

# STAYING HUMAN: A JEWISH THEOLOGY FOR THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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## ROADMAP

1. **Questions raised by AI**
  - a. What is intelligence?
  - b. What are our objectives and values?
  - c. What is freedom?
  - d. What does it mean to be human?
2. **Religion and AI**
  - a. The conception of human perfection
  - b. The limits and power of knowledge
  - c. The aspiration towards oneness
3. **Philosophy and AI**
  - a. Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677)
  - b. Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)
4. **Living Jewishly in the face of AI**
  - a. Conceptions of God
  - b. *Shabbat*
  - c. *Halachah* (Jewish law)

## QUESTIONS RAISED BY AI

### What is intelligence? / What are our objectives and values?

#### Source 1

- “humans are intelligent to the extent that our actions can be expected to achieve our objectives”
- “Machines are intelligent to the extent that their actions can be expected to achieve their objectives.”

*Reflections on Artificial Intelligence for Humanity* edited by Bertrand Braunschweig, Malik Ghallab, p32.

### What is freedom?

#### Source 2



Google Maps

A



B

### What does it mean to be human?

#### Source 3

Post-singularity, there will be “*no distinction... between human and machine or between physical and virtual.*” Instead, intelligence will saturate the physical universe and reorganise “*matter and energy to provide an optimal level of computation.*” It will then “*spread out from its origin on Earth*” to turn the universe into a vast super-intelligence.

Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near* (2006)



**Source 4**

*Student:* "So you're trying to create a god? Your own god?"

*Caster:* "That's a very good question. Um, isn't that what man has always tried to do?"

*Transcendence (2014)*

**Source 5**

"... the universe consists of data flows, and the value of any phenomenon or entity is determined by its contribution to data processing."

"... merely tools for creating the Internet-of-All-Things, which may eventually spread out from planet Earth to cover the whole galaxy and even the whole universe."

Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus*

**RELIGION AND AI**

**The conception of human perfection**

**Source 6 – Deuteronomy 6:4**

וְזֹאת הַמִּצְוָה הַחֲקִימָה וְהַמְשַׁפְּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְלַמֵּד אֶתְכֶם בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם עֹבְרִים לְרִשְׁתָּהּ:  
And this is the Instruction—the laws and the rules—that the LORD your God has commanded [me] to impart to you, to be observed in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy,

לְמַעַן תִּירָא אֶת־ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשִׁמּוֹר אֶת־כָּל־חֻקֹּתָיו וּמִצְוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מְצִוֶּה אֶתְּךָ וּבְנֶיךָ וּבְנוֹתֶיךָ כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ וּלְמַעַן יֵאָרְבוּ  
so that you, your children, and your children’s children may revere the LORD your God and follow, as long as you live, all His laws and commandments that I enjoin upon you, to the end that you may long endure.

וְשָׁמַעְתָּ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְשָׁמַרְתָּ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֲשֶׁר יִיטֵב לָךְ וְאֲשֶׁר תִּרְבּוּ מֵאֲדָם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֶיךָ לְךָ אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֵלֶב וְדָבָשׁ:  
Obey, O Israel, willingly and faithfully, that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, spoke to you, in a land flowing with milk and honey

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד : Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one

**The limits and power of knowledge**

**Source 7 - Genesis 2:16-17**

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל־הָאָדָם לֵאמֹר מִכָּל־עֵץ־הַגָּן אָכַל תֹּאכַל:  
And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat;

but as for the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat of it; for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die."

## The aspiration towards oneness

### Source 8

“God is all reality, but not all reality is God . . . He is found in all things, and all things are found in Him, and there is nothing devoid of God’s divinity, God forbid. Everything is in God, and God is in everything and beyond everything, and there is nothing else besides God.”

R. Moshe Cordovero (1522-1570), *Elimah Rabbati* 34d-25a, in Michaelson, J. *Everything is God*, 62-6

### Source 9 - Genesis 11:1-9

Everyone on earth had the same language and the same words.

And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there.

They said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and burn them hard.”—Brick served them as stone, and bitumen served them as mortar.—

ויאמרו הבה

And they said, “Come, let us build us a city, and a tower with its top in the sky, to make a name for ourselves; else we shall be scattered all over the world.”

The LORD came down to look at the city and tower that man had built,

and the LORD said, “If, as one people with one language for all, this is how they have begun to act, then nothing that they may propose to do will be out of their reach.

Let us, then, go down and confound their speech there, so that they shall not understand one another’s speech.”

Thus the LORD scattered them from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city.

{פ} על־כֵּן קרא שמה בבל כי־שם בגלל ה שפּת כל־הָאָרֶץ ומשם הפיצם ה על־פְּנֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ:

That is why it was called Babel, because there the LORD confounded the speech of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

### Source 10 - Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin (1816-1893), *Ha-Emek Davar* 11:3-4

#### פן נפוץ על פני כל הארץ

ומבן שזה היה שייך לדברים אחדים שהיה ביניהם ובאשר אין דעות ב”א שוים חששו שלא יצאו ב”א מדעה זו ויהיו במחשבה אחרת ע”כ היו משגיחים שלא יצא איש מישוב שלהם

And it is understood that this was related to the uniformity that was among them. And since the opinions of people are not identical, they feared that people might abandon this philosophy and adopt another. Therefore, they sought to ensure that no one would leave their community.

## Philosophy and AI



Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677)



Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

### Source 11- Benedict Spinoza

- A. "... to perfect the intellect is nothing else than to understand God and the attributes and actions of God which follow from the necessity of his nature. Hence the ultimate aim of the man who is led by reason, i.e., his highest desire, by which he endeavours to govern all other desires, is that which leads to the adequate knowledge of himself and of all objects which can be embraced by his intelligence." Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part IV, 279
- B. "There is no absolute or free will in the mind, but [the mind] is determined to will this or that by a cause which is also determined by another cause, and this again by another, and so on." Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part II

### Source 12 - Martin Heidegger

"To the Being of any equipment there always belongs a totality of equipment, in which it can be this equipment that it is. Equipment is essentially 'something in-order-to. . .'. A totality of equipment is constituted by various ways of the 'in-order-to'... In the 'in-order-to' as a structure there lies an assignment or reference of something to something... Equipment — in accordance with its equipmentality — always is in terms of its belonging to other equipment: ink-stand, pen, paper, blotting pad, table, lamp, furniture, windows, doors, room... ."

Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 97–9

## LIVING JEWISHLY IN THE FACE OF AI

### Source 13

"On Shabbat, the hammer is no longer equipment for us, linked to our past, present, and future. It is also not an object of scientific investigation. It has a function wholly other. It becomes holy, subject to a new way of understanding in which the hammer remains rooted in the world but is now an object which makes demands on us, rather than us making demands on it, and which seeks to instil within the mind of the observer a consciousness of the divine."

Harris Bor, *Staying Human*, 221

***Staying Human: A Jewish Theology for the Age of Artificial Intelligence*** can be purchased for £18.50 (while stocks last) for free delivery in the UK by contacting the author at [harris.bor@btinternet.com](mailto:harris.bor@btinternet.com). Alternatively, the book can be purchased from the main online booksellers.