“Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903-1993) was not only one of the outstanding Talmudists of the twentieth century but also one of its most creative and seminal Jewish thinkers. His stature was such that he was widely known simply as “the Rav” – The Rabbi par excellence. Drawing from a vast reservoir of Jewish and general knowledge, Rabbi Soloveitchik brought Jewish thought and law to bear on the interpretation and assessment of the modern experience. On the one hand, he built bridges between Judaism and the modern world; yet, at the same time, he vigorously upheld the integrity and autonomy of the Jew’s faith commitment.”

Dr. David Shatz, Professor of Philosophy, Yeshiva University, Introduction to Lonely Man of Faith
1. The Rav on Modern Israel
Is there a danger that there will be an increase in anti-Semitism in America?

I cannot say...It is also dependent on the Jews themselves, on whether they live ethical lives and do not violate the standards of proper behavior....

_Do you support the peace proposal of Dr. Henry Kissinger [then Secretary of State] and the new proposed [interim] agreement between Israel and Egypt that are currently in the offing?_

I do not live in Eretz Yisrael and I have no right to express my opinion on these matters.

_A lengthy discussion ensued between the Rav and I and in its wake he agreed to express his viewpoint regarding the issue in general._

I pray that there will not be, God forbid, another war. Another [interim] agreement between Israel and Egypt will prevent another war and bloodshed for three years. This is very significant. The life of a young Israeli _[pikuah nefesh shel tza‘ir yisraeli]_ overrides the entire Torah. One must also consider this _halakhah_ when one is discussing politics. Many write and publicize letters calling for (the government) not to compromise on even one centimeter. They do not take into account that through lack of compromise we may, God forbid, pay a heavy price in blood. When there is no choice, one must fight and be ready to offer sacrifices. However, when there is a choice one must consider the lives of human beings....
Let me share with you a story I heard from avi mori z”l in the name of his father, Rav Hayyim of Brisk z”l: At the end of World War I, when R. Hayyim was living in Minsk, the non-Jews undertook a series of pogroms against the Jewish populace. One day, a number of Jews, and Rav Hayyim among them, were discussing the murders and destruction that had ravaged the Jewish communities. One Jew said: “If only we knew that this suffering was the birth-pangs of the Messiah” without finishing his sentence. On the spot, Rav Hayyim responded that he does not accept such a statement. The Jew looked at him and said: “What did I say that your honor does not agree with? I did not say anything,” Rav Hayyim said: “You said much, in fact too much...[you stated] that ‘If these were the birth-pangs of the Messiah’ as if to say that then it would have been worth the suffering. And to this I do not agree because it runs contrary to the Halakhah. If the Halakhah states that pikuah nefesh overrides the entire Torah, it overrides the coming of the Messiah too. Who says that the Messiah will come through the shedding of innocent blood? There are many ways for the Almighty to bring the redemption without the spilling of Jewish blood.” So declared Rav Hayyim of Brisk. Regarding this issue let me say: When one is required to feed an ill person on Yom Kippur it is done upon the advice of experts: i.e., the doctors. In the areas of territory, policy and pikuah nefesh – the experts are the chief of staff and the leadership of the Israel Defense Forces, and the government of Israel. If they will conclude that it is possible to compromise over territory without threatening the life of the yishuv and the existence of the state, we should rely upon them.

The greatest influence on the younger religious generation today is, for the most part, especially in Israel, the rashei yeshiva [and not the communal rabbis]. As one who has served in the communal rabbinate and has served for many years as a rosh yeshiva...how do you explain this phenomenon?

This phenomenon is not limited to Eretz Yisrael. I come across it here in the United States as well. From my own experience, I know that if I have influence in various circles it does
“The Rav was arguably the greatest exponent of Religious Zionism in the 20th Century and he traveled a long path to reach that position. He constructed a majestic Religious Zionism built on activism and the passionate desire to seek out God’s guiding hand in the world. He became an ardent Zionist and member of Mizrachi, yet always maintained his independent view. Each decision he made was subjected to rigorous analysis and Halacha was never subjugated in favor of Zionist sentiment.

His switch from Agudah to Mizrachi was a testament to his intellectual honesty and personal conviction. It was hard for him to differ with his family, change his associations and uproot his worldview, yet he came to see this as a fulfillment of two fundamental religious obligations - the drive to attune with the will of Hashem and the mandate to emulate Hashem’s creativity - to be an activist and make an impact in the wider world.”

From Rabbi Dr. Aaron Rakeffet in YU’s Torah To-Go Series
2. The Rav and the Israeli Chief Rabbinate

From RABBI JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK AND THE ISRAELI CHIEF RABBINATE: Biographical Notes (1959-60) by Rabbi Jeffrey Saks (YU Torah)

The Rav’s identification with religious Zionism struck a responsive chord among his students. Thousands of them have made Aliyah with their families, finding encouragement in the Rav’s theological stance regarding Medinat Yisrael. Yet, after his 1935 journey, the Rav himself was never to visit Israel again.

In 1959, following the death of Chief Rabbi Isaac Herzog, the Rav was asked to be a candidate to succeed him as Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi. At this point, the Rav’s election might have seemed assured, for he enjoyed the backing of a wide spectrum of the Israeli rabbinate and lay leaders.

While many names were bandied about as possible successors to R. Herzog, the Rav (as Rabbi Soloveitchik was universally known), R. Shlomo Goren (then Chief Rabbi of the IDF), and R. Isser Yehudah Unterman (Tel Aviv’s Chief Rabbi) were the leading contenders.² In the end, the position would remain vacant for almost five years, as elections were delayed time and again over the absence of a consensus-forming candidate, and (more significantly) bitter debates raged within the rabbinate and the Israeli government as to the electoral process.³

By this time in his life, Rabbi Soloveitchik was identified as a leading figure in Religious Zionism. From 1952 he had served as the honorary president of the Mizrahi, and had associated himself with that movement since the early 1940s.⁴

While it is not necessary to accept all of Shlomo Pick’s critiques of current Rav scholarship, it is hoped that this study answers his call for fleshing out chapters in Rabbi Soloveitchik’s biography, and correlating them to the more important matter of his thought. See Shlomo H. Pick, “The Rav: A Pressing Need for a Comprehensive Biography,” B.D.D. 10 (Winter 2000), pp. 37-57.

Among other names mentioned periodically in the Israeli press were R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, R. Yosef Kahaneman (Rosh Yeshiva of Ponovitz), R. Pinchas M. Teitz (of Elizabeth, NJ), and R. Shlomo Yosef Zevin (editor of the Encyclopedia Talmudit). The Israeli dailies all dedicated coverage to the issue following R. Herzog’s death. However, Pinhas Peli, who would later go on to prepare various volumes of the Rav’s lectures and shiurim for publication, dedicated almost weekly articles to it in the magazine he edited in those years, Panim el Panim. Peli, foregoing journalistic objectivity, clearly favored the Rav.
The Rav was not certain that he was truly interested in the position. One major reason was the fact that he would have to contend with his anti-Zionist Brisker family in Israel.

The family tradition of anti-Zionism, rejected by the Rav, was perhaps best represented by his paternal uncle, R. Velvel, the Brisker Rav of Jerusalem. It may have been out of a desire to maintain good relations with that branch of the family that the Rav did not visit Israel again. We might speculate that had he visited Israel, he might feel compelled to make a courtesy call at the Chief Rabbinate, thus alienating his uncle. However, Rav Velvel died on Yom Kippur 1959 and it is possible that this helped alleviate the Rav’s reluctance to consider the bid for the Chief Rabbinate.

During his deliberations, the Rav was diagnosed with colon cancer in December 1959, and during the three months of his post-surgical recuperation, he came to decide not to stand as a candidate for the Chief Rabbinate.

A key factor in his decision was that it had become apparent that his candidacy

At the time of his illness, Rabbi Soloveitchik was 57 years old, and he admitted that “I suddenly ceased to be immortal; I became a mortal being.”

The night preceding my operation I prayed to God and beseeched Him to spare me. I did not ask too much. All I wanted was that He should make it possible for me to attend my daughter’s wedding, which was postponed on account of my illness – a very modest wish in comparison with my insane claims to life prior to my sickness.... However, this “fall” from the heights of illusionary immortality into the valley of finitude was the greatest achievement of the long hours of anxiety and uncertainty.... When one’s perspective is shifted from the illusion of eternity to the reality of temporality, one finds peace of mind and relief from other worries.... When one frees himself from this obsession, his perspective becomes coherent and his suffering bearable. He learns to take defeat courageously.
could not count on the support of the entire National Religious Party (Mizrachi). There were political machinations afoot within the Israeli government that sought to limit the Chief Rabbinate to those holding Israeli citizenship.

From a letter to his old friend, Moshe Shapira:

By nature I am a teacher (moreh u-melamed). I know nothing of administering offices; I flee from ceremony, presentations and the press, and especially from politics. I had initially hoped to separate the spiritual ideals of this position and its technical and political needs.... I had hoped that I could dedicate my time and energy to spreading Torah and knowledge of God – and I was ready to answer the call [for such a position].... However, developments in the situation and political complications in the recent past about the electoral process [convinced me otherwise].... Under such circumstances I do not see myself as a fit and proper candidate to be appointed to such a great position – neither from my physical state nor my mental preparation.27

The Rav comments on an interview conducted by Elie Wiesel:
In October 1960, several public figures in Israel, including Profs. Urbach and Simon, signed a petition calling upon the Rav to run, saying

“*We, the undersigned, fearful for the fate, honor and independence of the Chief Rabbinate, see in your Honor the greatest person unto whose hand may be placed the banner of Torah, and who can infuse the light of Torah to the masses of people.*”

Dr. Yeshayahu Leibowitz also expressed his opinion:
The Rav resisted all the international entreaties and decided to withdraw his candidacy. He later further explained his decision to decline the Rabbinate opportunity:
The Rav said he would have considered running for Chief Rabbi only if the position would be completely reorganized to deal solely with spiritual and not administrative/governmental matters.

Question to ponder: How would Jewish life in Israel and the US been altered had the Rav made Aliyah and become the Chief Rabbi?

3. The Rav and the Vatican

Perhaps his best-known public decision concerned the question of whether Orthodox Jews should participate in ecumenical dialogues with Christians.

With the advent of the ecumenical thrust of the Catholic Church in the 1960s, the Rav was consulted regarding Orthodox participation in the dialogue initiated by the Vatican with Jewish leaders. Rabbi Soloveitchik opposed many aspects of this dialogue. He held that there could be no discussion concerning the uniqueness of the respective religious communities. Each, he held, was an individual entity which could not be merged or equated with the other, since each was committed to a different faith. The Rav presented a paper entitled “Confrontation” on this topic at the 1964 midwinter conference of the Rabbinical Council. Its presentation led to the formulation of an RCA policy statement which reflected the Rav’s viewpoint. He later published an expanded version of this seminal essay in Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought, a journal published by the Rabbinical Council. Appendixed to the Rav’s essay was the statement adopted by the RCA at the 1964 conference. It declared:

We are pleased to note that in recent years there has evolved in our country as well as throughout the world a desire to seek better understanding and a mutual respect among the world’s major faiths. The current threat of secularism and materialism and the modern atheistic negation of religion and religious values makes even more imperative a harmonious relationship among the faiths. This relationship, however, can only be of value if it will not be in conflict with the uniqueness of each religious community, since each religious community is an individual entity which cannot be merged or equated with a
Rabbi Soloveitchik said that he had profound respect for many Christian leaders. He has a detailed knowledge of the work of Karl Barth, the late Swiss theologian, whom he liked because “for him, faith is an act of surrender,” and he described Jans Cardinal Willebranz, a high Vatican official who visited him in New York as “a deeply spiritual person and a friend of the Jewish people.” He added, though, that Christians had generally misunderstood Jews. “They have never tried to penetrate the soul of the Jews. They have read the Bible but neglected the oral tradition by which we interpret it. This makes a different Bible altogether. You know the saying about “an eye for an eye”. The Bible states that this is what a man deserves when he has taken another man’s sight. It is the full measure of justice. But we also know that no human being can implement such strict justice. The Rabbis explained it means compensation.” (From June 22, 1972 NY Times Interview)

R. Soloveitchik affirmed the same in his seminal 1964 essay Confrontation, in which he wrote in part:

...we must state, in unequivocal terms, the following. We are a totally independent faith community. We do not revolve as a satellite in any orbit. Nor are we related to any other faith community as "brethren" even though "separated."...
mere appraisal of the worth of one community in terms of the service it has rendered to another community, no matter how great and important this service was, constitutes an infringement of the sovereignty and dignity of even the smallest of faith communities … Hence, it is important that the religious or theological logos should not be employed as the medium of communication between two faith communities … The relationship between two communities must be outer-directed and related to the secular orders with which men of faith come face to face. In the secular sphere, we may discuss positions to be taken, ideas to be evolved, and plans to be formulated. In these matters, religious communities may together recommend action to be developed and may seize the initiative to be implemented later by general society. We are, therefore, opposed to any public debate, dialogue or symposium concerning the doctrinal, dogmatic or ritual aspects of our faith vis-à-vis “similar” aspects of another faith community. We believe in and are committed to our Maker in a specific manner and we will not question, defend, offer apologies, analyze or rationalize our faith in dialogues centered about these “private” topics which express our personal relationship to the God of Israel.”

The Rabbinical Council of America, in a statement of addendum issued that same year, formally adopted R. Soloveitchik’s position as its official policy.
4. The Rav On Cooperation Among Jews

Knesset Israel

Halakhic Jews feel inextricably bound to all Jews, even those who are unsympathetic to them and their beliefs. "Judaism has stressed the wholeness and the unity of Knesset Israel, the Jewish community. The latter is not a conglomerate. It is an autonomous entity, endowed with a life of its own. . . . However strange such a concept may appear to the empirical sociologist, it is not at all a strange experience for the halakhist and the mystic, to whom Knesset Israel is a living, loving and suffering mother" ("The Community," p. 9). In one of his teshuvah lectures, Rabbi Soloveitchik stated that "the Jew who believes in Knesset Israel is the Jew who lives as part of it wherever it is and is willing to give his life for it, feels its pain, rejoices with it, fights in its wars, groans at its defeats and celebrates its victories" (Al ha-Teshuvah, p. 98). By binding oneself to the Torah, which embodies the spirit and destiny of Israel, the believer in Knesset Israel thereby is bound to all three generations of the community of Israel, past, present and future.

The Rav speaks of two types of covenant which bind Jews to Knesset Israel. The berit goral, the covenant of fate, is that which makes a Jew identify with Jewishness due to external pressure. A Jew is made conscious of Jewish identity when under attack by anti-Semites; when Israel is threatened by its enemies; when Jews around the world are endangered because of their Jewishness. The berit goral is connected to Jewish ethnicity and nationalism; it reminds the Jew that, like it or not, he is a Jew by fate.

Ultimately, though, Jewish tradition is passed from generation to generation by those Jews who are committed to Torah and halakha. Thus, it is critical that all Jews be brought into the category of those for whom Jewishness is a positive, living commitment. Jewishness based on ethnicity will not ensure Jewish continuity. The Rav credited the masorah community with transmitting Judaism from generation to generation. The masorah community is composed of those Jews for whom transmission of Torah and halakha is the central purpose of life. It was founded by Moses and will continue into the times of the Messiah. Members of the masorah community draw on the traditions of former generations, teach the present generation, plan for future generations. "The masorah community cuts across the centuries, indeed millennia, of calendric time and unites those who already played their part, delivered their message, acquired fame, and withdrew from the covenantal stage quietly and humbly, with those who have not yet been given the opportunity to appear on the covenantal stage and who wait for their turn in the anonymity of the "about to be" ("The Lonely Man of Faith," p. 47).
The Rav was tolerant of those with whom he did not agree. He had friends in other movements of Judaism. One such friend was a Conservative Rabbi in Boston, Rabbi Shubow, for whom he gave a eulogy at the Maimonides School after the latter’s passing.
In 1956, the RCA’s Halakhah Commission, consisting of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, R. Samuel Belkin and R. Hayyim Heller, was set to issue an official opinion on whether Orthodox rabbis may sit on the Synagogue Council of America, a body consisting of rabbis from all movements.

Five days before the scheduled meeting of the Halakhah Commission, the rabbinic advisory board of the Rabbinical Alliance, consisting of prominent Roshei Yeshiva, issued a prohibition on participation in the Synagogue Council. Amos Bunim told what occurred:

“I once heard from Rav Aharon Kotler in 1956, when eleven Roshei Yeshiva met and issued an issur against the Synagogue Council of America and the New York Board of Rabbis. Rav Kotler was the chairman of that meeting, and he requested that there be no mention of the issur until he had a chance to discuss the matter with Rav Soloveitchik.

However, an overly zealous individual (not one of the Roshei Yeshiva) found out about the issue and publicized it before Rav Kotler had the opportunity to meet with Rav Soloveitchik. Rav Kotler was very upset and he told me, “This day is a tragic day in the history of Judaism in America.”
The Rav declined to sign the proclamation, maintaining that there were areas, particularly those relating to problems that threatened all of Judaism, that required co-operation regardless of affiliation. His refusal emboldened other Modern Orthodox rabbis, and the RCA and the OU then joined the Synagogue Council of America, a group in which Orthodox, Reform and Conservative denominations worked together on common issues. (The Synagogue Council of America ceased operating in 1994.)

Although he vigorously opposed innovations in the synagogue and the traditional prayer service, the Rav did not advocate a total break with the Reform and Conservative movements, despite their unacceptable innovations. Rabbi Soloveitchik did not agree with the public ruling issued in 1956 by eleven leading American roshei yeshiva which prohibited rabbis and synagogues from membership in groups which also included non-Orthodox clergymen and synagogues. Over the years, the Rav clarified his position. He agreed with the roshei yeshiva that on matters of halakhah no cooperation was possible with the non-Orthodox movements. On issues involving relations with the non-Jewish world, however, matters which he termed kelapei hutz (“external affairs”), where vital Jewish interests were at stake, division in the Jewish camp would endanger the entire Jewish community. He therefore held that limited cooperation was desirable. It was reported that “he was grateful that the attempt to leave the Synagogue Council was defeated” at an RCA convention in the early 1960s.\textsuperscript{52}
The year 1984 was a tipping point in their anger and alarm. In that year, a Festschrift titled *Sefer kvodo ba-Rav* was published in honor of his R. Joseph’s eightieth birthday by the student organization of RIETS. The volume included articles written by R. Moshe Feinstein, R. Yaakov Yitshak Ruderman, and R. Mordekhai Gifter, all of whom headed significant traditionalist yeshivot in America, and sat on the *Moetzes Gedole Ha-Torah* (Council of Torah Sages) of Agudat Israel, the non-Zionist political organization founded in 1912 to represent the interests of traditionalist Orthodox Jews the world over. On the face of it, their membership in the Aguda, as it was known, meant that they were ideologically opposed to everything represented by Joseph Soloveitchik and the institution he headed. But by according him the honor of writing an article for this Festschrift, they were not only showing reverence to a colleague and friend. They were, it could be argued, blurring the lines of ideological difference and possibly even endorsing the worldview of the honoree. The most senior of the three, R. Feinstein, who was, it turns out, R. Soloveitchik’s blood relative, wrote in his letter that he hoped R. Soloveitchik would “continue to disseminate Torah in public, and to be involved in communal affairs, in honor of God and his Torah, and for the glory of our family.” Such a reference to Soloveitchik’s public activities being in
any way a commendable continuation of his family's legacy, and for such a reference to be made by one of ultra-Orthodoxy's most respected rabbis, must have caused apoplexy among the Jerusalem Briskers. R. Gifter, the American born rabbi of the Telz yeshiva in Cleveland, went even further. He wished Soloveitchik strength in his efforts to propagate Torah, adding that he hoped the rabbi from Boston would continue to inspire greatness in Torah among his students so that he could rightfully take his place "among those who perpetuate the House of Brisk!"

That was what so unsettled the Jerusalem Briskers. In the document we reprint here, they issued a public protest against those who "call themselves 'great sages' and 'heads of yeshivas' in America," unmistakable references to rabbis Feinstein, Gifter, and Ruderman. And with a hyperbolic rhetorical indignation characteristic of the Esh Kodesh, they homed in on their main target: R. Joseph Soloveitchik, described here not as "the Rav" but by a variety of harsh terms of opprobrium including "uprooter of Israel" (okker Yisrael), "poisoner of the hearts of the Children of Israel," and "Boston Sadducee." They regarded with particular disdain his years in university in Germany, declaring him a "product of the cursed Berlin Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment)."

Sensing that the "House of Brisk" was under assault, the Jerusalem Briskers trained their sights not only on Joseph Soloveitchik but also on one of his American colleagues, R. Hayim Karlinsky (1906–89). Karlinsky had published in the same year a five-hundred-page biography of the Beis Ha-Levi, R. Yosef Duber Ha-Levi Soloveitchik, under the title The First in the Brisk Dynasty (Ha-ribon le-shochelet Brisk).4 Karlinsky was hardly an unabashed defender of "Torah u-mada," as was Soloveitchik. Rather, he was a defender of traditionalist Orthodoxy who served as vice president of the haredi-oriented Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada (Agudat ha-Rabonim). He was also a deep admirer of the depth and reach of "the Brisker School of Torah," whose origins he traced to the town of Volozhin, home of the legendary yeshivah where the Beis

4. Hayim Karlinsky, Ha-ribon le-shochelet Brisk: Talbot hayav uf's'alav shel ha-ribon Rabbi Yosef-Duber ha-Levi Soloveitchik (Jerusalem, 1984). This book was published in a second edition in 2004. Interestingly, Karlinsky makes no mention of Joseph Soloveitchik in his introduction, nor of his father Moshe, as the sources for stories in the book. The first person he thanks, and quite lavishly so, is Rabbi Soloveitchik (1879–1941), the youngest son of the Beis Ha-Levi, from whom he heard many tales of the father and who was himself a forgotten scion of the Brisker dynasty who spent the last years of his life in Brooklyn. In addition, Karlinsky thanks a long list of other scholars, including R. David Lifshitz of the RIETS faculty and R. Berish Mandelbaum of the RIETS library.
With this we are publicly protesting against those who call themselves “great sages” and “heads of yeshivas” in the United States, who give obsequious praise to the known “uprooter of Israel,” the tyrant from Boston, product of the cursed Berlin Haskalah, and poisoner of the

5. The reference is to traditionalist rabbis and yeshiva heads who contributed letters of approval and articles to the Soloveitchik Festschrift, Sefer kedem ha-Rav, including Moshe Feinstein of the Mesivta Tiferet Yerushalayim, Yaakov Yitzhak Ruderman of the Ner Yisroel yeshiva in Baltimore, and Mordekhai Gifter of the Tels (Telshe) yeshiva.

6. The phrase *ocher Yisrael* (חפר ישראל), is the same one that King Ahab cast upon the prophet Elijah to connote “trouble of Israel” (1 Kgs 18.17).

7. “Haskalah” is the well-known Hebrew term for the Jewish Enlightenment movement, which had its basis in Enlightenment European philosophies.

May the Heavens protect us from this disgrace that has come upon us, that those who pretend to be flag-bearers of Torah would have this kind of audacity to say to this evil man “You are a righteous one.” Woe unto those criminal shepherds who replace light with darkness and purity with impurity, Heaven forfend.

The time has come for the naïve ones to open their eyes to see down which slope these criminal shepherds are leading them, a slope that will lead to a grave of iniquity, Heaven forfend. It is very well-known and that which is well-known needs no proof, that the sages and righteous of the House of Brisk constantly fought with great sacrifice against any and all changes or deviations from the tradition of our fathers and teachers, pillars of the earth—and against all innovation and against any opening of the slightest crack in our religion and the wall of the Holy Torah. And especially their relentless battle against the cursed Haskalah, as is known. It is only because we have sunk to such a lowly level that we are guided by such base leaders, Heaven forbid. As our sages said, the leader befits the generation.

Therefore, it is not surprising that wicked and evil H. K. exhibited extraordinary insolence in his new work entitled “Ha-rishon le-shoshelet Brisk,” in which the aforementioned fool dared to describe, as it were, the personality of the holy sage, the Bais Ha-Levi of blessed memory, and in addition to this, falsified and forged facts and sayings in a terrible and frightening manner that calls out for help. But it is not because of the falsification of facts and sayings that our cries intensified, but rather the unbounded and horrible brazenness of the aforementioned “uprooter of Israel” to cut down saplings, Heaven forbid, and to insult the honor of earlier sages (who are likened to angels), Heaven forbid. Who knows if those same “sages” and “heads of yeshiva” will not be called to judgment,
The Rav’s unique greatness made him the ideal symbol and spokesman of Modern Orthodoxy. In his own person, he demonstrated that the ideal Torah sage is creative, open-minded, compassionate, righteous, visionary, realistic and idealistic. He showed that one could be profoundly committed to the world of Torah and halakha and at the same time be a sophisticated modern thinker. Rabbi Soloveitchik was the paradigmatic 20th century figure for those seeking mediation between classic halakhic Judaism and Western modernity.

The Rav, through his lectures and writings, was the most powerful and effective teacher of Torah of our times. His insights in Torah were breathtaking in their depth and scope. When we and future generations sit down to study Torah, we will be privileged to share our room with Rashi and Rambam, with Rabbenu Tam and the Rashba. And sitting right next to us will be Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, whose penetrating insights lead us to greater heights in our quest to become “married” to the Torah.

From Rabbi Marc Angel, the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals