

study, to talk about God and belief without embarrassment. Exploring our relationship with God is not the exclusive province of theologians. It is the right, privilege, and responsibility of every Jew.

APPENDIX

| | In the Bible | In Rabbinic Literature | Philo: Spiritual Monotheism | Maimonides: Neo-Aristotelianism | Luria: Mysticism |
|------------------------|--|--|---|--|--|
| <i>God's Nature</i> | Different notions, some derived from other Near Eastern religions. | No systematic notion. | God is the "Soul" of the universe, the universal "Mind," pure spirit or intelligence. | God is pure intellect, the Unmoved Mover of the universe. | God is <i>Ein Sof</i> , infinite, revealed to us through the ten <i>s'firot</i> . At the same time God is self-limited. Therefore, God needs us to "mend" the world. |
| <i>Basic Questions</i> | God exists. But is God among us? What is God's name? What does God want of us? | God exists. How can we serve God? | Does God exist? Does God have two parts, body and soul? | Does God exist? How should we interpret the attributes of God? | How can we ascend the ladder of creation and return to God? |
| <i>God's Unity</i> | An early notion that there may be gods for other nations gave way to a firm belief that there is only one God for all humanity. Angels exist, but only as God's messengers. | God is one, not two, and unique. Denied the existence of any other divine power in the universe. Angels exist, but only as God's messengers. | God is one. We can prove that God exists. | God is one. We can prove that God exists. | God is one. |
| <i>God's Name</i> | Proper name of YHVH, not to be pronounced. Other names used to describe powers of God or ways in which God relates to the world (<i>El, Elohim, El Shaddai, Adon, Tzur, Av, Melech</i>). | New names introduced: <i>HaG'vurah, HaRachaman, HaMakom, Ribono shel olam, Avinu shebashamayim</i> , and others. | God can only be called <i>Ontos</i> , a Greek term for "That which exists." | Whatever we call God is inadequate, for our language is limited. | <i>Ein Sof</i> (The Endless One). |

| | In the Bible | In Rabbinic Literature | Philo: Spiritual Monotheism | Maimonides: Neo-Aristotelianism | Luria: Mysticism |
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| <i>Knowing God</i> | Some texts assert that a few people "saw" God or "met" God, but these texts provide no specific description. | We cannot know God. | We cannot describe God. God is unknowable. | God is incorporeal. We cannot say what God "is," only that God "is not." | God is totally unknowable by the human mind. |
| <i>God's Relationship to The World</i> | God alone created the world, established a predictable order for it, and continually renews it. God's might and concern for humanity are revealed through historical and natural events. | God judges the world. God rewards the good and punishes the wicked. | The "logos" is the means through which God operates in the world. | God created the world out of God's will, <i>ex nihilo</i> (out of nothing). God rules the world through "angels," divine intellects. God put in them the forces that govern and shape the physical world. | In observing the physical world, we derive the existence of <i>Ein Sof</i> as its cause. |
| <i>God and the People Israel</i> | God revealed the Torah at Sinai. God brought Israel into the Promised Land. God and Israel are in a covenantal relationship. Israel is to obey God's laws. God is to protect Israel as God's chosen people for all generations. | God gave Israel both a Written and an Oral Torah at Sinai. God "loves" the people Israel. Israel loves God. The relationship is an unbreakable one. God protects us and cares for us. God will resurrect the dead in the world-to-come. | Revelation is God's special gift to Israel. Israel receives the highest form of prophecy. | Israel is the chosen people. The Torah and the mitzvot help us realize our divine potential. | God and Israel are copartners. Through the performance of mitzvot, we free the imprisoned divine sparks and help to restore the world. Through prayer, our soul ascends to God. |
| <i>What God "Wants"</i> | God requires observance of mitzvot and ethical behavior. | God requires observance of mitzvot and ethical behavior. | Observing the biblical prescriptions is not enough. We must attempt to understand their spiritual essence. | God is distant from the world. We have free will to shape our world. But God "knows" the choices we will make in a manner that is beyond our comprehension. | God "wants" and "needs" us to better ourselves and restore the world. |
| <i>God and the Individual</i> | God is a personal God, who hears and answers prayer. God is compared to a parent who cares and watches lovingly over us. God is seen as having human qualities, such as anger, compassion, and a capacity for love. | God is a personal God, who hears and answers prayer. God has the capacity for compassion and anger, but God "prefers" mercy. | We can direct prayer to God, but that is merely our way of talking "about" God. Only through development of our reason can we approach God. | We can pray directly to God and draw nearer to God as our intellectual level increases. The highest goal in life is intellectual and spiritual perfection. | Meditation, prayer, and contemplation give us knowledge about God's relation to our world. People represent the Divine Presence on earth. We can commune with God. |
| <i>The Problem of Evil</i> | God is loving and just, yet there is evil in the world. Different notions: evil is punishment for sin, is a test, is beyond our comprehension. No single idea. | God is loving and just. Suffering may be a punishment for sin, but why the righteous suffer is beyond our comprehension. This world is not the only one. There is another world, <i>haolam haba</i> (the world-to-come) when the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked punished. | Evil is a consequence of the imperfection of the physical world and, therefore, was not caused and cannot be remedied by God. Humanity is endowed with free will and, thus, must choose virtue. But humanity must choose virtue for its own sake, as virtue leads to happiness. | Evil is the denial of good and has nothing to do with God. It is the result of the perishability of matter and the misuse of freedom by human beings. | Evil exists in the world as a result of <i>sh'virat hakeilim</i> . God need us to eliminate evil. |

| | Spinoza: Pantheism | Buber: Dialogue | Steinberg: Limited Theism | Kaplan: Naturalism | Fromm: Humanism |
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| <i>God's Nature</i> | God and the universe are one. God is nature. The laws of nature were set by God, and everything follows their structure. | God is the "Eternal Thou," always awaiting for us to relate to God. God is an eternal presence that cannot be defined, described, or proven. | God is a Power and a Mind, the Being of all beings, purposive and ethical. But God is not all-powerful. God is like a parent who loves us but cannot save us from pain. | God is the totality of those forces in the world that render human life worthwhile. God is Power or "Process." | God is a symbol, an idea, of our highest potential, the most desirable good. |
| <i>Basic Questions</i> | What is God? How can we know God? | How can we open ourselves to genuine "I-Thou" encounter? | How do we reconcile the notion of God with the problem of evil and free will? | How can we attain self-realization? | How can the idea of God lead us to better ourselves? |
| <i>God's Unity</i> | God is one. There is no dualism of mind and matter. | God cannot be defined in any way. God can only be "met." | God is one. | God is one, in the sense of being a totality of forces leading to human self-realization. | God is a unique idea, a symbol in our minds, but not a reality in itself. God represents the supreme goal for humanity. |
| <i>God's Name</i> | No unique name. | The "Eternal Thou." | No unique name. | "The power that makes for salvation." | No unique name. Any name for God makes God an idol. |
| <i>Knowing God</i> | God is the totality of the universe. The more we know about the structure of the world, the more we know about God. | One can meet God through a genuine dialogue with others. | We cannot know God completely. Our human knowledge is inadequate. We must accept the existence of God on faith. Logic alone cannot bring us to belief. | The human mind cannot know the totality of God. God is a power and thus has no appearance. | Imitating God means knowing God. |
| <i>God's Relationship to the World</i> | The laws of nature are manifestations of God. God does not act independently of the world. God is the world. | God waits everywhere in the world for us to let God in through a genuine dialogue. | God has a relationship with the world and needs humankind's help to improve it. | The world had not reached its finality but is continually being renewed by God. | God has no relationship to the world as such. Our idea of God places God in the world. |
| <i>God and the People Israel</i> | God has no special relationship to Israel or to any other people. The laws of nature, God, operate equally for all. | Sinai was not a one-time revelation of laws for all time. Revelation is possible at any time. | No particular notion. | Tradition has permanent values that we cannot afford to ignore. | God has no special relationship to any people. But the idea of God should inspire all people. |
| <i>What God "Wants"</i> | God "wants" nothing. God as nature simply "is." | God "wants" genuine encounter with mankind. | God needs and wants us to work for a more decent world. | Our prayers are for ourselves, not directed to some supernatural being. God is not supernatural, and thus does not "want" anything. | Our idea of God should move us to self-betterment, greater justice, and love. We thus should strive to "imitate" God. |

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| <i>God and the Individual</i> | God is not a personal God. God is the laws of nature. The world is determined. Our only freedom comes through knowledge. | Whenever we have an "I-Thou" relationship with another person, we also encounter God, the "Eternal Thou." We receive a revelation of God's presence. | God allows us free will so that we can work together with God. | A God who makes a difference in one's personal life should be designated as a personal God. | God has no "relationship" with people outside of our idea of God. God is an inner human experience. We cannot know God. |
| <i>The Problem of Evil</i> | Good and evil are relative to human experience and have nothing to do with God. | Evil is the predominance of relating to others in an "I-It" fashion. Evil can be transcended through an "I-Thou" encounter. God's face is hidden before "radical evil." | Evil is part of the lower levels of evolutionary development. God cannot be blamed for evil and tragedy. Evil is part of the makeup of the universe and part of nature that has not yet been conquered. | Evil is that part of the universe that God has not yet subdued. The world has not reached its finality, and our responsibility as copartners with God is to eliminate all evil from the universe. | Whatever hinders good is evil. Since God is an image of our higher selves, God has nothing to do with evil in the world. It is therefore the task of people to eliminate evil through greater truth, goodness, and kindness. |

| | Heschel: Depth Theology | Reines: Polydoxy & Hylotheism |
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| <i>God's Nature</i> | God is the source of insight and intuition and is "in search of" humanity. | God is the enduring possibility of being. |
| <i>Basic Questions</i> | How and where do we meet God? How do we apprehend God as God "looks" for us? | What is the source of a religion's authority? Each person has "radical freedom" to choose beliefs and practices, so long as they do not impinge on the freedom of others. |
| <i>God's Unity</i> | God is one. | There is one God only insofar as "being" is unique and singular. |
| <i>God's Name</i> | We call God by the many names found in Jewish tradition. | God has many names, from which every individual may choose. |
| <i>Knowing God</i> | God is beyond the scope of our minds. The world gives us a glimpse of God. | We cannot "know" God any more than we can "know" being. |
| <i>God's Relationship to the World</i> | God created the world and remains the object of "radical amazement." | God is the past, present, and future possibility of being in the world. |
| <i>God and the People Israel</i> | God and Israel are bound together by the covenant of Torah. | God has no special relationship with Israel or any group of people. |

Notes

Chapter 1. God in the Bible

1. Based on the 1917 Standard Jewish Version (SJTV), published by the Jewish Publication Society (JPS), Philadelphia. According to many interpreters even these verses from the Psalms may simply mean that only "a fool" says God does not care for the world and those who live in it.
2. Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible excerpts will follow the New Jewish Version translation, published by JPS.
3. Quoted from *Gates of Prayer*, published by the Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1975.

Chapter 2. God in Rabbinic Literature

1. Quoted in *A Rabbinic Anthology*, no. 20, p. 26.
2. *Ibid.*, no. 48, p. 28.
3. *Ibid.*, no. 46, p. 33.
4. For Jewish views on life after death, see Rifat Sonsino and Daniel Stone, *What Happens After I Die?* (New York: UAHC Press, 1990).

Chapter 3. Philo's Spiritual Monotheism

1. All translations are taken from *Philo*, Loeb Classical Library, 1961.

Chapter 4. The Neo-Aristotelianism of Maimonides

1. All quotes from the *Guide* are taken from *The Guide to the Perplexed*, trans. S. Pines. Other quotes are taken from I. Twersky, *A Maimonides Reader*.

| | Heschel: Depth Theology | Reines: Polydoxy & Hyltheism |
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| <i>What God "Wants"</i> | Divine revelation is the basis of what God "wants." We are to sanctify time. | There is no supernatural entity that "wants" anything from us. |
| <i>God and the Individual</i> | We humans can know God's "feelings." God loves humankind. We accept God's existence through our intuition. | God has no relationship to humanity as we understand it. If we act to improve the world, however, we better the enduring possibility of being. |
| <i>The Problem of Evil</i> | We do not know how to solve the problem of evil, but its source is humanity, not God. | What we call "evil" is the imperfection inherent in all existence. |