

1) "Judaism, with its realistic approach to man and his place in the world, understood that evil could not be blurred or camouflaged, and that any attempt to downplay the extent of the contradiction, and fragmentation to be found in reality will neither endow man with tranquility, nor enable him to grasp the existential mystery...whoever wishes to delude himself by diverting his attention from the deep fissure in reality, by romanticizing human existence, is naught but a fool and a fantast." (Kol Dodi Dofek, Ktav Publishing House 1992, p. 53)

2) "When the blow strikes, the first question which pops up upon the lips of the sufferer is: Why me? Why should I be different from others? Why was I selected to explore the valley of sorrow? A feeling of envy fills out the heart of the afflicted. He envies everybody, pauper and prince, young and old. They were spared, while I was picked out."

"When I eulogized my uncle, Rav Velvel Soloveitchik, zt"l, in the auditorium of Yeshiva University while knowing of my affliction, one naging thought assailed my mind. All these thousands of people are healthy and expect to live a long and happy life, whereas I am not certain that I will be able to accompany my daughter to the wedding canopy. While these thoughts are passing through one's mind with the speed of lightning, one feels forsaken, forlorn and lonely. I am different; I have met with a strange destiny. No one else is like me." (Out of the Whirlwind p.133)

3)

בְּרֵעַךְ כָּל יוֹמֵי הָאָרֶץ עֵקֶב אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקִלְיִי: נִישָׁב אַבְרָהָם אֶל-נְעָרָיו וַיִּקְמוּ וַיֵּלְכוּ יַחְדָּו אֶל-בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע וַיֵּשֶׁב אַבְרָהָם בְּבְאֵר שֶׁבַע:

וַיְהִי אַחֲרַי סְדֵכָרִים הָאֱלֹהִים וַיָּגֵד לְאַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה יִלְדָה מִלְּפָנָי גַּם-הוּא בְּנִים לְנַחֲוֹר אֶחָיָה: אֵת-עֵוֶץ בְּכֹרֹו וְאֵת-בְּנֹו אֶחָוִי וְאֵת-קִמּוֹאֵל אֲבִי אַרְם: וְאֵת-כֶּשֶׁד וְאֵת-חִזּוֹ וְאֵת-פִּלְדֵּשׁ וְאֵת-יִדְלָף וְאֵת בְּתוּאֵל: וּבְתוּאֵל יִלְדָה אֶת-רִבְקָה שְׁמֵנָה אֱלֹהִים יִלְדָה מִלְּפָנָי לְנַחֲוֹר אֶחָוִי אַבְרָהָם: וַיִּפְלְגֶשׁוּ וַשְׁמָה רֵאומָה וַתֵּלֶד גַּם-הוּא אֶת-טִבְחָה וְאֵת-גָּחַם וְאֵת-תַּחֲשׁ וְאֵת-מַעֲכָה: פַּפֵּה

ספרי מסוקים אמרין סימן.

¹⁹ Abraham returned to his young men, and they stood up and went together to Beer-sheba, and Abraham stayed at Beer-sheba.

²⁰ It came to pass after these things, that Abraham was told, saying: Behold, Milcah too has borne children to Nahor, your brother: ²¹ Uz, his firstborn; Buz, his brother; Kemuel, the father of Aram; ²² and Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel; ²³ And Bethuel begot Rebecca. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. ²⁴ And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore children: Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maachah.

4)

הרב סולובייצ'יק השיב לשאלותיו תשובה יסודית וחודרת. יש המשך לנסיון העקידה. הנסיון לא נגמר בשעה בה ציוה המלאך על אברהם "אל תשלח ידך אל הנער, ואל תעש לו מאומה". המשכו של הנסיון גנוז בסיומה של הפרשה, כפי שנבאר לקמן.

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" משה
TO BERTON

נתאר לעצמנו את חויותם של אברהם ויצחק, היוורדים מן ההר אחרי שלשה ימים רצופי פחד וחורדה. והנה, באותה שעה בה תמה העקידה הנוראה, כאשר הם מתכוננים לחזור הביתה, נתבשר להם, שאצל קרוביהם ומכיריהם הכל הולך כשורה — זה ילד את אלו, וזאת ילדה את אלו, וכולם חיים חיי שלווה ושקט, חיי עושר וכבוד. אברהם ויצחק רואים, שאצל הרחוקים מאלו — אין נסיונות, ואין עקידות. אדרבה, לאלו יש נחלות רבות, והם נהנים מכל טוב. ואילו הם, המוסרים את חייהם למען בניין האמונה והחסד, הבונים מזבחות כדי ללמד את ההמונים את ייחוד ה' — טובלים מנודדים ומכאב לב.

Letter to Dr. Dan Vogel, then Dean of Stern College for Women, in response to a question regarding a discourse entitled "On the Halakhic Approach to Suffering" delivered by the Rav on December 6, 1961. The lecture, delivered to clergy of all faiths, was sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health and appears in the Rav's Out of the Whirlwind: Essays on Mourning, Suffering and the Human Condition.

13 Nissan, 5725

Thursday, April 15, 1965

Dear Dr. Vogel:

I received your letter. Of course, you may quote me.

The gist of my discourse was that Judaism did not approach the problem of evil under the speculative-metaphysical aspect. For such an inquiry would be a futile undertaking. As long as the human mind is unable to embrace creation in its entirety and to gain an insight into the very essence and purposiveness of being as such, it would not succeed in its attempt to resolve the dilemma of evil. The latter is interwoven into the very fabric of reality and cannot be understood outside its total ontological configuration. Job was in error because he tried to grasp the nature of evil. Therefore, Judaism has recommended that the metaphysical inquiry be replaced by the halakhic ethical gesture. Man should not ask: Why evil? He should rather raise the question: What am I supposed to do if confronted with evil; how should I behave vis-à-vis evil. The latter is a powerful challenge to man and it is the duty of man to meet this challenge boldly and courageously.

Suffering, in the opinion of Judaism, must not be purposeless, wasted. Out of suffering must emerge the ethical norm, the call for repentance, for self-elevation. Judaism wants to convert the passional, frustrating experience into an integrating, cleansing and redeeming factor.

Man was summoned to defy evil and try to eliminate it. However if he fails temporarily to defeat evil he must see to it that the confrontation be a courageous one, heroic and useful. In a word, instead of philosophizing about the nature of evil within the framework of a theodicy, Judaism wants man to fight it relentlessly and to convert it into a constructive force.

Mo'adim le-simhah,

Sincerely,

Joseph Soloveitchik

1) The ceremonial turning point at which *aninut* is transformed into *avelut*, despair into intelligent sadness, and self-negation into self-affirmation, is to be found in the recital of *Kaddish* at the grave.

The *Kaddish* marks the beginning of a new phase of courageous and heroic mourning to which the message of salvation is addressed. What is the relationship between the proclamation of the solemn doxology and burial? Through the *Kaddish* we hurl defiance at death and its fiendish conspiracy against man. When the mourner recites "Glorified and sanctified be the Great Name . . .," he declares: No matter how powerful death is, notwithstanding the ugly end of man, however terrifying the grave is, however nonsensical and absurd everything appears, no matter how black one's despair is and how nauseating an affair life is, we declare and profess publicly and solemnly that we are not giving up, that we are not surrendering, that we will carry on the work of our ancestors as though nothing has happened, that we will not be satisfied with less than the full realization of the ultimate goal—the establishment of God's kingdom, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal life for man.

2) *Sitting Shivah is Doing Teshuvah* / 129

A) That mourning is equated with *teshuvah* is implicit in the practice in Talmudic days of *avelim* being required to overturn their couches (beds), *kefiyat hamitah*. Bar Kapara explained the symbolism: God said, "I have set My image upon them, but

B) because of their sins, I have upset it. Let [therefore] your couches be overturned" (M. K. 15b).¹⁰ Rashi explains that the image refers to God's spiritual image, *tzelem Elohim*, which is bestowed upon all mankind but is tarnished through sin.

C) Overturning the *mitah* was later replaced by the custom (*Minhag*) of turning mirrors to the wall or covering them. The symbolism is the same as with the overturned *mitah*, namely, that our image is not as lustrous as it should be. The period of mourning suggests human failure, and covering the mirror is a form of *vidui*.¹²

D) ~~It~~ . Quite a few of the injunctions governing the observance of *shivah* (prohibitions against washing, ointments, wearing shoes, and sexual intimacy) are reminiscent of Yom Kippur, a day when the Jew quests for forgiveness.

4)

1)

א ויאמרו איש אל-אחיו אבל אשמים אנחנו על-אחינו
אשר ראינו צרת נפשו בדהזוננו אלינו ולא שמענו
ב על-כן באה אלינו הצרה הזאת: ליען ראובן אתם

The ²¹ They then said to one another, "Indeed we are guilty concerning our brother inasmuch
Brothers' we saw his heartfelt anguish when he pleaded with us and we paid no heed; that is why the
Regret anguish has come upon us."

גו' ה' תמו' כ

2)

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב בשעה שעלה משה למרום מצאו להקב"ה שיושב וקושר כתרים לאותיות אמר לפניו
רבש"ע מי מעכב על ידך אמר לו אדם אחד יש שעתידי להיות בסוף כמה דורות ועקיבא בן יוסף שמו שעתיד לדרוש
§ על כל קוץ וקוץ תילין תילין של הלכות

Rav Yehuda says that Rav says: When Moses ascended on High, he found the Holy One, Blessed be He, sitting and tying crowns on the letters of the Torah. Moses said before God: Master of the Universe, who is preventing You from giving the Torah without these additions? God said to him: There is a man who is destined to be born after several generations, and Akiva ben Yosef is his name; he is destined to derive from each and every thorn of these crowns mounds upon mounds of halakhot. It is for his sake that the crowns must be added to the letters of the Torah.

3)

conditions or restrictions. [The bestowal of good is always to be viewed as a conditional gift—a gift that must be returned—or as a temporary gift. When God endows a person with wealth, influence, and honor, the recipient must know how to use these boons, how to transform these precious gifts into fruitful, creative forces, how to share his joy and prominence with his fellows, how to take the divine *hesed* that flows toward him from its infinite, divine source and utilize it to perform, in turn, deeds of *hesed* for others. A person who is not brought by divinely bestowed bountiful good to commit himself, absolutely and unreservedly, to God perpetrates a dire sin