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Finding God, First Steps

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The question I am asked most often is how can one connect directly to God? Apparently it is finally dawning upon a lot of people from all different walks of life that being religious and studying religion does not necessarily make one any closer to God. On the contrary being filled with religion can make one acutely aware how empty one is and how distant God seems to be. The secret to finding God and living in the experience of His Presence is not so hard as many have been led to believe. On the contrary knowing and experiencing God can be rather easy and natural, all one has to do it is to do it right. Just how to do this is what we will consider right now.

Before any Sage or Biblical scholar opened his mouth or took out his pen to write, knowledge of God came about first-hand, through those who spoke directly to Him and who, in turn, received direct communication from Him. Those with this first-hand experience and knowledge were the prophets of the Bible. Now, although there has not been direct prophecy received by man from God for centuries, this does not mean that all avenues of communication have been severed. Humanity can never be severed completely from our Divine source, for to do so would be to sever us from life itself.

As long as we are alive, we are in some small way connected to the Divine. All we have to do then is to expand the channels that are already open. In order to do this, we must turn back to the paths of the Biblical prophets, those who knew how to experience G-d. It is only through their path of experience that we can ever hope to have any such experience ourselves. Those who instead turn to the philosophers of Biblical theology fill their heads with all kinds of ideas, beliefs and thoughts, none of which have the power and ability of prophetic techniques to enable one to reach out and actually touch God.

The prophets were renown for two specific things, first their impeccable righteous behavior in that they treated all others regardless of everything with decency, respect and honor. Second, the prophets were not people of society, they did not seek out social status, political power or financial wealth. The acquisitions of this world meant little or nothing to them. For the prophet, male or female alike, the more things one had in this world, the more hindrances one acquired preventing them from clarity of spiritual vision. In other words, the more attached one is to the things of this world, the less attached one becomes to the spiritual things of the world of truth.

One cannot have it both ways. One cannot be wealthy in both the physical and spiritual worlds. One has to make sacrifices in the one in order to make accomplishments in the other. Even the Biblical patriarchs Abraham Issac and Jacob who were indeed wealthy men, the scriptures says of them that they knew God only as El Shadai, but His true essence as YHVH, they did not know (Ex. 6:3). In other words, although these great men of old did indeed walk with God and were indeed prophets, nevertheless, there were grades of spirituality that they did not achieve.

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It was not until Moses came along and took an entire generation of men, women and children, into the most harshest of earthly living conditions to teach the members of that generation that, "man does not live by bread alone, but rather by that which proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Deut. 8:3). Needless to say, for those who place their financial concerns primary in their lives, this fundamental lesson is lost to them.

Think of life as a see-saw, the children's playground toy, where two children sit on opposite sides of the see-saw board and bounce up and down each one balancing out the opposite other. Life is like this, with physical needs and spiritual needs being the two necessary opposites in need of balance. Needless to say, both sides bobble up and down, seeking equilibrium. The problem of course occurs when one side or the other dominates and throws off the entire balance. Just as one can be overly physical to one's personal harm, so too can one be overly spiritual, equally to one's harm. Extremes on both sides thwart the Divine ordinance for balance and harmony based upon the center. Religious extremism creates and feeds secular extremism and vice versa. Such extremes wobble all of life out of balance creating havoc for all around.

Common sense and natural law dictate to us that we must find healthy, properly expressed balance for both our physical needs and our spiritual aspirations. We must feed both body and soul for us to survive as who we are, human beings. If we deprive our physical bodies and focus almost exclusively on our spiritual sides, we lose a part of our humanity and become more like the angels. On the other hand, if we deprive our spiritual souls and focus almost exclusively on our physical desires, we also lose a part of our humanity and become more like animals.

Some consider becoming like an angel to be a good thing. Yet, if God wanted us to be angels, He would have had us born in Heaven. Instead, God made us human, here on Earth. Therefore, logic dictates to us that God wants us to be that which He created us to be, this being human. God did not create us to be animals, desiring us to act like beasts of the field or of the jungle. Human beings who act like animals will in the end face their fate as do all animals. When a human being creates a "kill or be killed" environment for himself, he may for a time, be doing the "killing," such a life style will catch up with one, and in the end such a one will himself be killed, most likely hunted down, killed and "eaten" just like an animal. How often do we see the mighty rise just to tumble, fall and be shattered into a million pieces.

The Biblical prophets all spoke publicly about the need to act human and humanely towards one another. This was always the first path and the easiest path to the Grace of God. The righteous alone are the ones who stand the chance to ever gaze upon the Glory of God with any type of spiritual vision. Some mistakenly consider that such visions and mystical experiences are the only true definition of drawing close to God, but nothing could be further from the truth. God's glory is not something visible to the physical eye, but it is visible to the inner eye, the eye of mind and consciousness. When one lives the right way, doing the right things and seeking God, the consequence of this search also inspires one to seek out to help his human brothers and sisters.

We are taught (Gen. 1:27) that we are created in the Image of God. As God is the ultimate Giver, so too, if we wish to be like Him, we must also become givers. We must stop taking and start giving. Apply this general rule to everything, to everyone, everywhere. Granted there is balance to be achieved, yet God is the author of balance, not us. When we give, we are not giving of anything of our own, but rather we are passing on that which belongs to Him. For all things, including all our possessions and wealth come from God and belong to Him. We are only stewards over our possessions all the while that they are in our possession. We give freely to others, because this is how God gives freely to us.

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We give, not only of our money, but also of our time and our labors. Giving comes in many forms. As God gives in all ways to all, so too should we follow in His footsteps. If we ever wish to truly experience God and become full of His Divine Presence, Grace and Glory, then first we must open ourselves up to such a reception and then remove from within ourselves everything that is blocking the way and filling us with c-r-a-p. When we are full of ourselves, we are empty of God. Only when we become empty of ourselves can we ever hope to become filled with God.

Today in our world of extremes, desperation dominates. People are willing to try almost anything to acquire an authentic spiritual experience. They are often duped by so many charlatans who are willing to sell them any package of goods with a price tag. We never ever saw this type of behavior with the Biblical prophets or any of the holy Sages that followed in their footsteps.

One does not need magic and “sound and light show spirituality” to find God. One does not need magical names or difficult meditative practices. All one needs is basic simplicity. One needs to return to a simpler, less extravagant life style. One needs to cut back on personal spending and one's over-abundant possessions. A simple life with simple necessities and without all the distractions that come with simply having too much, this is the way the prophets lived. And it was this lifestyle that when coupled with their prophetic techniques enabled them to experience God. If we walk in the paths of the prophets, then we too must combine righteous behavior towards others with righteous behavior towards ourselves.

Embrace simplicity. Return to a natural lifestyle. Get out of the distracting, unnatural, stifling urban life style. Take these steps and they themselves will be your first steps towards experiencing God. For you see, God is always here, it is just that we cannot see Him. So, if we remove the blinders from our eyes that distract us, we can begin to clarify our spiritual vision. The path is open and the steps are there. But it is you that must walk them. If you do not leave the cities, do not ever expect to succeed. One cannot expect to see in a place that promotes blindness.

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