

OU JERUSALEM CENTRE.

RABBI DR ALAN ABRAHAM KIMCHE

“Great Jewish Thinkers”

Rabbi Joseph Ber Soloveitchik (1903-1993)

1. A most influential and significant Jewish Leader of 20th century.
2. a 200 years rabbinical dynasty of both paternal and maternal.
3. Named after his great-grandfather the “Beis Halevy” RY Volozhin
4. Talmudic training in Russia and academic training in Berlin
5. 1932 moved to USA Boston representative of Agudat Yisrael
6. 1935 only visit to Israel to submit candidacy for ChR of Tel Aviv
7. 1944 Chairman of Mizrachi Religious Zionists of America.
8. Rosh Yeshiva University RIETS Rabbinical College 1941-1986
9. Non-messianic Religious Zionism - “Kol Dodi Dofek” 1956
10. “Lonely Man of Faith” - 1965. Religious Existentialism.

“The Lonely Man of Faith”

Creation of Man in Bereishit Ch.1

(ו) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ וַיְרִדּוּ בְדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם
 וּבְבְהֵמָה וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל-הַרְמֵשׁ הָרֹמֵשׁ עַל-הָאָרֶץ
 (ז) וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם
 (ח) וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וּכְבִשְׁתֶּה וַיְרִדּוּ
 בְּדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל-חַיַּי הָרֹמְשֹׁת עַל-הָאָרֶץ
 (ט) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה נֹתְתִי לָכֶם אֶת-כָּל-עֵשֶׂב זֶרַע אֲשֶׁר עָלֵי-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ
 וְאֶת-כָּל-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ פְרִיעַץ זֶרַע זֶרַע לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ

Creation of Man in Bereishit Ch.2

(ז) וַיִּצְרֵם אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם עֶפְרָיִם מִן־הָאָדָמָה וַיִּפְחֵם בְּאָפָיו נְשָׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה

(ח) וַיִּטֵּעַ יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהִים גֶּן־בְּעֵדֶן מִקְדָּם וַיִּשֶׂם שֵׁם אֶת־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יָצַר
 (כא) וַיִּפְלֵ יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהִים תְּרִדְמָה עַל־הָאָדָם וַיִּישָׁן וַיִּקַּח אַחַת מִצִּלְעֹתָיו וַיִּסְגֶּר בָּשָׂר תַּחְתָּנָה

(כב) וַיִּבֶן יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַצֵּלַע אֲשֶׁר־לָקַח מִן־הָאָדָם לְאִשָּׁה וַיְבִאָהּ אֶל־הָאָדָם
 (כג) וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֹאת הִפְעַם עִצְמִי וּבָשָׂר מִבְּשָׂרִי לְזֹאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ לָקַחָהּ זֹאת

(כד) עַל־כֵּן יַעֲזֹב אִישׁ אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד

Rav Soloveitchik proposes that the two accounts of the creation of man (in chapters 1 and 2 of Bereishit) portray two types of man, two human ideals. In their approaches to God, the world and the self.

The first, he calls Adam I, - is guided by the quest for dignity, which is a surface social quality attained by control over one's environment. He is a creative and majestic personality who espouses a practical-utilitarian approach to the world.

Adam II, on the other hand, is guided by the quest for redemption, which is a quality of the depth personality attained by control over oneself. He is humble and submissive, and yearns for an intimate relationship with God and with his fellow man in order to overcome his sense of incompleteness and inadequacy. These differences carry over to the type of community each one creates: the "natural work community" (Adam I) and the "covenantal faith community" (Adam II).

God not only desires the existence of each of these personality types and each of these communities, but actually bids each and every one of us to attempt to embody both of these seemingly irreconcilable types within ourselves. We must attempt to pursue both dignity and redemption.

The demand to be both Adam I and Adam II leads to a built-in tension in the life of each person responsive to this call; and because one lives with a constant dialectic, a continual oscillation between two modes of existence, one can never fully realize the goals of either Adam I or Adam II. Unable to feel totally at home in either community, man is burdened by loneliness.

Some Important Ideas derived from Adam1 and Adam2 analysis:

1. Validating the creative, natural, material, ambitions of modern Man as part of his Divine legacy as Adam1 create partnerships and groups to build and shape and dominate the world.
2. Defining the spiritually sensitive Adam2, who marvels and meditates at on the wonders of Nature seeking the redemptive presence of God in every moment and place.
3. Adam2 is essentially a Man of Transcendence, seeking God by himself in every action and every moment.
4. The contrasting types of communities and friendships made by Adam1 in contrast to Adam2. קנה לך חבר.
5. Re-define yetzer hara; that engagement in material benefits and pleasures is an integral part of the Divine intention. בכל דרכך דעהו.
6. Contrast sharply with the Christian view that only after The Original Sin was Man driven by material interests, and that to attain a true spiritual life one must abandon materialism, live as a monk or nun in denial of one's physical nature.
7. The resolution of the these two dimensions of human nature is not the ability of one to obscure the other, rather it is a dialectic process moving back and forth between these two modes of existence. רצוא ושוב.
8. The quality of 'GEVURA' he translates as a form of heroism, contrasted to classic heroes who are making a public display of courage, Adam1 has the inner courage to engage fully in the material world but drawing on his spirituality of Adam2 he is able to resist its seductions and excesses.
9. The key to this dialectic is in a different essay by RYBS called 'Halakhic Man'. In which the Man uses the concepts of halakha to reconstruct his world and sees everything in the framework of its halakhic meaning.
10. RYBS taught non-messianic religious zionism. In this he followed the views of R.Yitzchak Yaakov Reines (1839 - 1915) who was a founder of the Mizrachi movement but avoided all forms of messianic redemption in his promotion of the Zionist ideal. The contrasting Messianic form of religious zionism goes back to R.Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795 - 1874) who wrote extensively about actively bringing the messianic redemption and building the Beit Hamikdash.

 IN WHAT WAY IS THE MODERN MAN OF FAITH LONELY? Rav Soloveitchik proposes that the two accounts of the creation of man (in chapters 1 and 2 of Bereishit) portray two types of man, two human ideals. This is a dual call in life.. To BE two incompatible people... This dilemma is insoluble.. Its built-in to the soul of man... RYBS proposes no solution. In fact the individual can never resolve this, as he is always either in one state or the other, there is no synthesis or resolution.

The demand to be both Adam I and Adam II leads to a built-in tension in the life of each person responsive to this call; and because one lives with a constant dialectic, a continual oscillation between two modes of existence, one can never fully realize the goals of either Adam I or Adam II. Unable to feel totally at home in either community, man is lonely.

Since this type of loneliness is inherent to one's very being as a religious individual, RYBS terms it "ontological loneliness" (ontological = relating to existence). In a sense, this kind of loneliness is tragic; but since it is willed by God, it helps guide man to realize his destiny and is ultimately a positive and constructive experience.

Contemporary society speaks the language of Adam I, of cultural and material achievement, and is unable or unwilling to understand the language of Adam II, of the uniqueness and autonomy of faith. Worse, contemporary Adam I has infiltrated and appropriated the realm of Adam II; he presents himself as Adam II, while actually distorting covenantal man's entire message.

For instance, whenever Torah, Mitzvot or Judaism in general is portrayed as being 'good for you', providing tranquility, inner comfort and harmony, solution to discord and hardship, RYBS considered this to be a false ideology, using the language of Adam1, of utilitarian goals, in order to motivate Adam2 who is engaged in spiritual issues. (Lishma and shelo lishma.) A dangerous error to use utilitarian and pragmatic terms to justify a religious life. On the contrary, Religious life is intrinsically valuable without any need to use pragmatic reasons. This becomes a religion of convenience which is self-serving.