**Introduction**

“Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Breath of God (ruach’elöhîm) was moving over the face of the waters.”

In Genesis, ruach both brings form into the chaotic newborn world and the breath of life that God breathes into humanity. Psalm 33:6 says, “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth” and Job (27:3 + 4) in the midst of his pain cries, “as long as I have life within me, the breath of God in my nostrils, my lips will not say anything wicked, and my tongue will not utter lies.”

Many spiritualities and religions see breathwork as a key spiritual practice. The Yogic pranayama, the fourth limb of Yoga, is intended to help practitioners focus on the flow of life energy. The Buddhist Anapanasati, a practice of mindful breathing to help anchor one in the present moment. The Hush Dar Dam, which literally translates as "awareness in the breath”, is one of the 11 core principles of the Naqshbandi Sufi order. These focussed breath practices are intended to cultivate mindfulness, calm the mind, and connect the practitioner with the divine.

In the Christian tradition we have the Jesus prayer of the Desert Fathers and Mothers where one connects the prayer's repeated words with the rhythm of one's breath.

Bishop Ignatii Brianchaninov (1807-67) writes that, “The essence of the matter consists in the union of the mind with the heart during prayer, and this is achieved by the grace of God in its own time, determined by God. The breathing technique is fully replaced by the unhurried enunciation of the Prayer, by a short rest or pause at the end, each time it is said, by gentle and unhurried breathing, and by the enclosure of the mind in the words of the Prayer.”

Richard Rohr writes that the very name of God is more of an act of breathing than of speaking, “All people have access to their True Self from their very first inhalation and exhalation, which is the very sound of the sacred. It is the literally unspeakable Jewish name for God, YHWH. It cannot be spoken but only breathed: inhaling and exhaling with open lips.”

Christine Sine, who has written a number of breathing prayers, says, “Breathing prayers are not about emptying ourselves so that we feel a void inside. They are about renewing our minds by saturating ourselves with the presence of God. I like to imagine that the outward breath creates a new space for God to fill. The inward breath draws something new of God’s character into me. As I breathe… I visualize myself breathing in a little more of God and who God intends me to be and letting go of some of what is not of God.”

Jesus breathed over his disciples (John 20:22), filling them again with the living ruach’elöhîm. drawing them back to the source of life and creativity which moves in our being, back to their identity as God breathed.

**A breathing meditation.**

* Find a comfortable place and posture. You might need to physically and mentally put aside any distractions.
* Some people like to set an intention for their meditation time. This doesn’t mean that there needs to be an outcome, it can just mean an attitude or a commitment to enter the time with, or a road map for your meditation. Frame your intentions in positive and present-tense language, as if they are already happening. For example, instead of saying "I will try to be more peaceful" say "I am calm and feeling peace."
* Focus on your breath**.** Close your eyes and focus your attention on your breathing. Take a few deep breaths, inhaling and exhaling slowly, as you feel your body start to relax. You might want to try Square or Box breathing. A simple relaxation technique that involves inhaling, holding, exhaling, and holding for equal counts, creating a visual of a square shape with each breath cycle.
* Scan your body. Notice how the body feels right now. Starting at the top of the head, gently scan down through the body, noticing what feels comfortable and what feels uncomfortable. Remember, you’re not trying to change anything, just noticing how the body feels as you scan down evenly and notice each and every part of the body, all the way down to the toes.

Breathe in deeply and slowly, feel the breath fill every part of your lungs. Make what is normally an unconscious act, your whole focus.

Breathe out by allowing your body to relax, don’t push out the air, let it flow naturally as your body lets go.

Breathe in life and energy

Breathe out staleness and decay

Picture yourself as newborn, full of promise and potential, fresh to the world, close to the heart of the creator.

Release any past disappointments and failures that tighten your chest and restrict your energy.

See the eyes of the divine parent looking at you, full of joy and wonder at what you might become. Look deeply into those eyes.

Welcome their love for you.

Be still.

Breathe out self-doubt and fear

Breathe in the breath of God

Breathe out shame and inadequacy

Breathe in the breath of God

Breathe out anger and cynicism

Breathe in the breath of God

Breathe out pain and hurt

Breathe in the breath of God

Breathe out the need to achieve

Breathe in the breath of God

Breathe out haste and the desire to rush

Breathe in the breath of God

Breathe out pride and the need for status

Breathe in the breath of God

Breathe out sadness and grief

Breathe in the breath of God

Breathe out jealousy and ego

Breathe in the breath of God

Breathe out injustice and wrongs

Breathe in the breath of God

Breathe out broken relationships and loneliness

Breathe in the breath of God

Breathe out the bruises of endings

Breathe in the breath of God

Be still

Breathe

Feel the love of God filling you

Flowing from your lungs into your bloodstream

Making your veins tingle and your muscles glow

Know, as if for the very first time you are truly loved

Know the wonder of new life

Wonder

Reach out to all creation,

Can you touch it, smell it, see it, taste it?

Can you feel its fullness?

It is your inheritance, your family,

You are a child of divine, filled with the breath of God

Be still

Breathe

Divine three in one,

breathe on us,

breathe in us,

breathe through us,

Fill us with new life,

Remade, reborn, renewed, refreshed, reenergised, revitalised.