



*Project for the Study of Love in Religion
(Sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation)*

Love – Philosophy & Praxis in the Teachings of Rabbi Akiva

*Illustration of Rabbi Akiva in the Mantua
Haggadah 1568*

A lecture by Rabbi Prof. Naftali Rothenberg
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5. 00 pm, Monday 12 June 2017
At Regent's Park College,
Pusey Street, Oxford OX1 2LB

Rabbi Akiva was one of the greatest sages of the Mishnaic period, if not the greatest. His legendary figure, leadership, halakhic method and thought occupy a central place throughout the rabbinic literature redacted over a period of centuries. The image of Rabbi Akiva that the Mishnah and Talmud present is that of the sage of love par excellence, with far-reaching implications regarding the place of the wisdom of love in the Jewish canon as a whole.

He first appeared in a **love story** in the legends; rescued the quintessential **love song**, *Song of Songs* from oblivion; developed an entire philosophy—and practice—of marital harmony; saw **love between man and woman** as a sacred perfection of body, mind and spirit; asserted that “**love your fellow** as yourself” is the great principle from which all morality derives; preached **love for all who were created in God's image**; and fulfilled the commandment to **love God** with every fibre of his being, loving Him with all his heart, soul and might, even when all was taken from him—an expression of **love to the last breath**. His ideas, theories and praxis laid a foundation for the study of the wisdom of love.

Naftali Rothenberg has published extensively on love in Jewish canonical literature. His forthcoming book: Rabbi Akiva's Philosophy of Love will be published during summer 2017 by Palgrave-Macmillan. The book was completed in two winter-periods in the programme of 'Law and Religion' and the Project of 'Love in Religion' at Regent's Park College.