Forty [40] Jewish philosophical Topics (as per request for Rabbi Nenner) by David B Levy

For general Jewish philosophy intro see http://libguides.tourolib.org/jewishphilosophy

(1) Yesh mi-ayin, creation ex nihilo, and limits of the proofs for divine CREATION but their necessity nonetheless "know how to respond to the epikoros" see proofs for Creation at libr. guide on ethical monotheism intro essay at:

http://libguides.tourolib.org/ethicalmonotheism

Give demonstrations of proof according to the Rambam (Sefer Moreh Nevukhim), Rav Saadia (sefer Emunot ve-Deot), Gersonides (Sefer Milhamot HaShem) on the Existence (Hu Kayam), Unity (Hu Yahid ve-Eino Yachdut KIYihudo), and Incorporeality (Ein lo demut ha-guf ve-eino guf) of Hashem

Why in sifrei Hasidut are there 5 words for creation? Why Did Rambam forbid his disciples to read Shiur Komah which gives dimensions in space and time of the G-dhead? How is Hashem’s unity different from the #1 but rather suggests a Uniqueness (Die Einzikeit Des Gottes)? From What sefirah does yesh mi ayin derive in Hasidut? How is Asifah related to that sefirah of Keter?

(2) How might one attempt to prove supernatural revelation before the tribunal of reason, Hu Kayam, 1st principle of Rambam’s 13 principles and existence of what is beyond nature (teva) memalah le-teva (i.e. Moshe Lo Yanum ve lo yishan arbayim yom ve arbayim lilah). How do the asserot debrot according to Rabbi Simlai and Hazal in the reception history of Rabbinic texts contain all the TARYAG ha-mitzvot. See http://libguides.tourolib.org/10comm

(3) Gates of Emunah and betachon: (see Rav Bacha's Sefer Hovot levavot and Ramhal's Sefer Derekh HaShem (organized in gait of emunah). Consider the relationship between tefilah and emunah in the works of Rav Bachya ibn Paqudah, Rabbi Isaac Abrabanel (principles of faith), etc. and how do tefilah and emunah work in tandem? How is tefilah like a ladder (i.e. gematria of sulem= kol (voice= prayer), fasting (tzum), and mamone (tzedakah)? In the realm of emunah consider one of Rambam’s principles of faith and elaborate upon this foundation. For example concerning tihiyat hamaytim consider if Hashem created yesh mi ayin/ creation ex nihilo) then He certainly can pull off a resurrection? In the Moreh Nevukhim how does the Rambam liken resurrection to CPR whereby Eliyahu ha Navi breathes into the nostrils and the patient sneezes 7X and returns to life? How is the spring in Rav Nachman of Breslav’s poem Shir LiAviv likened to “resurrection” by signs such as buds springing up after a long winter appearance of the foliage in hibernating slumber? Consider your experiences that may suggests hints to resurrection such as being in the Negev and witnessing after a rain storm within 1 hour green buds sprouting from the desert floor? Why does the liturgical text (recited on Pesah) called "tal (dew) allied with resurrection?"

(4) How does one reconcile science of the day with torah (an aspect of the Moreh Nevukhim that harmonizes Aristotelian science with Torah ) also see Jeremy Brown "New Heavens New earth" and DBL's review at: http://libguides.tourolib.org/scienceandtorah
(5) Ma’seh bereishit: How do we reconcile for instance mystical light Created on 1st day (Rashi notes this is the light for the tzadikim in olam ha-bah and Rambam elaborates further in Hilchot Teshuva that there (sham/ il y a au dela le verset/ es gibt Da(sein)) the Righteous sit and have crowns on the heads directly proportional to the hokmah-binah-daat gained in olam hazeh and they bask in ziv shekhnah (associated with Ohr genuz/ohr nistara) and the light giving heavenly bodies (sun-moon-stars) hooked up in orbits on 4rh day? Why for Rambam is there nothing physical in olam ha-bah, i.e. no eating, drinking, etc. yet the midrashim are filled with images of “great banquests” where for instance the righteous partake but the wicked have their hands tied behind their backs. In Maseket Sanhedrin what is meant by the “Wine stored up for the righteous” representing Eliyahu ha-navi who will clear up the kashes (contradictions) in the Rabbinic texts. i.e. Eliyahu is associated with the cup of wine of Elijah at the Seder and a bris.

(6) Unity of Hashem, Die Einzigkeit Des Gottes, How do many Jewish philosophers understand the Oneness of Hashem as a unity.? How do mystics understand this unity in gematria i.e. ahabah (13) + ekhad (13)= 26 gematria of tetragramaton i.e. Rabbi Akiva did an act mystical when proclaiming with all his love the unity of Hashem in reciting Shema as last words by effecting cosmic tikkun 13+13= 26

(7) Why do some Rabbis reject the incorporeality of G=d while some Rabbis like Rambam insist on the incorporeality of Hashem. Ain lo demut haguf ve-eno guf? That is why does the first part of the Guide after hakadmah, treats anthropomorphisms understood philosophically and not literally? Why does Rambam interpret Bitzelem Elokim bara oto (In the Image of G-d he created man) to mean with regards to the sekel hapoel which is the link (kesher) between man and Hashem? What does it mean that hashem has an outstretched arm and strong hand for Rambam? For Rambam this does not mean Hashem has an arm like a human arm or hand like a human hand, noting the “sense of touch reminds us that in this existence in olam ha-zeh we are bebodied, but rather the Mishneh Torah (yad hazakah) (yad= 10+4) is the” the strong hand”. which will free the student of "mental Egyps" or false opinions that may only be accidentally true, but the student should advance to being able to demonstrate which opinions are true and which are not by cognitive demonstration. As with Wittginstein the spectrum of truth, divides along lines of "correct (politically contingent), sound, valid, and true in all its dimensions. What is ultimate truth i.e. “He is near to all who call upon Him in truth” (Ashrei) or what is the logic behind the Maharal erasing the Aleph from the forehead of the Golem (spelling EMET) to effect caput-Mait (death) to put the Golem out of commission, when the golem as the perfect scientific system malfunctioned with glitches . According to Hazal why does Emet contain the first letter, middle letter, and last letter of the Hebrew alphabet? How does this signify more than the highpoints of Jewish history: Creation, Revelation, and Eschatological redemption?

(8) What are miracles? See Sefer HaPelah. Also: are miracles within the laws of nature that Hashem orchestrates and intervenes to redirect (i.e. strong winds caused kriyat yam suf- but what about the timing that the waters split just when the children of Israel needed to cross to dry land from the pursuing Egyptians), or are they memalah le-tevah represented by the # 8 (ie 8 day s of Hanukkah and Pesah and Hanukat HaBayit when Shlomo dedicated the 1st Temple). Also note sifrat ha-omer is 7X7 =49
+ 1= 50th day = Shavuot, [when Dovid HaMelekh went upstairs], as sefirot emanated pleromatically from *Die HimmelFern Garten as Malchut Malchut*. What is the logic behind Lag B’omer rationally relating to the sefirah of Netzah Netzahi (infinite eternity forever) which is understood as appropriate for the yahrzeit, and day the Rashbi emerged from the (Platonic) cave to the light (Republic book 7). In the cave one investigates the shadows on the wall representing the opinions of the many, *ad captum vulgi*, but only the philosopher can ascend to the light of truth (intellectus illuminatus). Explain the makloket between Rambam on the pusek from yeshayahu “the wolf will dwell with the lamb” and Rabbi Don Isaac Abarbanel who interprets that wolves will no longer desire by instinct to eat lamb as carnivores? Does this explain why Rav Kook holds that many humans will also be vegetarians closer to the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash, as a spiritual catharsis, before once again offering the sacrifices in purity and sanctity effecting theurgic cosmic tikkunim? Explain the “accidents/coincidences that” the gematria of Ohr= 207; ohr=207, shabbat=702 reverse images Why is there an uncanny coincidence that the gematria of Moshe is 345which is the sum of ohr (207) plus 138 which can either be the numerical equivalent for Menachem, a name for the final redeemer, or Tzemach meaning plant. The light of Moshe’s face was radiating light at the burning bush, as was the case with Adam and Eve before the primordial sin. Is it mere coincidence that light, ohr=207, and skin (ayinvav resh= 276), both multiples of 23, the tenth prime number, is the gematria of radiance (zayin yod vav). Further coincidence that 207 is 9 times 23, and 276 is 12 times 23, whereby 23 plays a key role in string theory? Rabbi Ginsburgh thinks not, for in string theory the reciprocal of 207 (light)= 1/207= 0.00[483]0 and further 483 is repeated when we add 207 (ohr) and 276 (skin), which equals 690, the equivalent of the “Moshe, Moshe,” G-d’s call to Moshe to redeem the Jewish people at the sneh which was not consumed but as a lowly bush symbolizing humility, as Moshe Rabbenu was not just humble, but anav moed. Why does Pirke Avot liken gematria, notricon to the after dinner drinks of a heavenly (intellectual) banquet where the food of love is the celestial discourse of angelic hosts who bring the shefa of the soul to higher levels of hokmah-binah-daat so the soul may enter palaces of the 7 heavens and be refreshed and delighted, and some privileged found to be worthy souls will witness Eliyahu ha-navi clearing up contradictions of kashes etc

(9) How does Jewish philosophy understand Reward and Punishment in Afterlife? see:  
http://libguides.tourolib.org/afterlife

(10) What are the Levels of Prophecy (*madregot shel nevua*)? for example why is Moshe Rabbenu chief of the prophets? For Rambam why does this signify that Moshe’s revelation is law i.e. halakhah is not coterminous with secular law or nomos, while other prophets employ the imagination in greater degrees; Why does Rambam argue that the imagination is the speculum that does not shine clearly Asplakaria me’iri?

(11) What is the hierarchy of Jewish angelology see: essay on angelology at  
http://libguides.tourolib.org/c.php?g=131604 How do the 5th Century Hechalot texts (The Greater and Lesser Places) enlighten us about the myriads of celestial hosts? Why does Rambam hold malakhim are extensions of faculties of the mind while Shmuel HaNagid holds that they are the eyes of angels in
agreement with Ibn Ezra? Why do some rabbis hold angels have no bodies i.e. Rashi on the 3 malakhim at Mamre appear to eat but are not eating?

(12) Hashgahah Pratit (Providence) vs. Free will (behira) see Akedat Yitzchak mikorot packet at:

http://libguides.tourolib.org/c.php?g=114143&p=742989 scroll to ppt. on akedat Yitzchak under Hagim (Yamim Noraim) focus on pusek "now I know that you fear G-d". How do different rabbis across 2000 millenia interpret this pusek differently? Can we discern patterns of peshat, remez, sod in constellations of interpretations?

Also see test case of Hashem hardening Pharoah's heart- Ramban holds Pharoah did not have free will

(13) How do philosophers understand War in Rabbinic thought and halakhah relating to end of days when there will be no more war, and the timing of when the children of Israel have permission based on a pusek in Shir HaShirim to ascend to Eretz Yisrael “bi-homah”? See library guide on King David power point on David’s wars in context and development of halakha at:
http://libguides.tourolib.org/c.php?g=114157&p=743093

(14) What is the prophetic calling [Gattung] mission? What patter do we see in Moshe saying he is a stutterer (based on a midrash that he reached for the coal and not the gold), Isaiah claims he is of uncircumcised lips, Jeremiah claims he is just a lad (naar). See ppt. on Sefer Yonah at
http://libguides.tourolib.org/c.php?g=114143&p=742989 How does the GRA interpret based on a gemarah that Yonah and his prophetic call represents a gilgul of tikkunim?

(15) Jewish views of the eternality of the soul and bodily resurrection see:
http://libguides.tourolib.org/afterlife Why does Rabbi Chaim Vital, Talmud mivhak of HA-Ari HaKodesh classify and describe the 5 parts of the soul? Name those 5 distinct parts and explain what HAZal understand by the pusek in Koheleth: “HaNefesh tashuv li-Makor”. How Does Rav Solomon ibn Gabirol in Fons Vital, Mikor Hayim, reference Hashem as the “source of life” from which all souls spring?

(16) What is the difference between fear of Hashem (yirat Shamayim) and Ahavat Hashem (see Rambam Sefer Madah in MT) or Rav Bacyha on sefer Hovot Levavot. Why does Rambam hold that ahavas Hashem is higher than Yirat HaShem? Why does Mishlei hold that all is in the hands of Hashem except yirat Shamayim? What are the dimensions of Ahavas Hashem? How do they according to Rav Tzadok the Kohen relate to Ahavas Olam, Ahavas Torah, Ahavas Yisrael? Etc. What is the La Sagesse D’amour? How does friendship based on sharing a common endeavor of searching for hokmah-binah-vedaas in the life of the mind to acquire intellectual virtue factor into love of G-d?

(17) How do Jewish philosophers understand the Process of Geulah (tachlis geulah). What is the significance of the vision shown the Noam Elimelekh of the two paths that can occur in Jewish history towards ultimate redemption? How do Hazal interpret the war of Gog veMogog differently and how is this based on Biblical theology? In the Rambam’s clarification in Sefer Shoftim of the MT. what do we understand by the following conditions that may obtain biyamei haMashiah: (1) no war, (2) no famine, (3) blessing abundant, (4) knowledge of Hashem as widespread as waters in the sea (Bavli as the sea), (5) lamb with dwell with the wolf, (6) halakhic requirements of reinstitution of shemitah, yuvel, techelet in
tzizit, reinstallation of the Sanhedrin and avodah of Beit HAMikdashetc, (7) building of the Beit HaMikdash, (8) ingathering of the exiles etc

(18) How a scholar ethically conducts themselves? (See Derekh Eretz Zuta) and loshon naki ve-machashava naki refraining from loshon ha-rah see DBL’s paper at: http://databases.jewishlibraries.org/node/49357 Consider the Chofetz Chaim’s halakhic and philosophic understanding of the evil of speaking motzi shem rah and loshon ha-rah.

Abstract= Halakhah as an Ethical Guide for Netiquette: Applying the Chofetz Chaim’s Hilchot Eshrei Lashon Hara ve-motzi shem rah (laws against slander and libel), the prohibitions of (a) ona’at devarim (meanspeak), (b) lo telech rachil b’ameicha (tailbearing), (c) embarrassing someone in public (halbanat panim) based on Baba Metzia 57a-58, and striving for (a) loshon naki (proper speech) found in Pesachim 3b and Arachin 15b, (b) derekh eretz (good manners) kedma la’torah found in sefer Derech Eretz Zuta, (c) kiddush haShem (sanctifying G-d’s name), (d) k’vod habriyot (respecting G-d’s creation) and all human bitzelem Elokim (in the image of G-d), and (e) Darkhei Noam (ways of pleasantness). All examples were illustrated by cited sources (mikrot) from the Mishnah, tosefta, Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmudim, Midrashim, Sifrei Hasidut, and Musar texts.

(19) Consider a topic Contemporary problems in Jewish ethics and business ethics and online ethics and show how the rabbis apply old case law from rabbinic texts based on the Biblical law, to the apparent new technologies of stem cell research, cloning, heart lung machines and if and when they cannot be disconnected, criteria of death, etc. For example how do the rabbis apply the category of hasagat gevul (stealing a neighbors piece of land by moving a boundary) to plagiarism?


See presentation addressed issues including (1) Cherem de Rabbeni Gershom applied to privacy of emails, (2) is mechikat Hashem from a computer screen oser of lo ta’asum ken as an issur chafitza? (3) filters for pritzus & stius, (4) illegal film and music downloading causing loss of royalties despite minhago shel olam and hamotzi l’or yodeah mizeh, and (5) copyright by applying principles of (a) hasagat gevul, (b) hashkamot, (c) dina d’malkhuta dina, and (d) shiur b’kinyan.

More information is available here: http://www.jewishlibraries.org/main/Resources/Podcast/tabid/89/currentpage/2/Default.aspx

(20) How does halakhah work in tandem with Jewish philosophy as a prerequisite for philosophizing? Why does Rambam hold that sciences including physics, is a prerequisite for ma’aseh bereishit and metaphysics is a prerequisite for ma’aseh merkavah? What does Rambam understand by metaphysics and how does this differ greatly from common notions of the many regarding what is “after the physical” literally in etymology?

See http://libguides.tourolib.org/codification and http://databases.jewishlibraries.org/node/49232
"Medieval Jewish Textual Collections and the History of Jewish Education and Rabbinic Curriculum" was based on evidence from the Cairo Geniza, Geonic Responsa, and Rabbinic corpus [The Cases of Temurah 14b, Megillat Setarim, Kiddushin 29a, Megilli 32a, Iggerot of Rabbi Sherira Gaon, glossiata & quntres of Rashi, 'the lost halakhic books of the Tosaphists' and the Academy of Rabbi Samuel of Dampierre]- Findings post- Simchah Assaf, Goitein, Nehemya Allony, Malachi Beit Arie, Collette Sirat, Yakov Sussman, and Yakov Ellman.

(21) What are some different Jewish philosophies of Education and ultimate learning as a dedication of one’s life to perfecting the soul, Shelemut, the life of the mind in pursuit of hokmah-binah-vedaat or acquiring intellectual virtue via the sekel hapoel which is the link between Hashem and human beings? How does one balance this quest with also searching and showing moral and spiritual virtue? Does this relate to the pusek in Pirke Avot Yafa Talmud torah eim derekh eretz? See

See

(22) Philosophy of Language: Why according to sefer Yetzirah did Adam and Chava speak a translucent Hebrew in Gan Eden where sign and signifier are coterminous? Why does Sefer HaZohar and the Midrash describe that Hashem went to all 22 letters and only found the bet worthy of beginning in Bereishit (begins in brachot, can’t push to the right of the bet, bet looks like a house etc.) Why is the first letter of tanakh bet, and last lamed in reverse spelling lev the seat and faculty of understanding or binah?

http://libguides.tourolib.org/linguisticsphilosophy

http://libguides.tourolib.org/hebrewlanguage Hebrew the eternal language

(23) Why is ma’aseh merkavah higher than even the pristine certainty of mathematics indicated by the gemarah’s remark ‘Ben Zoma is still outside (see Hagigah 12b-14b)? see Rambam’s view of Logic and math at http://libguides.tourolib.org/mathphilosophy see essay on Herod’s use of pure blue painted marble in beit HaMikdash at http://libguides.tourolib.org/jewisharts

(24) How have philosophers understood the commandment “lo oseh likhah pesel” Consider Rabbi Akiva asking if he can enjoy the waters of a bathhouse if there is a statue of Aphrodite in it? Why did Rabban Gamiel not handle Roman Coins that have a picture raised up (a little pesel) of the Roman emperor who like Pharoah thought he was a deity in the pantheon like the morning and evening stars? How does the Mekhilta understand the pusek “lo oseh likha pesel” in relation to the pusek from shirat haYam, “zeh elei ve-anavehu, Elokai vearemehu? See http://libguides.tourolib.org/jewisharts for rif on Herod’s use of techelet (painted blue marble) in his beit Hamikdash and how Rabbi Akiva relates this to al tamru mayim mayim in Maseketa Hagigah 12a-14b. With regard to other forms of idolatry such as the egel ha-zahav how does Hazal understand that Chet? What does Rambam warn the Jews of Marseilles with their interest in astrology? Write a dialogue between the rationalist Rambam and the mystic ibn Ezra for and against truths in the mazalot? See Ibn Ezra’s Sefer Halbur (book of celestial pregnancies), : the Book of Elections (3 versions); the Book of Interrogations (3 versions); and the Book of the Luminaries. Sefer ha-Moladot, which addresses the doctrine of nativities and the system of continuous horoscopy in nativities, and of Sefer ha-Tequfah etc edited by Shlomo Selah. Write a dialogue between Rambam and the GRA with regards to why the GRA decodes the Kail Adon prayer sung on Shabbos to refer to all 7
planets? Write a dialogue between the Rambam and Rav Kahuna who likes the Hakafot on Simchat Torah to the paths of the 7 planets?

(25) why in Jewish thought are women considered to be on a higher spiritual madrega than men?- consider the incident of the meraglim (men in minyan because 10 spies gave bad report of eretz yisrael) and Rosh Hodesh? See http://databases.jewishlibraries.org/node/17677

http://libguides.tourolib.org/jewishwomen

(a) see ppt Jewish Women in Tanakh-Talmud-Responsa-and history of the 1st and 2nd Temples, Tannaitc, Amoraic, Geonic, Rishonim, and Ahronim periods, (b) Jewish Women's education since the Chofetz Chaim and Today, and (c) Responsible use of the Internent for Researching Jewish Women in history. The Introduction, PowerPoint, narrative text with footnotes, 213 page Bibliography, and a 65 page list of mikorot (sources) in Hebrew & Aramaic in Rabbinic texts on Womens' Mitzvot

(b) Rosh Hodesh relating to Women and Kabalah

Lurianic Kabbalah claims that the 2 orot, shemesh veyareach, and the 1st 2 humans, Adam and Chava, male and female aspects of the Godhead were equal in the embryonic stage of ma‘aseh bereshit. However as a result of the exit from Eden the lavanah became smaller and the Shechinah went into Galut. It is only in geulah tha that the 2 will be restored to their rightful places. A similar destiny is promised women and technology may play a role in that. For example biomedical technology allows women to give birth at older ages and with less labor pain. Technology and science also allows women greater access to Rabbinic learning that in some cases was denied women in the past as illustrated by Moshe Weinberg and Isaac Sassoon. The revolution in the expansion of Women Midrashot in Israel and across the globe in the past 25 years, the subject of Esti Rosenberg’s recent article in the Spring 2012 issue of Tradition (45:1) is enabled by the advances in technology to travel to these centers of learning to participate in a living masorah, oseh likhah rav. The sources for this promise and the halakhic basis for the observance of Rosh Hodesh is a sugya from Megillah 22b. Rashi and Tosafot comment that women are not permitted to do work on RH i.e. Rashi comments women refrain from spinning, weving, and sewing. This is explained in Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer (ch. 45):

"The women heard about all construction of the egel hazahav and refused to submit their jewelry to their husbands for the women said that the egel hazahav was a toavah hi and has no power of geulah. Hakadosh baruch hu rewarded the women in olam hazeh to observe RH and in olam habah the women are destined shen atidot lehithadesh kimokhah."

Mekor Haminhagim notes the women were enthusiastic about the mishkan and reluctant about the egel hazahav. According to Ohr Zaruah RH is an obvious reference to the monthly cycle after which women renew themselves in a mikvah like the moon thru immersion (See Midrash Tadshei). The acronym for Roshei Chadashim is rechem. Biyemei hamashiah just as the moon (sefirah of malchut) will be elevated in size to the shemesh-[sefirah of keter], so women will ascend in function and status without becoming identical to men but realizing true gender equality that recognizes the difference between men and women who complement each other as Chava complemented Adam, or as Rabban Gamliel's daughter notes in a Midrash, when Eve was presented to Adam Rishon, it was a raising in kedushah as if a silver jug were replaced by a
gold jug. The bnai Yissachar notes the gematria of Hodesh= 312 and the yod key vav key times 12 months of the year= 312. Ergo Hashem is present with all the tribes throughout the year (364 days) because of the factor of RH where the women refused to engage in avodah zarah.

(26) What are some Jewish philosophic ideas of “time” (dwelling poetically in time via observance in the Jewish calendar vs. Greek notions of “exploiting, charging for, and manipulating time” represented in phrase “Chronos Diatreiben”= to spend time. How is this Western Greek notion inferior to the Rabbinic understandings of time as a metaphysical topic see: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=10382

(27) What does Rambam note in distinguishing between positive [ (1) not a body, (2) not finite, (3) not ignorant] and negative attribute (Hu chanum ve rachum ve erekh ha-payim rav hesed ve-emet etc.) of Hashem? Why this distinction based on humility? Why does Rambam hold that contemplation of all the attributes of Hashem as a form of intellectual meditation is the highest of all cognitive activities?

(28) What are some of the philosophical debates between the mitnagdim and Hasidim over the soul, the world redeemed or not, popularization of sifrei Kabbalah, and eretz yisrael that are at ultimate stake:
See http://libguides.tourolib.org/hasidism
http://libguides.tourolib.org/codification also see musar movement

(29) How is the synagogue similar and different from the beit HaMikdash? How is heavenly Temple related to the worldly beit HaMikdash? What is the relationship between the mishkan and beit HaMikdash on har habayit? How wil the beit HaMikdash be rebuilt by the mashiach? How does the microcosm of the beit HaMikdash reflect the macrocosm or cosmic realms? Why does Hashem’s shekhinah dwell in the beit HaMikdash? What are some philosophic understandings of the supernatural aspects of the begadim, keilim, of the beit HaMikdash

What are the philosophical mystical aspects of the Korbanot? Why did the Chofetz Chaim’s yeshivah focus on learning the laws of the korbanot

see
http://libguides.tourolib.org/secondtemple
http://libguides.tourolib.org/synagogue

(30) What are some philosophic streams in Religious Zionism
See: Rav Kook http://libguides.tourolib.org/ravkook
Religious Zionism http://libguides.tourolib.org/religiouszionism
Rav Yehudah HaLevi http://libguides.tourolib.org/halevi

(31) What are some Ethical issues at stake in contemporary Jewish medical ethics for Orthodox Jewish scientists?
http://libguides.tourolib.org/scienceandtorah

(33) What are the moral and ethical implications of Rabbinic theodicy? What philosophic reasons do philosophers give to the question, “why do the innocent sometimes suffer?” Consider the case of Iyov. Why does Rav Saadia give the reason that Iyov suffered because Iyov was silent in Pharaoh’s court when it was decided that the Hebrew boys be drowned while Rambam suggests that Iyov was tested because he needed to learn how to serve Hashem out of ahavah and not yirah? How does other rabbinic theodicy explanations wrestle with the existence of evil- consider for existence that the 1st bei HaMikdash was destroyed by violence and pritzus, the 2nd by sinat hinam, 1648= Tach vaTat according to the Tosefot Yom Tov was brought about by talking in the synagogue, etc. [see PHD dissertation by David B Levy, 2000, University microfilms ] How have Jews who have suffered catastrophe and Hurban sought to transcend such terrible and horrible circumstances on the extreme hand by acts of martyrdom and other acts such as in the death camps of the Holocaust making a menorah from scrap metal, trading in one’s bread ration on Pesah although everything including the watery soup was humetzdik and treif, risking one’s life to put on tefillin in the camps? Why did Rambam draw so much controversy with regards to his letter on martyrdom?

(34) How do Jewish philosophers understand Jewish election (am segulah)? Bahar banu mikol ha-amim and how would a Jew defend that this concept is not “racist” or makes claim for Jewish superiority?

(35) What is the relationship in Jewish philosophy between law and rationality and justice? See intro essay at: 

(36) Consider the influence of Platonism, Aristotelianism, and the Kalam on Jewish medieval philosophy within the context of the rabbinic notion of authority vested in a reliable tradition (masorah)

(37) Compare and contrast the analysis of teshuvah in Rambam’s Hilchot Teshuvah, Rabbi Yonah Gerondi’s Sharei Teshuvah, and Rav Soloveitchik’s essay on this subject. How does teshuvah relate to forgiveness, reconciliation, and Kapora (atonement). For example consider cases such as that in Maseket Yoma where Rava tried to ask forgiveness from a Jewish butcher on behalf of someone who asked 3x as per the Mishnah in Yoma for the butcher to forgive him, but the butcher would not. What do commentaries (Yad Mordechai, Rabbenu Hanalel, Rashi, Tosofot, etc) note is the reason why the
butcher when refusing to forgive upon Rava’s entreatment that he do so, accidentally choked on a bone from a piece of meat he was hacking on? In rabbinic law what special great exceptional areas constitute cases where forgiveness cannot be given? Consider for example Rabbi Heschel’s statement in the Sonnenblumen of Simon Wiesenthal that the Nazi murder of 6 million Jews by gassing, machine gunning by Einzatzgruppen, and other terrible sadistic means is a fait accompli, and thus a Nazi on their death bed cannot be forgiven by someone like Wiesenthal, because no matter how preposterous the thought, the Nazi would have to ask forgiveness from the Jewish victims shot into pits or gassed and reduced to ashes in the crematoria. Situate Heschel’s analysis of the Sunflower in the halakhic context of this discussion regarding the impossibility of forgiving Amalek. See for instance the Rivaad’s makloket on the Rambam, etc.

(38) Consider the Contradictions in Megilat Koheleth? What does and does not Koheleth say is the meaning and purpose of life? Is there a method whereby Koheleth intentionally contradicts himself to employ a process of thesis/antithesis/ and aufhebung? What is meant by Koheleth in the pusek, “Happy is they who have seen the light of the sun?” What does Koheleth mean?

(39) What does Dovid HaMelekh in the haftorah for the 7th day of Pesah mean by “Ani MiMayim Rabbim? What is the peshat and the deeper meanings?

(40) What does the Ramban mean by suggesting in Kadmah litorah that the whole torah is an encryption of Hashem’s Holy Names that only mikubalim can decode? Why in Megilat Esther is the name of Hashem not mentioned explicitly but indirectly as the King of kings? What is the significance of Adam Kadmon’s naming of the animals in Bereishit? Why do Hazal hold that Moshe Killed the task master by uttering the name of Hashem? Why did only the Kohen Gadol pronounce the name of Hashem 1x per year in the Kodesh Kodashim on Yom Kippur? What is the power of names? How did the Besht effect theurgic results by inserting names and name permutations in his siddur? What is understood by Hazal in commentary on the Kail Maleh Rachamim prayer, ‘a shining name in Gan Eden?”. Why do Hazal hold that a name is the essence of person’s character. How do gematriot of names suggest hidden secrets? For example is it accidental that Rambam’s brother Rabbi Dovid Maimon has the gematria of “14’ (Daleth + vav + daleth” and the MT. is in 14 sections? Is it accidental that Dag is 7 (Dag biYom Dag). See Sefer Mah BiShemot? What’s in a name?

Composed by David B Levy erev Taanis Esther inspired by the pusek, “Shushan was perplexed” as related to the Moreh Nevukhim