The Mystical Spirituality of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik[*]

By: HESHEY ZELCER

חוויות נמסרות בלחישה ואינן נלמדות בקול. אדם מוסר חוויה כדרך חולה שמוסר מחלה... אדם נדבק במחלה בהיותו במגע עם חולה. וכן נדבק אדם בחוויה מתוך מגעו עם הרב שחותמו־קדושה, שהוא חולה־אהבה. (הרב יוסף דב הלוי סולובייצ'יק, דברי הגות והערכה, דף רד)

Introduction

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik was imbued with a mystical spirituality that affected his life and thought. By recognizing his mystical spirituality we can better understand some of the Rav's disagreements with Rambam; his attitude toward ḥasidut; his relationship with his students; his attitude toward theodicy; and his dismissal of proofs of God as irrelevant.

What is spirituality?[1]

When we speak about the spiritual essence within ourselves, we often contrast it with the material, i.e., that the non-material spiritual spark within us is but a reflection of the ultimate spiritual existence that is God.

When we talk about our ability to act or feel spiritual, however, we usually do so in two different ways: as either an intellec-

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[*] I lovingly dedicate this essay on spirituality to my father HaRav Yeraḥmiel ben Ẓvi Yehudah, *zẓ"l*, מחבר ספרי נר למאה, who passed away this 17th day of Kislev 5771 and who lived the ideal of והגית בו יומם ולילה.

[1] This section is not meant as a full discussion of Jewish spirituality. For a fuller treatment the reader is advised to consult The Orthodox Forum's *Jewish Spirituality and Divine Law*, ed. Adam Mintz and Lawrence Schiffman (Jersey City: Ktav, 2005).

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tual/philosophical endeavor, or as an emotional/mystical experience. Sometimes it is a combination of both.[2]

As an intellectual/philosophical endeavor, spirituality is our search for meaning in life. When religious people follow the dictates of their religion, they fill their lives with spirituality. In Judaism such spirituality is attained by accepting the beliefs of our religion and by performing the dictates of God, i.e., the mitzvoth. When the mitzvoth are performed, not by rote but with forethought and intent (*kavvanah*) as a means of obeying the will of God and connecting to Him, our lives become filled with spirituality. Certain commandments, such as prayer or the obligation to love and fear God, highlight our striving to connect with the Divine. According to Rambam, by contemplating the awesomeness of His wondrous creation, we recognize our own comparative insignificance and are filled with love and awe for the One Who created the endlessly complex and sophisticated universe (*Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 2:1-2, 4:12).

A person can also experience a connection with the Creator and/or the universe on an emotional/mystical level (*deveikut*). For some people the ability to experience or feel the Divine is natural and intense. For others it can be brought about, for example, through a religiously neutral action such as meditation.[3] Within the mystical strain of Judaism, i.e., kabbalah, we are told how to achieve this experience: we relax our body, still our mind and then visualize and focus on certain lights, *sefirot*, or names of God. The

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[2] For another definition of spirituality see R. Norman Lamm in *The Shema: Spirituality and Law in Judaism* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1998), quoted repeatedly in the Orthodox Forum's *Jewish Spirituality and Divine Law*. See, for example, p. 63, "By 'spirituality' I mean the intention we bring to our religious acts, the focusing of the mind and thoughts on the transcendent, the entire range of mindfulness—whether simple awareness of what we are doing, in contrast to rote performance, or elaborate mystical meditations—that spells a groping for the Source of all existence and the Giver of Torah."

[3] Asceticism, which entails the denial of bodily pleasures, the removal from worldly affairs, and the focus on heavenly matters, is another example of a method used for achieving such spirituality.

ensuing meditation then enables us to achieve a mystical spiritual feeling of closeness to the Divine.

To summarize, in Judaism, the intellectual/philosophical type of spirituality is achieved through the observance of mitzvoth that require actions, forethought and contemplation, while the emotional/mystical type of spirituality is either inborn or achieved through meditative and other aspects of kabbalah. These two methods, however, are not mutually exclusive. The performance of mitzvoth, and concurrent meditative techniques, are often used in tandem to achieve spiritual experiences.

To contrast these two types of spirituality we should note that the intellectual/philosophical type of spirituality is bound to, and a natural outgrowth of, our performance of the mitzvoth with the proper forethought and intent. There is no halakhic obligation or halakhic ideal, however, to strive for or to achieve the emotional/mystical type of spirituality.[4]

The Rav's Spirituality

It needs no proof and it need not be said that from an intellectual/philosophical perspective the Rav was a very spiritual person.[5] His meticulous performance of the mitzvoth, his deep understanding of the halakhah and his all-encompassing view of reality through the prism of halakhah—all imbued his life, by definition, with meaning and spirituality.

What needs to be said, however, is that the Rav was also very spiritual on an emotional/mystical level. This spirituality was not

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[4] Even the "cleaving" to God mentioned, for example, in *Devarim* 4:4 and 30:20 is reinterpreted in *Ketubbot* 111b as an injunction to serve and benefit *talmidei ḥakhamim*.

[5] Allan Nadler, "Soloveitchik's Halakhic Man: Not a Mithnagged" *Modern Judaism* 13: 119–147, 1993 argues against the view that "*Halakhic Man* is a mithnagged phenomenology of awesome proportions." Instead he writes p. 139 that "In rejecting completely the mithnagdim's adherence to Lurianic kabbalah's dualistic asceticism, and their sense of pessimism regarding the potentialities of man within the confines of this fragmented and alienated world, Soloveitchik has developed a highly original and uniquely optimistic alternative to hasidic spirituality."

something the Rav had to develop; it was simply there, a constant presence that was as real to him as the air he breathed—perhaps even biological and genetic.[6]

While the Rav may have inherited and imbibed his analytic nature from his paternal ancestors, he was also exposed, from his mother's side, to a more nurturing, warmer[7] and more mystical orientation:

> Most of all I learned [from my mother] that Judaism expresses itself not only in formal compliance with the law but also in a living experience. She taught me that there is a flavor, a scent and warmth to *mitzvot*. I learned from her the most important thing in life—to feel the presence of the Almighty and the gentle pressure of His hand resting upon my frail shoulders. Without her teachings, which quite often were transmitted to me in silence, I would have grown up a soulless being, dry and insensitive.[8]

A few paragraphs later (pp. 77-78) we find the following:

> [The Rebbetzen of Talne] was an outstanding teacher, even though she was a woman of few words. She taught, like my mother, how to feel the presence of God.

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6 For discussions concerning the possibility of a biological/genetic basis for spirituality see, for example, Dean Hamer, *The God Gene: How Faith Is Hardwired into Our Genes* (New York: Anchor, 2004), and Andrew Newberg and Mark Robert Waldman, *Why We Believe What We Believe: Uncovering Our Biological Need for Meaning, Spirituality, and Truth* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

7 Shulamith Soloveitchik Meiselman, *The Soloveitchik Heritage: A Daughter's Memoir* (Hoboken: Ktav, 1995): "The Soloveitchiks are very unusual in that every act in their household is performed according to the letter of the Law... Your father is a saintly man, but he recognizes the importance of secular education, not only for his children but for all Israel, as long as it doesn't negate our tradition. At his table one feels free to discuss any subject—political, social, or literary. In addition, your home is permeated with warmth and tenderness," p. 11, as explained by her brother-in-law, Reb Menachem, to Pesha, the Rav's mother, prior to her engagement to R. Moshe Soloveitchik.

8 Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "A Tribute to the Rebbetzen of Talne," *Tradition* 17:2, Spring 1978, p. 77.

While yet a child, the Rav had already experienced this emotional/mystical spirituality:

> ... As a child I used to feel stimulated, aroused, and deeply inspired. I used to experience a strange peaceful stillness. As a child I used to surrender, using the language of the mystics, to a stream of inflowing joy and ecstasy. In a word, as a young child I felt the presence of kedushah [holiness] on these nights... Paradoxically, I must say that these emotions and experiences, however naive and childish, have always been the fountainhead of my religious life. My religious life has always been a colorful life. This achievement I derived from my childhood experience and not from my intellectual accomplishments.[9]

This mystical feeling stayed with the Rav throughout his life. Consider the effect that the sighting of the Baltic Sea had upon him:

> I remember that I was grown up when I went to Danzig [Gdansk, Poland]. I saw the [Baltic] sea for the first time, and it made a tremendous impression upon me. From afar, it looked like a blue forest. I was used to forests from Russia. When I drew closer and saw that it was the sea, I was overwhelmed. I made the benediction of "Blessed be He who wrought creation," which is recited when "one sees mountains, hills, seas, rivers and deserts" [Berakhot 9:2]. This blessing came from the depths of my heart. It was one of the greatest religious experiences I have ever had.[10]

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[9] Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Rav: The World of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik* (Jersey City: Ktav, 1999), volume 2 of 2, p. 172. We refer to these books hereafter as "Rakeffet Vol. 1" and "Rakeffet Vol. 2."

[10] Rakeffet Vol. 2, p. 164. In another retelling of the same incident we find: "It was a religious reaction to viewing the majesty of God's creation. When I recited the blessing upon seeing the sea, I did so with emotion and deep feeling. I deeply experienced the words of the benediction: "Blessed be He who wrought creation" [Berakhot 9:1]. Not all the blessings that I recite are said with such concentration. It was more than simply a blessing, it was an encounter with the Creator. I felt the Shekhinah [Divine Presence] was hidden in the darkness and vastness of the sea. The experience was unique and unforgettable; the blessing welled out of me." (Ibid. 165:166)

The Rav also recounts how a traumatic event on Yom Kippur foreshadowed the death of his wife:

> ... It was Kol Nidrei, and I was holding a Sefer Torah for Kol Nidrei. Then the hazzan finished Kol Nidrei... I turned over the Sefer Torah to a talmid of mine and told him to put it into the aron ha-kodesh. He put it into the aron ha-kodesh. Apparently, he did not put it in properly. I don't know exactly what happened, but the Sefer Torah slipped and fell. It did not fall on the floor, but in the aron ha-kodesh. At that moment I knew that my wife would not survive. It was sealed. Don't ask me how I guessed it. Don't ask me why. I felt it was sealed. Nothing would help. Indeed it was so.[11]

God, the ultimate spiritual essence, was for R. Soloveitchik not merely something in which he believed but a presence which hovered above his shoulders.

> There are times at night when I feel as if someone [the Divine Presence] is standing behind me, bending himself to look over my shoulder to peer into the Talmudic text at the topic I am studying at that moment.[12]

Consider also how the Rav imagines Adam Two, the "man of faith":

> ... On the one hand, he beholds God in every nook and corner of creation, in the flowering of the plant, in the rushing of the tide, and in the movement of his own muscle, as if God were at hand close to and beside man, engaging him in a friendly dialogue. And yet the very moment man turns his face to God, he finds Him remote, unapproachable, enveloped in transcendence and mystery.[13]

The spiritual presence was also something he could turn to and find comfort in, in his darkest moments.

> ...However, I could not pray in the hospital; somehow I could not find God in the whitewashed, long corridors among the interns and the nurses. However, the need for prayer was great; I could

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11 Rakeffet Vol. 2, pp. 5-6.

12 Rakeffet Vol. 2, p. 189.

13 Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith*, with a foreword by David Shatz (New York: Doubleday, 2006), p. 46.

> not live without gratifying this need. The moment I returned home I would rush to my room, fall on my knees and pray fervently. God, in those moments, appeared not as the exalted, majestic King, but rather as a humble, close friend, brother, father: in such moments of black despair, He was not far from me; He was right there in the dark room; I felt His warm hand, כביכול, on my shoulder, I hugged His knees, כביכול. He was with me in the narrow confines of a small room, taking up no space at all.[14]

To the Rav, the ability to experience God's presence is self-evident:

> She [the Jewish people] hears the rustle of footsteps on the hills, in the valleys, among the tender river-shoots, and in the garden paths where the almond and the pomegranate trees blossom. She bestirs herself and goes out to greet him [God]. Suddenly the echo melts away and disappears in the sun-drenched distance... their love cannot be realized, their yearning cannot be fulfilled...[15]

The above is not merely a poetic reading of *Shir ha-Shirim;* it is a manifestation of the Rav's deepest feelings:

> When God is apprehended *in* reality it is an experience; when God is comprehended *through* reality it is just an intellectual performance... The trouble with all rational demonstrations of the existence of God, with which the history of philosophy abounds, consists in their being exactly what they were meant to be by those who formulated them: abstract logical demonstrations divorced from the living primal experiences in which these demonstrations are rooted... Does the loving bride in the embrace of her beloved ask for proof that he is alive and real? Must the prayerful soul clinging in passionate love and ecstasy to her Beloved demonstrate that He exists? So asks Soren Kierkegaard sarcastically when told that Anselm of Canterbury, the father of the very abstract and complex ontological proof, spent many days in prayer and supplication that he be presented with rational evidence of the existence of God.[16]

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[14] Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Majesty and Humility," *Tradition* 17:2, Spring 1978, pp. 25–37, on p. 33.

[15] Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *And From There You Shall Seek,* trans. from the Hebrew by Naomi Goldblum (Jersey City: Ktav, 2008) p. 2.

[16] *The Lonely Man of Faith* p. 49, fn. 1. See also *And From There You Shall Seek*, p. 133.

> The religious sensibility does not offer decisive proofs, draw inferences, or make deductions. It "senses" and experiences God in its innermost ontological consciousness.[17]

Furthermore, this ontological consciousness far outweighs any and all of the proofs of God's existence:

> The proofs so prevalent in both general and Jewish philosophy attest to the human longing for God. These demonstrations can be divided into five categories. As mentioned in the text, we do not need these demonstrations as proofs, because the experience of God is the basis of certainty.[18]

The Rav's Difficulty in Passing on His Spirituality to His Students

Unfortunately for the Rav, his spirituality was not something he could easily pass on to his students:

> While I have succeeded, to a great or small degree, as a teacher and guide in the area of 'gadlut ha-mochin'... I have not seen much success in my efforts in the experiential area. I was not able to live together with them, to cleave to them and to transfer to them the warmth of my soul. My words, it seems, have not kindled the divine flame in sensitive hearts.[19]

When a mystical spiritual person discusses spirituality with a non-spiritual rationalist person, they often tend to talk **at** each other; they are not communicating **with** each other. They share different worlds and each has no idea what the other is saying. Consider this story within a story as related by the Rav to a student:

> ... With the aim of intensifying the emotional experience, the Rav announced that he was interested in teaching the *Likkutei Torah*,

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17 *And From There You Shall Seek*, p. 13.

18 *And From There You Shall Seek*, p. 157, n. 3.

19 "Al Ahavat Ha-Torah," p. 420; translation based on that of Rav Lichtenstein, "The Rav at Jubilee," p. 55. In another version: "I am not a bad teacher. However, I cannot transmit my recollections to them. If I want to transmit my experiences, I have to transmit myself, my own heart. How can I merge my soul and personality with my students? It is very difficult. Yet it is exactly what is lacking on the American scene... This is exactly our greatest need in the United States—to feel and experience God's Presence." Rakeffet Vol. 2, pp. 169, 170.

> authored by the founder of Habad Hasidism... Soon afterwards, the Rav learned that one of his closest students, who was a confirmed mitnaged [opponent of hasidim], was not exactly pleased with the choice of topic. Upon hearing of the student's objections, the Rav recounted the following tale... The *Bet ha-Levi* had a student who had become a devotee of the Hasidic movement... Time and again he invited the *Bet ha-Levi* to join him at a gathering of his hasidim. After many refusals, Rabbi Soloveitchik finally consented to accompany his student... Upon arriving, the two entered a room filled with song and spiritual delight. As the tunes of the hasidim grew louder and more intense, the sun suddenly peeked out of the clouds and shined forth over the *shtiebel*. Then the Rebbe began to speak... Suddenly the snow melted, the grass sprouted forth, the barren trees bloomed again, and the birds joined the hasidim in praising the Almighty.
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> As the hour was late, the *Bet ha-Levi* glanced at his watch and suddenly told his student in a sharp tone: "Nu, nu, it is time for the Minhah [afternoon] prayers." The spiritual rapture of the gathering was broken, the weather outside once again turned bleak, the trees once again became bare, and the earth returned to a barren wilderness.
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> After finishing the story, the Rav turned to the student who was not happy about studying a classic Hasidic text and exclaimed: "This story is about you!"[20]

As a postscript to the Rav's efforts mentioned above, to instill spirituality in his students, R. Aharon Lichtenstein quotes the Rav:

> "But," he confided to me subsequently, "it didn't really help."[21]

The Rav's Interpretation of Rambam's Imperative to Know that God Exists

Rambam, the ultimate rationalist, in the beginning of his *Mishneh Torah* rules that one has an obligation "to know that God exists." In paragraph 5 Rambam goes on to provide a proof for God's existence. For the Rav—whose spirituality allows him to experience the presence of God—any type of proof of God's existence is of second-

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[20] Rakeffet Vol. 2, pp. 180, 181.

[21] *Memories of a Giant: Eulogies in Memory of Rabbi Dr. Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt"l*, ed. Michael A. Bierman (Jerusalem, New York: Urim, 2003) p. 68.

ary importance. He thus interprets Rambam's first paragraph as stating not that there is an obligation to know God but that knowing Him is self-evident. Only as secondary evidence does Rambam, according to the Rav, then provide a proof for His existence:

> Maimonides's term לידע (*Yesode ha-Torah* I:1) transcends the bounds of the abstract *logos* and passes over into the realm of the boundless intimate and impassioned experience where postulate and deduction, discursive knowledge and intuitive thinking, conception and perception, subject and object, are one. Only in paragraph five, after the aboriginal experience of God had been established by him as a firm reality (in paragraph one), does he introduce the Aristotelian cosmological proof of the unmoved mover.[22]

Analytic and Spiritual Explanations

While it is quite common for the Rav to give different explanations for a halakhah or a religious concept, we sometimes get the feeling that the two explanations he gives are meant to satisfy two aspects of his personality: the analytic and the spiritual. Consider the following two examples:

Reason for the Commandments—*Taamei ha-Miẓvot:* In *Halakhic Mind*[23] the Rav explains why he disagrees with Rambam's attempt in *Moreh Nevukhim* to give a rational reason for the *ḥukim*—those commandments that we assume have no known rationale:

> For example, should we post [sic] the question: why did God forbid perjury? the intellectualistic philosopher would promptly reply, "because it is contrary to the norm of truth." Thus, he would explain a religious norm by an ethical precept, making religion the handmaid of ethics. Again, when the same philosopher attempts to sanction dietary laws on hygienic grounds, the specific religious content and meaning are supplanted by a principle of foreign extraction. If the Sabbath is to be seen only against the background of mundane social justice and similar ideals, the intrinsic quality of the Sabbath is transformed into something alien. It serves merely as a means to the realization of a "higher" end.

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22 *The Lonely Man of Faith,* p. 50.

23 Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Halakhic Mind: An Essay on Jewish Tradition and Modern Thought* (New York: Free Press, 1986) p. 93.

> Maimonides' efforts foreshadowed failure from the very outset of his "how" approach.

Going beyond why the Rav is unhappy with Rambam's approach to *taamei ha-mitzvot,* the Rav explains that the proper way to understand the *ḥukim* is not to ask "why were they commanded," but rather to construct reasons based on how the observations of the *ḥukim* make us feel; what these mitzvot mean to us subjectively. However, in *Majesty and Humility* the Rav gives a more esoteric/spiritual reason to explain the importance of *ḥukim*.

> Let me ask the following question: Is this Lurianic doctrine of צמצום just a Kabbalistic mystery, without any moral relevance for us; or is it the very foundation of our morality? If God withdrew, and creation is the result of His withdrawal, then guided by the principle of *imitation Dei*, we are called upon to do the same. Jewish ethics, then, requires man, in certain situations, to withdraw. Man must not always be victor. From time to time triumph should turn into defeat.[24]
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> The Judaic concept of חק represents human surrender and human defeat. Man, an intelligent being, ignores the logos and burdens himself with laws whose rational motif he cannot grasp. He withdraws from the rationalistic position. In a word, withdrawal is required, in all areas of human experience and endeavor; whatever is most significant, whatever attracts man the most, must be given up.[25]

In other words, the purpose of *ḥukim* is to get man to admit that there are commandments of God that he cannot understand. By nevertheless accepting and observing these commandments, man admits defeat and surrenders himself to the will of God.

Theodicy and the Need for Mystery: In trying to explain why bad things happen to good people, the Rav similarly provides both an intellectual answer and a mystical answer. In one attempt to come to grips with "why bad things happen to good people," the Rav is emphatic that we should not try to provide a theodicy; we should not try to understand why God wants good people to suffer:

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[24] *Majesty and Humility*, pp. 35-36.

[25] *Majesty and Humility*, p. 37.

> 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? [26]

In other words, if we try to give a theodicy, a rational answer for why a person suffers, e.g., to cleanse him of sins so that he will reap a greater reward in the next world, we may then be tempted to say, "why should I help him; after all he deserves it, or it is for his own good." We might then be lax in helping such a person. The Rav thus advises us not to look for answers but to concentrate on helping the person who is suffering.

And yet elsewhere the Rav gives a totally different reason we should not offer a theodicy. The reason is similar to the mystical reason he provides for the *ḥukim*:

> The grandeur of religion lies in its *mysterium tremendum*, its magnitude, and its ultimate incomprehensibility... When a minister, rabbi, or priest attempts to solve the ancient question of Iyyov's suffering, through a sermon or lecture, he does not promote religious ends but, on the contrary, does them a disservice. The beauty of religion, with its grandiose vistas, reveals itself to man not in solutions but in problems, not in harmony but in constant conflict of diversified forces and trends.[27]

In both of the above cases (*Taamei ha-Mitzvot/ḥukim* and theodicy), the Rav sees the acceptance of the mysterious Will as the ideal. In *Taamei ha-Mitzvot* by observing the *ḥukim* we admit that we are not able to grasp everything that God commands. Similarly when it comes to the question of why bad things happen to good people, the Rav advises us that the ideal is to acknowledge that God's actions are sometimes unknowable and mysterious and yet to accept His edicts always.

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[26] As paraphrased by David Shatz in *Jewish Thought in Dialogue: Essays on Thinkers, Theologies, and Moral Theories* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2009), pp. 275-276.

[27] "Sacred and Profane: *Kodesh* and *Chol* in World Perspectives," *The 1995 Book of Jewish Thought*, ed. Moshe Ch. Sosevsky (Orthodox Union and Yeshivat Ohr Yerushalayim, 1995) p. 57.

Attitude toward Ḥasidut, Lubavitch and the Rebbe

The Rav[28] describes how on one Rosh Ha-Shanah his father was about to begin to guide the blowing of the shofar when he noticed that a God-fearing Ḥabad ḥasid began to weep. Turning to the ḥasid, the Rav's father began chastising him: "Do you weep when you take the *lulav*? Why then do you weep when you sound the *shofar*? Are not both the commandments of God?"

The Rav then does something very strange. He spends two pages explaining why the ḥasid's weeping was justified. Toward the end of this explanation (p. 62) the Rav's writing takes an even stranger turn. He gives a biblical rationale for the actions of the Ḥabad ḥasid. He points out that "The Targum... translates the biblical name of Rosh Ha-Shanah... (*Yom Teruah*) (Num. 26:1) as 'a day of moaning' (*Yom Yevavah*). In contrast, the Torah enjoins special rejoicing on the festival of Sukkot: 'And ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days' (Lev. 23:40)."

In short, the Rav makes an impassioned and detailed defense of the position of the Ḥabad ḥasid and portrays his father, the ultimate halakhic man, as being against an almost literal reading of Ḥumash. The Rav's sympathies seem to lie not with his father but with the Ḥabad ḥasid.

The Rav's warm feelings toward his first rebbe, a Ḥabad ḥasid who taught him Tanya; his visit to the Rebbe at the *farbrengen* celebrating his thirtieth anniversary as head of Ḥabad;[29] his sending two students to pick up a copy of every new sefer put out by the Rebbe; the Lubavitcher Rebbe's support for the Rav;[30] and the entire paean to ḥasidut described on pp. 145–163 in Rakeffet Vol. 1 all testify to the Rav's tendencies toward ḥasidut.

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[28] Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, translated by Lawrence Kaplan (Philadelphia: JPS, 1983), p. 60.

[29] Rakeffet Vol. 2, p. 145.

[30] Meiselman, regarding the effort to have the Rav succeed his father as *rosh yeshiva* at RIETS, writes: "The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Grand Rabbi Y. Y. Schneersohn (1880–1950), declared his support for Rabbi Soloveitchik," p. 256.

Conclusion

In *Halakhic Man* the Rav spends many pages denigrating *homo religiosus*—the mystical/spiritual ascetic—who removes himself from the material world to contemplate Heavenly matters.[31] We have shown, however, that on both an intellectual/philosophical level and an emotional/mystical level the Rav was a very spiritual person. We have shown further that the Rav's emotional/mystical spirituality was palpable, immediate and intense—a natural inborn part of his personality—and that his emotional/mystical spirituality affected his life and thought, his attitude toward proofs of God and the question of theodicy, and his relationship with his students.[32] ☙

[31] See for example *Halakhic Man* pp. 92-94.

[32] I would like to thank Rabbi Asher Benzion Buchman and Drs. Leib Litman, David Shatz and Meir Zelcer for reading and commenting on an earlier draft of this work.