

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.

KOL DODI DOFEK: COVENANT OF FATE – COVENANT OF DESTINY

There are two halves of Judaism which together create Klal Yisrael.

The Covenant of Fate (goral) and the Covenant of Destiny (yeud).

The Jewish People are a community of Fate in four ways: We have historical events in common; We identify with each other’s suffering; We recognize responsibility in confronting challenges; and we engage in shared action. – the Jewish people meet these criteria.

This is regardless of the degree or nature of religious commitment, Jews share a history; they feel the suffering of their fellow Jews, they feel responsibility for other Jews, in good times and in bad; and they are capable of concerted action. Fate is not chosen.

We may try to escape our fate, as Jonah fled, but to no avail. Fate is what happens TO us. The Holocaust was the most tragic form of Fate.

Mordechai tells Esther - you may be dressed in royal robes and I am in sackcloth, but if anything happens to Am Yisrael we are in it together.

In contrast, Destiny is about choice. A nation, like an individual, “freely chooses an existence in which it finds the full realization of its historical experience.” Destiny is about what we choose to DO with our life.

The exodus from Egypt constituted the Jewish people in terms of a Covenant of Fate: God extracted the people from slavery unilaterally. In contrast the covenant at Sinai gave the Jewish people its destiny and it is consequently negotiated between God and the nation. We had to choose to accept it, naaseh ve'nishma.

The Covenant of Fate is expressed clearly in our mitzvah of Tefillah, where we daven on behalf of Klal Yisrael, and show concern for the fate of fellow Jews everywhere. The Covenant of Destiny is primarily expressed in the mitzvah of Talmud Torah, when we delve into the a deeper grasp of Mitzvot.

The Rav distinguishes two terms for the Jewish collective in the wilderness — the camp (mahane), as opposed to the congregation (eda, deriving from the same root as edut, testimony), expresses the covenant of destiny.

In the laws of conversion there is circumcision and immersion. Circumcision introduces the male convert into the Jewish people. It represents the covenant of Egypt, the indelible physical mark of being separated from other nations to become part of the Jewish people. Immersion represents the Sinai covenant, the “elevation from life as it is to life infused with a unique exalted vision.”

The Rav, at the very end of his presentation, chastised secular Zionism, if they cared deeply about Jewish fate and devoted their lives to the Jewish people yet sinned against the covenant of destiny.

God is knocking on our door, asking us to transform Fate into Destiny.