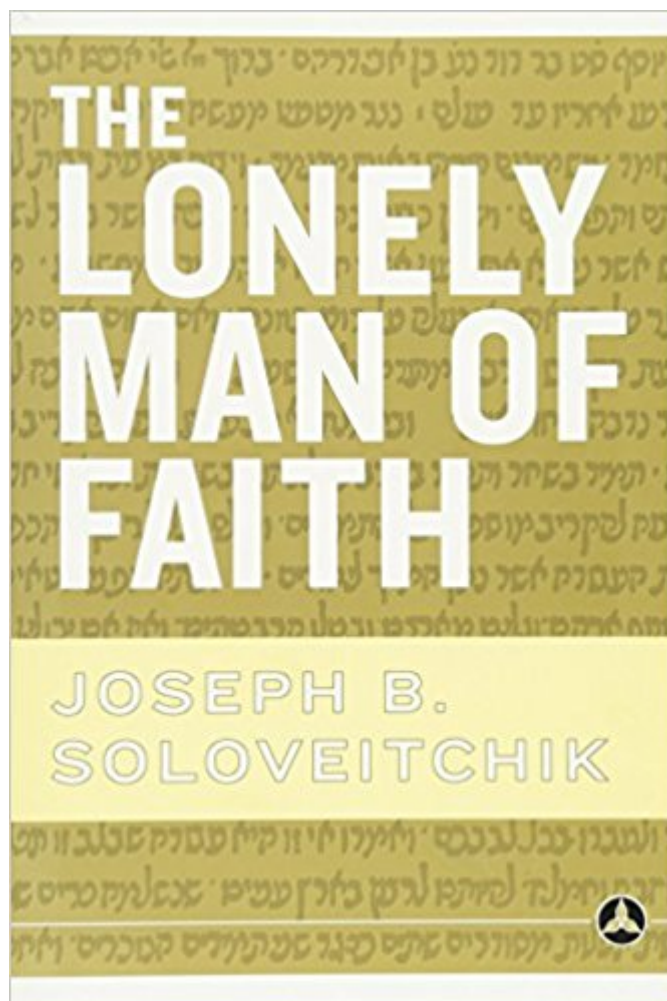


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# The Lonely Man Of Faith



## Synopsis

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 to which people of all religions will respond.

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## Customer Reviews

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. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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., OhioCopyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Lonely Man of Faith sets out contrasts between those disparate creation accounts of Adam, from Genesis opening chapters. The author describes the differences between Adam I, created male and female, given dominion as a form of majesty or gravitas, and the second account, Adam II, created alone, brought to name the animals. The second creation account finds Adam II 'alone', not as an indictment addressed to Adam, but as a contextual observation of God about Adam. As the author expresses, that statement "it is not good for the man to be alone" may be better served from the Hebrew original as "being lonely." His analysis, a good seven chapters deals with plausible reasoning about the social and psychological status of Adam I and Adam II, explaining how the first Adam pursues the goal of meeting his needs, to structure his communities for his best interests and productivity. Adam II however, is invested by his creator with the need to interact in the covenantal Prophetic/Prayer community with the creator. Only in the second community is the association with Eve extended to the level of relationship, it entails awareness of and interaction with the participation of the third person, as with the participation of God. Through many footnotes sourcing

Talmudic discussion of Hebrew commentary, this treatise presents a bird's eye view of Judaistic eschatology from the stand point of it's Orthodox Jewish author. Rav Soloveitchik argues that the narrative titles of God, called Elohim for the "majestic" Adam, versus being called YAWEH for the "covenantal" (man of faith) Adam, are illustrative (metaphorical names) of different aspects of God encountered by each. The one observes God through the mechanism of the cosmos, in his surrounding environment (Elohim), while the title "YAWEH" identifies a symbolism perpetuated down through the patriarchs, of God who calls covenantal Adam to draw near, of God who presents Eve in relationship with Adam and with himself, as co-equal in covenant rather than merely as co-worker. Within the covenantal community, Adam and Eve participate in an existential experience of being together, not merely working together. The change from a technical-utilitarian relationship to a covenantal-existential one occurs (in the Rav's view) "...when God joins the community...Deus absconditus emerges suddenly as Deus revelatus... (while) homo absconditus sheds his mask...(now) homo revelatus." One demonstrative illustration is the Rabbi's observation of how the Biblical text doesn't provide us any interpersonal intercourse/discourse between in-depth personalities of Eve and Adam. "Ontologically, they do not belong to each other; each is provided with an 'I' awareness and knows nothing of a 'We' awareness...the communication lines are open between two surface personalities engaged in work, dedicated to success, and speaking in cliché's and stereotypes, and not between two souls bound together in an indissoluble relation..." The other base to cover is the significance of the stories to an understanding of covenantal theology. Any covenant assumes distinctive definitions and terms of equality between the contractual partners. This understanding often finds a void space among teachers and students of the Bible. The non-Talmud student (like me) may be approaching the literature irrespective to the parties it's addressed to. (i.e. the Levites to whom the Leviticus is addressed to.) As a Christian I'm persuaded that the ignorance of covenantal theology plays a role in substantial misappropriations of Jewish scriptures. Rav Soloveitchik, I believe handles this topic with his best velvet gloves. While his treatise is addressed principally to the Jewish community, it is laced intermittently with precise Latin terms coined by the Christian theology community. In that respect, he also speaks to the theologically alert Christian who may be interested to understand the different goals of Jewish eschatology, including it's own ecumenical aspects. To put this into a perspective potentially accessible to my fellow Christians, there's a proverb near my door where a stray glance cannot easily escape. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination." (Proverbs 28:5, ASV) It is incumbent upon a hearer to recognize, or pay attention to whom the directive is applicable; namely to whom are the terms of the covenant applicable? Also, what are the roles of the

participants which the covenant defines? Preaching becomes quite strange, when assuming the assertion from the Christian epistles, that all those things which were written were given for 'our' edification, for 'our' instruction, where the preacher fails to acknowledge the covenant provisions/restrictions actually belong to Judaism. For example:[Only] "The covenant draws God into the society of men of faith."[As]-- the leader of the community-- the teacher of his pupils-- the shepherd of the flock."The prime purpose of revelation in the opinion of the Halakhah is related to the giving of the Law."The prophetic pilgrimage to God pursues a practical goal in whose realization the whole covenantal community shares." [...] "which is mainly a community of action."Because Judaism doesn't have a Hell connected to the concept of "salvation", redemption isn't reduced to a Great Escape. It's more of a progression down the path of repentance, "Teshuva", as it's called. "Cathartic redemptiveness--when objectified--expresses itself in the feeling of axiological security [i.e. being anchored in halachic life.] attained through man's exercise of control over himself." "[Which]...is experienced in the privacy of one's in-depth personality, [and] cuts below the relationship between the 'I' and the 'thou'."Abraham's story introduces the basics of covenantal community. "Both parties entering a covenantal relationship possess inalienable rights which may only be surrendered by mutual consent. The paradoxical experience of freedom, reciprocity, and 'equality' in one's personal confrontation with God is basic for the understanding of the covenantal faith community."Without any epic myth of the fall into sin, his Orthodox comment on Tanakh originality has this to say: "The Biblical account of the original sin is the story of man of faith who realizes suddenly that faith can be utilized for the acquisition of majesty and glory and who instead of fostering a covenantal community, prefers to organize a political utilitarian community exploiting the sincerity and unqualified commitment of the crowd for non covenantal, worldly purposes." "The history of organized religion is replete with instances of desecration of the covenant."

This essay describes the dual nature of man by utilizing the two creation stories as metaphors. Similar to Jung's Self forming from the proper balance of the conscience and unconscious mind or Nietzsche's super man emerging from the Dionysian and Apollonian impulses. He like Nietzsche criticizes modern man of becoming too rational and like Jung states that a man out of balance becomes neurotic. The essay alludes much to Otto's Idea of the Holy and has Emerson undertones as for whatever reason the phrase "the visible creation is the terminus or circumference of the invisible world" keeps coming to mind as I relate Adam the first to the terminus and the second as the invisible world.

Beautiful, one of the best books/expansions on some timeless thoughts I have had the pleasure of reading.

One of the poorest reads I have tried. I say tried because I put it down for good after about 30 pages. For those that understands "fog-factor" (derived from a consideration of poly-symbol words and sentence length) this book is impossible. Forty to 50 words sentences are common. For those that enjoys a very difficult read, this could be it. However, I have seen worse! It was a grad course in inorganic chemistry!

Just what I was wanting to read... Being Christian does require the courage and endurance of our changing world. This is one of those treasure books that I can pick up anytime and find the reinforcement I so want to read... any page, any place, there is very relevant substance.

This book is adjunct reading. Read of it in a book by David Brooks..."The Road to Character".

A profoundly troubling and honestly revealing discussion about faith. Excellent book and customer service.

Get through with this - understand what you've read - internalize it and . . . you're a much better person for it. Adam 1 and Adam 2 are unique characterizations of the 'real' world and how we approach and understand it. It also makes for a quicker and more accurate take on where the other person is coming from. Read this first and then read 'The Social Animal' by David Brooks. Done in that order and you WILL BE A BETTER PERSON FOR THE EFFORT.

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