

# Modern Orthodoxy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:

## Lecture IV: "Inclusiveness & the Ideal of 'Klal Yisrael' in the Teachings of Rabbi Soloveitchik

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Shaarei Shomayim Congregation, Spring 5766

### Selected Bibliography

- *Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik: As Posek of Post-Modern Orthodoxy*, Rabbi Dr. Wurzbarger, Tradition, vol 29, 1994.
- *Some Comments on Centrist Orthodoxy*, Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, Tradition 22(3), 1986
- *Orthodoxy, the Synagogue, and the American Jewish Community, Community, Covenant, And Commitment: Selected Letters and Communications*, Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik, Nathaniel Helfgot ed.

### 1. ספר הכוזרי מאמר ב

נ. אמר החבר: הלא תראה איך הציע דוד בשבח התורה כשהקדים ספור השמש במזמור: +תהלים י"ט ב'+ "השמים מספרים כבוד אל", וזכר אורה הכולל וזכות עצמה ויושר דרכה ויופי מראה, וסמך לזה: "תורת ה' תמימה משיבת נפש", והתלוי בו, כאלו אמר אל תתמהו מן הספורים האלה כי התורה יותר בהירה וגלויה ומפורסמת ומועילה ומועילה, ולולא בני ישראל לא היתה התורה, ועוד כי לא היתה מעלתם בעבור משה אבל מעלת משה היתה בעבורם, כי האהבה לא היתה כי אם בהמון זרע אברהם יצחק ויעקב, ובחר במשה להגיע הטוב אליהם על ידו.

**R. Yehuda Halevi (Kuzari 2:56)** - *If not for the Children of Israel, there would be no Torah in the world.*

### 2. ספר האמונות והדעות מאמר ג

ועוד מה שאמרה (דבר' ל"ג ד') תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהלת יעקב. ועוד כי אומתנו איננה אומה כי אם בתורתיה...

**R. Saadia Gaon (Emunot Ve'De'ot 3:7)** - *Our people, Israel, is a people only by virtue of its Torahs (both Written & Oral)*

### 3. אליהו רבה (איש שלום) פרשה טו

אמר לי, רבי שני דברים יש לי בלבבי, ואני אוהבן אהבה גדולה, תורה וישראל, אבל איני יודע אי זה מהן קודם, אמרתי לו, דרכן של בני אדם שאומרים, תורה קדומה לכל, שנאמר ה' קנני ראשית דרכו (משלי ח' כ"ב), אבל הייתי אומר, ישראל קדושים [קודמין], שנאמר קודש ישראל לה' ראשית תבואתו (ירמיה ב' ג')

### 4. Some Comments on Centrist Orthodoxy, Dr. N. Lamm

Now, these two opposing viewpoints have lived peacefully, side by side, for centuries, their conflict latent—until our own days when, as a result of the trauma of the Holocaust and the reduction of Orthodoxy to a decided minority, the problem assumes large, poignant, and possibly tragic proportions. The confrontation between the two, if allowed to get out of hand, can have the most cataclysmic effects on the future of the House of Israel as well as the State of Israel. History calls upon us to abandon tired formulas and ossified clichés and make a deliberate, conscious effort to develop policies which, even if choices between the two must be made, will lead us to embrace both and retain the maximum of each. We shall have to undertake a difficult analytic calculus: Which of the two leads to the other and which does not lead to the other?—and give primacy to the preference which inexorably moves us on to the next love, so that in the end we lose neither. Ultimately, there can be no Torah without Israel and no Israel without Torah. *ישראל ואורייתא חד הוא.*

If indeed such a calculus has to be undertaken, then Orthodox Jews will have to rethink their policy. Heretofore, the attitude most prevalent has been that Torah takes precedence—witness the readiness of our fellow Orthodox Jews to turn exclusivist, to the extent that psychologically, though certainly not halakhically, many of our people no longer regard non-Orthodox Jews as part of *Kelal Yisrael*. But this choice of love of Torah over love of Israel is a dead end: Such a decision is a final one, for it cuts off the rest of the Jewish

people permanently. Such love of Torah does not lead to love of Israel; most certainly not. The alternative, the precedence given to love of Israel over love of Torah, is more reasonable, for although we may rue the outrageous violations of Torah and Halakhah and their legitimation by non-Orthodox groups, a more open and tolerant attitude to our deviationist brethren *may* somehow lead to their rethinking their positions and returning to identification with Torah and its values; לארשי תבהא may well lead to אהבת התורה. A posture of rejection, certainly one of triumphalist arrogance, will most certainly not prove attractive and fruitful.

Moreover, if there ever was a time that a hard choice had to be made to reject Jews, this is not the time to do so. In this post-Holocaust age, when we lost fully one third of our people, and when the combination of negative demography and rampant assimilation and out-marriage threaten our viability as a people, we must seek to hold on to Jews and not repel them. Love of Israel has so often been used as a slogan—and a political one, at that—that it dulls the senses and evokes no reaction. Yet, like clichés, slogans contain nuggets of truth and wisdom, and we ignore them at our own peril.

Included in the rubric of the centrality of the people of Israel as a

### 5. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *On Orthodoxy and Non-Orthodox Movements, Community Covenant and Commitment*, ch 21 (pp. 145-146)

The conclusion above is very simple. When we are faced with a problem for Jews and Jewish interests toward the world without, regarding the defense of Jewish rights in the non-Jewish world, then all groups and movements must be united. In this area, there may not be any division, because any friction in the Jewish camp may be disastrous for the entire people. In this realm we must consider the ideal of unity, as a political-historical nation, which includes everyone from Mendes-France to the "old-fashioned" Jew of Me'ah She'arim - without exception. In the crematoria, the ashes of the hasidim and pious Jews were put together with the ashes of the radicals and the atheists. And we all must fight the enemy, who does not differentiate between those who believe in God and those who reject Him.

With regard to our problem within [the Jewish community], however, - our spiritual-religious interests such as Jewish education, synagogues, councils of rabbis - whereby unity is expressed through spiritual-ideological collectivism as a Torah community, it is my opinion that Orthodoxy cannot and should not unite with such groups which deny the fundamentals of our weltanschauung. It is impossible for me to comprehend, for example, how Orthodox rabbis, who spent their best years in yeshivot and absorbed the spirit of the Oral Law and its tradition, for whom Rabbi Akiva, Maimonides, Rav Moshe Isserles, the Gabn of Vilna, Rav Hayyim Brisker and other Jewish sages are the pillars upon which their spiritual world rests, can join with spiritual leaders for whom all this is worthless....

Community, Covenant & Commitment, pp. 125-127

May 5, 1954

Mr. Philip Fleischer  
27 Judith Road  
Newton, Mass.

Dear Mr. Fleischer,

Please excuse the delay in answering your letter. The reason for my not replying promptly was due to a feeling of reluctance on my part to refuse to serve as an honorary sponsor of a testimonial dinner in honor of Rabbi and Mrs. Shubow and also marking the occasion of the dedication of the new Temple "Bnai Moshe." Frankly speaking, I was faced with a very unpleasant situation. On the one hand I was eager to accept your invitation. I cherish my

long association with Rabbi Shubow and I consider him a dear and distinguished friend whom I hold in great esteem because of his many talents and fine qualities. It is self-evident that if the dinner were being given only in honor of Rabbi and Mrs. Shubow I would consider it a privilege to serve as one of the sponsors.

On the other hand, however, this reception, to my regret, will also serve as an occasion to celebrate the completion and dedication of the new temple. Let me say unequivocally that I do recognize the importance of this new house of worship for the Jewish population of Brighton as a means of communal organization and unification. I also appreciate the unselfish efforts on the part of the members and leaders which made such an undertaking possible. Their pride in having attained their goal is fully warranted. You in particular have manifested a strong sense of community awareness and devotion to Jewish causes for which you should be congratulated.

Yet, all this does not justify my serving as a sponsor of a dinner at which the dedication of this temple will be celebrated since the latter will, in all probability, have a mixed seating arrangement which is in my opinion not in consonance with our time-honored Law. The requirement for separate pews is almost a truism in our religious code and I have neither the right nor the desire to sanction either by word or by silence a departure from this tradition

My presence at the celebration or the appearance of my name as a sponsor would be tantamount to a tacit approval of mixed pews, a thing which would greatly disturb my conscience. Therefore, after I had given the matter considerable thought, I arrived at the unavoidable conclusion that my role in connection with this affair would prove to be absurd, and so I respectfully decline.

I wish to impress upon you that my words are not to be interpreted in the sense of criticism or censure. I am not a preacher by nature, and I have never tried to convert others who are committed to a different philosophy to my viewpoint. I write this letter with a sense of deep humility, explaining to you my feelings on the matter. I hope that you realize and fully understand my position

and appreciate my hesitance in accepting an honor which would be in direct opposition to my inner convictions.

Please convey my regards to Rabbi and Mrs. Shubow and wish them, on my behalf, many years of joy and happiness.

Sincerely yours,

Joseph Soloveitchick

<p><b>CLASS OF SERVICE</b> This is a free message unless the deferred character is indicated by the proper symbol.</p>	<h1 style="margin: 0;">WESTERN UNION</h1> <h2 style="margin: 0;">TELEGRAM</h2> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">W. P. MARSHALL, President</p> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">The filing time shown in the date line on domestic telegrams is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination.</p>	<p><b>SYMBOLS</b> DL = Day Letter NL = Night Letter LT = International Letter Telegram</p>
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RABBI JOSEPH SHUBOW

HOTEL SOMERSET (DLR) BSN

HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS I HAVE ALWAYS DEEPLY APPRECIATED YOUR GREAT QUALITIES AS A FRIEND THE WARMTH OF YOUR PERSONALITY YOUR READINESS TO HELP OTHERS AND YOUR COURAGE AND STEADFASTNESS IN ADVOCATING GREAT CAUSES MAY THE ALMIGHTY GRANT YOU MANY YEARS OF SERVICE TO YOUR COMMUNITY AND OUR PEOPLE

JOSEPH B SOLOVEITCHICK.