

Heresy! The Audacious Jewish Power of Subversion.

Babylonian Talmud, Hagigah 14b

Our Rabbis taught: Four entered Paradise, they are: Ben Azai, Ben Zoma, Acher, and Rabbi Akiva... Ben Azai cast a look and died. Of him Torah teaches, "Precious in the sight of God is the death of saints," (Psalms 116). Ben Zoma witnessed it and was touched. Of him Torah teaches, "Have you found honey? Eat so much as is sufficient for you, lest you be filled and vomit it," (Proverbs 25). Acher cut down trees. Rabbi Akiva left in peace.

תלמוד בבלי חגיגה י"ד ע"ב

תנו רבנן: ארבעה נכנסו בפרדס, ואלו הן: בן עזאי, ובן זומא, אחר, ורבי עקיבא... בן עזאי הציץ ומת, עליו הכתוב אומר (תהלים קט"ז) יקר בעיני ה' המותה לחסידיו. בן זומא הציץ ונפגע, ועליו הכתוב אומר (משלי כ"ה) דבש מצאת אכל דרך פן תשבענו והקאתו. אחר קיצץ בנטיעות. רבי עקיבא יצא בשלום.

Babylonian Talmud, Hagigah 15b

But what of Aher? Greek song did not cease from his mouth. It said of Aher that when he used to get up from the *Beit Midrash* many heretical books used to fall from his lap.

תלמוד בבלי חגיגה ט"ו

אחר מאי - זמר יווני לא פסק מפומיה. אמרו עליו על אחר, בשעה שהיה עומד מבית המדרש הרבה ספרי מינין נושרין מחיקו.

Isaac Deutscher, "The Non-Jewish Jew"

The Jewish heretic who transcends Jewry belongs to a Jewish tradition. You may, if you like, view Akher as a prototype of those great revolutionaries of modern thought about whom I am going to speak this evening—you may do so, if you necessarily wish to place them within any Jewish tradition.

Mayim Bialik

How do I convey that the science I've studied fits in with the Jewish beliefs I hold dear?

Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Reason and Revelation in Saadia's Philosophy*

Saadia Gaon takes the attitude that reason and revelation are not antagonistic to each other but supplementary so as to act in concert for a common goal. There is only one truth, but two ways lead to it.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook

It is forbidden for religious behavior to compromise a personal, natural, moral sensibility. If it does, our fear of heaven is no longer pure. An indication of its purity is that our nature and moral sense becomes more exalted as a consequence of religious inspiration. But if these opposites occur, then the moral character of the individual or group is dismissed by religious observance, and we have certainly been