

# THE DUTIES OF THE HEART, GATE 1:5

*by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman*

We're about to present and prove three logical premises. And the fact that each will be proven to be true will lead us to conclude without a doubt that G-d exists, and that He created the world (as will be expanded upon in the next few chapters).

Now, we in modernity will be somewhat taken aback by the foreignness and seeming oddness of the arguments presented, since they'll be based on ancient systems of logic. But two points are to be made about that.

First that we're indeed capable of accommodating the trains of thought we'll be exposed to, if we just allow ourselves to suspend disbelief as the expression goes. And second that, as we indicated before, what we're being presented with here are **Ibn Pakudah's own proofs of G-d's existence** -- not the Torah's per se. As such, it's perfectly reasonable to expect them to be rooted in his time and place; and it's also perfectly reasonable to see them as **one way** of proving G-d's existence, rather than as the definitive one. Let's go on with that in mind.

In Ibn Pakudah's own words, The first premise is that nothing creates itself. The second is that since there's only a finite number of beginnings, there must be one instance of beginning that preceded all the others. And the third is that all composites had to have been created.

We'll go about proving that nothing creates itself-- our first premise-- thusly.

It only stands to reason that anything that comes into existence either had to have created itself, or to have been created by something or someone else.

Now, if it created itself, then we're forced to posit that it either created itself **before it itself existed**, or after. But both are absurd, obviously. Because if you contend that it created itself **after** it itself came into existence, then what did it accomplish? After all-- it already existed. And if you claim that it created itself **before** it itself came into existence, then it didn't exist when it was supposed to have created itself, and something that's non-existent can't create or indeed **do** anything.

Obviously, then, nothing can create itself (which is our first premise), and everything had to have been created by something or someone else.

We can explain Ibn Pakudah's second premise-- that since there's only a finite number of beginnings, there must be one instance of beginning that preceded all the others-- thusly. This will

get more than a little complex.

Let's start off by pointing out a number of things. First, that whatever comes to a conclusion, has a beginning. And second, that it clearly began at one particular, definitive point in time (since there can only be one definitive instant in which anything begins). We can say the same about everything in creation. Everything had to have come about at a particular moment in time.

Now let's point out a couple of other things before we come back to the idea of there being a definitive moment when things come about. Which is that **infinite** things can't be broken down into parts.

Let's go about proving this last point. Imagine something infinitely long (we'll call it Line A). Then imagine removing a piece of it (which we'll call Line B). You'd certainly have to say that whatever was left of Line A is somehow shorter than it had originally been before you took Line B away from it (so we'll call it Line A- now). If Line A- was still and all infinite, then we'd have to say that infinite Line A was longer than infinite Line A-. But that's absurd, since infinite is infinite, not infinite plus and infinite minus.

You couldn't then claim that Line A- was finite, either. Because if you returned Line B to Line A- and thus made it Line A again, then Line A itself would now have to be deemed finite (since it would now have points at which it begins and ends), and yet infinite at the same time (as it had always been). Hence it's absurd to speak of removing a piece of something infinite.

Ibn Pakudah's point, then, is that since we can remove (i.e., isolate) a piece of existence (i.e., history) from the whole of it (in our minds), it therefore follows that **existence is finite** (since you can remove a part of it, and something infinite cannot be divided as we indicated above).

Since existence has been proven to be finite (or, non-eternal), then as we said above, there must be a finite number of beginnings for it, and logic dictates that there had to have been one definitive beginning point, i.e., an ultimate beginning (which is our second premise).

And now we set out to prove Ibn Pakudah's third premise: that all composites had to have been created.

Composites (which all of existence is, in fact) are, by definition, comprised of an amalgam of parts. Needless to say, the parts that make up the composite had to have come into existence **before** the composite itself did (after all, the parts had to first be gathered and joined together for there to then be a composite), and the composite had to have existed **after** what (or who) ever created it.

Now, since eternal things have no causes (after all, they were always there), and since what has no cause has no beginning, and what has no beginning has no end it follows then that anything that has a beginning isn't eternal.

And since anything non-eternal had to have been created at some point, it then follows that all

composites (**including all of existence**) are non-eternal, and had to have been created at a certain point (which is our third premise).

We've thus proven all three premises to be true. The reader would do well to keep this chapter beside him to refer to, for we'll be citing its premises again and again in the following ones.

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