

Defining Divine Providence

Posted by Chachaman - 30 May 2013 20:56

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I was just reading through Zvi's question on how exactly we're supposed to throw ourselves into God's arms like a little baby, and I have a related question:

I'm reading the Garden of Emuna right now, and the author defines the most basic level of emuna as believing that everything comes from Hashem, from the splitting of a single-cell amoeba to great natural calamities.

The reason why I'm having trouble with that is because I've read the Ralbag, who had a radical view and took a very limited view of divine providence (saying that God knows the generals but not particulars, instead leaving the operation of the world to the "active intellect"), and the Rambam, who included more within the scope of Divine Providence but in his Moreh Nevuchim 3:17-22 (I forget exactly where in there) he categorically dismisses an Islamic view of the time that EVERYTHING comes from Hashem, including the drop of a blade of grass. Instead, his model was more "the more righteous you are, the more providence you get". It was only with the advent of the Chassidic/Kabbalistic view in the 1700s that Divine Providence over *everything* became the conventional viewpoint.

So, I'm having trouble with accepting that Hashem has complete control over everything that happens. While the Ralbag's view is untenable (and clearly an attempt to reconcile Judaism and Aristotle), the fact that the Rambam didn't believe that Hashem had complete control over everything (and there were probably Rishonim who shared that view) makes me doubt whether that is the definition of Emuna, or if Hashem actively controls everything, including nature, instead of letting nature be?

(it should be noted that R. Hasdai Crescas took the opposite view of the Ralbag, and limited our free will by saying that Hashem controls absolutely everything).

I'm sure people on the forum are more knowledgeable about this than me. Sorry I posted it in breaking free, it just seems like no one really reads the "Torah and Chizuk Approach".

Thank you!

--Robert

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Re: Defining Divine Providence

Posted by inastruggle - 30 May 2013 22:04

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First of all you have to realize that there isn't such a difference in what you're going to do whether or not Hashem controls everything or not. Either way you have to do you're hishtadlus so this really isn't a practical question just a theoretical one.

That said, if you have a question then you should find out the answer (chovos halevavos says this not me)

I'm not qualified to answer this at all so i'm going to give you some links to Rabbi Dr. Dovid Gottlieb, a speaker i really enjoy who goes through these and many other topics in detail. (Plus he has a lot of letters after his name so you might like that too)

[www.simpletoremember.com/media/a/providence-n-responsibility/](http://www.simpletoremember.com/media/a/providence-n-responsibility/)

[www.simpletoremember.com/media/a/free-will-p1/](http://www.simpletoremember.com/media/a/free-will-p1/)

[www.simpletoremember.com/media/a/free-will-p2/](http://www.simpletoremember.com/media/a/free-will-p2/)

[www.simpletoremember.com/media/a/freewill-philosophicalproblems/](http://www.simpletoremember.com/media/a/freewill-philosophicalproblems/)

[www.simpletoremember.com/media/a/free-will-philosophical-problems-qs-as/](http://www.simpletoremember.com/media/a/free-will-philosophical-problems-qs-as/)

[www.simpletoremember.com/media/a/freewill-religiousproblems/](http://www.simpletoremember.com/media/a/freewill-religiousproblems/)

[www.simpletoremember.com/media/a/freewill-religiousproblemsqna/](http://www.simpletoremember.com/media/a/freewill-religiousproblemsqna/)

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Re: Defining Divine Providence

Posted by some\_guy - 30 May 2013 23:28

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*Disclaimer: I am just putting some ideas out there. I may be mistaken. If what I say is different than what anyone else says, they are probably right.*

I thought about this paradox a lot. I think I have found a way to resolve it. I remember a couple of quotes I read but not where their from. One was that Hashem holds the keys to three things: rain, resurrection and conception. Another quote was that a blade of grass does not grow unless an angel in heaven commands it to. These two quotes are needed to resolve the paradox explained above.

First lets define the problem. Chassidic writing state that everything happens because of Hashem's will. Also, if Hashem were to stop actively sustain the world, it would immediately collapse. On the other hand, Rambam says Hashem is not in control of anything. It is well known that Hashem is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. Therefor, Rambam is saying that although Hashem could do everything personally, he chooses to give the active intellect power. The question is, "Does Hashem work alone or does use (but, not need) others?"

Combine the above quotes with these, and you reach the conclusion. Hashem controls some things that are of unequalled importance while granting permission allowing the angels to control everything else. This means for field of grass to grow Hashem makes the rains fall, then commands the angel who controls the plants to make that grass grow (*who commands the angel beneath him, who commands the angel beneath him ... until every angel who controls a particular blade of grass in that field receive Hashem's word. This aspect of the idea I personally created, so it may be wrong*) Although the angel(s) is the one to perform the act, it only does so because Hashem desires that it be done. Everything is done because Hashem wants it to be done, which is what the Chassidic Masters say, and Hashem may or may not use angels (active intellect) to perform the act, which is what Rambam says. Thus the paradox is solved.

If someone has any questions, comments, objections, ect. I will happily attend to them to the best of my abilities.

--some\_guy/Elias/Eliyahu

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Re: Defining Divine Providence

Posted by Machshovo Tova - 31 May 2013 02:07

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[some\\_guy wrote:](#)

... If someone has any questions, comments, objections, ect. I will happily attend to them to the best of my abilities.

--some\_guy/Elias/Eliyahu

Thanks so much, but I think I'll stick to my grandma's way of emunah peshutah.

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Re: Defining Divine Providence

Posted by Chachaman - 31 May 2013 03:46

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Thank you Some Guy, that really helps:

Really, everything comes from Hashem, it's just he has agents that do his will, but everything happens for a reason.

Inastruggle...In my opinion it's not academic, because I'm trying to work on emunah, and it has practical implications over how I treat everyday occurrences, actions of others, etc. Still, the

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Re: Defining Divine Providence  
blade of grass part is academic  
Posted by some\_guy - 31 May 2013 23:58

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Machshovo Tova, I am a Chabad chassid, so I believe that emunah peshutah is the purest way to love Hashem. Your grandmother she must be a tzaddekes.

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Re: Defining Divine Providence  
Posted by inastruggle - 01 Jun 2013 00:25

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i will pm you on why i think that this is academic but i don't feel comfortable discussing these on a public forum, i think that this is probably not the setting to discuss these things.

The setting would be with experts on these topics moderating the discussion which i don't know of a website like that (though there are some real life settings) but i can give you some sites that have many articles on these topics.

There is a chabad website called [www.askmoses.com/](http://www.askmoses.com/) that you can ask these types of questions on.

Though i don't know if their hashkafos are right or not since i haven't really used the site.

i have used these two though:

[www.simpletoremember.com/](http://www.simpletoremember.com/)

[www.dovidgottlieb.com/](http://www.dovidgottlieb.com/)

But the web is really not the best place for hashkafah since it's full of apikorsis, twisted ideas and people misrepresenting themselves as jewish so hashkafah is best left to real life experts and of course reputable seforim (there are plenty of good english ones out there if necessary) .

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