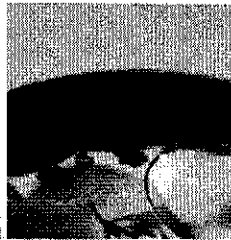
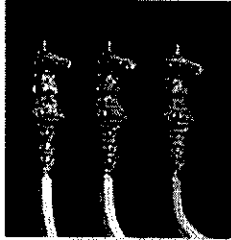


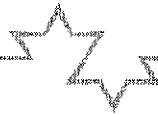
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***An Introduction to the Philosophy of Judaism***

***These and Those are the Words of the Living G-d***

***Rabbi Tzvi H. Weinreb***

***November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012***



THIS COURSE IS DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF:

אסתר חנה זיל בת צבי ופרומה עלקא פייגא בת מאיר ופשא לאה זיל נח בן אברהם ופייגא זיל  
MAY THEIR SOULS BE BOUND IN THE EVERLASTING BOND OF LIFE תהא נשמתם צרוות בצרוור החיים

## Introduction to the Philosophy of Judaism

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi H. Weinreb

These & Those Are The Words Of The Living God

Institute for Jewish Continuity

www.gojc.org

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### 1. תלמוד בבלי מסכת עירובין דף יג עמוד ב

אמר רבי אבא אמר שמואל: שלש שנים נחלקו בית שמאי ובית הלל, הללו אומרים הלכה כמותנו והללו אומרים הלכה כמותנו. יצאה בת קול ואמרה: אלו ואלו דברי אלהים חיים הן, והלכה כבית הלל. וכי מאחר שאלו ואלו דברי אלהים חיים מפני מה זכו בית הלל לקבוע הלכה כמותן – מפני שנוחין ועלובין היו, ושונין דבריהן ודברי בית שמאי. ולא עוד אלא שמקדימין דברי בית שמאי לדבריהן.

### 2. תלמוד בבלי מסכת בבא מציעא דף נט עמוד א

תנן התם: חתכו חוליות ונתן חול בין חוליא לחוליא, רבי אליעזר מטהר וחכמים מטמאין. וזה הוא תנור של עכנאי. מאי עכנאי? – אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל: שהקיפו דברים כעכנא זו, וטמאוהו. תנא: באותו היום השיב רבי אליעזר כל תשובות שבעולם ולא קיבלו הימנו. אמר להם: אם הלכה כמותי – חרוב זה יוכיח. נעקר חרוב ממקומו מאה אמה, ואמרי לה: ארבע מאות אמה: אמרו לו: אין מביאין ראייה מן החרוב. חזר ואמר להם: אם הלכה כמותי – אמת המים יוכיחו. חזרו אמת המים לאחוריהם. אמרו לו: אין מביאין ראייה מאמת המים. חזר ואמר להם: אם הלכה כמותי – כותלי בית המדרש יוכיחו. הטו כותלי בית המדרש ליפול. גער בהם רבי יהושע, אמר להם: אם תלמידי חכמים מנצחים זה את זה בהלכה – אתם מה טיבכם? לא נפל מפני כבודו של רבי יהושע, ולא זקפו מפני כבודו של רבי אליעזר, ועדין מטיין ועומדין. חזר ואמר להם: אם הלכה כמותי – מן השמים יוכיחו. יצאתה בת קול ואמרה: מה לכם אצל רבי אליעזר שהלכה כמותו בכל מקום! עמד רבי יהושע על רגליו ואמר: לא בשמים היא. – מאי +דברים ל' + לא בשמים היא? – אמר רבי ירמיה: שכבר נתנה תורה מהר סיני, אין אנו משגיחין בבת קול, שכבר כתבת בהר סיני בתורה +שמות כ"ג+ אחרי רבים להטות. – אשכחיה רבי נתן לאליהו, אמר ליה: מאי עביד קודשא בריך הוא בההיא שעתא? – אמר ליה: קא חיך ואמר נצחוני בני, נצחוני בני. אמרו: אותו היום הביאו כל טהרות שטיהר רבי אליעזר ושרפום באש, ונמנו עליו וברכוהו. ואמרו: מי ילך ויודיעו? – אמר להם רבי עקיבא: אני אלך, שמא ילך אדם שאינו הגון ויודיעו, ונמצא מחריב את כל העולם כולו. מה עשה רבי עקיבא? לכש שחורים, ונתעטף שחורים, וישב לפניו בריחוק ארבע אמות. – אמר לו רבי אליעזר: עקיבא, מה יום מיומים? – אמר לו: רבי, כמדומה לי שחכירים בדילים ממך. – אף הוא קרע בגדיו וחלץ מנעליו, ונשמט וישב על גבי קרקע. זלגו עיניו דמעות, לקה העולם שלישי בזיתים, ושליש בחטים, ושליש בשעורים. ויש אומרים: אף בצק שבידי אשה טפת. תנא: אך גדול היה באותו היום, שבכל מקום שנתן בו עיניו רבי אליעזר נשרף. ואף רבן גמליאל היה בא כספינה, עמד עליו נחשול לטבעו. אמר: כמדומה לי שאין זה אלא בשביל רבי אליעזר בן הורקנוס. עמד על רגליו ואמר: רבונו של עולם, גלוי וידוע לפניך שלא לכבודי עשיתי, ולא לכבוד בית אבא עשיתי, אלא לכבודך, שלא ירבו מחלוקות בישראל. נח הים מזעפו. – אימא שלום דביתהו דרבי אליעזר אחתיה דרבן גמליאל הואי. מההוא מעשה ואילך לא הוה שבקה ליה לרבי אליעזר למיפל על אפיה. ההוא יומא ריש ירחא הוה, ואיחלף לה בין מלא לחסר. איכא דאמרי: אתא עניא וקאי אבבא, אפיקא ליה ריפתא. אשכחתייה דנפל על אנפיה, אמרה ליה: קום, קטלית לאחי. אדהכי נפק שיפורא מבית רבן גמליאל דשכיב. אמר לה: מנא ידעת? אמרה ליה: כך מקובלני מבית אבי אבא: כל השערים ננעלים חוץ משערי אונאה.

## CONCERNING THE CONFLICT OF OPINIONS AND BELIEFS

Thought has become impotent because of the influx of strange ideas, especially the strange ideas of idolatry. They stream into our midst and they have trapped many hearts, they have perverted the paths and have turned many of our youths from the way of life to the way of death. Those who defend the concepts of Judaism have raised an outcry, they refute the wrong opinions, exposing their falsehood by defining the concepts of Judaism. But it is very doubtful if it will be possible through this strategy to defeat what has erupted with the force of an earthquake.

Particularly mistaken are those who seek to formulate specific definitions of Judaism from the aspect of its soul and its spiritual essence, though it may be possible to define it from the point of view of its objective manifestation as a historic phenomenon. Everything is embraced in its soul, it includes all spiritual inclinations, the open and the hidden, in a higher generalization, just as everything is included in the absolute reality of the divine. Every such definition in Judaism is heresy and is analogous to establishing an idol or a molten image to explain the character of God. The status of the Jewish people, the bearer of Judaism, among the nations, resembles the status of the person among other beings. Many beings have attributes of excellence surpassing those of man, but the combinations of qualities and the spiritual advantage they facilitate to exercise intelligence in directing his potentialities make the person a higher being in the world. Similarly there are many peoples who excel the Jewish people in certain talents, but the Jewish people as the microcosm of all humanity integrates within itself the unique qualities of all

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peoples, in an ideal, holy form, in an exalted form of unity.

We need a penetrating grasp of these events, an all-embracing overview, together with a penetrating probe of all the ideas and the religious concepts in the world.

Every universal theory carries with it certainty to the extent of its universality, and together with its certainty, which rules out the possibility of doubt, there goes a refusal to share with others in any collaborative pluralism. The certainty that goes with universality and the principle of singularity go together. To illustrate, the old theories of astronomy, which were particular expressions applicable only to the area of astronomy, carried an element of doubt within them, so that there was a common adage among astronomers that the objective of the astronomical theories was only to find a solution to account for the different motions of the heavenly bodies, and that another solution was also conceivable. But since the theory of gravitation began to explain the astronomical problems, because it is a universal, cosmological theory, the element of doubt has been discarded. This also led to the second consequence: The old astronomical theories could be joined to each other, something that is ruled out under the new astronomy. Being universal and certain, it is intolerant and no one can try to account for some astronomical phenomena by the theory of gravitation and other planetary movements according to the old astronomical hypotheses.

It is similar in the realm of the spirit. Idolatry was tolerant, while the belief in the unity of God is intolerant; being universal and not particular, certain and not beset by doubt, it is singular and not pluralistic. The principle of universality is not tolerant according to the superficial conception of tolerance, but in its very intolerance is contained the essential basis of tolerance. The wrong kind of tolerance, which weakens life, is invoked on the discovery of particulars that cannot be included in their general category, and the perverse kind of tolerance comes presumptuously to regard particular notions

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as though they were universal principles. Because they are particular concepts they cannot animate the diverse expressions of the spirit outside their own domain, and in their disdain for other concepts that they cannot incorporate in themselves, they only shrink the unfolding of life and diminish the manifestation of the spirit.

The concept of higher comprehensiveness, however, through its breadth and certainty, offers us an ideal system in stressing the principle of singularity, which brings with it a noble zealousness that engenders grandeur of spirit and removes every weakness of limited particularisms, all doubt and all eclecticism. "The Lord alone will lead them, and there is no other god with Him" (Deut. 32:12). Because it is universal, because everything is included in it, it cannot by nature exclude anything from its domain, it finds a place for everything. In doing this it only increases our perception of the light in all life-styles and in all expressions of the spirit. The basic thrust of its kind of tolerance is to find a place for every form of illumination, of life and of spiritual expression.

This concept of tolerance is aware that there is a spark of divine light in all things, that the inner spark of divine light shines in all the different religions, as so many different pedagogics for the culture of humanity, to improve the spiritual and material existence, the present and the future of the individual and of society. But they exist on different levels. Just as there is only one force of germination, and it is manifest in the cedar of Lebanon as well as in the foliage on the wall, except that in the first instance it appears in a rich and beautiful form and in the second instance in a poor and limited form, so does the spark of divine light appear in the more advanced religions in a form that is rich and exalted, while in the less advanced religions in a form that is blurred, poor and lowly. Human sin and ignorance have perverted man's general inclination, which aspires for the good, for truth, for spiritual happiness in the fullest sense of the term. But even in

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the crudest husks [that cover and blunt man's higher self] is hidden that spark of the good, the light of God, the supreme light that we cannot define and that cannot be robed in letters of any expression, nor of any kind of thought.

The world is continually progressing, sound thinking continues to make headway, healthy logic and the rich fund of experience are removing the roadblocks, error is diminishing, the entanglements of the imagination are being released. There remains within, in full force, the inner impulse that is pushing the good sparks to become manifest, and the good sparks, which are flashes of the light of the good emanating from the light of the God of truth, begin to be seen through the openings in the zone of darkness. It is for this reason that grains of truth and light diffused among the different religions have begun to sparkle. The source of this light is the only living fountain, whose source is always the light of Israel, the pure faith that is based on the foundation that gives it permanence and that will never decline.

Therefore, instead of rejecting every pattern of ideas from which the tiny elements of good have begun to sparkle and which in themselves have trapped souls to lead them to the depths of the abyss—the place where reigns the darkness that deadens the soul in its prime of vigor—a task that is bound to fail, it is for us to enhance the original light. It is for us to disclose the breadth and depth, the universality and eternity that is immanent in the light of the faith of Israel. It is for us to clarify how every spark of the good that is manifest in the world stems from its source and is linked with it in a natural bond. Then will all the sparks newly made manifest add light and life to the soul of the people mighty in its spiritual vitality, in its divine potency. Those thirsty for light will look and be enlightened, and will no longer go to feed in alien pastures even for nourishment they had begun to think could be found only in those places.

This type of tolerance is bound to spread so that the human spirit will be able to find the divine spark hidden in

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everything, and automatically discard every dross. "And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth, and he also shall be a remnant for our God" (Zech. 9:7). All the sparks will be joined into the most august torch, and all nations will acquire a clear language to call in the name of the Lord. "Take away the dross from the silver and there will emerge a refined vessel" (Prov. 25:4).