

TORAH YOGA: Experiencing Jewish Wisdom Through Classic Postures

Diane Rachel Bloomfield. Jossey-Bass, \$19.95 (240p) ISBN 0-7879-7057-3

Students of Torah may never have considered yoga, just as students of yoga may never have considered Torah. Yet Bloomfield, a yoga instructor and longtime student of the Torah, seamlessly connects the two as she teaches readers how to engage body and breath while meditating on Jewish wisdom. Like any good teacher, Bloomfield carefully lays out her lesson plan and instantly engages her reader. She approaches her seven topics for reflection with a thoroughness employed by the most rigorous yeshiva student. At the same time, her posture instruction is clear and easily understood. Quoting the yoga master B.K.S. Iyengar, Bloomfield reminds us that “Yoga was given for the human race, not the Hindus... [it] is for the culturing of self and that self-culture has no barrier.” She universalizes the Torah references and demonstrates a keen ability to unlock the plethora of doors found within the Hebrew language. For instance, Egypt is not only the land of ancient slavery, as she points out, with the change of a few vowels, the same Hebrew letters spell the word for “narrow straits.” The center letters of the word, when paired, connote limitations and pain, yet are surrounded by letters that, when combined, spell the word for water—“a symbol of unlimited possibilities... a harbinger of new life.” Readers of any faith or athletic inclination should do their souls a favor and investigate this illuminating guide. (*Apr.*)