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## MEMORIAL TRIBUTE FOR RABBI DR. WALTER S. WURZBURGER

Rabbi Dr. Walter S. Wurzburger, *zekher tsaddik li-verakha*, was my friend and teacher for twenty-five years. He nourished my love for Jewish theology and philosophy and provided me with support and advice on spiritual and religious issues.

My personal loss due to R. Wurzburger's tragic death on April 16, 2002, is only overshadowed by the immeasurable loss to his loving and caring wife, Naomi, his children, Myron, Benjamin, and Joshua, his extended family, and the entire Jewish community that he served with distinction for more than fifty years as a scholar, teacher, pulpit rabbi, and communal leader.

I offer these inadequate words in his memory to begin a process, which I hope others will follow, of appreciating the enormous intellectual contributions of this extraordinary and complex man.

I suggest three important areas in which R. Wurzburger made a lasting impact on Jewish thought:

First, he was a dedicated student of his teacher and friend, R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *zt"l*, known as the quintessential "Rav" to his many students and admirers. He devoted his life to interpreting and sharing with others the Rav's Torah and religious philosophy.

Second, while he was a great student of halakha and the Talmud, he made his mark in the fields of Jewish philosophy, theology, and ethics. But this was not just because of his personal interest in these critical areas of Jewish study. Like the Rav, Maimonides, and many other significant Jewish thinkers, he recognized that one could not achieve a thorough mastery of Torah without understanding the complexities of philosophy, theology and ethics. By doing so, he achieved a balanced synthesis of law and spirituality.

Third, he developed a creative religious perspective—especially in the area of Jewish ethics—in which he recognized that a person could make ethical decisions based on intuitive judgments as long as they did

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not conflict with the mandate of halakha. As a corollary to this principle, R. Wurzburger recognized that there are many valid normative Jewish spiritual and religious outlooks that are rooted in the unique religious personality of each individual.

### RABBI WURZBURGER'S DEVOTION TO HIS TEACHER, RABBI JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK

R. Wurzburger would surely have wanted to be remembered as a loyal and devoted student of his teacher, R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik. The teaching, friendship, and spirit of R. Soloveitchik animated R. Wurzburger's writings, as well as his religious personality. He internalized and mastered the corpus of the Rav's thought from halakha to Jewish and secular philosophy. He devoted much of his life to teaching the Rav's Torah to a wide variety of audiences.

R. Wurzburger's books and published articles are filled with quotations and references to R. Soloveitchik.<sup>1</sup> He was a distinguished member of the Rav's first generation of students and was a close friend of the Rav and his family for many years. He knew the *Torah she-bi-khtav* and the *Torah she-be-al Peh*—both the written and oral traditions that involved the Rav. He was at the Rav's side during times of great joy as well as during times of deep sadness. The profound loss to the Jewish community that has been caused by R. Wurzburger's death is magnified because it also reminds us of the deep void created by the loss of the Rav. We are left with precious few disciples of the Rav who enjoyed a close friendship with him and who can speak with R. Wurzburger's authority and knowledge of the totality of the Rav's thought.

The student-teacher relationship underlies the transmission of the *mesorah* in each generation. One cannot fully appreciate this tradition unless one studies the contributions made by each teacher and student. It, therefore, is not surprising that the first two chapters of the tractate on Jewish ethics in *Pirkei Avot* contain so much discussion about the identity and unique characteristics of each teacher and student who played an important role in the transmission of the *mesorah*.<sup>2</sup>

R. Soloveitchik served as a religious model for R. Wurzburger.<sup>3</sup> Like the Rav, R. Wurzburger was not interested in material things or personal displays of superficial religiosity. He was a modest and humble man who was interested in intellectual and moral pursuits, on a ceaseless quest to obey God's Will and achieve a state of *devekut*, or attachment to Him.<sup>4</sup>

## RABBI WURZBURGER'S SYNTHESIS OF HALAKHA AND PHILOSOPHY

R. Wurzburger was influenced by Maimonides' teaching that the pursuit of secular knowledge, especially philosophy and theology, is necessary to enhance one's understanding of the Torah and one's relationship with God. As R. Wurzburger's close friend, Professor Yitzhak Twersky, *zt"l*, explained, Maimonides offered a novel interpretation of the Talmud's statement that one should divide one's time for study among "Mikra, Mishna, and Talmud."<sup>5</sup> Maimonides held that the study of Talmud included the study of "*pardes*," or philosophy.<sup>6</sup>

The goal of this broad approach to the study of Torah is to develop a greater love of God and knowledge of Him.<sup>7</sup> Maimonides criticized those who merely performed the commandments without understanding their meaning and purpose.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, in one of the concluding chapters of his philosophical *magnum opus*, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Maimonides summarized his views in his famous parable of the palace. There, he classified the religious levels of persons who seek God in different ways. Maimonides extols those who observe the commandments while also achieving a deep philosophical and theological understanding of the principles underlying the Jewish faith.<sup>9</sup>

Professor Twersky taught that, for Maimonides, one's deep reflection on the Torah and one's religious actions are essential to reaching a high spiritual level.

[O]nly contemplation and meditation—sustained reflection on the significance and objectives of every commandment—will safeguard against perfunctory performance. . . . This is the motto of spirituality, a goal common to mysticism and philosophy, based on belief in the regenerative power of understanding and/or inwardness. Unreflective performance, without attention to the meaning and the end of the action, falls short of the desired goal.<sup>10</sup>

Rav Soloveitchik expanded on the Maimonidean teaching and held that all human creativity is rooted in the central ethical principle in Judaism of imitating the ways of God.<sup>11</sup> The Rav beautifully expressed his grand conception of the creative potential of human beings when he described "Adam I" in *Lonely Man of Faith*.

Adam the first is aggressive, bold, and victory-minded. His motto is success, triumph over the cosmic forces. He engages in creative work,

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trying to imitate his Maker (*imitatio Dei*). . . . Adam the first is not only a creative theoretician. He is also a creative aesthete. . . . In doing all this, Adam the first is trying to carry out the mandate entrusted to him by his Maker, who, at the dawn of the sixth mysterious day of creation, addressed Himself to man and summoned him to “fill the earth and subdue it.”<sup>12</sup>

The Rav’s teaching inevitably led to his embracing secular knowledge as a positive good and religious endeavor, which is self evident from a study of his published work.

The path of Maimonides and R. Soloveitchik was R. Wurzburger’s as well. He spent his life, which was filled with creativity, meticulously following halakha while also contemplating Jewish law, philosophy, theology and all available knowledge as he strove to become closer to God.

### RABBI WURZBURGER’S CONTRIBUTION TO JEWISH ETHICS

R. Wurzburger made an extraordinary contribution to the field of Jewish ethics. He taught that one’s first source for ethical principles was Jewish law, which is always binding when it establishes an unambiguous standard of conduct.<sup>13</sup> The strict rulings of halakha, however, do not address numerous ethical issues that confront people in their daily lives.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the observance of halakha “does not exhaust the meaning of Jewish piety. Halakha merely provides a foundation; it is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the attainment of religious ideals. As R. Soloveitchik put it, ‘Halakha is not a ceiling but a floor.’”<sup>15</sup>

R. Wurzburger creatively developed an ethical framework to address the manner in which one should act when halakha did not provide clear guidelines. He described his system of “covenantal ethics” as follows:

I have coined the term ‘Covenantal Imperative’ to denote the kind of intuitive religious responses to be given to existential situations that cannot be justified exclusively in terms of obedience to objective and formal rules of conduct. Covenantal Imperatives are not obtained by deduction or inference from legal norms but are immediately intuited as subjective religious responses to a particular concrete situation.<sup>16</sup>

An important premise of R. Wurzburger’s covenantal ethics is based on Maimonides’ teaching that one has an affirmative duty to develop ethical character traits.<sup>17</sup>

Maimonides regards virtuous dispositions as intrinsic rather than merely instrumental values. His ethical system does not limit itself to act-morality—the moral propriety of particular actions—but focuses as well upon agent-morality—the moral quality of the state of mind of the agent.<sup>18</sup>

A person who has cultivated ethical dispositions will be better able to make proper ethical choices.

An example of the implications of R. Wurzburger's conception of Jewish ethics that emphasizes the moral character traits of the individual is the treatment of non-Jews. R. Wurzburger insists that "[s]olicitude for all human beings, regardless of their national or religious identity, is an important seminal principle in Jewish law."<sup>19</sup> This position is rooted in Maimonides' contention that the Biblical principle of the "ways of peace" "reflects not merely pragmatic considerations of Jewish self-interest but expresses sublime ethico-religious ideals."<sup>20</sup> Thus, because one is obligated to imitate the ways of God, "[i]nsensitivity to the needs of others is no less reprehensible when it is displayed in one's conduct toward non-Jews than it would be toward Jews."<sup>21</sup>

R. Wurzburger also emphasized the importance of working to help others and improve conditions in this world.

Since, according to Halakhic Judaism, it is our task to seek to encounter God's presence primarily in the lower realms of being (*ikkar shekhinah ba-tahtonim*), we must not escape from this world by a flight into transcendental spheres. The human task is to create an abode for God in the here-and-now.<sup>22</sup>

Likewise, following the Rav's teachings, our response to human suffering and evil must be to become more sensitive to the needs of people and "respond to evil by fighting disease, misery, injustice, oppression, etc., as well as utilizing personal suffering as a prod to eliminate our personality defects and blemishes to attain spiritual regeneration."<sup>23</sup>

While one has moral duties to other people and society that require creative actions, R. Wurzburger maintained that one also should adopt a moral stance of humility. Thus, as Rav Soloveitchik formulated his dialectical approach to ethics, "[m]an is summoned by God to be a ruler . . . to be victorious.' On the other hand, Judaism mandates an 'ethic of retreat or withdrawal,' demanding at times humble submission and acceptance of defeat precisely in areas that matter most to the individual."<sup>24</sup> R. Wurzburger suggested that the tensions within the human

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personality reflect the difficult and conflicting ethical choices that face individuals in their lives.<sup>25</sup>

Yet, despite the conflicts that may be presented in life, R. Wurzburger taught that a religious person must always adopt a “God-centered approach” in making choices about how to behave, from the mundane to the sublime.<sup>26</sup> One must constantly ask a fundamental question: Are my daily actions consistent with God’s Will and will they glorify and sanctify God’s holy Name? R. Wurzburger demonstrated his deep spirituality when he affirmed that

[i]n keeping with the emphasis upon the absolute rule of God, total commitment to His service represents the acme of religious perfection. . . . There are no religiously neutral zones. Depending upon our motivation, every act can acquire religious significance.<sup>27</sup>

By focusing on one’s ethical and spiritual challenges in life, R. Wurzburger developed a pluralistic religious perspective that recognized the dignity and unique qualities of every person. Because he appreciated the complexities in life and the nuances inherent in one’s personal relationship with God, he rejected the view that all people should follow the identical path in their quest to become close to God. While he maintained that the rules of halakha were obligatory, he understood that Jewish piety is far more complicated and deeper than mere observance of legal norms. Thus, he concluded

[t]hat a variety of ideological positions are compatible with halakha can be garnered from the facts that throughout history Jews who have professed absolute loyalty to halakha adopted radically different life styles and policies. From the battles between rationalists, anti-rationalists and mystics through the controversies dividing Hassidim and Mitnagdim. . . . Jews have exhibited an uncanny ability to arrive at a host of mutually contradictory conclusions from the same set of halakhic data.<sup>28</sup>

Is this not one of Rav Soloveitchik’s implicit fundamental teachings about Jewish spirituality? The Rav was the master of unpacking the great Biblical personalities and teaching the lessons to be learned from them. Indeed, he was endlessly fascinated with this mode of analysis as if there was always more to uncover as one analyzed the complexities in these personalities. The Rav also candidly shared with his students and readers on many occasions his own personal struggles. With characteristic humility, however, he would remind the reader or listener that he

hoped his confessions of his own struggles might be of some value to others but that he would take no offense if they were not.<sup>29</sup>

By internalizing the Rav's religious value system, R. Wurzburger demonstrated in his life that religious Jews can learn from and respect Jews and non-Jews alike from across the political and ideological spectrum.

## FINAL WORDS

My final conversation with R. Wurzburger reflected his spiritual and religious values. His doctors had permitted him to return home from the hospital for the *Sedarim* and the first days of Passover. I had the opportunity to visit with him briefly over the telephone while he was at his house.

Although he was weak, R. Wurzburger wanted to speak about the meaning of Passover. I asked him to share with me some words of Torah from the *Seder*. He said he had been thinking about the Rav's interpretation of the "*Ha Lahma Anya*" passage ("This is the bread of affliction . . .") that introduces the *Seder* discussion. There, we extend an open invitation to those who are hungry and need hospitality. But the invitation appears futile because we are already sitting at the *Seder* and it is unlikely that we can invite additional guests to join us at that time. The Rav explained that this passage is designed to teach us an important lesson about Jewish ethics and the nature of the religious personality. In contrast to a slave, only a free person has the ability to perform acts of *hesed*. A free person has the ability to make an autonomous choice to perform good deeds and serve God.<sup>30</sup> Thus, this passage in the *Haggadah* is not about one's actual invitation to new guests on the evening of Passover but rather is directed to one's religious commitment to act freely in performing acts of *hesed* that help other people.

R. Wurzburger then confided in me that he was suffering. He asked me what I could say to him in light of our many conversations and study about suffering over the years. I did not respond directly because I could not think of anything I knew about suffering that R. Wurzburger did not already know, and I felt helpless due to my inability to alleviate his distress. I assured R. Wurzburger that his many friends and I were praying for his recovery. I also asked if I could share with him an unusual and valuable insight that we had learned at our family's *Seder*.

I had discussed with our guests the Rav's teaching that Passover not only was a celebration of our redemption from slavery in Egypt but also

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included an important vision of the future Messianic redemption for the Jewish people and all mankind.<sup>31</sup> Our gratitude to God is expressed in the recitation of the *Hallel* at the *Seder*.<sup>32</sup> Our praise of God leads us to a glorious vision of our future redemption, which is described in the beautiful *Nishmat* prayer that, according to the Rav, is one of the great universalistic prayers in the Jewish liturgy.<sup>33</sup> We yearn for the day when all people and all nations of the world will bless and acknowledge the Name of God.<sup>34</sup> I concluded the discussion by noting that in contrast to the English name, *Book of Psalms*, from which the *Hallel* is taken, the Jewish tradition's name for the book—*Tehillim*—is based on the pervasive theme in the *Sefer* of our praise of God.<sup>35</sup>

As I was telling R. Wurzburger this story, I could sense that it lifted his spirits. He told me many times that he felt so emotionally and spiritually moved when he had the privilege to sit at the Rav's *Seder* and observe his ecstatic recitation of *Hallel*. R. Wurzburger carried this powerful memory with him and it never ceased to inspire him.

I then told R. Wurzburger of a fresh, creative insight into the Rav's Torah that was offered by one of the guests at our *Seder*, Father Gregory Mohrman, O.S.B., a Catholic Benedictine Monk, now Prior of St. Louis Abbey, who at that time served as Headmaster of St. Louis Abbey's Priory School, an outstanding school for boys in grades 7 to 12. R. Wurzburger was intrigued to learn of Father Gregory's contribution.

After listening carefully to the discussion at the *Seder*, Father Gregory respectfully suggested that perhaps R. Soloveitchik's teaching also was expressed in the climactic final verse of the *Book of Psalms*, which reflected the theme (and Hebrew name) for this great book of the Bible—the universal praise of God. There was a long silence as R. Wurzburger contemplated the meaning of Father Gregory's comment. Then, in a strong voice filled with joy, he said, "That's good!" He soon was overcome with feelings of weakness caused by his illness and we said goodbye for the last time.

I had initially felt guilty that I could not offer my dear friend words that would mitigate his suffering when he asked me for my thoughts. Later, however, I realized that the words of Torah that were discussed at our *Seder* were the perfect response to R. Wurzburger.<sup>36</sup> In the precious moments in which he contemplated the truth of Father Gregory's insight, R. Wurzburger surely realized that the final verse of *Sefer Tehillim*, "Let all souls praise God, *Halleluyah!*,"<sup>37</sup> was very similar to the opening verse of the *Nishmat* prayer, "The soul of every living being shall bless Your name, Hashem our God; the spirit of all flesh



shall always glorify and exalt Your remembrance, our King.”<sup>38</sup> Hopefully, he also found solace in the fact that the eschatological vision<sup>39</sup> of these beautiful complementary prayers, which so animated the Rav’s spirituality on Passover, was a vision of ultimate peace, redemption, and the end of human suffering.<sup>40</sup>

May the memory of Rabbi Dr. Walter S. Wurzburger always be a blessing for his family, friends, the people of Israel, and all who are privileged to benefit from his life and teachings.

## NOTES

1. See, e.g., R. Walter S. Wurzburger, *Ethics of Responsibility(:) Pluralistic Approaches to Covenantal Ethics* (Jewish Publication Society, 1994); *Ibid.*, p. xi (“My revered teacher, R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, inspired me to treat Halakha not merely as a legal system but as the matrix of ideas, concepts, and values of fundamental importance to Jewish philosophy. Although I have frequently referred to R. Soloveitchik in this book, it is impossible to adequately record my indebtedness to him.”); *God Is Proof Enough* (Devorah Publishing, 2000); *Ibid.*, p. 5 (“Many of the positions articulated in the forthcoming pages reflect the inspiration and impact of my revered teacher and mentor, ha-Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik, of blessed memory.”); “*Imitatio Dei* in the Philosophy of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik,” *Hazon Nahum*, edited by Yaakov Elman and Jeffrey S. Gurock (Yeshiva University Press, 1997), pp. 557-575.
2. Rav Soloveitchik extolled the spiritual component of the student-teacher relationship. “Judaism has advanced a new doctrine of teaching. Education is not just a technical activity. It is a soul-performance, an existential involvement of two strangers, an imparting not only of formal knowledge but of a total self-experience, of an ontic awareness. It expresses itself in the emergence of a new fellowship, within which master and disciple share one great adventure, that of creation. Therefore, the union of teacher and disciple does not terminate with the end of actual instruction. The community outlasts the physical nearness of these two individuals; it contains something of the covenantal community. . . . Judaism saw the teacher as the creator through love and commitment of the personality of the pupil. Both become *personae* because an I-Thou community is formed. That is why Judaism called disciples sons and masters fathers.” R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Family Redeemed(:) Essays on Family Relationships* (MeOtzar HoRav, 2000), pp. 59-60.
3. Maimonides explains that one learns to imitate the ways of God by imitating the wise and pious individuals. Indeed, he maintains that the Biblical commandment, *u-vo tidbak* (“And to Him shall you cleave”), can be fulfilled by “cleav[ing] to the wise men in order to learn from their actions.” Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot De’ot* (Laws Concerning Character Traits), chapter six, quoting Deuteronomy 10:20, cited in Raymond L.

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Weiss, translator, *Ethical Writings of Maimonides (Moses ben Maimon)*, edited by Raymond L. Weiss and Charles Butterworth (Dover Publications, Inc. 1983), p. 47.

4. The state of *devekut* represents the ultimate religious experience for the Rav. See “Imitatio Dei in the Philosophy of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik,” p. 557, citing R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, “*U-Vikkashtem mi-Sham*,” in *Ish ba-Halakha Galui ve-Nistar* (Jerusalem: Department of Torah Education and Culture in the Diaspora, World Zionist Organization, 5739). R. Wurzbarger characterized the Rav’s description of *devekut* as follows:

At this stage of religious development, man still is torn asunder, vacillating between attraction to and recoiling from God. The peak of religious perfection is only reached in *devekut* (attachment), when total freedom is attained, because there is no longer any conflict between human inclinations and divine imperatives. Although the Rav’s emphasis on individuality is incompatible with the mystical ideal of self-obliteration in the quest for total union with God, he, nonetheless, maintains that at the level of *devekut* human beings become totally free, because they are capable of total identification with God’s will in thoughts, affections, and actions. (“*Imitatio Dei* in the Philosophy of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik,” p. 575, citing “*U-Vikkashtem mi-Sham*,” pp. 187, 193-204, and 234.)

5. Based on the Talmud, *Kiddushin*, 30a, “One should always divide his years into three: [devoting] a third to *Mikra*, a third to Mishna, and a third to Talmud (Gemara).” Quoted in Isadore Twersky, “Some Non-Halakhic Aspects of the Mishneh Torah,” *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, Alexander Altmann, editor (Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 107. Maimonides expanded on this statement as follows:

The time allotted to study should be divided into three parts: A third should be devoted to the Written Law; a third to the Oral Law; and the last third should be spent in reflection, deducing conclusions from premises, developing implications of statements, comparing dicta, studying the hermeneutical principals by which the Torah is interpreted, till one knows the essence of these principles, and how to deduce what is permitted and what is forbidden from what one has learnt traditionally. This is termed Talmud. (“Some Non-Halakhic Aspects of the Mishneh Torah,” p. 106, quoting Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Talmud Torah*, I, 11, 12.)

Professor Twersky described this passage from Maimonides as a “statement which was capable of working a silent revolution in Jewish intellectual history.” *Ibid.*

6. “A component of Gemara . . . is philosophy, or *pardes*.” Twersky, “Some Non-Halakhic Aspects of the Mishneh Torah,” p. 111. See *ibid.*, p. 107. See also Marvin Fox, *Collected Essays on Philosophy and on Judaism*, edited by Jacob Neusner, three volumes (Global Publications, Binghamton University, 2001), “The Role of Philosophy in Jewish Studies,” volume three, pp. 95, 97 (“[W]ithout close attention to philosophic issues and methods,

work in almost every area of Jewish studies is deficient. . . . The very nature of philosophic thinking is such that it can and should be applied without exception to the entire corpus of Jewish literature. Bible, Talmud, and other major Jewish works are not systematic philosophic treatises, but they will never be fully understood if we do not approach them with the concerns and the techniques of philosophy.”)

7. Professor Kenneth Seeskin has observed that the love of God for Maimonides is the culmination of a process of seeking Him and has a number of preliminary steps.

The challenge involved in loving God is primarily negative: We must love something that does not cater to our needs and cannot be subsumed under our categories. That is why Maimonides’ conception of love has so many prerequisites: One must first obey the commandments, then obey them for their own sake, then feel awe in the presence of God [which Seeskin equates with the fear of God], then study physics and metaphysics to have a love pure enough to involve God rather than a fantasy image.” (Kenneth Seeskin, *Searching for a Distant God(:) The Legacy of Maimonides* [Oxford University Press, 2000], p. 159.)

8. Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, translated by Shlomo Pines, two volumes (The University of Chicago Press, 1963), volume two, Part III, chapter 51, p. 619.
9. “Those who have plunged into speculation concerning the fundamental principles of religion, have entered the antechambers. People there indubitably have different ranks. He, however, who has achieved demonstration, to the extent that that is possible, of everything that may be demonstrated; and who has ascertained in divine matters, to the extent that that is possible, everything that may be ascertained; and who has come close to certainty in those matters in which one can only come close to it—has come to be with the ruler in the inner part of the habitation.” Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Part III, chapter 51, volume two, p. 619.
10. Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)* (Yale University Press), 1980, p. 395. The cultivation of proper beliefs is so important to Maimonides that he holds that unless one accepts his “Thirteen Principles of Jewish Faith,” one cannot receive a share of the World-to-Come. See Menachem Kellner, *Must a Jew Believe Anything?* (The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1999), pp. 52-56, 66-71, 127-52. See also *Ethics of Responsibility*, pp. 74-75.
11. The Biblical source for Maimonides’ interpretation of *Imitatio Dei* is “Thou shalt walk in His Ways,” Deuteronomy 28:9, cited in *Ethics of Responsibility*, p. 69. R. Wurzburger explored the fascinating reasons that Maimonides premised so much of his teaching of Jewish ethics on this verse. See, e.g., “*Imitatio Dei* in the Philosophy of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik,” pp. 557-561; *Ethics of Responsibility*, pp. 67-86. In characterizing R. Soloveitchik’s position, R. Wurzburger stated that the Rav “went so far as to consider it (*Imitatio Dei*) as the basic principle underlying all of Jewish ethics and to elevate it into the penultimate idea of Halakhic Judaism.” “*Imitatio Dei* in

- the Philosophy of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik,” p. 557.
12. *Lonely Man of Faith*, Jason Aronson Inc., 1997, pp. 18-19, quoting Genesis 1:28. See also R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, translated from the Hebrew by Lawrence Kaplan (Jewish Publication Society, 1983), p. 62 (“The most fundamental principle of all is that man must create himself. It is this idea that Judaism introduced into the world.”), quoted in “*Imitatio Dei* in the Philosophy of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik,” p. 566. See also *ibid.*, p. 561 and *God is Proof Enough*, pp. 30-31.
  13. See, e.g., *Ethics of Responsibility*, pp. 31-32.
  14. *Ibid.*
  15. *Ibid.*
  16. *Ibid.* at 32.
  17. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-47. This mitzva is based on the Biblical verse, “Thou shalt walk in His ways.” Deuteronomy 28:9. See *Ethics of Responsibility*, p. 69.
  18. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.
  19. *God is Proof Enough*, p. 100.
  20. *Ethics of Responsibility*, p. 50, citing *Proverbs* 3:17 and Maimonides, *Hilkhot Melakhim*, chapter ten. See also Walter S. Wurzbarger, “Darkhei Shalom,” *Gesher*, 1978, pp. 80-83.
  21. *Ethics of Responsibility*, p. 51.
  22. “*Imitatio Dei* in the Philosophy of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik,” p. 572. See also *Ethics of Responsibility*, pp. 40-66.
  23. “*Imitatio Dei* in the Philosophy of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik,” p. 571, citing “Kol Dodi Dofek”, *Divrei Hegut ve-ha’Arakhah* (Jerusalem, World Zionist Organization, 5742), pp. 9-19; *Halakhic Man*, pp. 99-107.
  24. “*Imitatio Dei* in the Philosophy of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik,” p. 572, quoting R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, “Majesty and Humility,” *Tradition* 17:2, 1978, p. 133 and “Catharsis,” *Tradition*, 17:2, 1978, pp. 43-44. The Rav fully developed this dialectical approach in *Lonely Man of Faith* where he analyzed the tension that exists between Adam I and Adam II.
  25. “*Imitatio Dei* in the Philosophy of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik,” p. 573 (“The need to accommodate polar values explains why ethical ambiguities and dilemmas are inescapable.”). See also *Ethics of Responsibility*, pp. 84-85.
  26. *God is Proof Enough*, pp. 36.
  27. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37. See also *ibid.*, p. 105 (“There are innumerable avenues of service to God; every psychological drive can be harnessed towards this goal.”). In chapter five of his celebrated *Shemoneh Perakim*, Maimonides equated the love of God with an unconditional and absolute commitment to God. Maimonides eloquently describes the deeply religious individual, who observes this commandment in an exemplary fashion, as one who “directs all powers of his soul solely toward God, may He be exalted, who does not perform an important or trivial action nor utter a word unless that action or that word leads to virtue. . . .” Quoted in *Ethical Writings of Maimonides*, p. 77.
  28. *God is Proof Enough*, p. 83. See also *ibid.*, pp. 93-98.
  29. See, e.g., Rav Soloveitchik’s introductions to *Lonely Man of Faith* and “A Halakhic Approach to Suffering,” *The Torah Umadda Journal*, 1998-99, pp. 3-24. See also *God is Proof Enough*, p. 82-83.

30. See R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Shiurei HaRav*(: A Conspectus of the Public Lectures of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, edited by Joseph Epstein (KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1994), “The Seder Meal,” p. 165. Cf. R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Ethical Emphasis in Judaism*, quoted in Abraham R. Besdin, *Reflections of the Rav*, volume one (KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1993), pp. 189-193.
31. See, e.g., R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Mitzvah of Sippur Yetzi’at Mitzrayim*, quoted in *Reflections of the Rav*, p. 216.

It seems that *shevah* is not enough for the *Seder* night. We are expected to rise to higher levels of exultant praise, to a *shirah hadashah*. It is a night when the Jew is in love with God, a night of passionate romance which is reflected in the tradition of reading Song of Songs after the *Haggadah*. We move from the *Hallel Hagadol* to *Nishmat kol hai*, ‘the breath of every living being shall bless Your name.’ We ecstatically see all of creation joining in a grand symphony of homage to God for all the blessings of life. From the *ge’ulat Mitzrayim* we are gripped with an appreciation that God is also the ultimate salvation of all mankind. The concluding note of the *Haggadah* is an eschatological vision of a glorious future, when ‘every mouth shall give thanks and every tongue shall swear allegiance unto You; every knee shall bow to You.’ To highlight this added dimension of gratitude, the *Hallel* and the *Hallel Hagadol* were included in the *Haggadah*.

32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.* See also *Shiurei HaRav*, “The Nine Aspects of the Hagaddah,” pp. 42-43 (“After discussing God’s special relationship with the Jewish People we move to the *Hallel ha-Gadol*, which contains a recognition of God’s benevolence to the whole world. We recognize and express gratitude for this, as we state, ‘Who giveth food unto all flesh, for His kindness endures forever.’ This leads us to the climax of the Seder, ‘*Nishmat*,’ when we speak of the future, the *Aharit ha-Yamim*, when all living beings shall give praise to the Almighty—‘*Nishmat kol hai t’varekh. . .*’ These portions add a glorious eschatological dimension to the *shevah* and the *hoda’a* sections that are so essential to the Haggada.”).
34. *Ibid.*
35. See Nahum M. Sarna, *On the Book of Psalms*(: Exploring the Prayers of Ancient Israel (Schocken Books, 1993), pp. 10-11 (explaining that the meaning of *Book of Psalms* is based on the Greek definition of “*mizmor*” as “stringed instrument,” while the Hebrew *Sefer Tehillim* is taken from the references to “*hallel*” or praise in the *Book of Psalms*).
36. Professor Steven S. Schwarzschild, *zt”l*, a close friend of R. Wurzburger and R. Soloveitchik, translated Rav Yitzhak Hutner’s deeply insightful lecture in *Pahad Yitshak* in which Rav Hutner suggested that there is an ultimate reconciliation between the two blessings Jews are required to say when hearing good news, “Praised be He who is good and causes good,” and bad news, “Praised be the truthful Judge.” “Two Lectures of R. Isaac Hutner,” *Tradition*, 14:4, (Fall, 1974), pp. 98-102. See also *ibid.*, pp. 90-102.

## TRADITION

37. Psalm 150, *Sefer Tehillim*, Artscroll edition, Hebrew with English translation, 1999, p. 321.
38. *Nishmat* prayer, *Siddur Kol Yaakov, The Complete Artscroll Siddur*, Hebrew with English translation, 1999, p. 321.
39. The eschatological vision is crucial to Rav Soloveitchik's religious world view, as it is a time when there will be a resolution of the conflicts that permeate his dialectical understanding of religious life. As the Rav wrote in a crucial footnote in *Lonely Man of Faith*, p. 87:

Jewish eschatology beholds the great vision of a united majestic-covenantal community in which all oppositions will be reconciled and absolute harmony will prevail. When Zechariah proclaimed 'the Lord shall be King over the earth; on that day the Lord shall be one and His name one' [*Zechariah* 14:9], he referred not to the unity of God, which is absolute and perfect even now, but the future unity of creation, which is currently torn asunder by inner contradictions. On that distant day the dialectical process will come to a close, and man of faith as well as majestic man will achieve full redemption in a united world.

Cf. "Two Lectures of R. Isaac Hutner," pp. 98-102.

40. For a person like R. Wurzburger whose faith was so strong and knowledge of God so profound, the final response to suffering, no matter how severe, is the praise of God and the offering up of one's suffering to Him. These are some of the essential teachings of the *Kaddish* prayer. As R. Wurzburger observed,

A telling illustration of the Jewish attitude towards the transcendent meaning of our finite life is found in the *Kaddish* prayer which mourners recite as they confront the mystery of human existence. The *Kaddish* contains no reference whatsoever to the phenomenon of death, but it indirectly conveys the Jewish response to the finitude of our existence. When human life is evaluated within the larger context of the ultimate objective of Judaism—the sanctification of the Divine Name—confrontation with the tragic finality of death will no longer result in a declaration of futility. Instead, life will be endowed with meaning to the extent that it contributes to the realization of the Providential design by helping to bring the world closer to the Messianic Redemption. (*God is Proof Enough*, p. 29.)

Cf. R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "A Halakhic Approach to Suffering," p. 16 ("If man loses a battle in a war, the topical Halakha has always believed, based on an eschatological vision, that at some future date, some distant date, evil will be overcome, 'and the Lord will wipe off the tears from all faces.' [Isaiah 25:8]")