

In Search of Ecstasies

Do not go in search of ecstasies. Let God provide the experience of your life. Trust in Him, obey Him, pray to Him in words. He is the Lord of glory. In this era of experience-seeking Christians, this is almost the opposite of what millions of souls yearn to hear. They yearn for acquiring ecstasies. Yet if we wish to turn to God with a sincere heart, humbly, we must do it with personal prayer, not with intent to gain spiritual high or with a man-made formula. Similarly, we must reject claims both modern and ancient that our words are magical, or have the same creative powers that God's words do. That is foolish and idolatrous. We must come to God humbly. We must seek no more than to pray and live entirely for Him.

I'm going to go through some examples of prayer in Holy Scripture to demonstrate what it is. However, before we do that, let's look at what a search for ecstasies attempts to do. Its intent is basically to have an intimate experience with God or at times to receive knowledge from God. Sometimes it intends to manipulate the physical universe. It typically involves trying to bypass our mind into something more nebulous, and allegedly deeper. The Pentecostal movement is probably the most popular church arena for the search for ecstasies, but of course it is a very old search, and exists in multiple arenas. I write this article for this webpage about the Pente movement merely because it is so common there.

In the Pentecostal (hereafter Pente) practice, probably the most common search for ecstasies is the search to receive "tongues." These are the mock version of the actual spiritual gift of languages given to the apostles. Yet it models very closely a search for ecstasies, and for some is truly ecstatic. What this has in common with all searches for ecstasy, is a formula. They all have a formula. Nearly all attempts to receive modern tongues involve either repeating nonsense syllables until it starts to flow out like a stream, or repeating actual words or phrases in praise of God until they become jumbled like modern tongues and this new "language" is received by the practitioner. This is only one of many attempts at ecstasy, perhaps the most common today. In a nutshell, it is a **formulaic attempt to receive something** from *Elohim* (God), or have intimacy with Him.

There have been many such attempts throughout the ages. I have read of a Catholic mystic who stuck one hand in warm water and the other in cold to try and confuse the brain. This allegedly would allow one to have an ecstasy, what the practitioner considers being close to God. Others use such techniques as **hand motions, body motions and breathing exercises or try to clear**

their mind entirely. Having come to faith out on my own, and spent years dabbling in Kabbalah, I can tell you a variety of ecstasy-seeking methods are used in their own attempts to reach what they believe to be God, taking them in a direction they believe is higher. Theirs may be unique, but in the use of formulas it is the same as any. They also, like the modern Word Faith believers, and the practice I mentioned above, claim to alter the material universe with their words and their “ecstatic” prayer.

I want to ask the average believers, at least those who take their faith and the Word of God seriously, if they honestly think that a formula can attain intimacy with *Elohim*. Can repeated phrases bring us close to God, at least any closer than we are already in Messiah? Can breathing exercises bring us some gift or piece of information? Is this really a spiritual attitude? If you are sympathetic to these techniques, I would challenge you by telling you they are in fact very carnal practices. They are not part of a right relationship with *Elohim*. I’d even ask you to tell me why, if it is spiritual to purposefully manipulate your brain, your nervous system and your circulatory system, then why on earth it isn’t spiritual to just take drugs instead. Many people have claimed that certain drugs brought on spiritual experiences. If you would alter your mind with breathing exercises to allegedly commune with the Deity, **why not also take LSD?** Do you see what I mean? In fact, let’s say that as a believer I long to see a light from God. I then proceed to stare at a bright light for a while until an afterimage develops. Can I then go about with this afterimage before my eyes saying – I have seen a light from the Lord? Well why not? If we can manipulate our bodily systems and “see God”, then why not?

I want to add, before we get to what scripture actually shows prayer to be, that I have had quite a number of “sensory” experiences, mostly in prayer, or when contemplating the Word of God (and when I say contemplate I mean by thinking about it deeply). I have felt warmth. I have seen lights, before me, to the sides of my vision and a **great, sparkling light** coming down from above. On one unique occasion I heard an audible voice. In other instances I have seen **the entire room change color**, or heard sounds, such as the chirping of crickets or singing of birds, ones which I like to call *Gan Eden* (the Garden of Eden). So I know that prayer can sometimes include sensory experiences. I also think it’s fair to accept that some of those could be from Almighty God. But it’s very important to let you know, in none of these instances did I need to do a repeated formula. I merely came to God in sincere prayer, or dwelled on His word in my mind in a normal way. The sensory experiences were not the goal.

Perhaps the most powerful “experience” I ever had was when I was still struggling greatly with insomnia. It was regular for me to be up most of the night, if not all night. One night I was up

late, as usual, reading from my favorite scriptures. I read intently, and over and over, drinking them down as I loved them so much. You know what happened was, even though I ended up awake all night, I felt not a moment of drowsiness. In fact I felt a warm energy buzzing through my entire body and stayed like this for over 36 hours. I never wore out. This happened to me twice. Once while reading the scriptures in English, the other time in Hebrew. Of course it struck me afterward that it would be fantastic to repeat the experience, perhaps if I just remembered precisely what I'd done and did the same thing later. I refused to follow the urge to do this, however, because obviously this would amount to treating God like a magic trick. It would seem like little more than sorcery. The way I saw it, and the way I still do, *Adonai* just gave me a few incredible blessings probably because I was so desirous and thirsty for His word. Those blessings were HIS to give. They were not MINE to take. I still continue that philosophy today. I will not treat God like a genie and don't want you to either.

Let's go through scripture now, and let's look at some of the examples of prayer there. Of course I'm not going to go through all of it, but this will be a representative sample. Do you expect to see people talk about prayer in modern tongues (gibberish), or seek God by repeated syllables or repeated breathing? Do you expect to see scripture talk about being able to speak reality into existence with words, as if we were God himself? Do you think you will find these things anywhere? From the prayer of Solomon, to the prayer of *Moshe* (Moses), of Hannah, of Miriam (sister of *Moshe*), of the 150 Psalms, of Miriam (mother of Yeshua), of Yeshua himself or the angels and souls in the book of Revelation, do we see any attempts at ecstasy or speaking reality? No we do not. But let's just go through the sample of verses now just to make sure:

1) Israel's blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh (Genesis 48:15-16)

And he blessed Joseph, and said:

“God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,

The God who has fed me all my life long to this day,

¹⁶The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil,

Bless the lads;

Let my name be named upon them,

And the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac;

And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”

- Here's an early prayer from Genesis, spoken by the patriarch *Ya'akov* (Jacob) towards the children of *Yosef*. He addresses God, speaks of who God is and what God does and asks for God's blessing upon the children, providing some details of the blessing. Notice,

Israel does not repeat syllables over and over or speak in baby talk. He does not speak what he desires into existence. He addresses *Elohim* and asks for a blessing.

2) **The Song of Moshe** (Exodus 15:1-2):

Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and spoke, saying:

“I will sing to the LORD,

For He has triumphed gloriously!

The horse and its rider

He has thrown into the sea!

²The LORD *is* my strength and song,

And He has become my salvation;

He *is* my God, and I will praise Him;

My father’s God, and I will exalt Him.

- These are the first two verses of the Song of *Moshe*. It is representative of the rest. It contains no gibberish, no repeating syllables, no speaking reality. Rather it praises Adonai for what He has just done, and tells about who He is and what He does. That is prayer.

3) **The Song of Miriam** (Exodus 15:20-21)

Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.²¹ And Miriam answered them:

“Sing to the LORD,

For He has triumphed gloriously!

The horse and its rider

He has thrown into the sea!”

- Feel free to show me where this prayer contains any gibberish, repeated syllables or breathing exercises. Otherwise, I will take it simply to be biblical prayer, the kind we all should be a part of.

4) **The Prayer of Hannah** (1 Samuel 2:1-2):

And Hannah prayed and said:

“My heart rejoices in the LORD;

My horn is exalted in the LORD.

I smile at my enemies,

Because I rejoice in Your salvation.

²“No one is holy like the LORD,

For *there is* none besides You,

Nor *is there* any rock like our God.

- Once again, we see no gibberish, baby-talk, repeated syllables or speaking reality. We see a prayer. It praises God, and speaks of who He is and what He does. This is only the opening, but is representative of the rest.

5) King Solomon’s prayer at dedication of the Temple (1 Kings 8:22-25):

Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven; ²³and he said: “LORD God of Israel, *there is* no God in heaven above or on earth below like You, who keep *Your* covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts. ²⁴You have kept what You promised Your servant David my father; You have both spoken with Your mouth and fulfilled *it* with Your hand, as *it is* this day. ²⁵Therefore, LORD God of Israel, now keep what You promised Your servant David my father, saying, ‘You shall not fail to have a man sit before Me on the throne of Israel, only if your sons take heed to their way, that they walk before Me as you have walked before Me.’

- King Solomon also prays the way others do. He praises *Adonai*. He petitions *Adonai*. He speaks of what *Adonai* is and does. King Solomon does NOT speak in gibberish, repeated syllables or baby-talk nor does he try to speak reality into being. Solomon prays.

6) The Psalms, 3 samples (Psalm 1:1-2, Psalm 51:1-2, Psalm 119:65-70)

Blessed *is* the man

Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,

Nor stands in the path of sinners,

Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

²But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD,

And in His law he meditates day and night.

Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.
²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.

You have dealt well with Your servant,
O LORD, according to Your word.
⁶⁶Teach me good judgment and knowledge,
For I believe Your commandments.
⁶⁷Before I was afflicted I went astray,
But now I keep Your word.
⁶⁸You *are* good, and do good;
Teach me Your statutes.
⁶⁹The proud have forged a lie against me,
But I will keep Your precepts with *my* whole heart.
⁷⁰Their heart is as fat as grease,
But I delight in Your law.

- The Psalms are both prayers and hymns. They were used regularly in liturgy and some still use them liturgically today. We see a wide array of things in this sample. We see telling the Lord our thoughts and situation, we see petition, we see basic truths communicated, we see confession and seeking forgiveness, we see praise, we see speaking of what God is and does, we see speaking of His law. What we do not see is any baby-talk, gibberish or speaking reality into existence. You will find some of the latter in Genesis 1 by the way, but that's about it.

7) The Song of Miriam (Luke 1:46-49)

And Mary said:

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.
⁴⁸For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

⁴⁹For He who is mighty has done great things for me,
And holy *is* His name.

- This is just the opening of this beautiful passage, but please notice: we see prayer here and we do not see what ecstasy seekers do. This is the mother of Yeshua speaking.

8) The Disciples' Prayer (Matthew 6:5-13)

⁵“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. ⁷And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

⁸“Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. ⁹In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as *it is* in heaven.

¹¹Give us this day our daily bread.

¹²And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors.

¹³And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

- Here the Savior himself gives instructions on prayer, as well as provides a model prayer, a prayer which basically contains the elements of our prayer in general. Please look at every word of it. What do you see? There are even instructions such as avoiding vain repetitions. How can that be in harmony with seeking ecstasy, which practically always relies on repetitions? “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.” That is prayer.

9) The four living creatures and twenty-four elders (Revelation 4:8-11)

The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying:

“Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God Almighty,
Who was and is and is to come!”

⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

¹¹ “You are worthy, O Lord,
To receive glory and honor and power;
For You created all things,
And by Your will they exist and were created.”

- These are praising *Elohim*, speaking of His attributes and His work. These are awesome words.

10) Song of the four, the twenty-four, the thousands and every living creature (Revelation 5:9-13)

“You are worthy to take the scroll,
And to open its seals;
For You were slain,
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
¹⁰ And have made us kings and priests to our God;
And we shall reign on the earth.”

¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

¹³ And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

“Blessing and honor and glory and power
Be to Him who sits on the throne,
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”

- This is an incredible hymn to the Lamb. It does much of what prayer does and follows what we see in the rest of scripture. There are no attempts at ecstasies here. Look at this amazing hymn and ask yourself if this is not enough for us. What is lacking that we should need more? Notice this song is the song of many thousands of saints, and even “every creature which is in heaven and on the earth.” (vs 13) It seems this is more than any other a universal prayer.

Here we’ve gone through nine examples of prayers in scripture, and a brief sampling from the book which contains one hundred and fifty prayers. I realize there is more to look at, and feel free to do that yourself, but the point of this sample is to show that throughout scripture we see prayer to *Adonai*. We do NOT see ecstasy-seeking formulas. We see words used to greatly praise God, extol who He is and what He does, petition God, confess to God and more. **We do not see words used as mere repetitions, as gibberish or as magic spells.** They are not how the Bible shows us and instructs us to pray. If you are involved in any other those latter activities, really just sit down and ask yourself if you are involved in a right relationship with God. Ask yourself if maybe, just maybe, you are involved in **voodoo**.

I realize there are some who will say that we are always free to do things which are not specifically spoken of in the Bible. Of course this is true. Yet why should we do something different in the case of approaching God and communing with God, when every single example in the Bible is of spoken prayer, and when the only specific instructions are for spoken prayer as well. There are actual instructions in there, remember? **They do not instruct in ecstasies.** Moreover, and this is very important, the practices of many so-called mystics sound remarkably like sorcery, both in the techniques and desired effects. They also sound remarkably like divination and even spiritism in some instances. Sorcery, divination and spiritism are prohibited by *Adonai*. Probably the most comprehensive passage is Deuteronomy

18:9-12 which says: ***“When you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord. And because of these abominations the Lord your God is driving them out before you.*** There are many shorter passages saying the same, and this is clearly continued in the New Covenant with passages like Galatians 5:20-21: ***Idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife.... and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*** Therefore, if we are basically doing the same things required for these magical practices, we are violating *Adonai*’s commandments. We are approaching *Adonai* in the wrong way. He has given us a way to approach him in a relationship. Sorcery is not it.

There has always been an argument, and I have read this argument used by traditional Kabbalists, saying that these techniques may sound just like sorcery, but they are still acceptable. This is because their purposes are godly purposes and they address God in some way. These elements ensure they are not covered by the biblical prohibition. That’s a simplification of their argument, but I think you see the point. Notice first, if alleged mystics are using arguments like this, they are already acknowledging that what they do remarkably resembles sorcery. They’ve admitted it. Moreover, at heart this argument is an ends justifies the means one – sure it sounds just like what is prohibited in scripture, goes the argument, but the ends are good and maybe one or two of the means are good too. We can therefore do it. It is an attractive argument. Nevertheless, it’s easy to see the flaw in it. **The ends do not justify the means.** Naturally, if we reject the end justifies the means argument in other instances we must reject it here. The Word of the living God prohibits sorcery and an array of magical practices. We should respect that prohibition, and not seek to use them to commune with *Elohim*. Nor should we use them in attempts to manipulate the physical universe.

No ecstasies, some will say, sounds boring. No approach to God in a powerful sensory way they will say sounds unspiritual. No escape from the self sounds entrapping in the self, vulnerable, and human. Yet all these things we should accept. **God does not need us to escape our mind**, but rather uplifts our mind in the Spirit. He desires we use it for His service, and even more turn it over to His purposes entirely. We are not called anywhere to escape our mind or our humanity. We are not taught anywhere to speak in gibberish, to do formulas to seek highs or to pridefully claim we can speak reality into existence as *Elohim* does. Nowhere. In fact similar practices are prohibited and come with a harsh warning. Besides, I must repeat, these are not spiritual practices to begin with. They are typically just manipulation of our bodies, manipulation of our

nervous and circulatory systems. How spiritual is the ecstasy-seeker who is high on LSD? How spiritual is the man who stares into a bright lamp then walks about claiming that he has seen a light from God? This is mere manipulation. Perhaps the best description I have ever heard of Kabballah is this – it is a vain attempt to invade the heavenlies. The same is true with other ecstasy seeking. **We cannot invade heaven nor must we escape ourselves.**

I realize I have included a variety of techniques as being ecstatic in this essay, and I certainly have not been able to focus in any detail on one technique or another. Maybe that is for another time. Yet I believe it's fair to say they all amount to aberrant ways of approaching God. I also want to remind you as I did before, that even without these formulaic techniques, it is still possible to have sensory experiences. Absolutely. The difference is that we simply wait on the Lord to provide them. They do not happen too often. **We can't rub the magic bottle and have the genie come out.** Yet they happen. In fact throughout scripture we see many sensory experiences from *Elohim*, and in none of those experiences do we see someone repeating formulas or using special techniques. We have prophets and patriarchs who spoke with God; we have men who saw visions; we have men who saw what seems to be physical manifestations of *Elohim*; we have meaningful dreams; we have Isaiah who saw God the Son and spoke with Him; we have the crowds who witnessed the *Ruach hoKodesh* coming down on Yeshua and an audible voice; we have the several apostles who saw Yeshua at **the transfiguration, surrounded by the glory with Moshe and Eliyahu** (Elijah). We have all of those experiences, and not one includes using a special formulas. That should tell us something. On top of that (which I would never claim as equal or superior) I remind you that in my own life I have had sensory experiences in prayer and contemplation and never was doing a formula to receive them. Remember that. A life without ecstasy-seeking does not mean a life without any amazing experiences in prayer. It just means having fewer of those experiences because you are approaching God the right way. It also means meekly accepting them, rather than seeking them out.

Let me review before we end together with a prayer:

- Practices of seeking ecstasies, both old and new, typically involve using a formula to get in communion or greater communion with God.
- They are not to be found in the examples of prayer throughout the scripture, including numerous prayers by very righteous men. There is not one example of it.
- Moreover, they do not fit the instructions of prayer by the Son of God and in fact seem to be warned against in His instructions.

- Ecstasy-seeking activities and the practice of trying to speak things into existence match the characteristics of sorcery and similar pagan activities very well, and are naturally prohibited along with the Bible prohibitions against them.
- Finally, many righteous men in scripture, and believers throughout the ages, have experienced visions or ecstasies without any use of formulas whatsoever. Not one example of a visionary in scripture includes that person using a formula to experience visions or other spiritual experiences.

It is evident then, that seeking ecstasies, however attractive it may be for many souls, is not for us to do in Messiah. We should approach God humbly in simple prayer, as we are both shown and taught in scripture. We should dwell upon His holy Word with our mind.

Finally, let us **say a prayer together** you and I. This is the one I listed before from Revelation, with all creatures of the earth joining in. Please say this prayer and then tell me if there is anything lacking in it. You should get into a good prayer position for it – sitting can be so boring you know – probably either standing or on our knees. I usually clasp my hands before my chest when I pray, but you can put them in another position if you'd like, such as in the air. Please say these words with me directed to the Most High and say them like you mean them. Tell me if you find anything lacking:

**“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”**

**“Blessing and honor and glory and power
Be to Him who sits on the throne,
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”**

Amen