
**Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'Olam, Asher Kideshanu BeMitzvotav
VeTzivanu, La'asok BeDivrei Torah. Hafoch Bah!**

Text 1: Ex. 18:13-18, 24

Moses sat as judge among the people, while the people stood about Moses from morning until evening. But when Moses' father-in-law saw how much he had to do for the people, he said, 'What is this thing that you are doing to the people? Why do you act alone, while all the people stand about you from morning until evening?' Moses replied to his father-in-law, 'It is because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, it comes before me, and I decide between one person and another, and I make known the laws and teachings of God.' But Moses' father-in-law said to him, 'The thing you are doing is not right; you will surely wear yourself out, and these people as well. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.' Moses heeded his father-in-law and followed his recommendation.

Text 2: Talmud Bavli, Berachot 34b

Rabbi Chiya bar Abba in the name of Rabbi Yochanan taught: A person may only pray in a room which has windows, since it says, 'Now his windows were open in his upper chamber towards Jerusalem (Dan. 6:11).'

Text 3: Rabbi Haym Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary

Orthodoxy" (Tradition, Summer 1994)

Zealous to continue traditional Judaism unimpaired, religious Jews seek to ground their new emerging spirituality less on a now unattainable intimacy with [God], than on an intimacy with [God's] Will, avidly eliciting Its intricate demands and saturating their daily lives with Its exactions. Having lost the touch of [God's] Presence, they seek now solace in the pressure of [God's] Yoke.

Text 5: Paulo Coelho, "Warrior of Light"

A young man went to a rabbi to consult him about what to do in life. The latter led him over to the window and asked: What do you see through the glass?

- I see people coming and going, and a blind man begging in the street.

Then the Rabbi showed him a great mirror and again asked the man: Look into this mirror and now tell me what you see.

- I see myself.

- And now you no longer see others! See how the window and the mirror are both made of the same material, glass; but because there is a thin layer of silver on the glass, you see nothing but your own figure. You must compare yourself to these two types of glass. With a window, you saw others and had compassion for them. Covered with a thin layer of silver all you see is yourself. You shall only be worth something when you have the courage to tear off the silver coating over your eyes, so that you can see and love others once again.

Text 6: Rabbi Stuart Kelman, COMMUNITY AND DIVERSITY: A TESHUVAH ON GAY AND LESBIAN COUPLES
(1995)

Our [Conservative] Movement's structure allows for religious and Halachic creativity locally, where the need for it first arises, and where its authenticity can best be evaluated. This is a precious resource indeed, and it should not be lightly dismissed for the sake of an exclusive "uniformity" which will disappoint tomorrow those whom it satisfies today.

Text 7: Chancellor Arnold Eisen, Rethinking Modern Judaism (1998), p. 228

Transformation of practice in the name of tradition is now utterly commonplace and need not be elaborately explained or justified. It has become more problematic, however, because the task must be accomplished without [Mordecai] Kaplan's faith in objective science, historical progress, or the authenticity of "modernity" and also without Kaplan's hope for the sort of all-encompassing community that would have made the argument in favor of tradition, however reconstructed, unnecessary.

Rabbi Elliot Dorff: For Love of God and People: A Philosophy of Jewish Law

"[Legal Positivism is] the doctrine that the law is totally encompassed by what the legislators say it is in the law they posit. They may have had all kinds of reasons to enact a particular law - moral, social, economic, political, or simply the pressure of time - but none of that matters in interpreting and applying the law; what counts is what the law says (49)...This immediately identifies the law with the received, written tradition. Other theorists of the Law [including Dorff] would disagree with him completely, pointing to the oral nature of most of the tradition from its very origins and the immense role that custom, morality, economics, politics, and even style have played in the history of Jewish law, especially as Jews spread all over the world. As a result, despite Roth's conscientious effort to demonstrate the role of such extralegal elements in the law in the past, his theory seems to limit the scope and the methods of the law far too much to be historically accurate, and many would find his definition of Jewish law too narrow to form a wide basis for making Jewish legal decisions in our own time (52).

...Finally, with Roth's understanding of the nature of the law, there can be no serious moral or social critique of the law. Instead either the law is accepted forever as the criterion of what it means to be moral or it loses any claim to morality. ... This was clearly in evidence, for example, in [Roth's] method for justifying the ordination of women [in the Conservative Movement], by which he based his argument solely on what he could find in precedents without mentioning morality as even one of several motivating factors for the change (57). ...[The] continuing interaction between received Jewish law with both internal and external factors is the reason that Joel Roth's claim that law must be 'the dog wagging the tail of theology' cannot be right. It is rather that Jewish law, theology, morality, and political, social, technological, scientific, and economic developments in the Jewish community and in the larger communities within which Jews live are all intertwined, and each affects each other in critical ways in an ongoing basis (68)."

Rabbi Gordon Tucker: Halakhic and Metahalakhic Arguments Concerning Judaism and Homosexuality

We are all positivists in the same way that we all use Euclidean geometry and Newtonian mechanics to solve the broadest range of problems in the configuration of space and in the dynamics of motion. Euclid and Newton are not only perfectly suited to the small scale of the billiards table; their relative simplicity and linear quality serve us well in most of the tasks we face. But despite the fact that Euclid and Newton are splendid and irreplaceable tools in most ordinary matters, we need to know that their "local success" does not necessarily translate into "global success". When Einstein measured, during a solar eclipse, the light of a distant star that passed very near the large mass of the darkened sun, he demonstrated that we either had to concede that space was not Euclidean, or that light did not travel in straight lines near large gravitational fields. We know, in other words, that there are those phenomena that lie outside the domain of normal observation that lay bare to us the need for more sophisticated, less simple tools of analysis that can be extremely disorienting at first. But that is the only way that progress is made.

Jay Michaelson: Everything is God: The Radical Path of Nondual Judaism, p. 4

Nonduality if true, is necessarily a universal truth, and all schools and teachers are but skillful means of apprehending it. However, nonduality does not erase the world in a hazy cloud of oneness... The general takes the form of the particular; the One wears the drag of the many. And so, as the world is reborn, our particularities matter anew, and with my background and accidents of birth, the Jewish way continue to resonate in my heart. At times along the nondual path, I have surrendered all that is particular: not just all that is Jewish, but also many important particularities of gender, sexuality, class and ethnicity. Yet when I "return to the marketplace," to paraphrase the Zen ox-herding parable, all these forms return. Jewish forms are neither superior nor necessary. But they are superior and necessary *for me* because they are the vocabulary of my heart and the technology of my body.