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The Quest for Universal Spirituality

Readings from the book,
Israel and Humanity, by R. Elijah Benamozegh
An 18 lesson audio course

Course Outline

Lesson 1 – Introduction. Addressing the modern “great religious crises.”

The concept of universal Torah, what it is, and why it is so desperately needed today. Understanding the pursuit of truth, and our necessary willingness to embrace it wherever found. Dialog with students addressing their own prejudices against certain other cultures and religions. References to Hinduism and Indian culture. Why prejudice and racism in religion cannot be tolerated. The importance of the natural harmony found in Talmudic/Rabbinic Judaism. A basic introduction into general philosophy of the author, R. Elijah Benamozegh, and its relationship to later authors, like Rav A. Y. Kook. The messianic concept of Tikkun, the spirit of the prophet Elijah, how we can integrate this ourselves.

Lesson 2 – The Origins of Monotheism.

Chapter 1 – The unity of God. Monotheism did not start with Moses. There is a strong overlap and influence of Egyptian culture and religious beliefs on fledgling Judaism. Discussion of the Hyksos, the early Egyptian monotheists. Cross cultural influences can be seen from the ancient Greek Pythagorean school to the ancient Indian Vedic (Hindu) schools. Torah is in the middle uniting them all. This is the role of Universal Torah. Defense of the Kabbalah, how this universal application of Torah elevates Judaism out of its limited national role, and enables it to rightly be a light to the nations.

Lesson 3 – Ancient Mystery Teachings, Torah, Freemasonry & the Ultimate Singularity.

End chapter 1- beginning chapter 2. There is a definite connection between many of the teachings of ancient mystery religions and the teachings of ancient Torah, and even original Rabbinic Judaism. How and why did these connections come about. We discuss the underlying universal teachings that the ancient schools taught, and how they are continued to modern day in Freemasonry. How freemasonry has a close relationship to the Noahide code, and how it has adopted much from mystical Judaism. Reference to “The History of Freemasonry” by Albert Mackey. R. Benamozegh states that the answer to the problems faced in modern religions can

be found in the Kabbalistic experience of the Ultimate Singularity, which is the Being of the universe. This is YHWH, God, the Creator. Emphasis is on experience, not theory, theology or philosophy.

Lesson 4 – YHWH, Tribal God or Singularity, the Psychology of Idolatry

Chapter 2, with readings from Erich Fromm's "Religion and Psychology" (pages 114-119) and Edward Edinger's "The Bible and the Psyche" (pages 65,69).

There was an original concept of a Singularity long before there was a concept of diversity and division. Reference to pre-Adamic civilization, and when the concepts of dividing Divinity occurred and why.

The original concept of the significance of God as the Singularity of existence and how this is reflected in humanity being created in the Image of God in essence to state that humanity also shares this singularity and unity as a human race.

One who respects God respects his fellow man, and one who disrespects his fellow man is by definition disrespecting God.

The psychology of idolatry, what exactly is idolatry as a human state of mind, and how almost everyone, in one form or another, creates one's own "psychological" (if not actual) idol.

Readings from Fromm.

The purpose of Israel's initial exclusion from the nations, and why the Sages of Israel created the hedge around the Torah. Readings from Edinger explain the psychology of this.

Lesson 5 – The "Pagan" Origins of Judaism, the Original Message of Torah.

The Biblical message is clear, a single God created all existence and all humanity. Thus, all the world, and all humanity is ultimately united in source. The Biblical message proclaims that just as all in the beginning was one, so too in the messianic future will all return to the one. In the mean time, it is our job to gather the pieces of our lost unity.

Judaism developed over many centuries, and included many influences from clear pagan sources, such as Melchizedek and Jethro. Even the Hebrew language was originally Canaanite. An important Torah teaching based on Malakhi 1:11 is that God is known in every nation and culture. God reveals Him/Itself under different Names, and it is the job of Israel to gather the disconnected spark to reunite them as a whole, and this is how God's Name is unified.

Lesson 6 – Divine Providence, God Equally Rules Over All

Chapter 4. God is the director of all life, equally the Director, Lord and Judge of Israel, the rest of humanity, the whole of nature, and also to include whatever forms of extraterrestrial life we may some day encounter.

Life is a singularity, and it is sacred everywhere. YHWH upholds and supports all life, equally in balanced justice. Even the animal kingdom is provided for, and protected by God.

The light to the nations is the message of this universal law, that all life is sacred, and that all life is one, under the Guidance and direction of the Universal Singularity, YHWH.

In the messianic future, all human differences will not be erased, but rather transcended.

Instead of being hostile due to differences, we will learn to respect and honor differences, and recognizes how like spokes of a wheel, all are connected to the singular center.

Lesson 7 – The Unity of Humanity & Human Dignity

Part 2, Chapter 1. The Biblical message of the common origins of all humanity indicates a unity

of all peoples. A long discussion and condemnation of racism, in all its forms, including within Judaism itself.

All souls are one in Adam. All humanity has a common origin, and will together face a common future. Mashiah comes to rectify all, not just one religion over another.

The ills of the concept of national superiority, with the example of American abuse of the continental natives, the Cherokee/Israelite connection is mentioned.

Torah speaks in the language of man, therefore, one should not be surprised to discover Biblical stories found in other cultures, with the stories formatted to the norms of those cultures.

The necessary unity of body and soul, how physicality is an integral part of spirituality. The philosophical origins of the separation between the spiritual, and the physical, and how this aberration has continued to this day. This contradicts the very foundation of Judaism, and Kabbalah, which calls for the union of Heaven and Earth, of Tiferet and Malkhut.

Lesson 8 – Man, the Temple of God, Inherent Good, and the Meaning of Freedom

Part 2, Chapter 2 – This lesson opens with a discussion defining the difference between Hebraic and Greek thinking. The Hebraic mind sees no split between the spiritual and the physical, whereas the Greek mind drew strong lines of distinction between the two. It is this significant difference in global outlook that underlies the difference between the religions of Judaism and Christianity.

Continued discussion defining the fundamental differences between the two faiths, how Christianity looks at man needing to be saved, and how such a salvation is unheard of, and unnecessary in Judaism. Man is inherently good, and will face a positive future.

Human freedom, man is free from the spirit of determinism. Reference to Calvinism, and the eastern idea of Karma, and how Torah fundamentally disagrees with both. Every individual has a positive foundation, and can move forward with self improvement.

The meaning of “there is no mazal for Israel.”

Lesson 9 – Evolving Human History, the Torah Ideal of the Future.

The meaning of the Hebrew term Derekh (way), and its relationship to the Chinese term, the Dao. Humanity is on an evolutionary path of psychological, spiritual growth. By following the “way,” one follows the natural order, the “laws of cosmic Torah,” and the Dao, all at once.

Why resurrection is such a vital Torah belief. Discussion of the haluka d'rabbanan (astral) body, whether or not it has an element of physicality to it. Example of Rabbi Yehuda the Prince and his post-death Sabbath visits.

The two Trees in the Garden, and their connection to one another. The example of the serpent. The Kabbalistic metaphor of the “shattering of the vessels,” and what it actually means over the course of human history.

Original sin in Christianity, and how differently it is understood in Judaism.

The need for hope of a positive future. Even the Pre-Adamic civilization needed to reveal its hidden shadow for the sake of its rectification (and that's where we are today).

How and why the klipah comes first before the “fruit,” and what this means in the life of the individual, and in society.

Secret of Yeshu's gospel, Gospel of Thomas. Relationship of Yeshu to actions of Elisha Aher.

Revealing things publicly prior to the public's ability to handle the revelation. How knowledge is revealed progressively, until final exposure in messianic times.

Lesson 10 – The Evolving Torah, from Bible to Judaism, and Beyond

Part 2, Chapter 3b- Religion, like life itself, is a product of evolution. Evolution as a biological progression is clearly supported by the Torah. Evolution occurs equally in the human arena, in the domains of both religion and psychology.

Religions, including Torah evolve, they change, adapt and grow, all in accordance to Intelligent Design. The Torah of Moses was different, and more advanced than the Torah of the Patriarchs, which evolved from the Torah of Noah, which evolved from the Torah of Adam.

Religious evolution is progressive and teleological. The purpose is to reveal the concealed.

Metaphysics will become physics, the supernatural will become the natural, all in the future messianic age. Science will unlock the secrets of today, making them the known facts of tomorrow.

The Torah of today has evolved through centuries of interpretation and new applications. The meaning and purpose of the Hidush, new insight.

The Talmudic concept of a Sage being superior to the prophet, how one who can enter and exit in peace is superior to the one who wait outside until he is invited in.

Lesson 11 – The Teleological Evolution of the Universe, our Planet, and all Humanity

This class begins with a discussion of the nature of schizophrenia, the flight v. fight response, and how the exploration of these led to the discovery of the collective unconscious and the teleological direction to psychological individuation, and how this is mirrored in the collective direction of the whole.

An in-depth discussion into the Torah concept of the Shemitot, the progressive evolution of the universe. Reference to two of my essays,

<http://www.koshertorah.com/essays/tomorrowstwilight.pdf> and

<http://www.koshertorah.com/essays/preadam2013.pdf>

Involved discussion about inner Earth, and how the messianic era will be the dawn of the next Shemitah epoch.

What is missing between Gen.1:1, and Gen.1:2.

Humanity is considered a microcosm of the universe, therefore the universe is considered the macrocosm of humanity. Humanity and the universe are united as spouses joined for the betterment of each other.

This class looks at the big picture, the collective direction of humanity, and includes a practical lesson about how distractions are nothing other than part and parcel of the greater plan.

Lesson 12 – Man in Partnership with God

Creation is an ongoing process. Humanity contributes to the work.

Humanity, through Adam was given dominion over the face of the Earth, which does not include other worlds.

Dominion means to live in harmony with nature, and to nurture it respectfully.

Relationship of humanity to other species. How to build a world: Sefer Yetzirah or DNA genetic building blocks. Torah is on Earth, and therefore must be interpreted practically, and not theoretically. Torah, God, humanity, nature and the Dao, if Maimonides can quote Aristotle, we can quote Lao Tzu.

The wonders and blessings of science and technology, how they are the Will of God, allowing human ingenuity to discover the wonders of creation.

Adam, humanity and Israel, priesthood to the planet, to serve and to protect.

Lesson 13 – Creation: the Doctrine of Human Cooperation

What does it mean to cooperate with God? What does it mean to be a partner with God in creation?

This lesson addresses in-depth issues of how we human beings perceive our world, and how this perception either adds to, or subtracts from, our harmony with nature, and thus with God. God's Law and natural law are one, so too man's law must be part of this unity.

The secret of the Great Unity, how all is created by God, and how dichotomy is only a human mental construct.

Human beings influence all reality, this is the quantum nature of things.

How prayer works, how the mind actually influences reality all around us.

The meaning of the Kabbalistic term, Zeir Anpin (the Small Face) of God, and how this relates to what God told Moses about no man being able to see God's Face and live. This is explained in detail.

All reality is a singular whole, this lessons delves deeply into this concept.

Lesson 14 - Universal Torah vs. Particularistic Judaism.

Israel & Humanity, Part 3, Chapter 1B

What is the nature of Torah, and how does it differ from the religion of Judaism?

Understanding Torah as it applies within the context of Judaism, and how it possesses a universal nature that reflects the pattern of cosmic (psychic) reality.

God's morals (observance of natural/universal Torah Law) and man's limited understanding of how and why God does what God does.

Why and how we pursue imitating the Image of God within us, and what this means for human evolution.

How references to places and concepts found in Torah are applied as psychological metaphors, and archetypes, referring as they do to levels of human consciousness, and not to actual spiritual places.

Lesson 15 - Abraham's Universal Message for Humanity

Israel & Humanity, Part 3, Chapter 1C

The Torah is universal, and predated Sinai. Abraham preached a message of monotheism, whose audience was all humanity.

Abraham was a priest to God (order of Melchizedek), so too s the entire Nation of Israel.

Israel and Torah are meant to serve humanity. This is clear from numerous Biblical references.

This class identifies the true meaning, purpose and consequences of monotheism, and why monotheism is a way of thinking, and a way of life, and not just a simple statement of belief.

Also discussed is how the Seven Laws of Noah include many details about all humanity's obligation to pursue spiritual, and scientific knowledge.

Lesson 16 - Prophecy Around the World

Text: Part 3, Conclusion Chapter 1

Prophecy is not unique to Israel. When prophecy is properly defined and understood correctly, it can be seen that prophecy exists around the world, and always has.

Numerous examples from Biblical, Rabbinic, and Kabbalistic sources are cited to validate the concept of Universal Torah existing globally.

Reading from the book, Perah Mateh Aharon by R. Ahron Soloveichik commentary on the Maimonidean code Mishneh Torah, Sefer Medah. If a tried and true prophet were to arise, even today who is from the nations of the world, all Israel is obligated to follow his directives. Discussion of the Kabbalistic concept of the Exile of the Torah, and its relationship to the concept of Birur, the gathering of the fallen sparks of light from amongst the shattered vessels.

Lesson 17 - Judaism vs. Universal Spirituality

Text: Part 3, Chapter 2A

How the religion of Judaism differs from universal Torah for humanity.

The nature of the relationship between Jews and Gentiles.

The difference between Judaism vs. Christianity and Islam with regards to global proselytization.

A brief Kabbalistic understanding of the relationship of the sefirotic faces of ZA and NOK, and how this relates to the sacred relationship between Israel and the nations.

A comprehensive condemnation of religious racism, and exclusivity.

Lesson 18 - Exposing the True "Secrets of the Torah"

An overall review of authentic universal spirituality, and the age-old interest in the secrets of the Torah, and how they relate to all humanity.

Reference to the amazing book, "The Blazing World," written in 1666 by the Duchess of Newcastle, Margaret Cavendish, and her tales of the Inner Earth, and her interest in the Kabbalah.

Also referenced is the Masonic connection to universal Torah and its materialization in the founding of the United States of America.

The Universal Way – the Path which we call Noahide.

The word "Noahide" means human being. It is not a term for a select group of people, or for a new religion. Noahidism must be understood for what it is, the path that unites all humanity in the common good. Doctrines, and theologies have no room or place here.

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