

**Class 12 – Philosophy and Poetry**  
**Rabbi Moshe Davis**

**Class Outline**

- Review
- Jewish Philosophy: A Period of Codification?
- 13 Principles of Faith
- Poetry

**I. Review**

During the period of the Rishonim new emphasis was placed on the study of Tanach as the result of both internal and external factors. The approaches to the text varied amongst the Rishonim from the pshat only approach of the Rashbam and Ibn Ezra to the Middrash approach of Rashi and Ramban. The notion of an understanding of the text other than its literal meaning was not new to the period of the Rishonim but was well founded in the Gemara, the Midrash Halachah and Aggadah, and even all the way back to the Peirush Hamekubal MeHar Sinai.

**II. A Period of Codification?**

The development of the Oral Law is marked by periods of codification, first with the Mishnah, then the Gemara, then the early Rishonim (Rif, Rosh, Rambam, etc.) and then the late Rishonim (Shulchan Aruch). Was there a similar such process of codification for Jewish philosophy?

- **Dogma in Judaism**

**Moses Mendelssohn (1729-86)**

**As quoted by Rabbi Benjamin Blech**

“There is not in the Mosaic Law a single command. “Thou shalt believe” or “not believe.” Faith is not commanded, only actions are.

**Solomon Schechter (1847-1915)**

**Studies in Judaism, i. 181**

Political economy, hygiene, statistics, are very fine things. But no sane man would for them make those sacrifices which Judaism requires from us. It is only for God’s sake, to fulfill the commands and to accomplish his purpose, that religion becomes worth living and dying for. And this can only be possible with a religion that possesses dogma. It is true that every great religion is ‘a concentration of many ideas and ideals’, which make this religion able to adapt itself to various modes of thinking and living. But there must always be a point round which all these ideas concentrate themselves. This centre is Dogma.

### **Rambam, Mishneh Torah - Laws of Idol Worship 2:3**

The worship of false gods is not the only subject to which we are forbidden to pay attention; rather, we are warned not to consider any thought which will cause us to uproot one of the fundamentals of the Torah. We should not turn our minds to these matters, think about them, or be drawn after the thoughts of our hearts.

- **Dogma in the Mishnah**

#### **Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 90a**

The following are those who do not have a portion in the world to come: The one who says there is no resurrection of the dead, the one who says the Torah is not from Heaven, and the apikorus.

#### **Lawrence Schiffman**

##### **Who was a Jew, pg. 44**

This mishnah is most likely directed against the Sadducees, who, Josephus tells us, did not accept either the immortality of the soul or the idea of reward and punishment after death.

- **Dogma in the Gemara**

#### **Babylonian Talmud, Makkot 23b-24a**

[THEREFORE GAVE HE THEM TORAH (TEACHINGS) AND MANY COMMANDMENTS . . . ] R. Simlai when preaching said: Six hundred and thirteen precepts were communicated to Moses, three hundred and sixty-five negative precepts, corresponding to the number of solar days [in the year], and two hundred and forty-eight positive precepts, corresponding to the number of the members of man's body...

Isaiah came and reduced them to six [principles], as it is written, [i] He that walketh righteously, and [ii] speaketh uprightly, [iii] He that despiseth the gain of oppressions, [iv] that shaketh his hand from holding of bribes, [v] that stoppeth his ear from hearing of blood, [vi] and shutteth his eyes from looking upon evil; he shall dwell on high...

Micah came and reduced them to three [principles], as it is written, It hath been told thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord doth require of thee: [i] only to do justly, and [ii] to love mercy and [iii] to walk humbly before thy God. 'To do justly,' that is, maintaining justice; and to love mercy,' that is, rendering every kind office; 'and walking humbly before thy God,' that is, walking in funeral and bridal processions...

Again came Isaiah and reduced them to two [principles], as it is said, Thus saith the Lord, [i] Keep ye justice and [ii] do righteousness [etc.]. Amos came and reduced them to one [principle], as it is said, For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye Me and live. To this R. Nahman b. Isaac demurred, saying: [Might it not be taken as,] Seek Me by observing the whole Torah and live? — But it is Habakuk who came and based them all on one [principle], as it is said, But the righteous shall live by his faith.

- **Dogma in the Rishonim**

**Rambam, Mishneh Torah - Foundations of the Torah, 1:1**

The foundation of all foundations and the pillar of wisdom is to know that there is a Primary Being who brought into being all existence. All the beings of the heavens, the earth, and what is between them came into existence only from the truth of His being.

*What can we learn from the fact that Rambam included (and even began with) dogma in his book of Jewish law?*

**III. 13 Principles of Faith**

<p>1. יגדל אלקים חי וישתבח נמצא ואין עת אל מציאיותו</p> <p>2. אחד ואין יחיד כיהודי</p> <p>3. נעלם וגם אין סוף לאהדוותו אין לו דמות הגוף ואינו גוף</p> <p>4. לא נערוף אליו קדשותו קדמון לכל דבר אשר נברא ראשון: ואין ראשית לראשיתו</p> <p>5. הנו אדון עולם לכל (נוצר יורה גדלתו ומלכותו</p> <p>6. שפע נבואתו נתנו אל אנשי סגלתו ותפארתו</p> <p>7. לא קם בישראל כמושה עוד נביא ומביט את תמונתו</p> <p>8. תורת אמת נתן לעמו אל על יד נביאו נאמן ביתו</p> <p>9. לא יחליף הקל ולא ימיר דתו לעולמים לזולתו</p> <p>10. צופה ויודע סתרינו מביט לסוף דבר בקדמתו</p> <p>11. גומל לאיש חסד כמפעלו יתן לרשע רע כרשעתו</p> <p>12. ישלח לקץ זמיו משיחנו לפדות מחכי קץ ישועתו</p> <p>13. מתים יחיה קל ברב חסדו ברוך עדי עד שם תהלתו</p>	<p>1. Exalted be the Living God and praised, He exists - unbounded by time is His existence;</p> <p>2. He is One - and there is no unity like His Oneness - Inscrutable and infinite is His Oneness;</p> <p>3. He has no semblance of a body nor is He corporeal - nor has His holiness any comparison;</p> <p>4. He preceded every being that was created - the First, and nothing precedes His precedence;</p> <p>5. Behold! He is Master of the universe to every creature - He demonstrates His greatness and His sovereignty;</p> <p>6. He granted His flow of prophecy - to His treasured, splendid people;</p> <p>7. In Israel, none like Moses arose again - a prophet who perceived His vision clearly;</p> <p>8. God gave His people a Torah of truth - by means of His prophet, the most trusted of His household;</p> <p>9. God will never amend nor exchange His law - for any other one, for all eternity;</p> <p>10. He scrutinizes and knows our hiddenmost secrets - He perceives a matter's outcome at its inception;</p> <p>11. He recompenses man with kindness according to his deed - He places evil on the wicked according to his wickedness;</p> <p>12. By the End of Days He will send our Messiah - to redeem those longing for His final salvation;</p> <p>13. God will revive the dead in His abundant kindness - Blessed forever is His praised Name.</p>
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**IV. Poetry**