

# THE DUTIES OF THE HEART, GATE 1:2

*by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman*

As we said last time, we declare G-ds oneness day in and day out in our prayers without really knowing what were saying. We might even be implying that Hes **more** than one, unknowingly, or at least downgrading His oneness.

Some of us understand it to mean that G-d is one of a kind or intense-- much the way wed describe a special event or gadget (though theres certainly no comparison!). Others of us take one to mean not-two, not-three, etc. and thus settle for a rather limited, even banal and ordinary view of G-d. And yet others declare Him to be one without knowing the difference between **real** oneness and what well term "circumstantial" oneness later on in this Gate.

But take heart. Because, truth be known, few believers know anything at all about this-- or about G-d Himself-- on a rational level. Because while we might have warm, even ardent feelings and convictions about G-d, few of us though know what were talking about in relation to G-d.

The case has been made, however, that simple, unalloyed faith in Him is fine-- and even better than a rational understanding of His Being (which is, after all, beyond us since G-ds Being is so surpassing of our own). But thats not Ibn Pakudahs view of things. As hell argue later on, anyone who **can** analyze G-ds make-up to whatever degree, **must**.

(The advice most others would give is to believe that G-d is the Creator, that He oversees it all both sweepingly and intimately, and that He functions in the universe much the way our soul functions in our bodies: fundamentally, vitally, invisibly, and utterly undeniably.)

Again, though, its important to point out that few of us know anything about all this. As such, its been said that we really dont worship **G-d** so much as what we misunderstand about Him!

As we indicated before, there are four ways to express G-ds oneness. By just declaring it, the way kids and simple folks do; by believing it after having been taught about it (which can turn out to be a case of the blind leading the blind if the people you learned it from didnt really know what they were saying); by believing it to a limited extent (the aforementioned circumstantial way and thus being so close, and yet so far); or by **proving** G-ds Oneness to yourself and believing it firmly, thus following through on the verse that commends us to "know today and reflect upon it in (our) heart that G-d is the Lrd" (Deuteronomy 4:39).

The latter form is the best of all, so the rest of this Gate will center on it.

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