The Value of the Particular: Lessons from Judaism and the Modern Jewish Experience

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Eternal Duration and Temporal Compresence: The Influence of Ḥabad on Joseph B. Soloveitchik

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Abstract

Joseph Baer Soloveitchik is one of the most captivating and perplexing Jewish personalities of the twentieth century. Many have assessed the occasional references to kabbalistic concepts and symbols scattered throughout Soloveitchik's corpus. Some have even focused on the possible influence of Ḥabad thought on Soloveitchik, an influence that is enhanced by details of his childhood and his relationship to his teacher, the Lubavitcher Baruch Ya'aqov Reisberg. This essay sheds more light on this influence by arguing that Soloveitchik's understanding of time as the concurrence of past, present, and future is a deliberate, albeit concealed, translation of a kabbalistic approach, mediated through Ḥabad speculation, into the epistemological and metaphysical categories of the Western philosophical lexicon.

Fun a kashe shtarbt min nisht
Yiddish Proverb

Jedes wesentliche Fragen muß sich, jedesmal wenn es ursprünglicher fragt, von Grund aus wandeln.
HEIDEGGER, *Beiträge zur Philosophie*

Joseph Baer Soloveitchik (1903–1993) stands out as one of the most captivating and perplexing Jewish personalities of the twentieth century. Many have sought to illumine his religious thought from the perspective of Western philosophy by noting his use of neo-Kantian idealism and Kierkegaardian existentialism. These scholars argue Soloveitchik transforms the scholastic piety developed by his grandfather, Ḥayyim (1853–1918), into a philosophical idiom based on a hybrid of the cultural orbits of Brisk and Berlin.[1] Some have also

1 See David Singer and Moshe Sokol, "Joseph Soloveitchik: Lonely Man of Faith," *Modern Judaism* 2 (1982): 227–72, esp. 232–33, 240–44. I concur with the authors' conclusion offered on 237: "Because 'Halakhic Man' is replete with references to the full panoply of Western thinkers and ideas, and because the essay leans heavily on neo-Kantian philosophy, it has been generally assumed that Western thought plays a determinative role in Soloveitchik's

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noted a conspicuous resonance with Nietzsche's ideas regarding asceticism and the critique of the alleged life-negating character of Christian spirituality,[2] while others have attempted to assess occasional references to kabbalistic concepts and symbols in Soloveitchik's corpus.[3] Some have even focused more particularly on the possible influence of Ḥabad thought on Soloveitchik,[4] an

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thinking. Thus, virtually all discussions of 'Halakhic Man' refer to the 'influence' of neo-Kantianism on Soloveitchik, as if a reading of Hermann Cohen had provided the basis for his theological position and agenda. In fact, however,—and this is true of all of Soloveitchik's theological writings—the arrows run in the exact opposite direction; it is Soloveitchik, standing on firm Jewish ground, who uses Western thought to serve his own (Jewish) theological purposes. Thus, as we have seen, 'Halakhic Man' is anything but a radical reinterpretation of Judaism in the light of neo-Kantian philosophy. Rather, Soloveitchik latches on to neo-Kantianism as a way of adding to the prestige of talmudism; he dresses up talmudism in neo-Kantian garb so as to make it more appealing to a modern, secularized audience." Also see ibid., 248: "Existentialist thought, then, plays the same role in 'The Lonely Man of Faith' that neo-Kantian philosophy does in 'Halakhic Man'—it is a packaging device." See also Michael Oppenheim, "Kierkegaard and Soloveitchik," *Judaism* 37 (1988): 29–40; David D. Possen, "J.B. Soloveitchik: Between Neo-Kantianism and Kierkegaardian Existentialism," in *Kierkegaard's Influence on Theology, Tome III: Catholic and Jewish Theology*, ed. Jon Stewart (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 189–210. A prudent assessment was offered as well by Lawrence Kaplan, "The Religious Philosophy of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik," *Tradition* 14 (1973): 59, "We can see that while in 'Ish Ha-halakhah,' Rabbi Soloveitchik was primarily under the influence of the Neo-Kantianism with its emphasis on man's cultural and scientific creativity, in his later essays he has come increasingly under existentialist influence with its emphasis on loneliness, inter-personal dialogue, the sacrificial non-rational act, etc." See, however, the summary given in Lawrence Kaplan, "Joseph Soloveitchik and Halakhic Man," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Michael L. Morgan and Peter E. Gordon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 210–11, where emphasis is placed only on the Cohenian influence. See ibid., 229. Clearly, Soloveitchik did not accept these philosophical views uncritically. For instance, see the reproach of Kierkegaard's notion of the leap into the absurd in Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith* (1965; reprint, New York: Doubleday, 2006), 101–02 n. 1. For a more positive assessment of Kierkegaard, see ibid., 49–50 n. 1.

2 Daniel Rynhold and Michael J. Harris, "Modernity and Jewish Orthodoxy: Nietzsche and Soloveitchik on Life-Affirmation, Asceticism, and Repentance," *Harvard Theological Review* 101 (2008): 253–84.

3 Two essays that explore Soloveitchik's attitude to kabbalah and mysticism are Rivka Horwitz, "Rav Soloveitchik's Relationship to Religious Experience and to Mysticism," in *Faith in Changing Times: On the Teachings of Joseph Dov Soloveitchik*, ed. Avi Sagi (Jerusalem: Sifriyat Elinur, 1996), 45–74 (Hebrew) and in the same volume, Lawrence Kaplan, "Kabbalistic Motifs in the Thought of Rav Soloveitchik: Substantial or Ornamental?" 75–93 (Hebrew).

4 On the complex relationship between Soloveitchik and Ḥabad, related especially to the doctrine of *ṣimṣum*, see Dov Schwartz, *Religion or Halakha: The Philosophy of Rabbi*

influence made more probable by the details of his childhood. In addition to firsthand testimony about the impact of Ḥabad on his upbringing, we know that later in life Soloveitchik befriended Menaḥem Mendel Schneerson (1902–1994), first in Berlin and then continuing, albeit with less intensity, in New York, and apparently he also had a relationship with his father-in-law, Yosef Yiṣḥaq Schneersohn (1880–1950).[5]

More importantly, in his essays, sermons, and lectures, Soloveitchik readily avails himself of crucial concepts from Ḥabad, especially from sections of *Tanya* and *Liqquṭei Torah* by Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1745–1812). Even more astounding, Soloveitchik's reading of Maimonides—arguably, the Jewish thinker

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Joseph B. Soloveitchik, vol. 1, trans. Batya Stein (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 165–83, 189–90; idem, *From Phenomenology to Existentialism: The Philosophy of Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, vol. 2, trans. Batya Stein (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 102–03, 112. On the dialectic of concealment and disclosure related to Ḥabad's understanding of *ṣimṣum*, see Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, trans. Lawrence Kaplan (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983), 151–52 n. 61. Soloveitchik rightly suggests that this "powerful antimony" of the infinite in the finite world is "practically the central axis of Ḥabad doctrine" (152 n. 61). The Lurianic doctrine of *ṣimṣum* is discussed as well in Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *U-Veqashtem mi-Sham: And From There You Shall Seek*, trans. Naomi Goldbaum (New York: Toras HoRav Foundation, 2008), 172–73 n. 12. Luria's teaching concerning the paradox of God's transcendent withdrawal from and immanent presence in the world is illustrated by a citation from Shneur Zalman of Liadi's *Liqquṭei Torah*. Cf. Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 152 n. 65: "It is interesting that even Habad doctrine understood creation from a voluntaristic standpoint. *Keter* (the Royal Crown), which is an 'intermediary' between the Emanator and the emanations, is the supernal will . . . But this entire matter is of exceptional profundity." The passages cited by Soloveitchik to buttress his claim are from the section on Shir ha-Shirim in *Liqquṭei Torah* and the *Iggeret ha-Qodesh*, included in the standard editions of *Tanya*.

5 Shaul S. Deutsch, *Larger Than Life: The Life and Times of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson*, vol. 2 (New York: Chasidic Historical Productions, 1997), 113–16. Chaim Miller, *Turning Judaism Outward: A Biography of the Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson* (New York: Kol Menachem, 2014), 7–8 and 90, notes that Soloveitchik's grandfather, Ḥayyim Brisker, had a working relationship with the fifth and sixth Lubavitcher Rebbes and even ordained the seventh Rebbe's father, Levi Yiṣḥaq Schneersohn (1878–1944). See also the anecdote (recounted by Miller, op. cit., 92) about Soloveitchik's securing Menaḥem Mendel's release from incarceration on account of rowdy behavior on Purim at the Humboldt University campus. The tale is repeated in Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz, *My Rebbe* (New Milford: Maggid Books, 2014), 40–1. The source of this story is an interview with Chaim Ciment, a Lubavitcher emissary in Boston since 1954. On the exchange of letters between Soloveitchik and Schneerson, see the documents published in *Heikhal ha-Besht* 32 (2012): 205–09. On the friendship between Soloveitchik and Schneerson, see also the eminently accessible but patently uncritical analysis in Joseph Telushkin, *Rebbe: The Life and Teachings of Menachem M. Schneerson, the Most Influential Rabbi in Modern History* (New York: Harper Collins, 2014), 234–51.

closest to Soloveitchik's own talmudic and philosophic temperament[6]—may occasionally reflect the Ḥabad viewpoint.[7] Minimally, Soloveitchik's reliance

6 For a challenge to the widespread view that Soloveitchik modeled himself after Maimonides, see Moshe Sokol, "'*Ger ve-Toshav Anokhi*': Modernity and Traditionalism in the Life and Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik," in *Exploring the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, ed. Marc D. Angel (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1997), 134–35.

7 This matter requires a separate study but here I will illustrate the hypothesis with a few examples. See, for instance, Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 25–26, where a discussion of Maimonides's goal to include all the laws of the Torah, even those currently not practiced, in the codification of Jewish law in the *Mishneh Torah*—both the halakhist and the mathematician "live in an ideal realm and enjoy the radiance of their own creations"—is supported by a citation from the first part of Shneur Zalman of Liadi's *Tanya*. From Soloveitchik's perspective, the foundation of halakhic thought is not the practical but the theoretical, an idea he deduces from the primary text of Ḥabad philosophy (*Halakhic Man*, 24). The passage is mentioned with a slightly different emphasis by Shubert Spero, "Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik and the Philosophy of Halakhah," in *Exploring the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, 167. See also Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 50, where a passage from Shneur Zalman of Liadi's *Liqquṭei Torah* is illumined by citation from Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah*. To take a third example, see Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith*, 50 n. 1, which states that Maimonides's use of the term *leida*—in the command to know that there is a God, which is enunciated at the beginning of the section on *Yesodei Torah* in the *Mishneh Torah*—"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." For Maimonides, the knowledge that there is a divine reality is, first and foremost, an "aboriginal experience of God," and only secondarily based on the "Aristotelian cosmological proof of the unmoved mover." The thesis is elaborated in Soloveitchik, *U-Veqashtem mi-Sham*, 7–17. Consider the following explanation of these words of Maimonides offered by Menaḥem Mendel Schneersohn, *Derekh Miṣwotekha* (Brooklyn, NY: Kehot, 1993), 46b: "At the beginning of *Sefer ha-Madda* [Maimonides] says 'to know that there is a first existent,' and included in this are two things, which are the knowledge of his existence, as it is known in the mind, and also faith in him, and it is one precept to place his knowledge on this and also to believe." Although the language of the Ṣemaḥ Ṣedeq is not identical to Soloveitchik, one can discern a strong resemblance in their respective understandings of Maimonides. The Ṣemaḥ Ṣedeq's combination of knowledge and faith, I submit, corresponds to Soloveitchik's description of the experience that is rooted in discursive knowledge and intuitive thinking. According to Aaron Soloveitchik, *Peraḥ Maṭṭeh Aharon: Ḥiddushim al ha-Rambam Sefer ha-Madda* (Jerusalem, 1997), 1–2, Maimonides distinguishes between the intellectual elite and the laity: for the former, the command to know God entails the "way of demonstration" (*derekh ha-mofet*), whereas for the latter, the knowledge depends on the "way of faith" (*derekh ha-emunah*). As a final example, see Soloveitchik, *U-Veqashtem mi-Sham*, 158–59 n. 4: "Even though Maimonides did not desist from presenting indirect demonstrations of the existence of God, and even though he believed that proofs of this sort exhaust our knowledge of the First Existent, the essence of his view is nevertheless that this knowledge is based in the immediate ontological cognition that there is no reality

on Ḥabad complements typical portrayals of him as an exemplary representative of the Lithuanian mitnaggdic tradition and its singular focus on the cognitive purpose of Torah study as the supreme religious duty.[8] As Soloveitchik's autobiographical asides often attest, this label is apt in some respects. He was a scion of a rabbinic dynasty that played a decisive role in solidifying and promulgating the Litvak ideal of intellectualist piety, traceable to Elijah ben Solomon, the Gaon of Vilna (1720–1797), and even more so to his disciple, Ḥayyim of Volozhin (1749–1821).[9] Soloveitchik's insistence that halakhic religiosity is

but God. This is the new teaching that was given to Moses with the statement 'I am that I am' (Ex. 3:14), as Maimonides interpreted it: I exist necessarily, and any attribution of existence is only a metaphor for My infinite existence, whose necessity is its essence [essence = truth = existence] (*Guide* 1:63). True existence is divine existence, and everything that exists 'depends on it' for its existence." Maimonides's interpretation of the name as signifying the Necessary Existent (*meḥuyav ha-meṣi'ut*) does not imply that *there is no reality but God*; it does indicate that God alone is the being whose existence is essential because without God all the other contingent beings could not exist. See ibid., 191 n. 18. I suggest that Soloveitchik's reformulation of the Maimonidean language reflects the influence of Ḥabad. See also Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Family Redeemed: Essays on Family Relationships*, ed. David Shatz and Joel B. Wolowelsky (New York: Toras HoRav Foundation, 2000), 38. Soloveitchik derives the equation of divinity and existence from the interpretation of the name *ehyeh asher ehyeh* in Philo and Maimonides: "Whatever exists, exists in Him, by Him, and through Him. The ontological autonomy of creation [its independent existence] is a contradiction in terms, Consequently, to say that there is a separate world which confronts God as entity *per se* would be sheer absurdity." The acosmism that Soloveitchik assigns to Philo and Maimonides is more reflective of the Ḥabad approach than it is of their own views even though in the continuation of this passage there is an overt rejection of the "crude pantheism of the mystics." I do not recall Philo or Maimonides ever suggesting that the presumed separate existence of the world is an absurdity.

8 One important exception is the study of Allan Nadler, "Soloveitchik's Halakhic Man: Not a *Mithnagged*," *Modern Judaism* 13 (1993): 119–47.

9 Cf. Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 87, where the author reports that once on Rosh ha-Shanah, while reciting Psalms late in the afternoon after the regular prayers, his father confiscated the book of Psalms and handed him a copy of the tractate Rosh ha-Shanah from the Babylonian Talmud, admonishing him, "If you wish to serve the Creator at this moment, better study the laws pertaining to the festival." Soloveitchik also reports that his grandfather, R. Ḥayyim of Brisk, would study Torah on the Days of Awe when the congregation recited liturgical hymns (*piyyuṭim*), or the laws of *shofar* on Rosh ha-Shanah and the laws of the sacrificial order on Yom Kippur. Drawing the moral of these stories, Soloveitchik gives expression to the fundamental axiom of the Lithuanian rabbinic culture: "The study of the Torah is not a means to another end, but it is the end point of all desires. It is the most fundamental principle of all." Compare Soloveitchik's account of the rejection of Israel Salanter's musar program by some of the prominent Lithuanian rabbinic authorities in ibid., 74–5: "The halakhic men of Brisk and Volozhin sensed that this whole mood posed a profound contradiction to

exoteric and democratic, coupled with his rejection of religious esotericism and elitism—particularly as it prescribed the necessity of intercessors to approach God—also attest to his commitment to the Lithuanian rabbinic opposition to Ḥasidism.[10] However, the matter is more complex, insofar as the Litvak rabbinic ethos is interwoven in Soloveitchik's thought with threads culled from the fabric of Ḥabad.

Ḥabad and the Role of the Religious Imagination

To understand the effect of Ḥabad on Soloveitchik, we would do well to consider initially some of his personal reminiscences. In his eulogy for Moshe Dovber Rivkin (d. 1976), Soloveitchik tellingly remarked, "I am not familiar with much Ḥasidism, only Ḥabad Ḥasidism do I know, since I grew up from a young age in a distinctly Ḥabad town, the city of Khaslavichy, which was a center for Ḥabad ḥasidim."[11] After recounting some anecdotes about Shneur

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the Halakhah and would undermine its very foundations. Halakhic man fears nothing. For he swims in the sea of the Talmud, that life-giving sea to all the living. If a person has sinned, then the Halakhah of repentance will come to his aid. One must not waste time on spiritual self-appraisal, on probing introspections, and on the picking away at the 'sense' of sin. Such a psychic analysis brings man neither to fear nor to love of God nor, most fundamental of all, to the knowledge and cognition of the Torah. The Torah cannot be acquired in a state of melancholia and depression. Man's entire psychic being must be committed to the regime of the cognition of Halakhah, and it is through such service that man can be saved from experiencing despair." This is a consummate articulation of the ethos of Litvak spirituality.

10 Ibid., 42–3. The reference to the "cult of the *tzaddik* in the Hasidic world" is made explicitly on 44. With respect to the characterization of halakhah as democratic, see ibid., 79, where Soloveitchik writes that the "whole being" of the rabbinic scholar "is imbued with the dignity of uniqueness and individuality, and displays a distinct streak of aristocracy . . . Neither modesty nor humility characterizes the image of halakhic man."

11 *Heikhal ha-Besht* 32 (2012): 215. See Deutsch, *Larger Than Life*, vol. 2: 119. One of the most unequivocal affirmations of the influence of Ḥabad on Soloveitchik is found in the talk he gave at a farbrengen on the nineteenth of Kislev, 1968, in Boston. A Hebrew paraphrase of the talk, "Derashat Rabbenu be-Hitwwa'dut Yod-Ṭeit Kislev," is printed in *Divrei ha-Rav*, ed. Herschel Schachter (Jerusalem, 2010), 108–11. At the beginning of the talk, 108, Soloveitchik notes that he is a descendant of the Volozhin dynasty, but he asks rhetorically if those present will think he is a "Ḥabad ḥasid" after listening to his words. I thank Menachem Butler for reminding me of this important text. In the audio recording of the talk, available at http://bcbmmedia.cloudapp.net/Media/RavSoloveitchik/MachshavaOther/Chabad_and_Gaon_19_Kislev_1969.mp3, Soloveitchik describes himself as a "clandestine Lubavitcher."

Zalman of Liadi that he recalled hearing from Ḥabad-Lubavitch ḥasidim when he was young, Soloveitchik acknowledged as well that in his childhood he had a "deep acquaintance" with Ḥabad, and mentioned that his teacher (*melammed*), the Lubavitcher Baruch Ya'aqov Reisberg, encouraged the study of the doctrines of Ḥabad instead of teaching Talmud. Soloveitchik revealed that when his father, Moshe (1876–1941), visited the schoolhouse, the copies of *Tanya* were hidden and the large volumes of Talmud were opened![12] So formative was this early experience that Soloveitchik claims that even into adulthood, he knew sections of *Tanya* by heart, especially *Sha'ar ha-Yiḥud we-ha-Emunah*. Without denying his appreciation to his father for teaching him Talmud, Soloveitchik insists nonetheless that had it not been for this *melammed*, he would have lacked an "entire dimension of thought," and that many of the sermons (*derashot*) he preached were based on what this Lubavitch educator imparted to him. Soloveitchik, a man exacting in his language, professed on that occasion that Reisberg "saved" him by expanding his horizons and divulging a "new outlook" on Judaism. Even though he alleges not to have comprehended many of the technical kabbalistic terms prevalent in Ḥabad teaching, the young Soloveitchik was impressed with how the ḥasidic doctrines conferred meaning (*ṭa'am*) on rituals such as the liturgy of the High Holy Days. Indeed, extrapolating from his youthful experience, Soloveitchik argues that the essence of Ḥabad in particular, and of Ḥasidism more generally, is to teach how to make a blessing in truth,[13] an effort that entails the proper intention, which in turn brings about the holy spirit (*ruaḥ ha-qodesh*) and causes the indwelling of the divine presence (*hashra'at ha-shekhinah*).[14]

12 In a parallel account related in an interview published in the Israeli paper *Ma'ariv*, October 28, 1977, Soloveitchik spoke of his *melammed* teaching the students *Liqquṭei Tanya* and *Liqquṭei Torah*, and recalled again the effort to conceal from his father that they were studying Ḥabad texts rather than the Talmud.

13 Soloveitchik supports his interpretation by citing the passage from the Babylonian Talmud, Bava Qama 30a, where the one who wishes to be pious (*ḥasida*) must fulfill the words or matters pertaining to blessings (*millei di-verakhot*).

14 *Heikhal ha-Besht* 32 (2012): 216–17. For an alternate, and somewhat imprecise, English translation, see Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Rav: The World of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik* vol. 1, ed. Joseph Epstein (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1999), 147–48. See Aharon Lichtenstein, "Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik," in *Great Jewish Thinkers of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Simon Noveck (Clinton: B'nai B'rith Department of Adult Jewish Education, 1963), 282–83; Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Rav*, vol. 1, 23–4; Schwartz, *Religion or Halakha*, 182, n. 89; Deutsch, *Larger Than Life* vol. 2, 71–3, 113, 117–18, 279, 282, 289; Miller, *Turning Judaism Outward*, 69, 90–3.

Perhaps even more telling is another anecdote that Soloveitchik recounts in *Halakhic Man* (1944). Once on Rosh ha-Shanah, right before the sounding of the *shofar*, a Ḥabad ḥasid, who was "very knowledgeable" in the mystical doctrine of Shneur Zalman of Liadi, began to weep. Soloveitchik's father chastised the man by asking why he would weep when the ram's horn was blown if he did not weep when he performed other commandments such as taking the palm-branch (*lulav*) and the citron fruit (*etrog*) on Sukkot. In contrast to his father's stern—and characteristically Litvak—response, the son demonstrated a more sympathetic and congenial understanding, indeed a response that reflected his intimate knowledge of the kabbalistic jargon appropriated by Ḥabad masters:

> The mystic understands the symbolic significance of the sounding of the *shofar* . . . whereby man attempts to pierce through lawful existence and reach the throne of glory of the *Atik Yomin*, the Ancient One, the *Deus Absconditus*. The sounding of the *shofar*, according to the outlook of R. Shneur Zalman, expresses the powerful aspiration of *homo religiosus* to extricate himself from the straits of contraction—the divine realm of strength—and enter into the wide spaces of expansion—the divine realm of grace—and from thence to rise above the seven lower divine realms . . . into the hidden world in which the light of the *Ein-Sof*, the completely hidden infinite God, gleams and shines, as it were. Man's weeping on Rosh Ha-Shanah, according to this doctrine, is the weeping of the soul that longs for its origin, for the rock from whence it was hewn, that yearns to cleave to its beloved not in hiding, but openly.[15]

The son thus gives an answer to his father's caustic query. The weeping is specific to blowing the ram's horn on Rosh ha-Shanah, because this ceremony symbolizes the "ontological pessimism" of the mystical desire to overcome the chasm separating finite reality from the infinite, a sensibility that is uniquely ascribed to this day in the Jewish calendar. Translated into axiological terms—found already in aggadic sources but developed in greater detail in kabbalistic lore—the divisive constriction of judgment is ameliorated by the integrative largesse of mercy. The wailing of the *shofar* is the ritual gesticulation that corresponds to the weeping of the individual. This weeping represents the yearning of the soul to be incorporated into the Ancient of Days (*Atiq Yomin*), the highest recess of the Godhead—the *Deus Absconditus*—which no thought

15 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 60–1. The passage is alluded to in Singer and Sokol, "Joseph Soloveitchik," 236, but without a sustained analysis.

can grasp.[16] In short, this liturgical rite signifies the mystical yearning to overcome the separation of the infinite and the finite.

Conversely, the commandment to take the *lulav* and *etrog* does not demand any weeping because this ritual "symbolizes the longings of man for God who illumines the path of all worlds, who dwells in the midst of reality itself, and who has contracted His light, as it were, within the forms of concrete existence in all its manifestations."[17] To be sure, Soloveitchik is critical of Ḥabad's mystical quietism, and goes on to say that the halakhic man does not distinguish between Rosh ha-Shanah and Sukkot. Immersion in the physical world is a *sine qua non* of the halakhah. Thus, the approach of halakhic man, as distinguished from cognitive man and *homo religiosus*, "begins with an ideal creation and concludes with a real one," just as a mathematician "fashions an ideal world and then uses it for the purpose of establishing a relationship between it and the real world . . . The essence of the Halakhah, which was received from God, consists in creating an ideal world and cognizing the relationship between that ideal world and our concrete environment in all its visible manifestations and underlying structures."[18] The desire of halakhic man, therefore, is "to coordinate the a priori concept with the a posteriori phenomenon."[19] The former presumes some degree of primacy vis-à-vis the latter, but the theoretical cannot be severed from the practical, the metaphysical from the empirical. By contrast, the mystic personality, which Soloveitchik discerns in the approach of Lubavitch, tears asunder the "barriers of the objectivity and the concreteness of the commandment," and in its place, attempts to navigate the "waves of a mysterious subjectivity that surges and flows" until he is transported to

16 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 62. See ibid., 70, where Soloveitchik appropriates kabbalistic language to describe the implication of a passage from the Yom Kippur liturgy: "Man stands before God, and the *Atik Yomin*, the Ancient One, Himself approves of man's being and existence." See also the passage cited below at n. 33.

17 Ibid., 62.

18 Ibid., 19–20. See also ibid., 57, and below at nn. 45 and 61. It stands to reason that the privileging of the mathematical signals the influence of the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism on Soloveitchik. See Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Halakhic Mind: An Essay on Jewish Tradition and Modern Thought* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 21, 105–06 n. 4; Kaplan, "The Religious Philosophy," 48–52; idem, "Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik's Philosophy of Halakhah," *Jewish Law Annual* 7 (1988): 139–97; Morris Sosevsky, "The Lonely Man of Faith Confronts the *Ish ha-Halakhah*: An Analysis of the Critique of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's Philosophical Writings," in *Exploring the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, 98–100; Singer and Sokol, "Joseph Soloveitchik," 232–37; and other references cited in Spero, "Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik," 176 n. 94.

19 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 20.

"paradisiacal realms."[20] Halakhic man "does not wish to snap the fetters of the objective form and demolish the iron bars of the firm and fixed lawfulness of this world." Going for the jugular vein of the theosophic myth, so to speak, Soloveitchik notes that halakhic man is not preoccupied with the "mystery of *tzimtzum*," or the descent of the *Shekhinah* to the sentient world; he does not wish to free either her or himself from the empirical realm.[21] The kabbalistic-ḥasidic notion of *shekhinta be-galuta* is an anathema to the halakhic worldview if it is "taken to mean that the Divine Presence is held captive in the tresses of the cosmos and the chains of reality."[22] From the halakhic standpoint, the intended place of the *Shekhinah* is in the terrestrial realm and thus her exile involves her being driven from this world.[23] In the final analysis, Soloveitchik vindicates his father's disparaging intervention, but what is most vital for the purposes of this study is that his comments prove his familiarity with the theosophic intricacies of Ḥabad thinking.

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20 Ibid., 62–63.

21 Ibid., 63. The portrayal of Ḥabad fits into Soloveitchik's more general classification of the "longing of *homo religiosus* for a supernal world that extends beyond the bounds of concrete reality," a worldview that has been "embodied in many doctrines of asceticism, renunciation, and self-affliction" (15). The approach to reality on the part of halakhic man, by contrast, is "devoid of any element of transcendence" (17), which is to say, any element of transcendence that is severed from empirical reality. Cf. ibid., 21: "It is not anything transcendent that creates holiness but rather the visible reality—the regular cycle of the natural order." It lies beyond my immediate concern to engage this topic thoroughly, but in my judgment, Soloveitchik has not offered a balanced view of Ḥabad teaching, where great emphasis is placed on drawing down the transcendent, of creating a habitation for infinity in the finite, what is marked by the midrashic phrase *dirah ba-taḥtonim*. See Elliot R. Wolfson, *Open Secret: Postmessianic Messianism and the Mystical Revision of Menaḥem Mendel Schneerson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 75 and reference to other scholars cited on 331 n. 51. Compare the passage of Soloveitchik cited below at n. 71. A related facet of Soloveitchik's critique is his understanding of the nexus between the mystical and the irrational, a theme that resonates with the approach of Hermann Cohen and other thinkers from his time and intellectual milieu. See, for example, Soloveitchik, *The Halakhic Mind*, 4, where the "revolt" against reason is said to occasion mysticism into being. The emphasis in Ḥabad on self-annihilation would constitute an illustration of what Soloveitchik calls the extreme of "mystical rapture." For discussion of Soloveitchik's effort in this work to avoid both the extremes of rationalism and irrationalism in understanding the religious phenomenon, see Jonathan Sacks, "Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik's Early Epistemology: A Review of 'The Halakhic Mind'," *Tradition* 23 (1988): 75–87, esp. 78–9.

22 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 51–2.

23 Ibid., 53–4.

One would expect the prototype of Lithuanian rabbinic culture to view Ḥasidism through this prism of emotionality. However, what is noteworthy is that Soloveitchik regards positively Ḥasidism's emphasis on spiritual feeling and the intimate experience of the divine presence achieved through ritual observance.[24] In a lecture delivered on May 28, 1975, "The Future of Jewish Education in America," Soloveitchik again publically thanked his Lubavitch *melammed* for instructing him "in how to behold a vision. He did not train my mind but somehow addressed himself to my soul and my heart. He taught me how a Jew can be imaginative in religious matters . . . He taught me how to practice Judaism, Torah, and mitzvot in an imaginative way."[25] Breaking with the stereotype of the opponent to Ḥasidism (*mitnagged*), Soloveitchik admitted that he learned of the importance of the imagination from his Ḥabad teacher, a skill that informed his homiletical prowess through the years and helped him cultivate a genuine capacity to pray.

In a sermon on repentance from September 23, 1974, Soloveitchik similarly remarked:

> During the month of Ellul, my melamed spoke with us in the heder about Rosh Hashanah. I was perhaps seven years old at the time. My melamed was teaching us the concept of Malkhut—the proclamation of God as King—as reflected in the Musaf service for Rosh Hashanah. If I can deliver this drasha tonight it is because of this melamed . . . He implanted within me a sensitivity for religious experience and an understanding of the Musaf service for Rosh Hashanah . . . These concepts must not only be explained on a philosophical level, they also must be experienced.[26]

Significantly, in the continuation of the sermon, Soloveitchik embraced the theurgical principle attested widely in kabbalistic literature: through prayer and repentance the Jew has the capacity to influence God. The more specific act of theurgy to which Soloveitchik referred is the coronation of God by the

24 The proximity of Soloveitchik's insistence upon experience and ḥasidic thought was duly noted by Pinchas Peli, *On Repentance: The Thought and Oral Discourses of Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 25; idem, "Repentant Man—A High Level in Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's Typology of Man," in *Exploring the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, 239.

25 Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Rav*, vol. 1, 150. Soloveitchik repeats the importance of his Lubavitcher teacher's imparting to him the requisite feeling that informed his experience of Rosh ha-Shanah in "Derashat Rabbenu be-Hitwwa'dut Yod-Teit Kislev," 111.

26 Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Rav*, vol. 1, 153–54.

people of Israel through their liturgical utterances. Hence, according to Ḥabad tradition, the first night of Rosh ha-Shanah is called "Coronation Night."[27]

Here it is pertinent to recall a passage in the beginning of the third part of *The Halakhic Mind: An Essay on Jewish Tradition and Modern Thought*,[28] in which Soloveitchik writes that *homo religiosus* "is little inclined to accept conceptual abstractions and quantitative transfigurations. It is for this reason that negative theologies have completely failed to impress the mind of God-worshippers."[29] Soloveitchik is keenly attuned to the insight that there can be no worship of God, theistically conceived, without figural representations that may be considered idolatrous as they promote imagistic portrayals of what is inherently imageless.[30] So strong is the need of the religious imagination to

27 Ibid., 154-55. See, by contrast, Soloveitchik's unequivocal disavowal of the mystical interpretation of the symbol of the *Shekhinah* in Peli, *On Repentance*, 104: "This definition of *Knesset Israel* as an independent entity has no relationship to the *Kabbala* where it is represented by *sephirat* '*malchut*' nor with Hassidism (which focuses upon the special sanctity of *Knesset Israel*); we are referring to straightforward halakhic application, which has implications in several other areas where it is necessary to distinguish between the community of Israel as an aggregate of individuals and *Knesset Israel* as an independent, integral entity." See, however, the account of expiation on Yom Kippur in ibid., 106: "Secondly, *Knesset Israel*, in its entirety and as a separate mystical kind of self, as an independent entity in its own right, is also purified in the presence of the Almighty on that Day." The avoidance of the kabbalistic approach to the *Shekhinah* is also evident in Soloveitchik's essay "Torah and Shekhinah" in *Family Redeemed*, 158–80, esp. 168.

28 *Halakhic Mind*, which was not published until 1986, was composed in 1944 and bore the title "Is a Philosophy of Halakhah Possible?" For a detailed analysis of this text, see William Kolbrener, "Towards a Genuine Jewish Philosophy: Halakhic Mind's New Philosophy of Religion," in *Exploring the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, 179–206, and references to other scholars cited on 203 n. 3; Kaplan, "Joseph Soloveitchik and Halakhic Man," 211, 212–14.

29 Soloveitchik, *The Halakhic Mind*, 39. It is pertinent to recall the discussion of the Maimonidean *via negativa* in Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 145–146 n. 14: the negative attributes are secondary to the positive attributes, which provide us with knowledge of the cosmos. As a result of this cognition, we arrive at the negative attribution and the discernment that we cannot know the divine essence.

30 With regard to this matter, Soloveitchik's view can be profitably compared to other Jewish thinkers and phenomenologists of religion. See Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 199–200, and the reference to Gerhard van der Leeuw cited on 200 n. 44; Elliot R. Wolfson, "Imagination and the Theolatrous Impulse: Configuring God in Modern Jewish Thought," in *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy, Volume 2: The Modern Era*, ed. Martin Kavka, Zachary Braiterman, and David Novak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 663–703, and the expanded and revised version

represent God in "anthropomorphic metaphors that lend warmth and color to the personal man-God relation" that even Maimonides failed in his effort "to purge Jewish liturgy of poetic elements and anthropomorphic symbols derived from our sensational experience."[31] The continued liturgical practices on the part of Jews attest to the fact that Maimonides's "endeavor to raise the prayer book to the lofty peaks of philosophical abstraction failed abysmally."[32] Analogously, in *Halakhic Man*, Soloveitchik opined:

> Halakhic man never accepted the ruling of Maimonides opposing the recital of piyyutim, the liturgical poems and songs of praise. Go forth and learn what the *Guide* sought to do to the piyyutim of Israel!... Nevertheless, on the High Holidays the community of Israel, singing the hymns of unity and glory, reaches out to its Creator. And when the Divine Presence winks at us from behind the fading rays of the setting sun and its smile bears within it forgiveness and pardon, we weave a "royal crown" of praise for the *Atik Yomin*, the Ancient One. And in moments of divine mercy and grace, in times of spiritual ecstasy and exaltation, when our entire existence thirsts for the living God, we recite many piyyutim and hymns, and we disregard the strictures of the philosophical midrash concerning the problem of negative attributes.[33]

Soloveitchik does not make the connection explicit, but the role he assigned to the mythopoeic imagination in producing cataphatic depictions of the divine persona accords well with what he elsewhere names as one of the cardinal dimensions of Ḥabad that exerted an enduring influence upon his own religious sensibility, especially as it relates to the phenomenon of prayer.[34]

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of that chapter in Elliot R. Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift: Apophasis and Overcoming Theomania* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 1–33. On the phenomenological question of prayer and the imaginary configuration of the divine in incarnational terms, see also Elliot R. Wolfson, "Iconic Visualization and the Imaginal Body of God: The Role of Intention in the Rabbinic Conception of Prayer," *Modern Theology* 12 (1996): 137–62.

31 Soloveitchik, *The Halakhic Mind*, 39.

32 Ibid. Regarding this passage, see Zachary Braiterman, "Joseph Soloveitchik and Immanuel Kant's Mitzvah-Aesthetic," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 25 (2000/2001): 3–4.

33 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 58.

34 See Soloveitchik's invocation of Shneur Zalman of Liadi's *Tanya* and Dov Baer Schneersohn's *Sha'arei Teshuvah* in Peli, *On Repentance*, 293–94, to validate the idea that true prayer is a sacrificial event that must be accompanied by spiritual torment, self-denigration, and weeping that wells from a desperate sense of one's distance from the divine. This accords with the view expressed by Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith*, that prayer is incited by

On many other occasions Soloveitchik proclaimed his indebtedness to Reisberg along comparable lines. I will mention two more examples. The first is from an October 3, 1973 sermon on repentance. Soloveitchik announced his gratitude to Reisberg "because if not for his teachings I would not have an understanding of hasidut . . . Many of my drashot and lectures are based upon hasidic philosophical thoughts that were implanted within me when I was a child of eight and nine. These seminal concepts still open new vistas of understanding for me."[35] The second example is from an interview published on October 28, 1977 in which Soloveitchik confessed that the doctrines and teachings of Ḥabad "have greatly influenced me until today, although I am a mitnagged in the tradition of Volozhin."[36] This essay will shed more light on this influence by illustrating that Soloveitchik's understanding of time as the concurrence of past, present, and future is mediated through Ḥabad speculation and constitutes a deliberate, albeit concealed, translation of a kabbalistic approach into the epistemological and metaphysical categories of the Western philosophical lexicon.[37]

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the relational intimacy of the God of revelation (YHWH) and not by the God manifest in nature (Elohim). See David Hartman, "Prayer and Religious Consciousness: An Analysis of Jewish Prayer in the Works of Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Yeshayahu Leibowitz, and Abraham Joshua Heschel," *Modern Judaism* 23 (2003): 105–25, esp. 106–09. It is of interest to recall the comment of Singer and Sokol, "Joseph Soloveitchik," 246, that Soloveitchik "does not so much as mention Torah study in 'The Lonely Man of Faith.' Rather, in a fashion that would do honor to a Hasid but is totally out of character for a Litvak, he focuses on prayer as the central religious act of the religious virtuoso. In this analysis, prayer is linked to prophecy, and the two are presented as twin commandments of the man-God dialogue." The authors reach the startling conclusion that "Soloveitchik is to some extent a simple man of faith, a naïve religious believer." I would counter that the affinities between Soloveitchik and Ḥabad provide a better explanatory model than that of simple faith. Soloveitchik's faith, like that expressed in Ḥabad sources, is intellectualist in nature, although there is an aspect to that faith that ultimately transcends reason and the natural order. Far from simple, the faith demanded by Soloveitchik is complex and paradoxical, as it is the path of reason that leads beyond reason. Nevertheless, it is true that prayer is an activity that requires the spontaneous emotional intensity of a child, "an unqualified total experience of either self-affirmation or self-negation." See Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Days of Deliverance: Essays on Purim and Hanukkah*, ed. Eli D. Clark, Joel B. Wolowelsky, and Reuven Ziegler (New York: Toras HoRav Foundation, 2007), 91.

35 Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Rav: The World of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, vol. 2, edited by Joseph Epstein (Hoboken: Ktav, 1999), 212.

36 Idem, *The Rav*, vol. 1, 158.

37 Worthy of a separate investigation is the intriguing resemblance between Soloveitchik's affirmation of the compresence of the three temporal modes in the eternality of the

moment and the three ecstasies of time in the thought of Heidegger. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, ed. Dennis J. Schmidt, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), § 80, 392. According to Heidegger's analysis in *Sein und Zeit* and other works from that period, which would probably have been known to Soloveitchik, the ontological structure of human existence (*Dasein*) is grounded in the temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) that is constituted from the site of being-there in the moment (*Augenblick*), the event of the advent, which occurs beyond presence (*Anwesenheit*). This authentic time is to be distinguished from the inauthentic time of presencing or making-present (*Gegenwartigkeit*), the calendrical reckoning of the mundane experience of time. Phenomenologically, the horizon of being is discernible in the momentary present that opens both to the past and to the future, but not simply as the presently-occurring now that is a causal bridge wedged between the now that is no longer and the now that is not yet. The moment is characterized rather by the concomitance of the three modalities of time: "Thus we call the phenomena of future [*Zukunft*], having-been [*Gewesenheit*], and present [*Gegenwart*] the *ecstasies* of temporality. Temporality is not, prior to this, a being that first emerges from *itself*; rather, its essence is temporalizing in the unity of *ecstasies*" (ibid., § 65, 314). Given the demarcation of Dasein's comportment as the being that is always "beyond itself" (*über sich hinaus*) or as the being that is "ahead of itself" (*Sich-vorweg*) as its "ownmost potentiality-for-being" (*eigensten Seinkönnen*) (ibid., § 41, 185), priority is accorded the future. Compare Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, trans. William McNeill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 11–4: "In running ahead Dasein *is* its future, in such a way that in this being futural [*Zukünftigsein*] it comes back to its past and present. Dasein, conceived in its most extreme possibility of Being, is *time itself*, not *in* time . . . Being futural gives time, cultivates the present and allows the past to be repeated in how it is lived. With regard to time, this means that *the fundamental phenomenon of time is the future* [das Grundphänomen der Zeit ist die Zukunft]" (emphasis in original). The running ahead (*Vorlaufen*) is epitomized in what Heidegger (*Being and Time*, § 50, 241) identified as the distinctive property of human existence, the anticipatory resoluteness of being-toward-death (*Sein zum Tode*). One would be hard-pressed to deny the privileging of the future in the tempocentrism of Heidegger's early thought. However, it must be kept in mind that Heidegger was aware of the fact that the future cannot be severed from the other two modalities of time, as evinced in the aforecited passage. In being futural Dasein comes back to its past and present. Alternatively expressed, the temporalization of Dasein's futurity materializes in the equiprimordiality (*Gleichursprünglichkeit*) of the three ecstasies and not in their linear succession. Compare Françoise Dastur, *Heidegger and the Question of Time*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1998), 37–8. The everyday attitude postulates both the irreversibility (*Nicht-Umkehrbarkeit*) of time and its assimilation into space expressed as the homogenization into now-points (*Homogenisierung auf Jetzpunkte*), because the past is the irretrievable no-longer-present (*Nicht-mehr-Gegenwart*) and the future the indeterminate not-yet-present (*Noch-nicht-Gegenwart*). See Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, 17–8. In contradistinction to the conception of time as a sequence of nows chronometrically measured and calculated, authentic time is lived from the future retrieval of the past in the present, an act that constitutes the nature of Dasein as historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*), the enigma of history that unravels in our being historical. The first principle of all

hermeneutics is grounded in the "possibility of access in history" (*Zugangsmöglichkeit zur Geschichte*), which is to say, the "possibility according to which any specific present understands how to be futural [*zukünftig*]" (Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, 20). In his later thinking, Heidegger identified the interplay (*Zuspiel*) of past, present, and future in relation to one another as the "true extending" that is the fourth dimension of time. See Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, translated by Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 15–6; *Zur Sache des Denkens* [GA 14] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2007), 19–20. I do not wish to convey the opinion that Heidegger's views are in any way identical to Soloveitchik. Indeed, there is an unbridgeable chasm that separates the two thinkers, including the respective ways they conceive of the future. Whereas, for Heidegger, the ultimate measure of the future is the sense of an imperishable perishing that we each must endure, Soloveitchik understands the future primarily in terms of the possibility of renewal—the longing for creativity—which he marks as the "ultimate desire of Judaism" (Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 163 n. 147). Futurity is not gauged by the inevitable imperishability of our perishability—from the halakhic mindset death is deemed the "arch-opponent of holiness" (ibid., 36), and cognizing death through the study of the specific laws regulating expressions of mourning and grief helps one overcome the fear of mortality by transforming the death-subject into the death-object—but by the power of regeneration, which is epitomized in the capacity of repentance to break the causal chain so that an individual's fate is not irrevocably determined by the events of the past. See Soloveitchik's moving expression of the anguish of death and the longing for one who has died in Peli, *On Repentance*, 259–61. An implicit critique of Heidegger, or perhaps the existentialist approach more generally, may be detectable in Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 73: "Halakhic man vanquishes even the fear of death, which . . . is rooted in his world perspective, by means of the law and the Halakhah, and he transforms the phenomenon, which so terrifies him, into an object of man's observation and cognition. For when death becomes an object of man's cognition, the fright accompanying death dissipates. Death is frightening, death is menacing, death is dreadful only so long as it appears as a subject confronting man. However, when man succeeds in transforming death-subject into death-object, the horror is gone . . . When halakhic man fears death, his sole weapon wherewith to fight this terrible dread is the eternal law of the Halakhah. The act of objectification triumphs over the subjective terror of death." See also Soloveitchik, *U-Veqashtem mi-Sham*, 47–8: "Man wishes to triumph over death, to turn senseless fate into a spiritual destiny with a clear direction, and to achieve both a joyful temporal existence and eternal life. He yearns for God so as to take shelter under His wings and repose in His shadow, where he will find what His heart desires . . . Man runs toward the transitory life, *hayyei sha'ah*, and finds eternal life, *hayyei olam*." In spite of this and other rudimentary disparities, one cannot ignore some striking similarities between the two thinkers. The most relevant affinity pertains to the convergence of past, present, and future in a way that destabilizes the more typical sequence of cause and effect. Additionally, Soloveitchik embraced a tempocentric view whereby the dimensionality of space is a consequence of what Heidegger called the fourth dimension of time, which is determined by the interplay of the threefold-giving that corresponds to past, present, and future. Needless to say, Soloveitchik does not deploy this terminology, but his discussion of eternity, in which the three temporal modes participate and through which they are

unified, functions like the fourth dimension. Lest there be any misunderstanding, let me state unequivocally that the question of influence—the question that typically preoccupies the mind of intellectual and social historians—is not of paramount importance to me. Far more tantalizing is the fact that the affinities between Heidegger and Soloveitchik can be explained by the latent kabbalistic dimension of the latter's understanding of time channeled through his study of Ḥabad. The similarity between Soloveitchik's understanding of repentance and Heidegger's conception of time was noted by Kaplan, "The Religious Philosophy," 63 n. 69. The affinity between Heidegger and Soloveitchik on their respective understandings of the flow of time has also been noted by Gil Student, "Rav Soloveitchik and Heidegger," *Torah Musings*, 2014, http://www.torahmusings.com/2006/10/rav-soloveitchik-and-heidegger/. Schwartz, *Religion or Halakha*, 120–21, notes the idealist neo-Kantian criteria underlying the surpassing of time that is characteristic of the cognition of halakhic man; and, in that connection, he mentions Heidegger's discussion of the neo-Kantian critique of temporality (121 n. 74). On occasion, Soloveitchik mentions Heidegger explicitly and, in one passage, even notes the affinity between the latter's idea (expressed in *Being and Time*) of the authentic existence of Dasein and the emphasis in Judaism on creative self-realization and the ethical directive for ontic transformation. However, he is also mindful of the Nazi distortion of the idea of will first articulated by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. See Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 53, and 164 n. 147; Kaplan, "The Religious Philosophy," 57, 63 n. 69. This critique of Heidegger is an extension of Soloveitchik's view that a religious ideology that bases itself on the "subjective nature of religion" can have "dangerous" and "destructive" consequences (*Halakhic Man*, 59). Although Heidegger is not mentioned by name, I do not think it farfetched to suggest that Soloveitchik had him in mind when he wrote in *The Halakhic Mind*, 19: "metaphysics can never be satisfied with merely theoretical considerations, however absolute their character may be, but must weave axiological threads into its philosophical fabric, whereas science is indifferent to value-judgements and ethical norms." See also the criticism of the antiscientific tendency and the implicit affirmation of the irrational in the existential-phenomenological school of Heidegger offered in Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 141 n. 4. Concerning this passage, see Schwartz, *Religion or Halakha*, 21. See, however, Schwartz, *Religion or Halakha*, 178: "The concept of being in Heidegger's thought, for instance, is truly significant for R. Soloveitchik, but he knows that this is not how the cognition of the men who founded and developed the Brisk school . . . is built. For them, being is a product of creative mathematical cognition, and has no essential need for any anchor outside it." On the intimation of Heidegger's influence on Soloveitchik, or the affinity between them, with respect to certain crucial phenomenological ideas, see also Schwartz, *From Phenomenology to Existentialism*, 71, 95, 142, 194, 203, 242–43, 275, 297, 324, 332–33, 343–44, 366, 369. Finally, mention should be made of the anecdote reported in Telushkin, *Rebbe*, 338, in the name of Moshe Berger that Soloveitchik recalled attending lectures by Heidegger in Germany. Allegedly, Schneerson also attended the lectures and, in a most remarkable detail, Soloveitchik reports that he remembers him studying the *Tanya* as Heidegger was lecturing. See, however, the reservation Telushkin expressed (op. cit., 571 n. 11) with regard to the accuracy of Soloveitchik's recollection. There is no other evidence to corroborate that Schneerson studied with Heidegger, in contrast to Soloveitchik himself, who avowed, in a lecture delivered before the Rabbinical Council of

Repentance and the Simultaneity of Past, Present, Future

In a manner typical of Soloveitchik's rhetorical strategy, he presents his thinking as a philosophical exegesis of halakhic concepts. In *Halakhic Man* and *Halakhic Mind*, essays written in 1944, Soloveitchik marks the contribution of Bergson as well as William James to his thinking about the experiential dimension of time, although he expresses his reservation regarding the suitability of applying either the biologism of the former or the psychologism of the latter to the experience of one whose life is bound by the restrictions and mores of halakhah. Acknowledging his debt in *Halakhic Man* to the Bergsonsian distinction between the quantifiable-mathematical time of physics and the qualitative-lived time of the duration of consciousness,[38] Soloveitchik argues that halakhah is not concerned either with the "metaphysics of time" or with the inclination "to transform time into pure, flowing, evanescent quality. Judaism disapproves of too much subjectivity, of an undue emphasis on quality."[39] In the final analysis, Jewish ritual law cannot be explained by an appeal to Bergson's notion of the *élan vital* because it is "bound up with

America on February 7, 1968, that he was in Heidegger's class. The text is transcribed in Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Rav*, vol. 1, 195: "I was in [Martin] Heidegger's class . . . I was a good student. He continually spoke about human destiny, spiritual perceptions, and the events of that time. Nevertheless, when Hitler rose to power, the first to join the ranks of the Nazis were Heidegger and many other philosophers. Their task for the Nazis was to teach ethics. Only a few of the secular philosophers resisted the Nazi onslaught." I am not sure where Heidegger's lectures took place, and I have not been able to substantiate independently that he taught at the University of Berlin. Finally, let me note that Peter E. Gordon, "Continental Divide: Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger at Davos, 1929—An Allegory of Intellectual History," *Modern Intellectual History* 1 (2004): 227 n. 14, includes Soloveitchik as one of the people who attended this debate. In the revised list of the debate attendees included in Peter E. Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 95, Soloveitchik's name does not appear. In an email exchange from July 17, 2011, the author explained the discrepancy to me: when he wrote the essay he relied on the memoirs of guests and reports of historians, whereas in the book, the information is based on the original roster of hotel guests in Davos.

38 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 120. Cf. Soloveitchik, *The Halakhic Mind*, 8–14, 47. A less equivocal reference to Bergson is found in Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Sacred and Profane," in *Ha-Adam we-Olamo* (Jerusalem: Sifriyat Elinur, 1998), 141–62, esp. 149–50 (Hebrew). The essay, which was based on a sermon delivered by Soloveitchik on the *yahrzeit* of his father in 1945, first appeared with the title "Sacred and Profane: Qodesh and Ḥol in World Perspective" in *Ha-Ṣedeq* (May–June 1945): 1–24 (Hebrew) and was then reprinted in *Gesher* 3 (1966): 5–29.

39 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 121.

measurable time periods." The halakhic view on time, consequently, is labeled "practical and ethical in nature."[40] In the supplementary notes to *Halakhic Man*, reported by Lawrence Kaplan, Soloveitchik elaborates: "Again we are confronted by the basic discrepancy between the outlook of homo religiosus and that of halakhic man. The former will certainly subscribe to the philosophy of the qualitative experiential time-stream, while the latter is more inclined to accept time in scientific, quantitative categories."[41]

Halakhic man shares the quantitative approach to time with scientific man.[42] Indeed the very distinction between holy and profane, which is the central nerve in the nomian framework of orthodox Judaism, is determined by the temporal rhythms of natural phenomena.[43] But, in consonance with *homo religiosus*, time is not calibrated merely as a string of fixed points, an ensemble of fragmented, shattered, and discontinuous fleeting moments, which the rabbis call "temporal life" (*ḥayyei sha'ah*) as opposed to "eternal life" (*ḥayyei olam*).[44] As Soloveitchik poetically expressed the matter:

> Time, for the scientist, is composed of infinitesimal moments. Time, for halakhic man, and in this respect he resembles homo religiosus, cannot be fragmented or torn apart. Rather quantifiable, mathematical time must find its full realization in eternity. Halakhic man thus quantifies

40 Ibid.

41 Lawrence Kaplan, "On Translating *Ish Ha-Halakhah* with the Rav: Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik's Supplementary Notes to Halakhic Man," in *Mentor of Generations: Reflections on Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, ed. Zev Eleff (Jersey City: Ktav, 2008), 337.

42 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 121: "The fact that the concept of time in the Halakhah is bound up with measurable time periods—days, weeks, months, years, sabbatical and jubilee cycles—demonstrates that Judaism does not desire a flowing stream of time but rather wishes to establish a time that is fixed and determined."

43 Ibid., 20–1. See Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Lord is Righteous in All His Ways: Reflections on the Tish'ah be-Av Kinot*, ed. Jacob J. Schachter (New York: Toras HoRav Foundation, 2006), 210–11. The philosophical conception of time, much like space, is always framed quantitatively in terms of a "coordinate system," and hence no essence or substance is bestowed on temporal events. The Jewish conception posits time as something "substantive," and thus different times display distinctive qualities or attributes. This is related to the idea of sanctification: "Days and hours are endowed or saturated with holiness. The day is a substance of which I can predicate a variety of adjectival designations." Soloveitchik illustrates the time-relatedness of the concept of holiness by mentioning the aggadic-kabbalistic symbol of the Sabbath Queen.

44 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 121–22.

> time, and, simultaneous with such quantification, he turns time into an endless stream flowing between eternity and eternity.[45]

Once again, we see how halakhic man is situated between cognitive man and *homo religiosus*. Like the former, the man of halakhah coordinates the ideal intelligibles with the real world, but like the latter, he is concerned with the hidden transcendence and the desire for eternity.[46] But there is a key difference between the two: "*Homo religiosus* starts out in this world and ends up in supernal realms; halakhic man starts out in supernal realms and ends up in this world."[47] Halakhic man is not only "firmly embedded in this world" but he also does not "suffer from the pangs of the dualism of the spiritual and the corporeal, of the soul which ascends on high and the body which descends below."[48]

Betraying what Soloveitchik designates in one passage as the Platonic aspiration to rise to the plentitude of the lofty existence of the ideas or the neo-Platonist aspiration to ascend to higher worlds that emanate from the unknowable and transcendent One,[49] and in another passage as the mystical yearning for union and self-nullification,[50] *homo religiosus* "attempts to extricate himself from the narrow straits of empirical existence and emerge into the wide spaces of a pure and pristine transcendental existence."[51] The man subservient to halakhah, on the contrary,

> longs to bring transcendence down into this valley of the shadow of death—i.e., into our world[52]—and transform it into a land of the living . . .

45 Kaplan, "On Translating *Ish Ha-Halakhah*," 337.

46 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 39–40.

47 Ibid., 40.

48 Ibid., 65. On the place of the somatic in the halakhic worldview, compare Soloveitchik, *U-Veqashtem mi-Sham*, 110–17.

49 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 44.

50 Ibid., 78: "What *homo religiosus* wants is *unio mystica*, attachment to infinity and complete immersion and dissolution in the supernal realm."

51 Ibid., 40.

52 It is curious that in his attempt to portray the essentially optimistic perspective of the individual who is subservient to halakhah, Soloveitchik refers to the world as the "shadow of death," and thus inadvertently suggests a rather pessimistic view. Compare the depiction of halakhic man in Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 52: "He is completely suffused with an unqualified ontological optimism and is totally immersed in the cosmos. On the contrary, as he sees it, the task of man is to bring down the Divine Presence to the lower world, to this vale of tears." The reader no doubt will catch the irony that in the very passage that Soloveitchik extols a positive view of the world, he describes it as a vale of tears. See

> His goal is not flight to another world that is wholly good, but rather bringing down that eternal world into the midst of our world . . . Halakhic man craves to bring down the divine presence and holiness in the midst of space and time, into the midst of finite, earthly existence.[53]

Whereas *homo religiosus* "demolishes the bounds of this-worldliness" and "transforms himself into pure spirit" by leaping "from the empirical and concrete into the transcendent and the mysterious," halakhic man "immerses himself in reality, plunges . . . into the very midst of concrete existence, and petitions God to descend upon the mountain and to dwell within our reality . . . *Homo religiosus* ascends to God; God, however, descends to halakhic man. The latter desires not to transform finitude into infinity but rather infinity into finitude."[54] Transcendence assumes the form of the ritual law, which, in turn, is shaped by the lawful natural order of which the human is an integral part. Holiness, therefore, does not denote a realm completely separate from this world (à la Rudolf Otto) or the complete actualization of the ethical ideal (à la Hermann Cohen), but rather denotes "the appearance of a mysterious transcendence in the midst of our concrete world . . . the bending down of a hidden

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ibid., 41: "Halakhic man is characterized by a powerful stiff-neckedness and stubbornness. He fights against life's evil and struggles relentlessly with the wicked kingdom and with all the hosts of iniquity in the cosmos." This is hardly a ringing endorsement of the world. Granted, the halakhic personality does not flee from the mundane, as does the mystic, but this does not amount to a sanguine worldview. On the contrary, the repeated emphasis on halakhic man's need to draw down the eternal into this world only enhances the implicitly glum view of earthly existence harbored by Soloveitchik. See ibid., 108: "While mysticism repairs the flaws of creation by 'raising it on high,' by returning it back to the source of pure, clear existence, the Halakhah fills the 'deficiency' by drawing the *Shekhinah*, the Divine Presence, downward into the lowly world, by 'contracting' transcendence within our flawed world." See also ibid., 105, where Soloveitchik seems to accept the validity of the kabbalistic notion of the demonic Other Side. See, however, ibid., 72: "Halakhic man does not give any thought to the 'other side,' that *tertium quid* of being and nothingness. He is unfamiliar with the dark back streets of defilement, nor does he ever go astray in the blind alleys and narrow pathways of the world's emptiness and chaos." On the question of the "negative side of being," see ibid., 156–57 n. 108. Relevant to this discussion is the analysis of Rochelle L. Millen, " 'Like Pebbles on the Seashore': J.B. Soloveitchik on Suffering," *Modern Judaism* 24 (2004): 150–64.

53 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 40–1. See ibid., 45: "When halakhic man pines for God, he does not venture to rise up to Him but rather strives to bring down His divine presence into the midst of our concrete world."

54 Ibid., 45.

and concealed world and lowering it onto the face of reality."[55] To attain the rank of holiness, one must become a creator of worlds, and this is achieved principally through adherence to the law: "Creation is the lowering of transcendence into the midst of our turbid, coarse, material world; and this lowering can take place only through the implementation of the ideal Halakhah in the core of reality."[56]

Soloveitchik expresses the paradoxical stance of halakhic man in terms of the kabbalistic mystery of *ṣimṣum*, the contraction of the limitless in the delimited timespace of the physical world: "Infinity contracts itself; eternity concentrates itself in the fleeting and transient, the Divine Presence in dimensions and the glory of God in measurements. It is Judaism that has given the world the secret of *tzimtzum*, of 'contraction,' contraction of the infinite within the finite, the transcendent within the concrete, the supernal within the empirical, and the divine within the realm of reality."[57] In the continuation of this passage, Soloveitchik contrasts the mystical doctrine of *ṣimṣum*—which is based explicitly on the interpretation of Ḥabad, and even more exclusively on Shneur Zalman of Liadi[58]—and the appropriation of this doctrine in the halakhah. According to the former, *ṣimṣum* "expresses a metaphysical system that

55 Ibid., 46. See ibid., 108: "We have already emphasized, that while the universal *homo religiosus* understands the concept of holiness as a rebellion against this world, as a daring attempt to scale the very heights of transcendence, Judaism explains the concept of holiness from the perspective of the secret of 'contraction.' Holiness is the descent of divinity into the midst of our concrete world . . . it is the 'contraction' of infinity within a finitude bound by laws, measures, and standards, the appearance of transcendence within empirical reality, and the act of objectification and quantification of that religious subjectivity that flows from hidden sources." See Kaplan, "The Religious Philosophy," 55–6; idem, "Joseph Soloveitchik and Halakhic Man," 217–18.

56 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 108–09.

57 Ibid., 48. See Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, ed. Michael S. Berger (New York: Toras HoRav Foundation, 2005), 51–2. In that context, Soloveitchik turns his attention again to the "most paradoxical mystery of divinity," the infinite transcendence, and to the delimited self-contraction, a paradox related to the midrashic "mystery of *tzimtzum*." Soloveitchik discerns a theological and an anthropological import to this mystery: "Apparently, life is expressed in the polarity of freedom and confinement, continuous movement and arrest within a bounded environment. It applies equally to both God and man." Here, too, I detect an influence of Ḥabad wherein the notion of *ṣimṣum* is applied both to the divine and to the human. In my judgment, the theosophical and psychological threads are already intertwined in kabbalistic sources, including the Lurianic material, but there is no question that this entanglement is accentuated more in Ḥasidim, and especially in Ḥabad.

58 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 151 n. 54.

penetrates into the hidden recesses of creation, that contemplates the foundation stones of the cosmos, being and nothingness, the beginning and the end," whereas according to the latter, it pertains to matters of law and judgment,[59] that is, the capacity of the law to set delineated and limiting boundaries.[60] The matter is clarified in the following passage:

> Halakhic man resembles somewhat the mathematician who masters infinity only for the sake of creating finitude, delimited by numbers and mathematical measures, and cognizing it. The Halakhah, from the perspective of the process of contraction, also uses the method of quantification; it quantifies quality and religious subjectivity in the form of concrete, objective phenomena that are standardized and measurable.[61]

Remarkably, and apparently unaware of the contradiction, Soloveitchik elucidates this idea by citing a passage from Shneur Zalman of Liadi's *Iggeret ha-Qodesh*, which emphasizes that the commandments are given "by way of being clothed in the attribute of strength and by the contraction of the light."[62] After quoting the relevant text, Soloveitchik comments:

> R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, the founder of Habad Hasidism, the great luminary of Halakhah and mysticism, sensed that the fundamental method of the Halakhah is that act of quantification which is so integral a part of the mystery of *tzimtzum*. This wondrous principle expresses itself in two parallel dimensions: in the real world—in empirical reality—and in the ideal world—in halakhic constructions. The supernal will clothes itself in these two creations and becomes embodied through them in the attribute of strength (*gevurah*) and contraction, from whose midst there flows the method of quantification.[63]

The mystical perspective of Ḥabad is not set in opposition to the halakhic perspective. Notwithstanding Soloveitchik's effort to distinguish the halakhic and the kabbalistic applications of *ṣimṣum*, he committed himself at times to what he calls the metaphysical explanation, predicated on the paradox of infinity contracting itself within the finite, the paradox of the immeasurable glory

59 Ibid., 49.
60 Ibid., 104.
61 Ibid., 55.
62 Ibid., 55–6.
63 Ibid., 56.

taking the form of the measurable cosmos, which is shared by the halakhist and kabbalist. Affirming this coincidence of opposites explicitly, Soloveitchik writes: "Not for naught does Judaism speak of (1) the world as finite entity; (2) the world under the aspect of eternity and infinity."[64] In a lengthy essay on marriage in the Jewish tradition, Soloveitchik goes so far as to say that Jewish mysticism "resolved the pantheism-theism antinomy" by identifying a "dual ontic motif," the "polarity of womanhood versus manhood," expressed in "abstract philosophical categories." That is, femininity, symbolized by the *Shekhinah*, is the aspect of divinity "imprisoned within the orderly yet restricted universe," whereas masculinity, symbolized by the attribute of *Yesod*, represents the transcendent aspect that is "above and beyond concrete reality."[65] I cannot expound on Soloveitchik's correlation of the masculine-feminine binary in kabbalistic symbolism and the philosophical distinction between transcendence and immanence, or creativity and receptivity, but I would like to underscore that this passage is further proof that sometimes he argued that the mystical approach affirmed both aspects of divinity rather than sanctioning one to the exclusion of the other.

In spite of occasional remarks like these where the lines are blurred, on the whole, Soloveitchik upheld a clearer distinction between the halakhic and the mystical interpretations. Hence, in a slightly different terminological register, he notes that the mystical idea of *ṣimṣum* conveys the "concealment of the glory and light of God," whereas the halakhic idea "does not consist in God's concealing His face but rather in His revealing His glory."[66] One could certainly question the legitimacy of the sharp typological distinction made between *homo religiosus* seeking to ascend to the transcendent and halakhic man seeking to draw down the transcendent. Furthermore, and perhaps more immediately relevant, the drawing down of the transcendent through compliance to halakhah corresponds in an essential way to Ḥabad anthropology, epitomized in the expression *dirah ba-taḥtonim*; that is, the mandate to create a "habitation below" for the divine presence, which entails transforming infinity into

64 Ibid., 122–23.

65 Soloveitchik, *Family Redeemed*, 69. On the "two sex-personalities" and the "dual religious experience," see ibid., 26–7.

66 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 70. Compare Soloveitchik, *Family Redeemed*, 39. Without mentioning the term *ṣimṣum*, Soloveitchik describes the attempt of Jewish mystics to explain the mystery of infinity taking the form of the finite: "The Almighty . . . sacrificed His all-inclusiveness, His all-consuming infinity, and withdrew from a here-and-now coordinate system and retreated into transcendence in order to let a world emerge outside of Him . . . Creation, according to the mystics, is sacrificial divine action. God retreated and left a void for the universe to fill."

finitude by transforming finitude into infinity through obedience to the law,[67] even though Soloveitchik associates the Ḥabad perspective with the mystical sensibility of fleeing to the transcendent realm and becoming dissipated in the nondifferentiated light of *Ein Sof*.[68]

His assessment that the mystic—which here stands for the Ḥabad practitioner—sees existence as an affront to God's glory and that the universe impinges on the infinity of the creator[69] is a misguided reading of the Ḥabad doctrine. Soloveitchik's binary cannot suitably grasp the full dialectical force of the Ḥabad cosmology, which is predicated on the premise that the constriction of infinity in the form of the finite is commensurate to the expansion of the finite into the formlessness of infinity. Alternately expressed, the spatio-temporal world is the disclosure of the light of *Ein Sof* to the extent that the light is concealed therein—an idea buttressed by the wordplay between *ha-olam*, "the world," and *he'lem*, "concealment"[70]—and hence the meontological nothingness of infinity becomes the ontic somethingness of finitude just as the ontic somethingness of finitude is restored to the meontological nothingness of infinity. In one passage, Soloveitchik comes close to articulating the paradox properly. After citing the words from Shneur Zalman of Liadi's *Liqquṭei Torah* that vis-à-vis the infinite "all worlds are nullified and they are as if they had not been and they revert to nothingness and naught," Soloveitchik writes:

67 See above, n. 21. This topic will be explored in more detail in the doctoral thesis of my student, Zalman Rothschild. On the assumed affinity between Shneur Zalman of Liadi's *Tanya* and Ḥayyim of Volozhin's *Nefesh ha-Ḥayyim*, see Soloveitchik, "Derashat Rabbenu be-Hitwwa'dut Yod-Ṭeit Kislev," 108. In that talk, 109, Soloveitchik even surmises that had the Gaon of Vilna seen the *Tanya*, he would have revoked his criticism of Ḥasidism.

68 Soloveitchik's criticism is reminiscent of the discussion in Ḥayyim of Volozhin, *Nefesh ha-Ḥayyim* (Wickliffe: Ohel Desktop Publishing, 1997), 3.6, 189. The life of halakhic observance—the "foundation of faith and the essence of the root of the Torah and all the commandments"—is dependent on spatial and temporal distinctions, whereas from the divine perspective these very distinctions are not viable, since there is naught but "simple unity" (*aḥdut pashuṭ*) and "complete indifference" (*hashwa'ah gemurah*). From the human perspective, the absolute truth must be concealed, for if it were fully revealed, it would destroy the moral and religious ground upon which society is built. Significantly, R. Ḥayyim does not deny the veracity of the monistic perspective; he merely says that it cannot be implemented in this world and hence the relativity of truth must prevail.

69 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 49.

70 Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 26–27, 52, 93, 103–14, 128–29, 132, 215, 218, and see Elliot R. Wolfson, "Open Secret in the Rearview Mirror," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 35 (2011): 405.

> Existence and naught, being and nothingness—against the perception of ontological metaphysics—do not constitute two mutually exclusive ideas but, rather, one coin on one side of which is imprinted the image of existence and on the other side that of nothingness and naught. God, qua He who fills all worlds and He who encompasses all worlds, sustains the world; qua *Deus Absconditus*, the most hidden One, He who is above and beyond the mysterious, God nullifies the world and returns it to chaos and the void. The absolute contradiction between existence and naught are only two faces that reveal themselves, as determined by the relationship between God and His creatures.[71]

An echo of the Ḥabad orientation also seems to be detectable in the essay *U-Veqashtem mi-Sham*, which appeared in 1978 as a revised version of an earlier unpublished text, *Ish ha-Elohim*:

> The ontological consciousness, which is all yearning and upward striving, becomes identified with the transcendental consciousness. The world is nothing but the glory emanating from the Infinite. Eyes thirsty for the richness of being, and hungry for the abundance of the creation, see God; the soul, seized by vision and agitated by beauty, travels through existence, following the footsteps of the lover who is hiding in the crannies of the symbolic mind.[72]

In my estimation, it is inaccurate to speak of an "absolute contradiction" between the being of God and the nonbeing of all other existents, for the deeper secret enunciated by the Ḥabad-Lubavitch masters is that the cosmos both is and is not divinity, that infinity both is and is not revealed by the finite—revealed as that which is not revealed and not revealed as that which is revealed. Soloveitchik falls short of apprehending the full paradoxical thrust of

71 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 51. The language of Soloveitchik can also be profitably compared to the discussion of the respective zoharic expressions for transcendence and immanence, *sovev kol almin* and *memmale kol almin*, in Ḥayyim of Volozhin, *Nefesh ha-Ḥayyim*, 3.4, 186–87. Interestingly, in Soloveitchik, *U-Veqashtem mi-Sham*, 8, both *Tanya* and *Nefesh ha-Ḥayyim* are cited as prooftexts for the kabbalistic phrase that God "fills and surrounds all the worlds." Soloveitchik, apparently, considered Shneur Zalman of Liadi and Ḥayyim of Volozhin equally as the "mystical masters," who "justly taught that the Deity separates itself from the existent, which is imprinted with the stamp of creation and chained by the constraints of objective cosmic necessity, yet at the same time dwells within it . . . The *Shekhinah* imbues both object and subject, yet also transcends them."

72 Soloveitchik, *U-Veqashtem mi-Sham*, 15.

the *coincidentia oppositorum*. Thus, focusing on what scholars have generally referred to as the acosmism of Ḥabad, he writes that the immanence of the divine in the material universe

> inflicts a blemish . . . upon the idea of the infinite, for indeed there is no existence apart from Him. The very grammatical form of "God of the world"—i.e., the genitive case—is a self-contradiction, a veritable coincidence of opposites. The world cannot exist when it is directly related to God. When God's splendid majesty shines forth and stands revealed, then everything reverts to chaos and the void. Therefore, mystical doctrine contemplates existence from a pessimistic perspective, and the ontological ideal is not its ultimate end.[73]

A thorough discussion of Soloveitchik's summation of the Ḥabad doctrine is beyond the scope of this inquiry, but let me quickly state that he has not articulated the paradox adequately. The transcendent is present in the world to the degree that it is absent from the world; the transcendent is present precisely as that which is absent. Hence, the expression *el olam*, the title by which Abraham addressed God,[74] which Ḥabad masters distinguish from the construct *el ha-olam*, denotes that God and world are identical by virtue of their difference.[75] There is thus no justification for assuming that, in contrast to the optimism of the halakhic orientation, the mystical underpinning of Ḥabad cosmology entails a pessimistic view towards nature. There are certainly no grounds to understand the liturgical formula used by kabbalists in conjunction

73 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 50.

74 Gen. 21:33.

75 Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 91–2, 222; idem, "Open Secret," 416 n. 83. In *U-Veqashtem mi-Sham*, 21–2, Soloveitchik explicates Genesis 21:33 in a fashion more amicable with the Ḥabad interpretation. Proclaiming the Lord as "God of the world" implies that the divine "is present to man in all the phenomena of creation . . . It was Abraham who commanded his children and household after him to search for the Eternal in time and for the Infinite in the limited and bounded . . . Judaism also knows, however, that this cosmic encounter, despite its importance, greatness, and force, is insufficient. God reveals Himself to His creation, but also eludes it. He is close to us . . . But despite His closeness to us, He is boundlessly far from us. He wraps Himself in a cloud and retires to the recesses of eternity. He lives here with us and also at the 'edges' of infinity. Now we see Him, and yet in a moment He rises above us. The Halakhah knows of the *Shekhinah* revealed, but also of the *Shekhinah* removed." In this context, Soloveitchik avoids dichotomizing the disclosure of the divine presence as a feature of the halakhic view and the withdrawal of that presence as a feature of the mystical view. See ibid., 62–3 and 101–02.

with the fulfillment of ceremonial practices, "for the sake of unifying the Holy One, blessed be He, with His *Shekhinah*," as evidence of a world-negating eschatological vision.[76] In any event, Soloveitchik himself recoils somewhat from this presentation by observing that there is here "an awesome, mysterious antinomy that bespeaks secrets and enigmas." On the one hand, the glory of God, which is hidden and transcendent, negates the ontic independence of the world; on the other hand, this glory contracts itself and is clothed in the world.[77]

Notwithstanding the occasional comment that reflects a more profound understanding of Ḥabad cosmology, on balance, Soloveitchik viewed halakhah—as opposed to mystical pietism—as the ideal form to structure the belief and deed through which the temporal is eternalized and the eternal temporalized. Expressing this theme in *Halakhic Mind*, Soloveitchik observes that from the vantage point of religion time "is neither a system of reference nor a bed for the stream of mental life, but appears under the guise of a substance bearing accidents." The two salient characteristics around which the religious experience of time revolves are the sacred and the profane. For these ontological classifications to be accorded ontic status—that is, for time to be conceived as reality—these qualities need to be applied to a substance or, at the very least, to something that will appear under the guise of a substance that persists in the evanescence of the sentient world.[78]

The most fertile aspect of Soloveitchik's thinking about time, and the dimension that betrays the influence of kabbalah most acutely, relates to his assumption that the coalescence of the three temporal modes in the present alters the commonplace notion of causality based on the criteria of irreversibility and synchronicity. His precise words on this pivotal point are worth citing verbatim:

> There is a living past and there is a dead past. There is a future which has not as yet been "created," and there is a future already in existence. There is a past and there is a future that are connected with one another and with the present only through the law of causality—the cause found

76 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 50–1.

77 Ibid., 50. The same logic of the *complexio oppositorum* is applied anthropologically to *homo religiosus* in ibid., 68: "From a religious perspective, man, in his relationship to the world, oscillates between the two poles of self-negation and absolute pride, between the consciousness of his nothingness and the consciousness of the infinity deep within him." These words could easily be applied to Ḥabad literature.

78 Soloveitchik, *The Halakhic Mind*, 47.

> at moment *a* links up with the effect taking place at moment *b*, and so on. However, time itself as past appears only as "no more" and as future appears as "not yet."[79]

Soloveitchik goes on to draw the logical conclusion: the conventional perspective regarding the one-directional flux of time, which presupposes that all change and becoming depend on "an unalterable, directed succession . . . an arrangement of temporal instants on a scale of 'before' and 'after' that are not interchangeable,"[80] renders the notion of repentance, an axial concept in Judaism, meaningless, because it is not possible to regret a past that is dead or make a decision about change in a future that is unborn.[81] From a physical outlook, reversibility precludes the possibility of change, since events run their course from an irreversible past to an anticipated future; however, from a metaphysical outlook, change is only possible if we assume an irreversibility such that the movement of time can progress equally from "a" to "b" and from "b" to "a." This concurs with the perspective of some physicists, who maintain that the cosmic process is reversible, and hence future and past "point to plus and minus directions which can be explored simultaneously."[82]

To grasp this point in all of its subtlety, we must bear in mind that, according to Soloveitchik, the salient dimension of the halakhic perspective on repentance is that it is an act of self-creation. Following the Maimonidean understanding of repentance as the forging of a new identity, which may even involve adopting a new name,[83] Soloveitchik explains this process of self-creation as the "severing of one's psychic identity with one's previous 'I,' and the creation of a new 'I,' possessor of a new consciousness, a new heart and spirit, different

79 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 114.

80 Soloveitchik, *The Halakhic Mind*, 33.

81 Compare the observation of Soloveitchik in Peli, *On Repentance*, 261, that the one who repents "has not forgotten his sin—he must not forget it. Sin is the generating force, the springboard which pushes him higher and higher. For such a person, repentance does not mean a clean break with the past, but rather continuity; for him the Holy One, blessed be He, does not 'overlook sin' but 'bears sin and iniquity.' " A related but distinct topic in Soloveitchik's thought is his romantic nostalgia for and idealization of the past, especially as it relates to memories of Brisk. See Singer and Sokol, "Joseph Soloveitchik," 254; Moshe Sokol, "Transcending Time: Elements of Romanticism in the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik," *Modern Judaism* 30 (2010): 233–46.

82 Soloveitchik, *The Halakhic Mind*, 33.

83 Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Teshuvah 2:4 (the passage is cited in Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 112–13). See ibid., 7: 4, where Maimonides writes that the one who repents is so beloved and cherished before God that it is considered "as if he never sinned."

desires, longings, goals—this is the meaning of that repentance compounded of regret over the past and resolve for the future."[84] For the person of faith, it is imperative that the past perseveres as something that can be amended and links up with the future as something that can reveal itself already in the present:

> Both—past and future—are alive; both act and create in the heart of the present and shape the very image of reality. From this perspective we neither perceive the past as "no more" nor the future as "not yet" nor the present as "a fleeting moment." Rather past, present, future merge and blend together, and this new threefold time structure arises before us adorned with a splendid unity. The past is joined to the future, and both are reflected in the present. The principle of temporal symmetry, of *b* following *a*, does not always serve as the distinguishing characteristic of time. Rather, a person may, not infrequently, abide in the shadow of a simultaneous past, present, and future.[85]

Soloveitchik proposes a phenomenological understanding of temporality that displaces the notion of time as a linear progression from the past through the present to the future. In place of this routine perspective, we are to think of a tripartite structure that subverts the principle of temporal symmetry: "b" does not necessarily follow "a." For the individual of faith, it is possible to live in the moment that is contemporaneously past, present, and future, and hence it is perfectly reasonable to assume that "a" follows "b." The law of causality "assumes a new form" to the extent that we are not beholden to the relationship of "active cause" and "passive effect" that prevails in the "determinate order of a scientific, causal process."[86] In contrast to the cause-and-effect logic implied by the model of time shared by the mechanistic and the teleological views—the effect is unilaterally predetermined by the cause in either case—Soloveitchik envisions a mode of temporality in which there is reciprocity

84 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 110. See ibid., 112, and Eliezer Goldman, "Repentance and Time in the Thought of Rabbi Soloveitchik," in *Faith in Changing Times*, 175–89 (Hebrew); Schwartz, *Religion or Halakha*, 285–305; idem, *From Phenomenology to Existentialism*, 339–41; Jeffrey R. Woolf, "Time Awareness as a Source of Spirituality in the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik," *Modern Judaism* 32 (2012): 54–75, esp. 60–2; Christian M. Rutishauser, S.J., *The Human Condition and the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, trans. Katherine Wolfe (Jersey City: Ktav, 2004), 30, 168–74.

85 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 114.

86 Ibid., 114–15.

between cause and effect such that "each influences and is influenced by the other." Reversing the standard order, we can meaningfully assert that the "future imprints its stamp on the past and determines its image. We have here a true symbiotic, synergistic relationship. The cause is interpreted by the effect, moment *a* by moment *b*. The past by itself is indeterminate, a closed book. It is only the present and the future that can pry it open and read its meaning."[87] The consciousness of halakhic man, therefore, lives in tandem in all three time zones, thereby embracing the entire company of sages from the past, present, and future.

> He lives in their midst, discusses and argues questions of Halakhah with them, delves into and analyzes fundamental halakhic principles in their company. All of them merge into one time experience. He walks alongside Maimonides, listens to R. Akiva, senses the presence of Abaye and Raba . . . There can be no death and expiration among the company of the sages of the tradition. Eternity and immortality reign here in unbounded fashion. Both past and future become, in such circumstances, ever-present realities.[88]

Soloveitchik challenges the antinomy contained in the idea of time formulated in the medieval adage, "The past already gone by, the future not yet nigh, the present, the blink of an eye,"[89] for such a conception rests on the assumption that the human being is "subject to the general scientific law of causality—the cause rooted in the past determines the image of the future. His existence does not enjoy the blessings of liberty and free will."[90] The causality that is operative for one who lives in accord with halakhah inverts the empirical perspective. Rather than being the inevitable effect of the past, the future transforms the past. The reversibility of the unidimensional linearity implied in this experience of time is exhibited most conspicuously in the possibility of repentance, which depends upon the assumption that a sequence of events can start with iniquity and end with righteousness. This alternate causality is based on the proposition that the future dominates and has reign over the past to the point that we can say the "cause is located in the past, but the direction of its development is determined by the future."[91] The eschatological ideal informs the

87 Ibid., 115.
88 Ibid., 120.
89 Ibid., 121.
90 Ibid., 122.
91 Ibid., 116.

attitude toward the past, for one "looks behind and sees a hylic matter that awaits the reception of its form from the creative future." In looking ahead, one can remold the contours of what happened before, and one "participates in the unfolding of the causal sequence and the ongoing act of creation." The reversal of the causal determinism implied by this circular motion of return[92] is what Soloveitchik tags as living in time "from the perspective of eternity."[93]

Through the ideal world of halakhah the temporal life is "transformed into eternal life; it becomes sanctified and elevated into eternal holiness."[94] Moreover, insofar as the time consciousness that is apposite to the creative gesture of the religious worldview is "grounded in the realm of eternity,"[95] the observant Jew must be able to embrace "the entire historical existence of the Jewish people" in a nonlinear manner such that there is genuine dialogue across the generations.[96] The texture of time implied in this chain of tradition—and the possibility of intra-generational dialogue implied therein—does not consist of "fleeting, imperceptible moments," but rather a simultaneity of the three tenses so that past and future become "ever-present realities."[97] The compresence of past, present, and future in the moment leads to a "blurring of the boundaries dividing time from eternity, temporal life from everlasting life . . . Judaism declares: There can be no eternity without time. On the contrary, ever-lasting life only reveals itself through the medium of the experience of time—the hour is transformed into infinity, the moment into eternity. Man can glimpse eternity only through the consciousness of time."[98] Resisting the atemporality of eternity implied by the dualistic legacy of an otherworldly metaphysics, Soloveitchik affirms a decidedly temporal understanding of the eternal. The time consciousness of eternity, "whose beginning and end is everlasting life," is the aim of halakhah; the everlasting life is not detemporalized or suprahistorical but a deepened experience of the innately transcendent character of time, that is, the aspect of time that exceeds itself by always being more of the less that is more. Creation is thus the "realization of the eternal Halakhah in the very midst of the temporal, fleeting world, the 'contraction' of the glory of the infinite God in the very core of concrete reality, the descent of an everlasting existence into a reality circumscribed by the

92 Compare the language of Soloveitchik in Peli, *On Repentance*, 89–91.
93 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 122.
94 Ibid., 35.
95 Ibid., 115.
96 Ibid., 122.
97 Ibid., 120.
98 Ibid., 118.

moment . . . In the midst of finitude there appear traces of infinity; in the midst of the fleeting moment an ever-enduring eternity."[99]

In "The Lonely Man of Faith" (1965), Soloveitchik returned to the problem of time and reframed it in terms of the unique anthropology that he developed in that study. The "existential insecurity" of Adam II is largely due to his "tragic role as a temporal being," since he "cannot pinpoint his position within the rushing stream of time." That is, the "frightening time-consciousness" that overwhelms him is the sense that all there seems to be is the transient and evanescent now of the present moment that serves as a link connecting the before of the endless past and the after of the endless future.[100] By contrast, Adam I is not confronted with this dilemma insofar as the "time with which he works and which he knows is quantified, spatialized, and measured, belonging to a cosmic coordinate system."[101] From this perspective, past and future are understandable within the causal sequence of events: "Majestic man lives in micro-units of clock time, moving with ease from 'now' to 'now,' completely unaware of a 'before' or an 'after.' Only Adam the second, to whom time is an all-enveloping personal experience, has to cope with the tragic and paradoxical implied in it."[102] It is through participation in the faith community that one can be delivered from the existential angst of being condemned to the ephemerality of the now. Covenantal time is both retrospective and prospective; it affords an individual the opportunity to re-experience the promise of the past and to anticipate the hope of the future in the present. In doing so, one can mimic the eternality of God wherein the boundaries separating before, now, and after disappear.[103] "Within the covenantal community not only contemporary individuals but generations are engaged in a colloquy, and each single experience of time is three-dimensional, manifesting itself in memory, actuality, and anticipatory tension."[104]

The "paradoxical time awareness" is exemplified in the Jewish conception of tradition (*masorah*), "which involves the individual in the historic performances of the past and makes him also participate in the dramatic action of an unknown future." The temporality appropriate to members of this community is "not only a formal succession within the framework of calendaric time but the union of the three grammatical tenses in an all-embracing time

99 Ibid., 122–23.
100 Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith*, 66–7.
101 Ibid., 67.
102 Ibid., 67–8.
103 Ibid., 68.
104 Ibid., 68–9.

experience . . . Covenantal man begins to find redemption from insecurity and to feel at home in the continuum of time . . . He is no longer an evanescent being. He is rooted in everlasting time, in eternity itself."[105] Historical continuity means that both past and future can be experienced as real through the memory that is enacted in the present.[106] Reminiscent of Rosenzweig, Soloveitchik's understanding of the present theologically corresponds to revelation, which bears witness to the past of creation and to the future of redemption, the "splendor of antiquity" and the "brilliance of the eschaton."[107] His observation about the part of the *Musaf* service for Rosh ha-Shanah, which deals with remembrances (*zikhronot*) and the prayer for rejuvenation of the cosmos, can be extended to his understanding of the eternalization of time implied in Jewish ritual more generally:

> The infinite past enters into the present moment. The fleeing, evanescent moment is transformed into eternity . . . Not only the infinite past but also the infinite future, the future in which there gleams the reflection of the image of eternity, also the splendor of the eschatological vision, arise out of the present moment, fleeting as a dream. Temporal life is adorned with the crown of everlasting life.[108]

Devotion to halakhah is the primary agency to achieve the *unio oppositorum* of time and eternity, finitude and infinity. The covenantal relationship eternalizes the present moment—transitory as a dream—so that it is transformed into the interval wherein the extending lines of the infinite past and the infinite future merge in the circularity of temporal compresence.[109]

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105 Ibid., 69–70.

106 On the coalescence of past, present, and future in the experiential memory associated with unitive time consciousness, see Soloveitchik, *The Halakhic Mind*, 47–9; idem, *Out of the Whirlwind: Essays on Mourning, Suffering, and the Human Condition*, ed. David Shatz, Joel B. Wolowelsky, and Reuven Ziegler (New York: Toras HoRav Foundation, 2003), 14–7; idem, *Festival of Freedom: Essays on Pesah and the Haggadah*, ed. Joel B. Wolowelsky and Reuven Ziegler (New York: Toras HoRav Foundation, 2006), 173–81, esp. 175; idem, *Days of Deliverance*, 5, 106–07, 117. On the centrality of time-awareness to the Weltanschauung of Judaism, see also Soloveitchik, *The Lord is Righteous*, 129, 210–11.

107 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 118.

108 Ibid., 119.

109 Compare my discussion in Elliot R. Wolfson, *Alef, Mem, Tau: Kabbalistic Musings on Time, Truth, and Death* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 59–60.

Eternal Time and the Transtemporal Moment

Eternity, for Soloveitchik, is neither the eradication nor the elongation of time; it is neither the end of time nor endless time, but rather the simultaneity of the three tenses in the moment that undercuts the sequentiality of the timeline and proffers in its place a time so replete that it is empty of time. Through repentance one can reclaim this moment—at once restorative and innovative—and thereby attain the infinitely expansive mindfulness that grounds and surpasses the boundaries and parameters of the law. It is with respect to this conjecture that we can mark the influence of Ḥabad on Soloveitchik, even as it must be admitted forthrightly that he does not explicitly acknowledge this to be the case. Despite his reticence and the fact that Soloveitchik was not interested in the technicalities of the theosophic symbolism that undergirds Ḥabad texts, a convincing argument can be made that the nuances of Soloveitchik's speculations about time and repentance are best appreciated by taking these sources to heart.

Consider Shneur Zalman of Liadi's explication of the tenet that nothing is an obstacle to repentance: "Every Jew [*ish yisra'el*] must be ready and prepared to give his soul for the sanctification of the Lord, and not worship idolatry, even for a moment, and to repent afterwards, because the light of the Lord is garbed in their soul . . . for [the soul] is not in the aspect of time [*bi-veḥinat zeman we-sha'ah*] at all but above time [*lema'lah me-ha-zeman*], and it rules over and dominates [time], as is known."[110] Mystically understood, idolatry, which stands emblematically for transgression, results in the ontological separation of the soul from the unity and oneness of the divine. By repenting the soul is reattached to that source, the light of infinity (*or ein sof*), and as a consequence, the interiority of the supernal will (*penimit raṣon elyon*) is revealed without any concealment and hence there is no more estrangement from God. "And this unity is above, and it is eternal, for he and his will are above time, and the disclosure of this will in his word, which is the Torah, is eternal."[111] The Ḥabad perspective, in sync with Soloveitchik's position, does not envisage eternity as the suspension of time but rather as its maximum investiture. One attains timeless transcendence through execution of the time-bound law but repentance is the hypernomian paradigm that extends beyond the confines of the law—literally, it is above the Torah—insofar as it effaces the distinction

110 Shneur Zalman of Liadi, *Liqquṭei Amarim: Tanya* (Brooklyn, NY: Kehot, 1984), pt. 1, ch. 25, 31b.

111 Ibid., 32a.

between guilt and innocence that is essential to the nomian axiology.[112] The matter is expressed as well in temporal terms: whereas halakhah is subject to the diurnal and nocturnal fluctuation of time, repentance is characterized by an instant not subject to this oscillation. The eternality of time is captured in the zoharic locution *be-sha'ta ḥada u-ve-rig'a ḥada*,[113] "in one moment and in one second," a turn of phrase that designates an interim, in the formulation of Menaḥem Mendel Schneerson, that "has no boundary or measurement in time" (*hagbalah u-medidah bi-zeman*)[114] and therefore is not subject to temporal successiveness (*meshekh ha-zeman*).[115] Repentance—and, by extension, the messianic redemption which is corollary to it according to one talmudic dictum cited frequently in Ḥabad literature[116]—transpires instantaneously in the interlude of time that is not dependent on time.[117]

As I have argued in a previous study,[118] the quintessential aspect of temporality in Ḥabad thought is the moment wherein there is a compresence of past, present, and future. Time, on this score, may be likened to the flash of infinity that encapsulates the collocation of the three tenses signified by the Tetragrammaton.[119] In a manner congruent with Soloveitchik, Shneur Zalman of Liadi argued that eternality (*niṣḥiyyut*) is the duration of time (*hemshekh ha-zeman*) and thus it cannot be ascribed to the infinity that is "above time." At best, we can say of the infinite that it was, it is, and it will be—not sequentially

112 Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 166–67, 169, 171, 180–81, 274, 279–80; idem, "Revealing and Re/veiling Menaḥem Mendel Schneerson's Messianic Secret," *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 26 (2012): 67.

113 *Zohar* 1:129a. See Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 281, 284.

114 Menaḥem Mendel Schneerson, *Iggeret Qodesh* (Brooklyn, NY: Kehot, 1998), no. 8816, 23: 175.

115 Menaḥem Mendel Schneerson, *Torat Menaḥem: Hitwwa'aduyyot 5713*, vol. 1 (Brooklyn, NY: Lahak Hanochos, 1997), 221. See also idem, *Torat Menaḥem: Hitwwa'aduyyot 5719*, vol. 1 (Brooklyn, NY: Lahak Hanochos, 2002), 256. On the related expression *hemshekh ha-zeman*, see Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 281 and 397 n. 72; idem, "Nequddat ha-Reshimu—The Trace of Transcendence and the Transcendence of the Trace: The Paradox of *Ṣimṣum* in the RaShaB's *Hemshekh Ayin Beit*," *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 30 (2013): 97 n. 86.

116 B. Sanhedrin 97b. See Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 3, 279. Compare Soloveitchik's discussion of Maimonides's adaptation of the talmudic view in Peli, *On Repentance*, 122–23.

117 Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 55–6, 279; idem, "Revealing," 64–5, and references to primary sources cited in nn. 140–42.

118 Wolfson, "Revealing," 84.

119 Wolfson, *Alef, Mem, Tau*, 108–09.

but concurrently.[120] The now imbibes this eternal temporality (*zeman niṣḥi*)[121] and hence it is the transtemporal present—the "interminable duration of time" (*meshekh zeman bilti baʿal takhlit*)[122]—in which the three temporal modalities coalesce. To be even more meticulous, the Ḥabad masters taught that time becomes eternal when the essence of the light of *Ein Sof*, which is nameless and above the aspect of time, is conjoined to or garbed within *Malkhut*, which is the epithet of the ineffable name and reveals the aspect of time that is limited (*ha-zeman bi-gevul*). As a result of this conjunction, "time, too, becomes eternal in the eternality of his essence, which is entirely above time."[123] Bracketing the theosophic lingo, when the matter of temporality is contemplated from the vista of infinity, all time is comprised, according to Shneur Zalman of Liadi, in the "little while" (*rega qaṭan*) or the "actual instant" (*rega mammash*), paradoxically the smallest and the largest of demarcations, the infinitesimal point that contains all difference indifferently.[124] The temporal deportment of that dimensionless point may be discerned from a passage where Shneur Zalman speaks of one's ability to transform darkness into light by the act of repentance that is realized in "one second" (*be-rega aḥat*),[125] the turning of the instant too instantaneous to be computed by any instance of time, since it enfolds the "aspect of the eternality of the essence of the light of infinity" (*beḥinat*

120 Shneur Zalman of Liadi, "Derushim le-Shabbat Shuvah," *Liqquṭei Torah* (Brooklyn, NY: Kehot, 1998), 67c. See Wolfson, "Nequddat ha-Reshimu," 96 and references cited in n. 85. Cf. Schneersohn, *Derekh Miṣwotekha*, 57a, where it is emphasized that we can speak of the eternity and perpetuity of God as if it were limitless time (*zeman beli gevul*), but in truth time is created and thus does not apply at all to the being that is above the aspect of time (*lemaʿlah mi-beḥinat zeman*). With respect to this axiom, philosophers and kabbalists agree, but, as the author goes on to say, the kabbalah appropriates and applies to the sefirotic emanations the midrashic idea of a temporal order (*seder zemannim*) that preceded the creation of time itself. See Wolfson, *Alef, Mem, Tau*, 62, 73, 77–9, 84–8, 94. The use of this motif in Ḥabad sources is noted, op. cit., 109, 111, 115.

121 Dov Baer Schneersohn, *Imrei Binah* (Brooklyn, NY: Kehot, 2008), 66d, cited in Wolfson, "Nequddat ha-Reshimu," 97. See Wolfson, *Alef, Mem, Tau*, 107–09.

122 Menaḥem Mendel Schneersohn, *Sefer ha-Ḥaqirah* (Brooklyn, NY: Kehot, 2003), 33b, cited in Wolfson, "Nequddat ha-Reshimu," 96–7.

123 Schneersohn, *Imrei Binah*, 66d. The motif of eternal temporality or temporal eternity arising from the union of that which is above time with that which is bound by time is reiterated often in Ḥabad sources. See references cited in Wolfson, "Nequddat ha-Reshimu," 97 n. 89.

124 Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 278, 395 n. 52.

125 Ibid., 279.

niṣḥiyyut de-aṣmut or ein sof),[126] the indivisible oneness in which "time itself is without limit, that is, time itself is without time" (*she-ha-zeman aṣmo hu beli zeman*).[127] From the fact that the moment is the synchronism of past, present, and future, we may infer that the quality of time both is and is not attributable to it (*zeman we-lo zeman*).[128]

The paradox of the moment mirrors the personification of the divine[129] in the following passage of Soloveitchik:

> The name *Ehyeh* ("I will be") which God reveals to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:14) conveys an identical idea: I am and remain present; not merely sometime and somewhere but in every now and in every here (Buber, *Moses*, p. 52).[130] Why? Because I am entangled in the historical occurrence; I co-participate in the historical drama on account of my covenant with their fathers, whom Israel embodies now. The *Ehyeh* of God is *eo ipso* the assurance for the *Ehyeh* of the charismatic personality … Covenant existence is historical existence in its full uniqueness; existence in a present in which future and past converge. … The uniqueness of such a historical existence consists in projecting a present onto a mystical future, and vice-versa in tying it in with a dim past.[131]

The name *Ehyeh* denotes *the existence in a present in which future and past converge*. Ever a close reader of the scriptural text, Soloveitchik interprets this name as an indication of the assurance of the presence of the divine in history, but the historical existence that is here affirmed undermines the strict lineal conception of history, for the name both projects the present onto an

126 Dov Baer Schneersohn, *Sha'arei Teshuvah* (Brooklyn, NY: Kehot, 1995), 29b. This text is one of the few by the Mitteler Rebbe explicitly mentioned by Soloveitchik; see reference above, n. 34.

127 Shalom Dovber Schneersohn, *Be-Sha'ah she-Hiqdimu 5672* (Brooklyn, NY: Kehot, 2011), 1346, cited in Wolfson, "Nequddat ha-Reshimu," 98.

128 Schneersohn, *Be-Sha'ah she-Hiqdimu*, 343, cited in Wolfson, "Nequddat ha-Reshimu," 98.

129 Soloveitchik, *U-Veqashtem mi-Sham*, 102: "God revealed to Moses the secret of 'I am that I am' (Ex. 3:14). Wherever there is 'being' in the third person—the 'it'—the 'I am' of the 'first person' of God reveals itself; the 'let there be' of the six days of creation continues to exist because the 'I am' of the burning bush is unveiled from within it." There may be a tacit denunciation of Heidegger's *es gibt* in this passage but the matter requires further study.

130 For discussion of the passage from Buber to which Soloveitchik alludes, see Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift*, 27–8, 296 n. 102.

131 Soloveitchik, *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, 171–72.

unknown future and binds it with a shadowy past. To speak of the present as comprising past and future means that past and future are not fixed respectively as cause and effect in relation to the present; not only is the future the time that always remains open but the past, too, is subject to constant revision and thus it is yet be determined. When one lives entirely in the moment—the time that is both the fullness of time and outside the flow of time—there is no immutable past or predictable future.[132]

Soloveitchik's interpretation of *ehyeh* reverberates with the kabbalistic explanation of the name as the secret of the conjunction of eternality and temporality instantiated in the moment wherein past, present, and future are no longer distinguishable.[133] Just as *ehyeh* is a peculiar name insofar as it names nothing that is but only what is to become—the gradation in the divine economy where absolute actuality is absolute potentiality—time is marked by the persistent presence of the unprecedented present that makes possible awaiting the past in recollecting the future.[134] From the Ḥabad perspective, as we may elicit from Dov Baer Schneersohn, the son and successor of Shneur Zalman of Liadi, *ehyeh*, which is correlated with *Keter*, the infinite will, signifies the "eternality of time" (*niṣḥiyyut ha-zeman*) that issues from the "essence of infinity" (*aṣmut ha-ein sof*), a realm that is itself utterly above time (*lema'lah min ha-zeman legamrei*). Insofar as time issues from the "essentiality" (*aṣmiyyut*) of the "light of infinity," which is designated as well as the "eternal world" (*olam niṣḥi*), it is interminable.[135] The mechanics of repentance are based on the possibility of the Jewish soul returning to this aspect of the divine and thereby transcending the normal constraints of the temporal, attaining the noetic state that corresponds to Adam Qadmon, the primordial human, who as intermediary between the infinite and the finite is "in the aspect of time but not in the aspect time" (*bi-veḥinat zeman we-lo bi-veḥinat zeman*).[136]

I contend that Soloveitchik, profoundly inspired by this Ḥabad idea, inculcated the notion that the Torah partakes of the paradox of being in time and not being in time. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that his portrait of halakhic man is informed by this paradox. This portrait is reinforced by parallel depictions in Ḥayyim of Volozhin's *Nefesh ha-Ḥayyim* of the mystical ideal of conjunction (*devequt*) through study and the emphasis placed on the Torah

132 Wolfson, *Alef, Mem, Tau*, 92.

133 Ibid., 93. Compare Soloveitchik, *U-Veqashtem mi-Sham*, 62: "The 'it shall be' (*yihyeh*) submerges into the infinite 'I shall be' (*Ehyeh*) which pervades the world bountifully."

134 Wolfson, *Alef, Mem, Tau*, 98.

135 Dov Baer Schneersohn, *Sha'arei Orah* (Brooklyn, NY: Kehot, 1997), 20b.

136 See texts cited and analyzed in Wolfson, "Nequddat ha-Reshimu," 94–6.

originating in the infinite essence of the divine,[137] which Soloveitchik apparently did not see as being at odds with the teaching of Ḥabad.[138] The Torah is in time, for it is garbed below in the form of the commandments that are to be fulfilled in the temporal plane, but it is not in time, for it incarnates the wisdom and the will of an infinite unity beyond all differentiation and discrimination. By safeguarding the laws of Torah in time, one merits to be conjoined to the eternal that supersedes any and every temporal classification. In a tone that is completely consistent with Ḥabad philosophy, Soloveitchik writes, "God's Torah has implanted in halakhic man's consciousness both the idea of everlasting life and the desire for eternity . . . His soul, too, thirsts for the living God, and these streams of yearning surge and flow to the sea of transcendence to 'God who conceals Himself in His dazzling hiddenness.' "[139] To the extent that repentance enables one to live in this nondual state—the state in which the disparity between irreverence and rectitude is abolished so that the repentant can live as if he or she were reborn—the act can be viewed as the bedrock upon which the edifice of halakhic Judaism is erected. It is surely no small matter that with regard to this foundation of religious life, Soloveitchik was indebted to his early study of and exposure to Ḥabad literature and customs.

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137 See Norman Lamm, *Torah Lishmah: Torah for Torah's Sake in the Works of Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin and His Contemporaries* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1989), 102–37. The distinction that Lamm, *Torah Lishmah*, 104–05 and 111, makes between the positions of Ḥayyim of Volozhin and Shneur Zalman of Liadi on this matter, are not sufficient, but this is not the place to elaborate. For a nuanced discussion of Ḥayyim of Volozhin's view on Torah study and practice in relation to ḥasidic teaching, see Allan Nadler, *The Faith of the Mithnagdim: Rabbinic Responses to Hasidic Rapture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 154–62.

138 See above, n. 67 & 71.

139 Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 40. The words "God who conceals Himself in His dazzling hiddenness" are from the beginning of the kabbalistic poem *el mistatter be-shafrir ḥevyon*, composed by Abraham ben Maimon, a student of Moses Cordovero in 16th-century Safed, and recited liturgically during the third meal on Sabbath.

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