

## Nourishment for the Neshama

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### Reflections on metaphysics - important basics to comprehend similarities and differences between Judaism and Islam

Please listen to Robert Reilly speak about the metaphysics of Islam and the thoughts operating in today's world. Below were my reactions to some of what he discusses.



Although humans cannot know the Divine mind in its entirety, we can know Hashem's will through the remarkable Torah He gave us exactly for that purpose! The Torah IS the blueprint for this world and we can know His attributes, including justice and mercy, because we are given free will in order to give us opportunity to bring His attributes into this world – we are made in His Image and we can choose to act in concert with His Attributes. By growing in our emunah and bitachon, we ask Hashem to help us develop and strengthen our understanding of ourselves - that we have no separate existence (our soul is an actual, unbroken, original emanation of Hashem) - despite our apparent independent existence in bodies within time and space. His reasoning is beyond the dimensions of time and space in which we find ourselves, but His reasoning and design is just, merciful and for our ultimate growth and development and benefit because our soul is eternal. His worlds are purposeful, for giving the ultimate eternal good to us, showing His love for us and for expression of His desire to give good to us here as well as for eternity. When we realize all the good that is coming to us, it creates within us love in return and a strong desire to remain in rapport with the Omnipotent Creator. This awareness, this consciousness, inhibits us from doing anything that we fear would be displeasing to Hashem ( that is, as

He tells us in Torah). The absolute morality of the Torah is our morality.

And what does He want from us? To love justice, be merciful and walk humbly with Him. He gave us free will so that He could give us the greatest reward, so we would not be shamed to have received His good. The goal of free will is to realize that there is only Hashem's will. And that there is only Hashem, Ein Od Milvado. Does Hashem allow us to use our free will in destructive, hurtful ways that are displeasing to Him? Yes. And He allows these acts to occur as well. However, this has nothing to do with His expression of approval of our free willed choice. It has only to do with His Will. Far be it from anyone to elect to be the stick in His hand to implement Divine justice simply to accomplish self-serving goals of this world, for in so doing, we create spiritual forces for which we will be punished and/or destroyed in this world and the next. While we may appear to be successful in reaching our goals through violence or destruction, that is only because we are not properly setting our goals with eternity in mind. Achievement in this world alone does NOT in and of itself result in holiness or eternal reward. Our actions in concert with Hashem's Attributes of Mercy may or may not bring achievement in this world, but, in fact, ARE the actions by which we will receive eternal reward. We must have emunah and complete bitachon.

Aristotle could not understand Emunah even though he was a genius – had he understood emunah and bitachon, he would have said it is rational to do what brings the greatest pleasure possible – submitting to Hashem! Aristotle gave us reason and rationality as the tools to determine what is ethical. What could Aristotle not comprehend? That there is only Hashem, Ein Od Milvado and that we have no separate existence from Hashem, and that there is more than this world! Reasoning and rationality are abilities given to us by Hashem so that we can turn our intellect upward and discover that there is only Hashem, just as Avraham Aveinu did. And by the way, Avraham is the father of Ishmael too, the point being to show that it is within all of Avraham's descendants to respect that Hashem can be found through proper use of reason. The power to reason is given to us by Hashem! When we use it along with our free will to choose submission to Hashem's will, we receive reward ( or if we choose otherwise, punishment) here and in the world to come. This world is designed as a passageway to the next, a place of Hashem's gifts given so that we may build eternity.

We struggle with self interest – often instead of making Gd the center, we make ourselves the center. Torah teaches us that we are to rise above our selfish instincts of taking to help form ourselves in His Image and emulate His middos. Amazing! With the reason and resources that Hashem gives us, He also gives us the ability to be totally blind to knowing that He gave these to us! Simply by comprehending that our intellect is given to us in order that we use it to recognize Him, we are able to receive more knowledge and insights, bringing us closer to emulating Him and thereby bringing His attributes to the world.

We cannot accomplish anything without siyata deshemaya. Even though Hashem runs the world He does not suspend natural laws. This is part of giving us free will – if we could see that everything was being done by Hashem or the ultimate consequences of our actions, our free will would not exist.. He wants us to live up to the absolute morality of the Torah. We can use reason to bring ourselves to this point. No person can establish what absolute morality is because only the Creator Who designed us and the world has that perspective.

The world we see, our visible reality, is an opportunity to develop within ourselves the middos of Hashem and to act in accordance with the mitzvahs of the Torah, with love and fear of Hashem. Realizing that we have no separate existence from Hashem Who loves us IS the reality. Will we remember that or not when tested? To pass our tests, we must believe there is Hashem and fear Him. How do we acquire belief? Rabbi Avigdor Miller instructs us to simply look at the miraculous world of nature. Esther Bayla Schwartz, quoting Rabbi Schwadron, says that the woodpecker alone shows there is a Creator. Conscience (awareness of the morality of the Torah) and connection (Emunah, bitachon, and emulation of Hashem's attributes) bring Hashem into this world. Hashem makes Himself into a receiver simply in order that WE can become givers to HIM. Why should we become givers? Both Rabbi Dessler and Rabbi Eziel Tauber explain - being united with Hashem Who is a Giver will only feel like a reward if we inculcate within our souls, while we have free willed choice, the quality of giving in this world. When we make ourselves like Hashem in this world, being united with Hashem for all eternity will be a tremendous joy. But do not think that there is no joy in doing so here. When we

emulate Hashem's attributes of mercy and middos in this world, we bring shefa into the world and that is a tremendous sense of pleasure. Try it out! Feeling resistance? GREAT! May I introduce you to the immovable stone against which we are intended to push in order to build our spiritual muscles. That resistance, and learning how to devalue it with the intention of serving Hashem, is what makes us great and what earns us reward. Still don't want to do it? That is your lower self, not your higher self talking. You are at behira - Hatzlacha!