

What We Can Prove About G-d

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Preface

The proofs in this booklet are actually successive steps to one complete proof for the existence, incorporeality, eternity, oneness, and sentience of the Creator of the universe. But more important than proving these concepts, going through the proofs forces us to understand a lot about the Creator. We are required Halachically to familiarize ourselves with certain characteristics of Hashem, and a pursual of the material in this booklet will assist the reader in fulfilling that duty.

The reader will find nothing here that is new. This booklet is merely a compendium of established principles already discussed in detail by the Rishonim and Achronim, explained in easily digestible language. Every *sefer* written by any Rishon that discusses Hashem – and I know of not a single exception to that - uses these principles as the cornerstone of their teachings about the Creator. The reader will find no *chidushim* here.

But unlike the Mesilas Yeshorim, a pursual of these pages is unlikely to remind people of what they already know. Unfortunately, these concepts have largely fallen into obscurity despite their importance, and despite the fact that without them, it is impossible to properly understand what great *gedolim* such as the Shelah, the Maharal, the Ramchal, the GRA, and the *chasidische seforim* (among others) mean when they talk about Hashem.

It should be understood at the outset that a comprehensive portrayal of the numerous details and discussions surrounding each of these principles is beyond the scope of this booklet. The author's intent herein is to present a basic, bottom-line understanding of the principles, which the reader is encouraged to pursue in more detail on his own.

The material in this booklet represents an actual online conversation with several teenagers, edited for clarity. The questions cited as quotations were actual queries submitted by the teenagers. They, too, have been edited for clarity (and elimination of slang!).

It is hoped that this booklet will serve the reader as a corridor to the magnificent world of *Yedias Hashem*, a world whose inhabitants all merit the glorious blessing, "Fortunate is the nation whose G-d is Hashem."

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1

INFINITY

Take a six-inch stick and divide it in half. You now have two sticks made of three inches each. Now divide those halves in half. Keep dividing them over and over again. How many pieces can you divide them into?

Infinity, right?

OK, now take a football field, and divide it into half, and then again in half, and again and again. How many pieces can you divide it into?

Infinity, right?

This means that both a six inch stick and a football field are comprised of the same amount of pieces: Infinity. And that makes no sense.

If $A/B=C$, then $C \times B=A$. So if six inches divided infinitely equals an infinite amount of pieces, that means if you take an infinite amount of pieces and line them up side by side, you'll get a six-inch stick.

Or maybe a football field?!

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The answer is, infinity is not a large number which you will reach if you count for a very long time. Infinity is unreachable. There is a never-ending (that is, an “infinite”) supply of finite numbers into which you can chop the stick – or the football field. Therefore, no matter how many times you chop up that football field, or that stick, the number of pieces will always be finite. You can keep chopping the pieces forever, but no matter how long you chop, you will never have an “infinite” amount of pieces. When we say you can keep chopping “for infinity” it doesn’t really mean you will ever chop the stick an infinite amount of times. Rather, it means you will never have to stop chopping - no matter how many times you have already chopped, you can always chop an additional time. You can go on like that forever. But because the amount of finite numbers never ends, the amount of slices you can chop that stick into never ends, and therefore, no matter how many times you chop that stick, and no matter how long you keep chopping, the amount of pieces that the stick – or football field – has been chopped into will always be a finite number. It will never reach “infinity.”

When we say that there is an infinite amount of finite numbers, we mean you can keep counting finite numbers forever. But no matter how long you count, you will never reach infinity, ever.

So if you are counting and counting and you have already reached a particular number, you can be sure that number is not infinity. Since infinity is not reachable, therefore, if you reached it, it is not infinity.

Time

Now we are ready for our first question: The amount of time that has passed in all of history – if you were to add up

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every moment that has ever been, until now - will that amount of moments be finite or infinite?

If someone was alive from the beginning of time and had been counting all the moments of his life, all throughout the past until now – would he be still counting finite numbers or would he have already reached “infinity”?

Answer: He would still be counting finite numbers, since he could never reach infinity.

If the past would consist of an infinite amount of time, it would never be over. At no point would you be able to say “we have reached infinity”, since that point is unreachable. The past, however, is over. Therefore, the amount of time that has already transpired in the past could never have reached infinity.

The past cannot be an infinite amount of time because the past is over, and an infinite amount of time can never be over.

As a syllogism:

If the amount of moments in the past is infinity, those moments would never be finished.

But the past has finished.

Therefore, the amount of moments in the past is not infinity.

This is based on the same idea as the answer to the stick-football field paradox, which appears problematic because it seems that even an inch can be divided up an infinite amount of times. This means that an inch and a mile - which also is divisible an infinite amount of times - are really the same length.

But this is wrong, obviously, and the reason is because you can never divide up an inch, or a mile, an infinite amount of times. No matter how many times you divide up the distance, the resultant amount of parts will always be a

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finite number. So you will never, ever have an infinite amount of parts in any given line.

Infinity cannot be reached in real life, ever. You can never count until infinity. You can never have an infinite amount of anything that has magnitude. Therefore, if we already had a certain amount of moments in time, since each moment does take up time, the total amount of moments cannot be infinity.

And if the amount of time that has happened throughout history is finite, that means it had to have a beginning. There had to have been a first moment in time. If there was no first moment, then time would be infinite, and that would be impossible.

And since there had to have been a first moment in time, then something must have caused it to begin, because nothing happens without a cause. Time could not have just popped into existence without something causing it to do so. It makes no sense that something should cause itself to begin (see Ch. 2: *The Siba Rishona*).

And the thing that caused time to begin must exist outside of time, because it was the cause of time. And if it exists outside of time, it must exist outside of space, because space can only exist within time.

And that means that the entity that created time:

1. Cannot change, because change means there is a “before” and “after”, and without time, it is not possible to have before and after.

2. It also means that the entity that created time was “always” here and “always” will be here. The cause of time had no beginning and can have no end, because to begin or to end cannot happen if there is no change.

3. It also means that this entity cannot be affected by any stimuli. Nothing can impact on it at all. Because that would

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entail a change, which cannot happen if something is not subject to time.

2

THE SIBA RISHONA

Everything that happens has a cause. Even accidents have reasons why they ended up the way they did. If someone rolls the dice and they land on nine, there were reasons why that happened. The force of the throw, the angle, the rigidity of the surface they land on, etc., all contribute to determine what number those dice will show. There is a reason for everything.

And there are reasons for the reasons, too. And reasons for those reasons. Nothing happens without a cause.

A cause is a reason something is the way it is, as opposed to a different way that it could have been. If the dice landed on nine, we can ask “What made the dice land on nine as opposed to any other number?” If a flower is blue, we can ask “What makes it blue as opposed to any other color?” If something exists we can always ask “What makes this thing exist as opposed to not existing?”

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Because the dice could theoretically have landed on any number, and the flower could have been any color, and the object could have not existed, there had to be some reason that caused these things to turn out the way they did as opposed to any of the other ways they could have been.

The reason something is the way it is as opposed to another way it could have been is what we call the “cause” for that thing.

Anything that could have theoretically not existed (and of course that includes everything in the universe) has a reason that it happens to exist as opposed to not existing. Therefore, we are entitled to ask about any of these things: What made it exist if it was possible to have not existed?

The answer to that question identifies the cause of its existence. Everything that could have not existed has such a cause (or more than one cause) for its existence.

Similarly, every single thing that did happen could have theoretically not happened. And so we can ask: Why did it happen as opposed to not happen? Of the two possibilities that could have been – (a) it should happen and (b) it should not happen – what caused it to happen as opposed to not happen?

Under other circumstances, the dice would have fallen on six and not nine – so what circumstances were in place that caused the dice to fall on nine and not six? Under other circumstances, I would not have been born – so what circumstances were in place – what happened – that caused me be born as opposed to never born?

Any given thing could have been different than it currently is, under different circumstances. Everything that is, is because some circumstances caused it to be so. The circumstances that make things be the way they are now – that is their cause. Everything has a cause. And the cause itself has a

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cause as well, because that cause would have been different under different circumstances.

But now we have a problem: If everything has a cause, and the causes also each were in turn caused by something else, “ad infinitum,” where did it start? All these things which caused other things had to start somewhere, because infinity can never be reached. And the amount of causes that have already happened therefore cannot be infinite.

Thus, the amount of causes that stretches back into the past must be finite. And if so, they had to have a beginning - a first cause, which itself had no cause at all.

This means that this first cause has no reason or reasons for why it is; nothing created it, nothing makes it what it is. There are no circumstances that govern what the first cause is. The first cause could never have been different than it is, because there is nothing that causes it to be as it is. And it certainly could never have not existed, since nothing causes its existence.

The First Cause is what we refer to when we say “Hashem.”

And since there are no factors which make the First Cause what It is, It cannot be defined. A definition explains what makes something exist as it does. If I were to give you the definition of a table, I would tell you that it has legs and a base and it is designed to have things placed upon it. The definition of table is a list of the things that cause it to be a “table” and not something else. But Hashem has nothing that caused Him to be Him. Hashem could never have been anything else, no matter what other factors would have been different.

The most important thing we can know about Hashem is that He is causeless.

THE SIBA RISHONA

This means that whereas everything in the world has a reason for its existence and why it is what it is, Hashem has no such reason. Nothing caused Hashem to exist, and there is nothing that makes Hashem is the way He is.

If I ask you to define yourself, I am asking you what makes you the unique being that you are. You would give me a list of qualities, attributes, a description of yourself. If I ask about the definition of me, I will get the same thing, just personalized for me. But when we ask what makes Him Hashem, there is no answer.

All the components of Hashem that we can list, all of His attributes, His actions, and things that you think make up the identity of this Being called "Hashem" are really not a definition at all, nor do they actually make Him Hashem. You may think you can say that what makes Him Hashem is His absolute power or unlimited wisdom, et cetera, but that is not correct. If that were so, then those things would be the "cause" of Hashem's existence. They would be what make Him Hashem. But Hashem has no causes.

If everything that could have not existed needs a reason that it exists, then couldn't we prove the existence of a Siba Rishona even without the infinity part of the equation? In other words, even if it would be possible to have an infinite regression of causes, wouldn't those infinite causes also need a reason that they all exist? So even if there would be an infinite amount of causes, since all those causes could have not existed, there must have been a causeless cause? Put it this way:

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Everything that could not have existed needs a cause for its existence.

Therefore, the causes also need causes, because they, too, could have not existed.

Therefore, no matter how many causes you will have, (even if there is an infinite amount of them) they will still need a cause.

Therefore, there had to be an uncaused cause.

In theory that is true – even if we had an infinite regression of causes, all those causes would need a reason they exist as opposed to not existing. But once you assume that an infinite amount of causes already exist, then all those causes that need causes would already have them. All your question accomplishes is to point out that a quantity of causes equal to infinity is still not a sufficient amount of causes to explain how everything got here, since even an “infinity” amount of causes would need more causes to explain why they exist as opposed to not existing. Therefore you need to end the chain with a *Siba Rishona*.

That of course is true. But it is only true because you assumed that we can add more causes to an already infinite quantity of them, consequently having more than an infinite amount of them as a result. If that is true, then yes, even if we do have an “infinite” amount of causes, we would still need more causes to have made the infinite amount of causes happen.

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But if you can not add anything to infinity that would result in a quantity greater than the one you had before you added to it, then what you are saying won't work. Because if we have an infinite amount of causes, then no matter how many we need, we would already have them!

But you are correct. If one supposes an "infinite amount" of causes, then that supposition carries with it the need for more causes, because it changes infinity from the unreachable to the reachable. But anything that exists – even an infinite quantity of them – needs a reason why they exist. So either infinity is unreachable and you can never have an infinite amount of causes, or infinity is reachable, and then you need even more causes to explain how the infinite amount of causes exists.

But I heard that there are different types of infinity, some greater than others. If that is true, wouldn't infinity be countable?

No. Even if there are infinities of different amounts, you can still never reach even the "smallest" infinity, so there could not have already been an infinite amount of causes.

3

POSHTUSO: HASHEM'S SIMPLICITY

The second thing we know about Hashem is really an offshoot of the first (His having no cause). That is, His simplicity. Even though we say that Hashem has infinite strength, wisdom and goodness (to mention just three of His attributes), we do not mean that statement literally, any more than we mean "G-d let the Jews out of Egypt with an outstretched hand" literally.

Just as G-d has no hand, so too He has no strength, no wisdom and no goodness. He has no components. If he would have components, the combination of those components would be the cause of Him (since without some or all of those components He would be different or non-existent), and He has no cause.

But now the question arises: If Hashem has none of these attributes, doesn't that mean that Hashem is imperfect? How can a perfect G-d have no strength, no wisdom, and no goodness?

POSHTUSO: HASHEM'S SIMPLICITY

The answer is that G-d has no strength because He *doesn't need* strength; no wisdom because He has no need for wisdom; no goodness because He has no need for it.

Strength is only necessary when there is something for you to pit your strength against. If someone can lift 400 pounds it means he can overcome 400 pounds of resistance. Strength is a compensating force that allows you to overcome opposition.

If there is nothing capable of presenting resistance to Hashem, saying that He is "strong" is absurd.

Wisdom is a tool used to figure things out; knowledge is the thing you use to overcome ignorance.

G-d doesn't need any of these things. Indeed, He cannot have them; they make no sense in the context of Hashem.

G-d is not ignorant even though He has none of what we call "knowledge" – so He doesn't need knowledge. He is not weak even though He has none of what we call "strength". G-d doesn't need the assistance of these compensating abilities because He has nothing to compensate for.

4

ACHDUSO: HASHEM'S ONENESS

This brings us to the third thing we know about G-d - the next logical step to follow the first two - and that is, *Hashem echad!* G-d is One. For it is impossible for there to be more than one entity that is *kulo poshut*. This is because any time you have two or more things, there must be some defining parameters for both of them, which make Thing #1 not Thing #2 and vice versa. There must be definitions and borders that separate the two things. But something that is *kulo poshut* does not have such parameters or definitions, which means there cannot be more than one of them.

But Hashem's being *kulo poshut* does not only mean that He is not two; it also means that He is not two halves, that He has no components. He is whole; indivisible; non-composite. Not made up of any ingredients or elements - not strength, not wisdom, not knowledge, not goodness, not even form or substance.

ACHDUSO: HASHEM'S ONENESS

Hashem is something that cannot be divided into parts. Something uncomposed of other things. Something with no cause, and therefore no parameters or attributes.

That's what "Hashem *Echad*" means.

We know things with our knowledge; we do things with our strength; we memorize things with our memory, etc. G-d "knows" things and "does" things and "memorizes" things not with various attributes, for He has no multiplicity of attributes. He "does" all of the above with the same mechanism: Him.

Not with His this or His that. He has no this or that. If He did, they would be components, and then having those components would be His cause, and this cannot be since He has no cause.

G-d "has" nothing - no parts, no attributes - nothing. He doesn't "have"; He only "is." The mechanism by which G-d knows, and does, and gives, and makes, is Him. His Self. Not His talents or His strengths.

G-d and His knowledge and His strength therefore are One and the same.

Hashem *Echad*.

All the things said about Hashem in the Torah (and elsewhere), that He is strong, awesome, knowledgeable etc. - all of those things are not to be taken literally, just as phrases such as "the eyes of Hashem" and "the hand of Hashem" are not to be taken literally.

Rather, what these phrases mean is that Hashem can accomplish the same things as someone with these attributes but without needing the attributes. Thus, "*gibor*" means Hashem does not need strength. "*Rachum*" means Hashem does not need the emotion of mercy, "*yodeah*" means Hashem does not need knowledge, and so forth.

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It is extremely important that we do not take these attributes literally. Hashem has no attributes since he is *kulo poshut* - completely Simple - *Hashem echad*.

5

MUCHRACH HAMETZIUS: HASHEM HAS TO EXIST

I have a question about the First Cause principle: Granted that the world needed a First Cause. But who says this First Cause is Hashem? Maybe it's an angel or an alien? And also, why doesn't Hashem Himself need a cause? If everything needs a cause then why doesn't Hashem need a cause too?

The First Cause can itself have no cause, meaning, nothing that it needs to depend on for its existence. If there exists anything without which it would not exist, then that thing is its cause. Obviously, then, any physical entity that possesses form and substance cannot be a First Cause, since without its form and substance it would not exist. Without its body it

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would not exist. Without time or space it would not exist. Anything that depends on something else to exist is not causeless and thus cannot be the First Cause.

Anything that, under different circumstances, would have not existed, cannot be a First Cause, since it depends on those circumstances for its existence, making those circumstances its cause.

In short, anything that is what we call *efsher hametziyus* – anything that could theoretically not have been here – cannot be the First Cause, since such a thing depends on other things for its existence.

Anything that could have not existed has a reason why in fact it does exist. Whenever there exists more than one possible scenario - in this case, scenario 1: “existence” and scenario 2: “non-existence” - there must be a reason why one scenario actually came about and not the other. Since they were both possibilities, there has to be something that caused one possibility to become reality and not the other.

And therefore, the First Cause must be what we call *muchrach hametzius* or *mechuyav hametzius* – meaning, something for which non-existence was never a possible scenario. This is a different type of existence than that which we have ever encountered in our experience. Everything that exists in our experience could theoretically have not existed. Therefore, it has a cause that determined it should exist as opposed to not exist. But a First Cause, in order to be a First Cause, must have had no possibility of non-existence to begin with, which would eliminate the need for a cause of its existence.

Only something that theoretically could have not existed has a cause for its existence, but something that never had an option of non-existence does not need a reason why it exists – for existence is the only option!

MUCHRACH HAMETZIUS

And since the First Cause has no cause, the only way that could be possible is if the First Cause not only happens to exist, but could never have not existed. Everything else in the world exists, but theoretically could not have existed. The First Cause, however, could never have not existed.

Everything else but the First Cause *happens to* exist; the First Cause exists not because it happens to exist but because it could not have not existed.

The First Cause thus by definition cannot be subject to time or space, or to anything at all, because then its existence would have a cause. It cannot have any measurable or describable attributes such as length, width, breadth because those measurements and attributes would be its cause since without them this entity would not exist. It cannot have any describable nature whatsoever because if it would, then that nature would be what causes it to be what it is.

Since this First Cause exists without being subject to circumstances, nothing in the world can affect it. It cannot change, cannot disappear, cannot cease to exist. If its existence has not been determined by any circumstances or factors, then no circumstances or factors can affect it.

And since we can easily prove that there was indeed a First Cause – because an infinite chain of causes in the past is absurd - we know clearly that:

There exists a first entity which was not created but always existed and will always exist, which is utterly Simple, is not composed of parts, and has no physical attributes, that exists not because of anything else, that could never have not existed, which caused everything else to come into being.

Call this entity whatever you like. This entity is what we worship. This is what we refer to when we say “Hashem Yisborach”. In fact, according to the Ran, the Mitzvah to believe in Hashem is not to believe that a First Cause/*muchrach*

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hametzius with all the attributes listed above exists. Rather, it is to believe that the First Cause/*muchrach hametzius* described above is in fact the entity that brought us out of Egypt and gave us the Torah etc. But the fact that this entity exists – that is not *emunah*. It is simple logic. This is what it means, the Ran says, by *Anochi Hashem Elokecha asher hotzaisicha*: Hashem is introducing Himself to us, *kivyachol*, and saying: “You all know of the entity that is First Cause. Well, I, Who brought you out of Egypt, I am that same First Cause that you always knew existed.”

People who do not understand this may ask: Yes, the universe has to have a First Cause, but who says Hashem was that First Cause? Such a question indicates a lack of understanding of the entire principle. It is not that we worship Hashem and then claim that Hashem is the First Cause. Instead, we know there is a First Cause and it is that First Cause that we worship and refer to as Hashem. Totem poles clearly exist, the sun and the stars clearly exist, and the First Cause clearly exists. Some religions worship totem poles; others worship the sun and the stars; Judaism worships the First Cause. We refer to it as *Hashem*.

This may be why many Rishonim, including the Rambam, when they discuss the Mitzvah of Emunah, first describe the existence of an “entity” that created the world and maintains it and is the cause of all existence. And then, afterwards, they say, “This entity is Hashem.” They are saying that this entity that created everything, this First Cause – that is what we refer to when we say *Hashem*.

The First Cause took us out of Egypt and gave us the Torah; the First Cause spoke to the prophets; the First Cause manages the world. In Hebrew, we express this thought as: *Hashem Hu HaElokim*. Or: *Hashem Elokeinu*. Meaning: *Hashem*

MUCHRACH HAMETZIUS

– the First Cause, *Hu HaElokim* – is the Manager of the universe.

That *emunah* – the belief that the First Cause is He Who gave us the Torah, brought us out of Egypt, and manages the world – that is the basis of the Jewish religion. Idol worshippers also believed in a First Cause, but they held that it did not directly interact with the world, but rather created other entities for which it was more appropriate to be involved in worldly affairs. Judaism believes that it is the First Cause Itself that runs our lives.

This is the *emunah* that Avrohom Avinu espoused – that the First Cause itself is running the world. He spread that belief until one day, the First Cause spoke to Avraham, and introduced Himself, saying “I am the *Baal Habirah*.”

But perhaps someone will ask: Maybe it wasn’t the First Cause that created the universe – maybe it was the second or third cause?

The answer is, if it wasn’t the First Cause that created the universe, but a second or third cause, then consider those second and third causes part of the universe, for they are creations, not the creator. They, like the rest of the universe, were created by the First Cause.

We worship the First Cause. We call it “Hashem.” The First Cause spoke to Avraham Avinu, introducing Himself as the creator of the world. The First Cause meted out plagues upon Egypt, escorted us through the desert, gave us the Torah, and spoke to the prophets. The First Cause is aware of everything that happens in the world and exerts His Hashgachah over it; rewards and punishes; and will one day send Moshiach and revive the dead.

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All right. You've proven that (a) there had to be a First Cause, (b) that the First Cause cannot be more than one, (c) that the First Cause is eternal and (d) can never change or be affected by anything. I have one more question: How do we know that the First Cause is sentient altogether? Maybe this First Cause was just a non-conscious event?

The First Cause caused everything either by choice or by necessity (meaning, it had no choice and had to create the world).

If it was by choice, then it cannot be a non-sentient entity, since choice requires sentience.

If it was not by choice, then something necessitated the First Cause to create the universe.

And we know that nothing could prompt the action of the First Cause, because then whatever that factor was is a cause before the First Cause, which is absurd.

Therefore, nothing could have necessitated action on the part of the First Cause.

Therefore, the action of the First Cause had to be by its own choice.

And a requirement of choice is sentience.

6

HASHEM: NO “EMOTIONS”

Wait. Are you saying that when it says Hashem is merciful it doesn't mean that literally? If that's true, then what do we mean when we say Hashem is Rachum? And what about Hashem's love for us? Isn't that meant literally?

G-d has no emotions. Zero. Nada. G-d is totally Simple. An emotional reaction - love, hate, loneliness, excitement - would mean, *chas v'sholom*, that...

- (a) He changes,
- (b) He is affected by stimuli (whatever it is that caused the emotion in G-d obviously affected Him),
- (c) Things have power over Him (since whatever it was that caused Him to feel the emotion controlled Him by causing the emotion in Him),

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(d) He has boundaries (since emotions are exclusive of each other, each one has to exist separately from the others, and so some boundaries must exist that ensure that when one emotion is felt the others are not),

(e) He is made up of parts (since the emotions are a part, but not all, of Him),

(f) He is not the First Cause (anything that is made up of different attributes cannot be the First Cause since the combination of the attributes are its cause)

... and more.

All of this means that believing that Hashem has emotions is *avodah zorah*, since by saying that you are making Hashem into a finite, composite, and measurable being.

When we say G-d "loves us" it means that G-d caused things to happen in such a way that it feels like He loves us. If someone else would have done that to us, it would be driven by love.

Hashem has no accidental attributes at all, meaning that there's no such thing as anything being part of Hashem. There is no such thing as "G-d's knowledge", "G-d's strength", or "G-d's love" - all of those things would mean that He has components, which is not true.

So when we ask G-d to have mercy on us, compassion, etc, we are asking for him to deal with us in a way that we define as mercy, compassion, etc? (It's very hard to understand this because we think like humans and G-d can't be defined in human terms, like you said.) But what I don't understand is that, when G-d acts with mercy towards us, isn't He having mercy, so doesn't that mean He has mercy?

HASHEM: NO “EMOTIONS”

G-d has no mercy in the emotional sense. He does, however, act in such a way that the results are the same as if He would have had mercy.

That’s what we mean when we ask G-d for mercy. We mean He should act in a way that seems merciful to us, although what we think of as human mercy is not His motivation.

When we say Hashem has “mercy” for instance, we do not mean that Hashem *chas v’sholom* has an emotion. We mean that Hashem at times acts in such a way that it feels to us as if He was merciful.

It's like, for instance, when you put the wrong software in your computer and it acts up. You may say, as a figure of speech, that the “computer doesn’t like the software” or even “the computer got angry”. The computer doesn’t really have any emotions or likes, but it acted in a way that metaphorically can be described as “anger”.

So too, when we say Hashem gets “angry” we mean that Hashem acts in a way that seems to us angry. But there was no emotion of anger involved.

So if we had a real Loshon Hakodesh dictionary there would be an entry like this:

an•ger n. - Hashem's actions toward us that seem as if He would have a strong feeling of displeasure or hostility.

“Anger”, when it refers to Hashem, is only a figure of speech.

So if our actions can't be compared to Hashem's at all, how can the Torah say that our Midos should emulate G-d's – ma hu rachum, af ata rachum? If all these Midos in regard to Hashem are only a Moshol,

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*then how can we “emulate” Hashem by us
having real Midos?*

You are asking that if our midos have nothing to do with Hashem's, and are merely homonyms, then how can we ever “resemble” Hashem in our Midos?

The answer is that when we say Hashem is “strong” it means He does not need strength because even without the attribute of strength He is never weak; when we say He is wise it means He does not need the thing we call wisdom because He is never ignorant, even without it; when we say Hashem is merciful it means that He does not need the emotion of mercy - even without it, He is not cruel. It is Hashem's perfection that causes Him not to have any of these traits; He is so perfect that He does not need any of them. Traits such as wisdom, mercy, and the like are only positive things if you need them. We do. Hashem does not.

So when we are commanded to be like Hashem, we are expected to use those traits that Hashem does not need, in order to mimic the actions that Hashem performs without them.

If fact, if you examine the way the Rambam quotes the Halachah of *ma-hu-af-ata*, you will see this idea explicitly. The exact wording of the Rambam is:

Ma hu nikra rachum, af ata heyei rachum (Deos 1:6).

In other words, Hashem is merely “called” merciful, but we are commanded to actually be merciful.

*One more thing: if G-d doesn't experience
emotion, then He must either be incapable
of emotion or chose not to experience it.
Surely G-d would choose to love His own*

HASHEM: NO "EMOTIONS"

people if it were a possibility, so then, is He incapable of love?

If so, wouldn't that be placing boundaries on a limitless G-d? And either way, what is the purpose of davening and fulfilling all sorts of requirements if not to please G-d?

G-d is incapable of emotion since He is incapable of change, since He is beyond time, and to change means to be a "victim" of time; and He cannot have emotions for various other reasons - it would contradict His simplicity and His perfection.

And no, this is not a limitation to G-d. Thinking so is just a trick of the mind. You ask: "If G-d is perfect, then can He make Himself imperfect? No?... Aha! The He can't do everything!"

G-d cannot scratch His nose; He cannot kill Himself; He cannot be weak. No, no, no. The answer is a simple "No". And no, it's not a limitation to be always limitless and it's not a weakness if you can't be weak.

So let me get this straight....everything that's said about "G-d's love" isn't literal at all?

So G-d's feelings about us are totally neutral, or don't really exist? Sorry, it's just kind of a weird realization to think that...but if G-d didn't really "love" us, and if He doesn't "need" or "want" any-

WHAT WE CAN PROVE ABOUT G-D

thing, then what would be His motivation to create the world?

Right. G-d's "love" isn't literal. Neither is His anger, or any other emotion.

And your question that if G-d has no emotions and does not "love" us, then why did G-d make the world, is a wonderful one. By asking it you have uncovered one of the greatest teachings of Creation:

G-d created the world for our benefit, with nothing for Him to gain at all.

That is the difference between "generosity" as it applies to us and "generosity" as it applies to Hashem. For us, there is always a reason why we want to be generous. We always have something to gain - a mitzvah, a feeling of satisfaction, a little recognition, whatever. For Hashem, there was none of this.

He wanted to create us and give us *Gan Eden* - eternal, infinite happiness - only for our sake. He gains nothing. He did it because He wanted to. For us. With absolutely zero benefit for Himself.

The topic you brought up – the Purpose of Creation – is an important one indeed, but as you have just discovered, it can only be understood properly after we establish that Hashem's actions do not have the same "reasons" as our actions. Our actions bring benefit to ourselves. Even "selfless" acts provide a sense of satisfaction and garner us reward for having done a Mitzvah. When Hashem acts, He does not get any benefit at all. He cannot benefit – that would imply a change, and some kind of gain. What is outside of time cannot change, and what is Kulo Poshut cannot "gain" anything at all.

HASHEM: NO “EMOTIONS”

When you say such things like "Hashem is One", "He just is, He never began nor ever will end," "Hashem is Kulo Pushut" etc. - do you fully understand what these terms mean or are you just referring us to different places where Hashem is described? Honestly, can we really comprehend what this truly means?

The meanings of these terms are easily understood; but visualizing someone or something with these characteristics is impossible - not only for us but for Moshe Rabbeinu, too. When Moshe asked Hashem “show me your glory”, what he wanted to understand was the essence of Hashem, to which Hashem answered: “No living being can see Me.” This means that as long as we are physical beings, we cannot conceptualize these things.

This is so because the human mind does not generate its own knowledge; rather, it absorbs information from the outside and rearranges it in the mind. So someone, let’s say, who was born blind, can never understand the difference between blue and red. There’s absolutely no way you can explain it to him.

Someone who never experienced infinity cannot imagine what he himself means when he says “space never ends”. And neither can he understand what it would mean if he’d say that space does end. Because we have experienced neither infinity nor anything outside of space, we cannot conceptualize those thoughts. Yet the infiniteness of space - or its having an end - can be understood “on paper,” even if our mind’s eye is not sharp enough to picture it.

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So too, the things we know about G-d can definitely be understood “on paper,” but we will not be able to imagine them in our minds.

There is a great difference between “impossible” and “unable to be visualized.” There is no reason to say that a *Muchrach HaMetzius* is impossible. There is no logic that negates the possibility of such an existence. But just because something is real does not mean we can visualize it. Visualization is possible only if we experienced the reality that we want to visualize. Since we never experienced a *Muchrach HaMetzius* we cannot visualize it.

However, an infinite regression of causes, for example, is not merely impossible to visualize. It is impossible to exist. Because infinity never ends, the amount of causes in the past cannot be infinite, because those causes have already ended. Logic precludes the existence of an infinite regression of anything in the past. Therefore, when faced with the choice of an infinite regression of causes, which is impossible, or a *Muchrach HaMetzius*, which is not at all impossible, we conclude that a *Muchrach HaMetzius* must have been the First Cause.

7

AIN ODE MILVADO

Can you cite some of the sources for me? Does it specifically say that Hashem is all-powerful, or do we infer this somehow? And if it's inferred, how do we come to this conclusion? It's not so much that I doubt His omnipotence as much as I want to be sure of it. I don't need any more proof than what we have in the Torah.

Sure. The best source is the *posuk* Ain Ode Milvado¹.

“All-powerful”, when we apply it to Hashem, does *not* mean quantitatively more powerful than you and I. It's not that Hashem has *more* power than anyone else. Hashem's

¹ Devarim 4:35

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power is completely different than what we understand power to be in this world.

Power, to us, means the ability to overcome something. Perhaps to lift weight (overcoming resistance), to jump high (overcoming gravity), or to figure out a mystery (overcoming lack of knowledge).

Limits come into the picture when the power that we want to overcome is greater than the power we possess. A limit means that there is some other power greater than yours.

Power and limits are expressions of the same thing. It's just a matter of how much power there is.

None of this makes sense when it comes to Hashem. When we say, "Hashem is all-powerful" it doesn't mean that He has power like we have except that He has an infinite amount of it. That would mean that the difference between Him and us is that we can only overcome a limited amount of things, but He can overcome everything.

Nope. That's not the idea. It's not that He is stronger than any power, but rather that He is the only power. There is no opposing external force for him to vanquish, since He is the creator, maintainer, and controller of all power in the world.

If you want to say that Hashem does have limits, I would ask you what the source is of the power that you say is stronger than Hashem. Since we can prove that the world - the entire world - has a creator, then the power that you claim is stronger than Hashem also must have a creator. Which means, ultimately, that the creator of the world can have no limits, since He would be the creator of power as well. And if you create and control all power in the world, you cannot have any limits, because limits means there is a power stronger than you.

AIN ODE MILVADO

When you understand how Hashem created the universe, you realize that He must be all-powerful. Not because he has more power than anything, but because there is no power except Him.

Hashem is called "*Makom*" (place). The reason, *Chazal* say, is because "The world is not a place for Hashem, but rather Hashem is a place for the world". This means that the entire world, the entire universe - reality itself as we know it - is only an expression of Hashem's will.

The best way to understand Hashem's existence versus ours is for you to imagine a little world that exists only in your mind. Little people, little cities, little rivers and forests - all in your imagination.

This is a *moshol* to explain how Hashem created the world. Those people in your mind have real existence - they are little electrical impulses in your brain, which are involved in your thought process - but compared to you, they don't really exist at all.

So too we exist in some way, but only as expressions of the Will of Hashem. "*Ain Ode Milvado*" - there is nothing except Hashem. "This means nothing has true existence like Hashem" (Rambam Yesodei HaTorah 1:4).

In your imaginary world, there would be no such thing as you having limits on the power you possess. Since the entire thing is only an expression of your will, no power there can exist without your desire. It would make no sense to question whether you are "strong" enough to lift a big rock in your world or to revive someone from the dead, since the rock is only heavy by your will and the person is only dead because you imagined it so.

Your will controls everything and so no force exists except you.

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When we say Hashem is all-powerful, we do not mean that He is stronger than anything, but rather there is no strength at all in the entire world except Him.

This is the simple meaning of "Ain Ode Milvado."

How do we manage to have free will then? Yeah, I can imagine my own little world and nothing can happen that is against my will, but then my little imaginary people have no will of their own. They can't even think. They just do whatever I imagine them doing. I don't have to command them to do something. If I envision it, it's done.

And another thing: When we disobey Hashem, we are going against His will. It would seem that we have become an opposing force. But then, it is He Who sustains us, so even when we rebel against Him we are only doing so through the strength and will that He has bestowed upon us. This doesn't make sense. In effect when we rebel against G-d, it's almost like He's the one supporting our efforts to rebel. And that would be like Him rebelling against Himself.

I'm struggling now with thoughts of dualism, because I can't see this any other way. I know it's wrong but it seems so logical, two opposing forces.

There's no way to completely cut yourself off from G-d, is there? Could you exist otherwise?

First, you can pat yourself on the back for this question. It shows that you understand now why free will is a miracle. And you are correct; according to the way Nature is set up, free will can't exist.

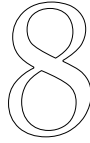
But Hashem found a way around that. What He did was, He created people out of a part of Himself. Meaning, your Soul was "sliced," so to speak, from Hashem's essence. It is really a part of Hashem, but with your sentience superimposed on it. It's like Hashem took pieces of Himself, with all the ability to make decisions, and animated those pieces by bestowing on them their own personalities.

When you rebel against Hashem you do so because He allows you to make the decision to rebel - and then, yes, He actually enables you to bring the decision to sin to fruition. Although the decision you made was against what G-d wanted you to do, this is not dualism because it is the Will of G-d that you be able to act in a manner contrary to His preferences if you so desire.

This is sort of like when you allow your kid to do something that you don't want him to do, knowing that he will mess up by making this mistake - and you do not stand in his way to prevent him. You allow him to go ahead and do it because by doing it he will learn "the hard way" and ultimately be able to function better on his own.

So too, Hashem allows us to rebel because without the possibility that we might make the wrong decision, we would never develop the ability to choose right over wrong.

No, a person cannot escape from Hashem's control. All of reality as we know it is only "inside" Hashem.



CAN HASHEM CREATE A ROCK SO HEAVY...?

How would one answer the question, attacking the omnipotence of G-d: Can G-d create a stone so heavy that even G-d can't lift it?

If so, then it seems that G-d could cease to be omnipotent; if not, it seems that G-d was not omnipotent to begin with.

There are certain actions that cannot be done, not because they are impossible to do, but because they are not really actions at all.

For instance: Can G-d make a "nyzaquml"?

There is no such thing as a nyzaquml. But can G-d make it?

Of course not! There is no such thing.

But does this mean that G-d is limited because He cannot make a nyzaquml? Of course not! Since there is no such thing, the request to make one is nothing but a jumble of words without any meaning.

There are more such things. Can G-d make something that is “dangerous” but not “perilous”?

Here, too, the answer is no, He cannot. Danger without peril is just an oxymoronic combination of words which doesn't actually express anything. The whole sentence is meaningless.

Can G-d be the only G-d but also have another G-d with Him?

Same thing. The whole concept is meaningless, and of course G-d cannot do that. In the same vein, He cannot make danger without peril.

To ask, Can G-d make other G-ds? is the same thing. “G-d” by definition means without boundaries, and so He can only be one. So what the question really means is:

Can G-d be G-d and yet not be G-d at the same time?

Nope. Of course not. But since being at once G-d and not G-d is conceptually meaningless, this is the same as asking if G-d can create danger that isn't dangerous.

Or, to use another example, asking “Can G-d kill Himself?”, is just playing with words, because G-d by definition is eternal. So what you are asking is, “Can G-d be eternal and not eternal at the same time?”

No, He can't.

So the idea is not that G-d has one limit, which is that He cannot limit Himself. That's not the idea. Rather, G-d can do anything. But it has to be *anything*, not something that has no meaning. Like a nyzaquml. Or an all-powerful weakling. Or a unique copy.

Or a stone too heavy for Him to lift.