdom will arise that transcends the inevitable dualisms of the ordinary mind

--Alison Hine and Lynn Bauman, 2017