The Edah Journal
REVIEW ESSAYS

Nitzhuni Banai: A Review Essay of "Love and Terror in the God Encounter, The Theological Legacy of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (Volume I)," by David Hartman

Eugene Korn

Biography: Dr. Eugene Korn is editor of The Edah Journal, Director of Interfaith Affairs at the Anti-Defamation League and Adjunct Professor of Jewish Thought at Seton Hall University.

The Edah Journal 2:1
Edah, Inc. © 2002
Tevet 5762

Nitzhuni Banai: A Review Essay of "Love and Terror in the God Encounter, The Theological Legacy of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (Volume I)," by David Hartman (Jewish Lights, 2001) 219 pages

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I

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903-1993), known simply as "The Rav," was arguably the most important Orthodox figure in the 20th century. He taught at Yeshiva University from 1941 until the 1980s and, more than any other person, established the intellectual basis for Orthodoxy's critical synthesis with modernity. Because of his singular status, his legacy has become a battleground in the ideological war now raging for the future of Orthodoxy. Those implicitly advocating retreat to the insulated *yeshivah* culture that shuns modernity question his appreciation of high Western culture, innovation, Zionism and universal issues, while Modern Orthodox Jews see him as the unabashed model of their religious philosophy.

Two great intellectual traditions nurtured the The Rav's spirit: the analytic Brisker method of Talmud study he inherited from his grandfather R. Hayyim of Brisk and his father R. Moshe, and the Western philosophic tradition, which he mastered at the University of Berlin while earning a Ph.D. in neo-Kantian ethics in 1929. At Yeshiva he taught both Talmud and Jewish philosophy.

The above debate is possible because R. Soloveitchik left two legacies parallel to these dual influences. His talmudic legacy is well-known in the Orthodox community. He ordained more rabbis than any other person in Jewish history, and his Talmud students continue to teach Torah in the Brisker analytic spirit at *yeshivot* and synagogues in America and Israel. In the last 25 years, numerous books, pamphlets and tapes of his talmudic and halakhic discourses have become available to the public.

By contrast, Rav Soloveitchik's theological legacy remains relatively unexplored. Many of his best philosophically inclined students, such as Professors Gerald Blidstein and David Hartman, have emigrated to Israel, limiting the presence of the Rav's philosophic legacy in America. Rabbi Walter Wurzburger and Professor Lawrence Kaplan have written articles analyzing individual aspects of the Rav's philosophy[1], but to date no one

[1] See for example, W. Wurzberger's "The Centrality of Creativity in the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik," *Tradition* 30:4 (Summer 1996) pp.219-228, and L. Kaplan's "Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik's Philosophy of Halakhah," *Jewish Law Annual,* Volume VII (1988).

has attempted a comprehensive explication and assessment of his theological *oeuvre*. David Hartman assumes this important task in his recent book, *Love and Terror in the God Encounter*. The book is the first of two planned volumes covering R. Soloveitchik's philosophic legacy.

Hartman is uniquely qualified for this endeavor. Born in 1931 in Brooklyn, Hartman spent his early years at Chaim Berlin, Lubavitch and Lakewood *yeshivot*. He studied Talmud with the Rav at Yeshiva University from 1951-1960. After receiving *semikhah* from YU in 1953, Hartman took a pulpit in Bronx, New York, so he could continue to sit at the feet of his *rebbe*.

Hartman credits the Rav for his philosophy career and is fond of quoting his dialogue with R. Soloveitchik about its pursuit. As a *ben torah* at Yeshiva, Hartman expressed reluctance to venture into the world of philosophy with its standard of critical rationality for truth and valid belief. When Hartman told the Rav that he feared philosophy might jeopardize his faith, the Rav responded curtly that the spiritual life demands taking risks. Rav Soloveitchik wrote Hartman's letter of recommendation to Fordham University for Hartman to study with Jesuit scholars from 1955 to 1960. In 1960, Hartman moved to Montreal to serve as rabbi of a large Orthodox congregation until 1971. He then emigrated to Israel, where he taught Jewish philosophy at Hebrew University. He received his doctorate from McGill University in 1973 and founded the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem in 1976. Named after Hartman's father, the Institute is the world's premier Jewish think tank, where scholars probe classical Jewish tradition's engagement with the challenges of modernity: pluralism, statehood, democracy, autonomy, and ethics. Hartman continues to teach and write as Director of the Institute.

Hartman's relationship with R. Soloveitchik transcended time and geography. His close studies with the Rav in the 1950's were so influential on his religious and philosophic development that the voice of his teacher accompanied Hartman wherever he traveled thereafter. I studied closely with Hartman, and it is clear that the Rav remains to this day Hartman's significant intellectual other. Hartman imbibed his teacher's theocentric passion and philosophic temper, his metaphors, his spiritual independence, his honesty in confronting intellectual challenges and his abiding faith in the spiritual power of Jewish tradition.

II

Hartman uses the traditional hermeneutic to analyze R. Soloveitchik's writing. He quotes a passage, then subjects it to his commentary: sometimes explicating, sometimes revealing implicit meanings, and sometimes elucidating problematic nuances. He devotes his initial two chapters to an analysis of the content and spirit of *Halakhic Man*, published originally in Hebrew in 1944 and in English translation by Lawrence Kaplan in 1983. Defending his teacher against two contemporary critiques, Hartman argues first that the critique of historical inauthenticity misunderstands the Rav's enterprise. *Halakhic Man* was intended neither as a historical construction nor as a characterology of the halakhic personality; it is, rather, a phenomenological description of an ideal halakhic type of which R. Hayyim of Brisk was only an approximation. *Halakhic Man* reflects a formalistic perspective, and R. Soloveitchik understands that *halakhah* is not symbolism of a higher cosmic drama (as hasidic *kabbalah* interprets it), nor is Judaism an attempt to purge the holy life of sex, death and finitude, as Christian spirituality understood religion. Unlike the Western religious personality, the halakhic person is concerned exclusively with fulfilling his duty through action in the empirical world. He is anchored firmly in society and history rather than in the world to come.

Hartman also defends his teacher against the oft-repeated claim that he uses the Western traditions of philosophy, mathematics and science merely as apologetics. Proponents of that critique maintain that the Rav merely repackages traditional talmudism to make it attractive to those outside the talmudic world, that he makes no conceptual breakthroughs, and that he fails to integrate Judaism and Western intellectual traditions to fashion a new spiritual vision. Quite simply, his writing is old Jewish wine in new Western bottles.

Hartman is strongest exposing the superficiality of this critique—whose advocates often have limited understanding of the philosophic tradition from which R. Soloveitchik draws—and demonstrating that something deeper than apologetics is at work. In fact R. Soloveitchik is articulating (1) the halakhic type's passion for theoretical inquiry and (2) his spiritual defense against the excesses of romanticism and existentialism.

From the polemical Paul to Spinoza, Kant, Mathew Arnold, and Nietzsche, the Christian and Western intellectual traditions portrayed faithful Jews as concerned exclusively with behavior. Greek and Christian spiritual life, by contrast, quests for truth through contemplative inquiry. For R. Soloveitchik the *talmid hakham* on his deepest level represents a profound theoretical spirit: The pillar of halakhic thought "is not the practical ruling but the determination of the theoretical *halakhah* ….The theoretical *halakhah*, not the empirical one, represents the longing of Halakhic Man." (*Halakhic Man*, p. 24) This is why Brisker *yeshivot* studied tractates dealing with sacrifices and ritual impurities, which have no contemporary practical relevance. Hartman argues that the devotion to *torah li-shmah* can only be explained by a passion for theoretical inquiry. Like the mathematician, the man of *halakhah* attempts to create an *a priori* logical construct that envelops his religious universe. R. Soloveitchik's invoking the model of mathematics is no *apologia*, but a way to illuminate the inner spiritual life of Halakhic Man.

Understanding the Copernican revolution that R. Soloveitchik achieves, Hartman details how creativity lies at the heart of the Rav's conception of halakhic living. R. Soloveitchik held in disdain intellectual timidity, passivity and blind obedience. From a tradition that begins with the human overpowered by divine revelation, R. Soloveitchik builds a religious ideal of intellectual independence, transforming tradition's primary theme of "He held a mountain over their heads" (*Shabbat* 88a) to "the Torah is not in Heaven" (*Bava Metsi`a* 59b).

At the same time, *halakhah* functions as a moderating principle, enabling R. Soloveitchik to avoid the dangers of modern romanticism and existentialism, for which vitality and authenticity became destructive values (see *Halakhic Man,* note 4). While Halakhic Man strives to sanctify himself through creative action, he is kept within the bounds of morality by the practical norm of *halakhah*. R. Soloveitchik's method is dialectical, and halakhic commitment serves as a counterweight to his individualist passion, thereby saving him from the extremes of absurdity, despair, nihilism, and Dionysian fury so common to Western spiritual testimonies.

Hartman explains how R. Soloveitchik delicately navigates between the distrust of irrationality and the urge to be a hero who rises above mediocrity. This dialectical oscillation produces conflict and complexity, yet it is the only path to spiritual depth. In the end, the religious life is an artistic struggle, and only those capable of intellectual independence and emotional intensity can comprehend the Rav writings.

Halakhic Man, then, is an attempt to construct a heroic personality who strives to liberate himself from "the icy darkness of uniformity." It is, in effect, R. Soloveitchik's response to Neitzsche's "*Übermensch*," whom we know R. Soloveitchik read carefully. Yet unlike Neitzsche's and Kierkegaard's models of unrestrained subjectivity, Halakhic Man is guided by the objective halakhic norm that governs his behavior, his emotional life and his conceptualization of God, the world and humanity.

The normative consciousness of Halakhic Man saves him from the perils of Kierkegaardian subjectivity, and his creativity and self-realization help shape the law. Here R. Soloveitchik achieves a linguistic revolution by appropriating Kantian terminology of autonomy, freedom, individuality, and spontaneity when describing *halakhah*. R. Soloveitchik differs from Kant, however, since the autonomy/heteronomy distinction breaks down when Torah and creativity are the central frameworks of religious life. For the Rav, the event of revelation that implies submission on the objective level of phenomena is experienced as independent freedom on the noumenal level *via* intellectual immersion in Torah. This is the authentic phenomenology of the halakhic life, which ends in both self-discovery and self-creation.

Given Hartman's understanding of *Halakhic Man,* it is clear that in blazing his interpretation of the halakhic life through dialogue with Kant, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Karl Barth and Rudolph Otto, R. Soloveitchik is not engaging in apologetics, but integrating commitment to tradition with modern conceptions of human freedom and dignity.

Halakhic Man is a strange figure to Western religious thought. The *homo religiosus* of Greek and Christian thought "searches for an existence beyond the empirical reality. He is dissatisfied, disappointed and unhappy and craves to rise above the vale of tears, from concrete reality." (*Halakhic Man*, pp. 13,40.) Western religious man yearns to be released from the chains of matter and strives to become pure spirit. "*Soma sema,*" says Plato. "The body is a prison house." God is a consola-

tion for life in the material world and religion merely offers mnemonic symbols of a life in another world. Halakhic Man, however, is filled with confidence borne of the conviction that his partnership with God renders him adequate to understand, appropriate, and apply the divine Word. Although man is but dust and ashes, as a Torah scholar employing rational capacities he is also the crowning achievement of creation. Halakhic Man overcomes the paradox of self-negation and self-affirmation via *mitsvot,* which constantly testify to God's confidence in the human ability to build a holy, i.e., meaningful, life. *Mitsvot* also integrate the body and the spirit, since they bring biological functions into the religious domain. Holiness is a life ordered by *mitsvot*, which add divine character to sexuality, eating, and the body. Unlike Aristotle and Rambam, who tried to suppress physical drives, R. Soloveitchik affirms the body as holy.

Hartman sees R. Soloveitchik as conceptualizing a unique Jewish version of spirituality. It is not liberation from finitude, but quite the opposite. Finitude, limit, imperfection then are the preconditions to redemption within empirical history; *halakhah* elevates the lower world to the level of the divine. Instead of rejecting the eschatological elements of jewish tradition, R. Soloveitchik adopts a Maimonidean stratagem: just as Rambam minimized the centrality of messianism in religious life, R. Soloveitchik similarly emphasizes selectively the worldliness of halakhic norms as the organizing principle of Jewish life. The experience of *mitsvot* in this life is its own reward.

This affirmation of earthly life and its possibility for holiness reflects R. Soloveitchik's appreciation of modern disciplines that focus on empirical understanding (science) and social organization (politics and ethics). It also allows R. Soloveitchik to celebrate creativity, joy, and human adequacy and avoid the melancholy of death that mocks those values. This worldly focus also allows Halakhic Man to become a moral activist who "hears the cries of the homeless, the sighs of the orphans and the groans of the destitute." The holy life consists of human relationships and improving the world, not of mystic meditation or stoic detachment.

Hartman stresses that in R. Soloveitchik's view creativity is a necessary condition of holiness. This emphasis is an important contribution, since some of R. Soloveitchik's talmudic students have portrayed the Rav as denying the value and practice of *hiddush*. In fact, Part II of *Halakhic Man* is a paean to the power—and sanctity—of human creativity. R. Soloveitchik's philosophical writing has a passionate artistic quality, and never as much as when he rhapsodizes on the redemptive nature of the creative act.

R. Soloveitchik is unique in seeing human creativity as *imitateo dei*. R. Walter Wurzburger has shown[2] that the Rav leaves the Brisker tradition of R. Hayyim and approaches kabbalistic thought to assert that creativity in society is both possible and religiously desirable. As Hartman explains, creativity is a *motif* infusing the entire halakhic tradition. Humanity's divine mandate is to perfect the world through creative endeavors of scientific, political and humanistic inquiry.

It is here that Hartman artfully relates R. Soloveitchik's affirmation of creativity to his conceptions of *teshuvah* and prophecy. The highest creative act is to recreate one's personality and leave sin in the past, for the penitent transforms himself into another person. Divine providence rests upon the individual (*hashgahah peratit*) as he recreates himself distinct from others. He does not abandon himself to the rule of the species, but blazes his unique trail to become the man of God. The freest, most realized person is the prophet, who energizes his full unique capacities. Hartman correctly notes that unlike the medievals, R. Soloveitchik is not interested in pure theology (i.e., the 'science' of God), grace, or metaphysics, but in the personality and anthropology of prophetic experience for modern man.

Self-creation, freedom, providence, repentance, and prophecy thus merge into the prototype of R. Soloveitchik's ideal religious personality. Creativity is so central in the Rav's religious phenomenology that to ignore or reject it is to misunderstand R. Soloveitchik's conception of the holy life and his philosophy of religious experience.

2 *Ibid.*

It is puzzling why Hartman does not use this opportunity to analyze R. Soloveitchik's important essay. "*U-Biqashtem mi-Sham*." Juxtaposing it with *Halakhic Man* might further illuminate R. Soloveitchik's religious anthropology. Though not published until 1979, *U-Biqashtem mi-Sham* was written in the 1940s, soon after *Halakhic Man,* It was originally entitled, "*Ish ha-Dat*" ("Religious Man"), probably as a complement to *Halakhic Man*. The essay breaks important new ground, ultimately rejecting the pure rationality of *Halakhic Man* in the spiritual life. *U-Biqashtem mi-Sham* is important in itself, but since R. Soloveitchik's thinking is characterized by dialectic, arriving at a complete picture of how R. Soloveitchik understood religious experience would imply analyzing the interaction of these two essays.

III

The personality seeking redemption is the counterpoint to the confident intellectual personality of *Halakhic Man*. *Lonely Man of Faith*, written in the early 1960's, portrays this lonely existential figure. Again Hartman defends his teacher against critics who attempt to explain this via psychology or reductionism or as an effort to speak to different audiences. He labors to prove that these critics underestimate the depth and subtlety of R. Soloveitchik's writing.

In Hartman's view, *Lonely Man of Faith* depicts the universal problematics of faith in a technological and pragmatic culture, while *Halakhic Man* defends only the halakhic personality. *Halakhah* points to a uniquely Jewish worldview, but the frame of reference for Adam I and Adam II (the paradigmatic figures of *Lonely Man of Faith*) is the biblical drama of humanity. Thus R. Soloveitchik's talmudic and rabbinic quotes in *Lonely Man of Faith* merge easily with those from Kant and Kierkegaard, since the Rav is there exploring the universal religious experience. This appears to be an obvious point, yet Hartman is the first to note it. It helps explain why *Lonely Man of Faith* has found resonance among Christian theologians.

Creation is a universal story; Sinai is particular. It is here that Hartman's philosophic expertise helps uncover R. Soloveitchik's implicit meaning, as he draws on the medieval philosophic debate regarding the comparative significances of creation vs. revelation. (See Rashi on Gen. 1:1; Halevi, Ibn Ezra and Ramban on Exod. 20:2.) Adam I, the conquering technological personality, seeks control over the energy of the cosmos with quantitative tools and functional relationships. With conquest come dignity and recognition of God as *E-lohim*. Adam II discovers depth relationship in his existential sense of loneliness. This awareness occasions qualitative experience, uniqueness, personal relationships, and redemptive personal revelation with an intimate God, i.e., a divine covenant with the personal One, called by the Tetragrammaton.

Hartman reads his teacher carefully, which is always an intellectual's act of great respect. He observes that when R. Soloveitchik employs the term "covenant" in *Lonely Man of Faith*, he refers to "a perspective through which any religious personality may perceive the world and religious life. "Covenant" is a universal religious encounter. This covenantal relation is always present and not dependent upon particular historical events (e.g. revelation at Sinai). It creates the ground for in-depth human relations. All religious personalities seek intimacy, love and transcendence. Covenant, then, becomes the universal category of intimate relationship, of which the halakhic community is only one particular instance.

The bold conceptual breakthrough of *Lonely Man of Faith* is R. Soloveitchik's insistence that both Adam I and Adam II fulfill divine mandates. God wills his creatures to oscillate between these two normative behaviors and worldviews. The resultant dialectical movement gives rise to creativity and redeems the religious enterprise. Unbalanced focus on the former corrupts religion as a power-seeking institution; reliance on the latter results in unholy quietism that empties God's universe of divinity. Either imbalance results in a superficial religious experience (*Halakhic Man*, note 4) that is so commonplace in contemporary religious revivals.

Hartman explains how R. Soloveitchik explicates doctrinal concepts such as prophecy, revelation, creation, and prayer as normative human behavior. R. Soloveitchik is concerned primarily with neither halakhic detail nor theological conceptualization. His concern is the phenomenon of religious experience. Neither prayer nor prophecy is exclusively a halakhic requirement; both are universal spiritual needs. Mirroring themes in his earlier book, *A Living Covenant*, Hartman sees R. Soloveitchik as teaching the religious person to become an active covenantal partner with God. The historical transitions

from prophecy to prayer, from revelation to talmudic study, represent the maturation of human spiritual impulse and the fulfillment of human love for God. The full love relationship between man and God is not mediated by historical events, as Martin Buber claimed. It is direct, where the Jewish covenantal partner knows God's intimate presence in the experience of *mitsvot,* prayer, and Torah study.

IV

No work of R. Soloveitchik has had more practical impact than *Confrontation.* He wrote the essay in 1964, when the Vatican made overtures for reconciliation and dialogue with the Jewish people. In effect, *Confrontation* became both an authoritative legal ruling against Orthodox participation in interfaith theological dialogue and a rationale for that ban. (It is important to note that R. Soloveitchik rejects only *theological* dialogue in *Confrontation.* The document encourages interfaith discussion on social, political and moral issues as "highly desirable.")

Given his thesis that *Lonely Man of Faith* portrays a universal existential religious experience, Hartman must explain how R. Soloveitchik can reject interfaith theological dialogue as impossible. Another problem must be addressed: R. Soloveitchik makes clear in his other essays that he was in private dialogue with Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, Max Schiller and Rudolf Otto and that these figures influenced his understanding of both repentance and holiness. Yet in *Confrontation*, R. Soloveitchik makes the astonishing claim that faith experience cannot be intelligible across faiths.

Hartman perceives an inconsistency between *Lonely Man of Faith*, where the Rav argues that human love and knowledge of the other can ultimately overcome isolation and the barriers to in-depth communication, and *Confrontation*, where he alleges that religious communication is impossible. Personal communication between Adam and Eve becomes possible when universal Adam II enters into covenantal relation with God. But in *Confrontation,* R. Soloveitchik stresses the impossibility of narrowing the gap between individuals: "Even in marriage, the *modi existentiae* remain totally unique and hence incongruous…The closer two individuals get to know each other, the more aware they become of the metaphysical distance separating them" (*Confrontation,* p.15).

Following Kierkegaard's structure, R. Soloveitchik posits three levels of human existence. "Natural man" lives in harmony with nature, not recognizing his distinctness from the natural order. "Cognitive man" stands apart from nature, understanding it as an object to be conquered. The second level also includes "normative man," who surrenders control to the ethical norm and is defeated by a pragmatic norm calling him to build a pragmatic order with others. The third level involves interpersonal relationships and in-depth encounter with others. As is evident, levels 2 and 3 correspond to Adam I and Adam II. But while in *Lonely Man of Faith*, Adam II achieves full relationship with Eve, in *Confrontation* human relationships inevitably descend to "I-It" depersonalized attempts at domination and exploitation. R. Soloveitchik insists that Jews must bear the burden of a double confrontation: they must cooperate with gentiles to conquer nature and improve society, yet must distance themselves to preserve their exclusive covenantal confrontation with God. Modern Jews do not understand the meaning of this double confrontation and misunderstand the uniqueness of Jewish identity.

It is clear that R. Soloveitchik fears that any Jewish-Catholic theological relationship will necessarily end in "*Ecclesia* triumphant," with Catholic theology defeating and invalidating Judaism. Reading *Confrontation* carefully, the reader senses R. Soloveitchik's palpable fear and defensiveness. Such a posture is warranted, given Jewish historical experience of exploitation and domination at the hands of the Church. Hartman's claim that R. Soloveitchik was filled with the memory of disputation and Church based anti-Semitism rings true. R. Soloveitchik feared that Jews would compromise their identity in return for acceptance by the Church. R. Soloveitchik argued that for Jews to retain their unique identity, they must believe that "at the end of time all men embrace the faith that this community has been preaching throughout the millennia" (p. 19). Hence, cooperative interfaith theological discourse can never be achieved.

Hartman questions this conclusion. Knowledgeable Jews of firm conviction can simultaneously embrace particularity and universality. Rambam achieved it by embracing Al Farabi and Aristotle, and R. Soloveitchik himself achieved it by integrating the categories of Kant, Kierkegaard, Otto, Schiller, and Barth into his religious worldview. In fact, *Lonely Man of Faith* represents just such an integration. Hartman concludes that

R. Soloveitchik does not close the door entirely on religious dialogue, but carefully limits it—-setting a "fence around the Torah." There is no identity without uniqueness, and R. Soloveitchik therefore trusts only those proud Jews willing to bear the burden of Jewish solitude and committed to the double confrontation.

Hartman sets conditions and warnings for Christian interlocutors: mutual respect, equality of theological frames of reference, understanding Judaism on its own terms, and, most importantly, renunciation of the traditional Christian doctrine of supersessionism, i.e., that Christianity has replaced the need for Judaism. Any failure to abide by these conditions renders theological dialogue impossible and existentially threatening to Judaism.

Hartman insists that R. Soloveitchik's philosophy, which focuses on experience rather than doctrine, leaves room for religious dialogue. In *Halakhic Mind* (1986), R. Soloveitchik argues for the need to transform religious inwardness into objectified normative frameworks. He also insists on normative and exoteric categories that can be shared by all faiths. R. Soloveitchik's arguments against religious subjectivism in *Halakhic Mind* and *Halakhic Man* imply that there is some objective phenomenon—"external facticity" in the Rav's language—to all revelatory religions that is logically open to interfaith discourse.

The issues for medieval theology were doctrinal. Hence interfaith discussion necessarily meant doctrinal disputation. Modern religious discussion—of which R. Soloveitchik's writing is a prime example—focuses on religious anthropology: how religious values are internalized and how they shape human character. This phenomenology of faith need not be exclusive to the point of rendering interfaith dialogue impossible, nor does it require a surrender of individuality or uniqueness. It can be witness (*edut*) in the original Jewish understanding of the term: publicly calling God's name in the world

Confrontation, then, should be understood as a legitimate response to a political dilemma facing Jews in the 1960's. It was a guiding policy for Jewish survival that assumed that the Vatican's overture was a new tactic of the traditional Catholic strategy to conquer Judaism. For R. Soloveitchik, the overture was simply a reenactment of Esau's old confrontation with Jacob. Hartman claims, however, that the Rav's theology as expressed in *Halakhic Man*, *Lonely Man of Faith*, and *Halakhic Mind*, points logically toward the possibility of fruitful interfaith discussion after careful limits are agreed upon.

Hartman's analysis points to an important logical inference and a significant historical query. In assuming that Jewish-Catholic dialogue could not be productive because the faithful Catholics could not agree to the preconditions of mutual respect, renunciation of supersessionism and acceptance of Judaism in its own theological frame of reference, R. Soloveitchik implicitly defined the conditions that would make dialogue possible and permissible. *Confrontation* was written prior to the Vatican issuing its ground-breaking 1965 document, *Nostra Aetate*. This document proved to be the first of a series of official Vatican documents that changed fundamentally the Church's doctrine about Judaism and prescribed Catholic behavior toward the Jewish people. In light of theses documents, perhaps the significant question for Jews today is to what degree the new Christian teaching about Judaism fulfills R. Soloveitchik's criteria for fruitful interfaith dialogue.

It should also be noted that while the material Hartman cites from *Halakhic Mind* is relevant to his argument, Hartman himself has taught us that to properly understand R. Soloveitchik's writing, one must understand his essays systematically. Citing passages in isolation is a technique used by many of the Rav's followers who apply his thought tendentiously. A full analysis of *Halakhic Mind* is necessary for that essay to be properly utilized.

V

Hartman reaches a high point of his book in his treatment of R. Soloveitchik's understanding of prayer. In contrast to his defense and explication of the Rav earlier in the book, Hartman here respectfully engages R. Soloveitchik as a *bar pelugta* in theological dissent, offering an alternative conceptualization of *tefillah.*

Hartman notes that R. Soloveitchik's description of halakhic experience is often antinomous: sometimes his focus is on human boldness, initiative and autonomy; other times the mood conveys melancholy, doubt and resignation. This contradiction is most conspicuous in the Rav's treatment of prayer. *Lonely Man of Faith* proj-

ects the human partner in covenant and prayer as a "Thou" with ontological legitimacy. Covenantal relationship bestows adequacy and optimism. Revelation does not terrify. On the contrary, it energizes, provides self-discovery, and evokes confidence that makes love possible. It is this covenantal confidence that enabled Israel to take the initiative in dialogue with God at the end of the prophetic era. According to R. Soloveitchik, Israel "refused to acquiesce to the end of the covenantal colloquy" and insisted on continued dialogue. At that moment, the Men of the Great Assembly initiated statutory prayer.

R. Soloveitchik insists that prayer as a continuation of prophecy is not to be confused with the objective mechanics of institutionalized prayer. Liturgical language and ritual requirements are merely external forms of prayer's essence, which is an overwhelming internal awareness of the presence of God (*amidah lifnei ha-shekhinah*). This distinction between essence and technique of implementation is crucial for R. Soloveitchik. Only the precedent of prophetic revelation makes the essence of *tefillah* possible.

The second common feature of prayer and prophecy is commitment to community. Both the prophet and the praying Jew connect to *am yisrael*, which explains the plural grammar of statutory prayer. Thirdly, prophecy and prayer are both prologues to a bold commitment to justice and constructive social action. Prayer does not signal resigned quietism, but energetic moral activism.

Yet the Rav also portrays an opposite vision of prayer: the unrestricted offering of one's whole being, i.e., sacrifice. In "Redemption, Prayer and Talmud Torah" as well as in "*Ra'ayonot al ha-Tefillah,*" R. Soloveitchik paints prayer as "a casting down of oneself before the Lord," characterized by an emotion of radical dependence. Prayer is not petition *(baqashah*) as much as *tehinah*, suggesting unearned grace. Its paradigm is *aqeidat Yitzhaq*, Isaac being willing to surrender his life, for prayer is admission of ontological insignificance. Hence the nexus between statutory prayer and the obligation of animal sacrifice. It is a man-God encounter that evokes awe and dread, in which man loses his ontological legitimacy and dignity. In the experience of prayer, man is overwhelmed by the superiority of God, and the only proper response is self-negation and silence. Man dares to pray only because of precedent. We pray only as the children of the patriarchs and therefore we are not free to innovate spontaneous prayer. We pray only within the framework of ritual prescription that has fixed our petitional needs. *Tifillat nedavah* (spontaneous prayer) seems to have no theological legitimacy for Rav Soloveitchik.

Hartman critically evaluates R. Soloveitchik's model of prayer and develops an alternative model—one that incorporates his religious anthropology of adequacy, creativity, and spontaneity. Hartman anchors his conception in talmudic, halakhic, and Jewish philosophic texts. Abraham and Moses were both assertive when meeting God petitionally (Gen. 18 and Exod. 32). Moreover, as R. Soloveitchik himself argued in *Halakhic Man*, religious experience is organized by *mitsvah*, which implies human importance derived from God's cognizance of each commanded individual. Just as one fulfills *mitsvot* without terror, so one should be able to pray without terror. Biblical prayer was rooted not exclusively in ecstasy or self-negating dread, but in the everyday experience of Israel. If covenant implies dignified partnership, as R. Soloveitchik claims in *Lonely Man of Faith*, then so does prayer.

Hartman invokes Rambam to validate his understanding of *tefillah*. For Rambam (*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Tefillah* 1:1-4), prayer is a reflection of the loving service of God that could be offered in any way at any time. The fixing of prayer language was only to free the ignorant from their inadequate Hebrew—not to emphasize overwhelming terror. Rambam codifies the legitimacy of *tefillat nedavah* in halakhic terms and expresses prayer as love of God philosophically (*Guide of the Perplexed* 3:51). Nowhere does he identify prayer with lack of human initiative, human smallness, or terror. It is "service of the heart," i.e. the yearning to be in God's presence. Finally, the Talmud (*Berakhot* 26a) makes clear that prayer as supplication overrides prayer as sacrifice. This is no small point, for it establishes the requirement for women to pray even thought it is a positive time-bound *mitsvah*.

Hartman attempts to explain why R. Soloveitchik chose a conception of prayer that runs counter to normative biblical, talmudic, and halakhic texts. Jews experience God in two ways: through *mitsvah* and *talmud torah,* and through prayer. The former experience empowers, allowing man to be assertive, creative, and fully accepted. But there is also the numinous experience of small-

ness before the Infinite, in which R. Soloveitchik locates prayer. R. Soloveitchik acknowledges that much of his phenomenology of prayer is indebted to Rudolph Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*. The religious person desires to draw near to God, yet is also repulsed and terror-stricken. Hence religious experience "explodes into antinomous and sharp dialectical movement." R. Soloveitchik reads the *amidah* as expressing these contrary moods, but the dominant theme of prayer remains "surrender and self-sacrifice where man stands overwhelmed by the Almighty."

Drawing on his philosophic background, Hartman deftly sees Rambam as a precedent for R. Soloveitchik's antinomous characterization of religious experience. *Halakhah* is not the exclusive mediator of spirituality for either Rambam or R. Soloveitchik. Both drink freely from the wellsprings of halakhic and philosophic traditions to shape their spiritual understanding. Maimonides used reflection on nature and philosophic contemplation to inspire his love of God (*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Tefillah* 2:1-2). Similarly, R. Soloveitchik finds modern existentialist religious writings compelling, and they helped him develop his understanding of the meaning and quality of prayer. *Halakhah* leads both to an anthropocentric life that validates human adequacy, reason, and assertiveness. Philosophy instills in both a theocentric passion that emphasizes finitude and frailty. Thus, both rabbinic giants used more than one path to approach God.

Those who wish to restrict either rabbinic thinker to one tradition alone can offer only simplistic and distorted accounts. Just as the *Mishneh Torah* stands side-by-side with the *Guide* in Rambam's life, the rationality of Brisk that shapes *Halakhic Man* is complemented by the universal condition of existential spirituality that R. Soloveitchik draws from the Western philosophic tradition.

VI

Leo Strauss maintained that, "genuine fidelity to a tradition is not the same as literalist traditionalism, and is in fact incompatible with it. It consists in preserving not simply the tradition, but the continuity of tradition." Clearly David Hartman has left the insulated worlds of Brisker talmudic study and Orthodox *yeshivah* culture, where he first engaged R. Soloveitchik. He now blazes his own path in the open spiritual world of the Hartman Institute. Hartman's understanding of Torah and his intimate partnership with God drove him to Israel to probe Zionism and messianism, religious pluralism, interfaith encounter, the necessity of spiritual uncertainty and the celebration of human finitude—areas that R. Soloveitchik never fully explored.

Hartman's book is a form of poetic gratitude for the incalculable debt he owes R. Soloveitchik. It is only fitting that Hartman philosophically examine the teacher who initiated him into the life of critical thinking. By manifesting the Rav's impulses of intellectual independence and theological boldness, Hartman demonstrates his abiding commitment to his spiritual parent.

The Talmud (*Bava Metsi`a* 59b) describes a remarkable incident when the *hakhamim* overruled a *bat qol* in a halakhic dispute. How did The Holy One feel at that moment, when His students out of their rational conviction parted ways with their Heavenly Teacher, proclaiming, "The Torah is not in Heaven"? God smiled in satisfaction and stated, "*Nitzhuni banai. Nitzhuni banai*—My children have eternalized me; My children have eternalized Me."

One can only hope that Volume 2 of "*Love and Terror in the God Encounter*" appears soon, where Hartman can analyze R. Soloveitchik's *U-Biqashtem mi-Sham, Halakhic Mind* and *Qol Dodi Dofeq*. If similar to Volume I, Volume 2 will further illuminate the Rav's theology, grant us additional access to David Hartman's spiritual deliberations, and serve to eternalize his beloved teacher.