



The Lonely Man of Faith

By Joseph B. Soloveitchik

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Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the rabbi known as “The Rav” by his followers worldwide, was a leading authority on the meaning of Jewish law and prominent force in building bridges between traditional Orthodox Judaism and the modern world. In *THE LONELY MAN OF FAITH*, a soaring, eloquent essay first published in *Tradition* magazine in 1965, Soloveitchik investigates the essential loneliness of the person of faith in our narcissistic, materially oriented, utilitarian society. In this modern classic, Soloveitchik uses the story of Adam and Eve as a springboard, interweaving insights from such important Western philosophers as Kierkegaard and Kant with innovative readings of Genesis to provide guidance for the faithful in today’s world. He explains prayer as “the harbinger of moral reformation,” and discusses with empathy and understanding the despair and exasperation of individuals who seek personal redemption through direct knowledge of a God who seems remote and unapproachable. He shows that while the faithful may become members of a religious community, their true home is “the abode of loneliness.” In a moving personal testimony, Soloveitchik demonstrates a deep-seated commitment, intellectual courage, and integrity that people of all religions will respond to.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Fusing the existential acuity of Kierkegaard with the wisdom of the Old Testament, Boston Orthodox rabbi Soloveitchik has produced a timeless spiritual guide for men and women of all religions. In this soaring, eloquent essay, first published in Tradition magazine in 1965, "The Rav," as he is known to his followers worldwide, investigates the essential aloneness of the person of faith, whom he deems a misfit in our narcissistic, technologically oriented, utilitarian society. Using the story of Adam and Eve as a springboard, Soloveitchik explains prayer as "the harbinger of moral reformation" and probes the despair and exasperation of individuals who seek to redeem existence through direct knowledge of a God who seems remote and unapproachable. Although the faithful may become members of a "covenantal community," their true home, he writes, is "the abode of loneliness" as they shuttle between the transcendent and the mundane. Sudden shafts of illumination confront the reader at every turn in this inspirational personal testament.

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From Library Journal

Boston-based Orthodox Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, perhaps the greatest living authority on Halakhah (Jewish law), offers some profound spiritual insights for persons of all creeds. Combining Kierkegaardian and Kantian philosophical insights with a unique exegesis of the Genesis creation stories, Soloveitchik provides guidance as to how the existential person of faith, essentially alone in a society beset by narcissism, self-seeking ends, and an empty modern technology, can find personal redemption in the living God of Biblical faith. This essay, originally published in the Orthodox Jewish journal Tradition in 1965, is an excellent introduction to the thought of this great thinker. Recommended for large religion collections.

- Robert A. Silver, Shaker Heights P.L., Ohio

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Review

“ . . . one of the most personal expressions ever voiced by a modern Talmudic authority on the elemental power of religious faith and the ways in which the joy of life often comes mixed with longing, torment, and despair.” —*Time*

Users Review

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Shirley Akins:

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