



JUDAISM FOR LIVING SERIES

G-D FOR GROWNUPS

SOURCE SHEET AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Introduction: Who is G-d?

The truth is that monotheism which our forefather Abraham brought into this world - the belief in One G-d -- is at its core the belief in a perfect, Infinite Being, beyond time, space and therefore at its essence unknowable. Although a complete understanding of G-d is impossible, what we do know is how He interacts with our world.

SOURCE 1: *Based upon Sefer HaChinuch mitzvah #25, To Believe in G-d.*

The author begins by describing the G-d that we are supposed to believe in:

1. "that the world has one G-d Who created everything" – **that He is the Creator;**
2. "that all that was, is and will be, forever and ever, came about from His power and will and is renewed constantly" – **that He is the Sustainer;**
3. "and that He took us out of the land of Egypt and gave us the Torah" – **that He is the Supervisor.** (guides every aspect of our lives)

Let's take a look at another source which may make this definition a little more relatable and personal for us.

SOURCE 2: *"Constant Connection" by Rabbi Eric Coopersmith, page 75.*

Although it's crucial to understand Hashem's relationship to the world regarding these three aspects, it's even more important to understand their implications and their impact on our relationship with Him. (1) G-d is the Creator implies **He loves us**, since He gave us a free gift of life and our world; (2) G-d is the Sustainer implies **there is no one and nothing else to rely upon but Him;** and (3) G-d is the Supervisor implies that there are **no accidents.** He's constantly looking out for us.

This source is describing a relationship with G-d based upon knowledge that He loves us and is constantly looking out for our good.

Q: Have you seen G-d's guiding hand – that there are no accidents - in your life? How so?

The next source delves a little deeper into the nature of the good that G-d makes available to us.

SOURCE 3: *Derech Hashem 2:1 Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto*

Since True good exists only in G-d, the "best good" He could give man was the opportunity to "attach" to Him to the greatest degree possible.

The source is pointing out that since all pleasure and good derives from G-d, the pleasure and goodness available from a relationship with G-d must be the greatest pleasure of all!

Q: If this is true, why do we seem to feel all other types of pleasure and good more readily than our relationship with G-d?

Consider the following source highlighting another important concept before we describe a possible path to a relationship with G-d:

SOURCE 4: *Culled from Ohr Gedalyahu, Moadim p. 138*

The Chassidic master the Chidushei HaRim points out that the word "olam" , translated as "world" comes from the root "he'elem" which means hidden. He goes on to explain that G-d created the world in a manner that would conceal Himself.

Q: Why would G-d hide Himself in nature when it would seemingly frustrate His goal of promoting relationship?

SOURCE 5: *Ohr Gedalyahu, Moadim p. 138 cont.*

All so that a person would be able to choose freely and recognize his Creator, or G-d forbid, choose to do the opposite.

Rule number one of relationships is that they must be freely chosen to be real, and number two is if they are not earned, they are not worth very much. As a result, we are required to go through life choosing and earning our relationship to G-d. In so doing, we actually become like G-d – who is totally free and totally owns His perfection.

Q: Aren't we all at our best when we freely choose and work towards earning things in life? Have you seen this in your own life?

Q: So how do we practically enter into a relationship with G-d, given that He is concealed in the world?

SOURCE 6: *Pirkei Avos, 1:2*

Shimon HaTzadik was among the survivors of the Great Assembly. He used to say: " On three things the world ("Olam"¹) stands – Torah, Avodah (prayer) and Gemilas Chasadim (good deeds).

¹Olam is the " Place Where G-d Hides" per source #4

Q: These three pillars are like the legs of a stool upon which the world stands. Though they are distinct pathways , taken together they represent a total holistic approach to "keeping the world standing". Why do you think we need all three areas and how do they inter-relate?

One approach is that these three areas hit upon the key attributes that make us uniquely human – our minds, hearts and bodies. Torah represents connecting to G-d through our intellect. Avodah/ Prayer allows us to develop a relationship through emotion and communication. Good deeds give us an opportunity to take care of others with our bodies. G-d creates a world where we can utilize the full range of our human capacity unified towards one purpose, connection to G-d.

Torah connects us to the mind of G-d, as it were. Prayer connects us directly and emotionally to Him and good deeds is perhaps the most eloquent statement of connecting to G-d, since we are emulating G-d by caring for others.