

Shalom Rosenberg is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Jewish Thought at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

FATE AND DESTINY: THE METAMORPHOSIS OF A PARTNERSHIP

“**B**ut the Lord has not given you a heart to know . . . until this day” (Deut 29:3). It is from this verse that Hazal derived that forty years is the period of time required for a student to completely comprehend his teacher (*Avoda Zara* 5b). It goes without saying that the same applies after fifty years, a period described by R. Yehuda ha-Nasi as *le-olam* (forever): “Come and see that the *olam* is only a period of fifty years, as it is stated ‘and his servant shall be his forever (*le-olam*)’ (Exodus 21:6); only until the Jubilee year.”¹ When fifty years have elapsed, the current world in no way resembles the previous world—for better or for worse—and only from the perspective of the “new” world are we able to fully apprehend the magnitude of past events and the force of its thinkers and ideological movements. The generations, teachers, leaders, and in our day, the world views and ways of life have all changed. Nonetheless, from the frame of reference of the new world, one may at times better appreciate the difficulties, successes, and failures of the previous world. To write on the fiftieth anniversary of *Kol Dodi Dofek* is an exercise in writing on the changes which have occurred in the Zionist movement and in the Jewish State since the delivery of the lecture. I will outline my thoughts on this issue in schematic fashion below. I shall attempt to go about this with an eye to the convergence of the respective philosophies of R. Soloveitchik and R. Kook on related issues.

One of the commonalities of these two aforementioned philosophies is entrenched in the contention that there exists an essential partnership between two admittedly dissimilar positions. For R. Soloveitchik, this would be the partnership between Adam I and Adam II; between modern man and the man of faith. For R. Kook, it would be the partnership between religious and secular Zionism. But let not partnership be

The article was translated by Yonatan S. Miller.

defined as identification. The partnership of which I speak is only partial. Nevertheless, both of the above partnerships are critical components for the advancement of man and the Jewish people. In both cases we find an attempt to achieve an integration of the two sides, though this is accomplished in opposing ways. One finds in the writings of R. Kook a valiant attempt to subsume cultural intricacies and human creativity in Jewish life and thought. So too in the writings of R. Soloveitchik. The partnership in *Kol Dodi Dofek* occurs between the covenant of fate and the covenant of destiny;² between those who came to Zionism as a means of confronting anti-Semitism and those who saw Zionism as the resuscitation of Jewish people and the actualization of generations of yearning.

Indeed, if we are to connect *Kol Dodi Dofek* and *The Lonely Man of Faith*, we arrive at an integration of integrations of sorts. This doubled integration only began to manifest itself situated in contemporary Jewry and is still far from completion. In actuality, there is a sizable gap between the two perspectives; between those who emphasize Zionism as the fledglings of the redemption (*athalta de-ge'ula*) and those who underscore their dual identity which synthesizes Jewish and secular culture. Those who successfully accomplish this integration of integrations are a sizable group, but they have yet to design an alternative religious-Zionist platform to serve in the culture schism of today.

Indeed, there exist two partnerships. But from the contemporary perspective, we sadly note that they are becoming ever more problematic. To better elucidate this problem, I wish to return to R. Soloveitchik's partnerships from *The Lonely Man of Faith*. Adam I, with his accomplishments and values, is the epitomal representative of the modern world. However, the postmodern man of the contemporary Western world poses a challenge of a different sort. Modern and postmodern man can be differentiated in three ways, and those differences can be utilized thereafter to illustrate their clash with the man of faith. The three dimensions are: 1) the cognitive, 2) the pragmatic, and 3) the emotional. From time immemorial, there stand before the Jew three ideals which qualify these three dimensions: 1) faith, 2) mitsvot, and 3) hope, i.e., hope for redemption. Modern man has created alternative ideals: 1) theory, 2) values, and 3) utopia.

Despite the ideological chasm between the man of faith and modern man, there are shared characteristics. These shared characteristics form the basis for the bond between Adam I and Adam II; a bond which is built on the ability to translate concepts from culture to culture, e.g., redemption and utopia. The most essential and basic com-

monalities are the readiness to yearn for the future, to change the present, and the hardest of all, the willingness to sacrifice to achieve one's ideals. The classic example of this phenomenon can be drawn from the parallel between religion, on the one hand, and socialism and nationalism on the other. The painful and occasionally brutal schism is due specifically to the similarity of the two contenders, especially of religion and socialism. In both cases, the two sides invoke the three above mentioned dimensions. In both religion and socialism one finds doctrine and weltan-schauung, a way of life which obligates sacrifice for ultimate goals, and a developed emotional arena which directs its followers towards their appropriate ideals. From this perspective, there was no covenant of fate and destiny inherent in Zionism fifty years ago. All of the classic Zionist parties emphasized the element of destiny fundamental to their ideals by always hyphenating the names of their movements. To a certain extent, one might say that the covenant of fate served as the cement which galvanized the different approaches, while the disparate destinies simultaneously divided them. At any rate, though the ideal of destiny may have differed from group to group, the very existence of the idea of destiny, and the imperative to fight and sacrifice on its behalf, constituted an existential and psychological common ground uniting all.

I have only described one side of the reality. If we are to complete the picture, we will need to take into account an additional variable which affects the relationship between fate and destiny; a factor which has evolved. Fate was considered destiny in those days! R. Soloveitchik delivered *Kol Dodi Dofek* in the latter part of one of the greater ideological periods; a period which saw a destiny in national fate: nationalism. National identity is an intrinsic and central component in individual fate. A person is thrown into it, without ever having a say in choosing it and its accompanying tragedies. You are willy nilly born into a certain nation. And in the modern world, since the 19th century, following developments resultant of the French Revolution and as a response to modern imperialistic ventures, nationalism has turned into an ideal, or at the very least, an ideology. This was an ideal for which man was called to sacrifice all that was dear to him, if not his very life. Indeed, even those factions of Zionism which did not accept the ideology of *tikkun olam* adhered to "fate becoming destiny." The central and most important idealogue of these factions was, without a doubt, Ahad ha-Am. Utilizing the ideology of Ahad ha-Am as its foundations, secular Zionist education was inspired.

TRADITION

We have seen that Zionism, in all of its forms, lived with an awareness of destiny. This consciousness served as the basis for the subjective feeling of adherents of Zionist ideology that “their wagon was not empty.” This was the reaction of the secular Zionists to the metaphor of *Hazon Ish* involving two wagons merging onto a narrow thoroughfare. The appropriate answer to the dilemma—which wagon has the right of way—is that the wagon with no load should yield to the loaded wagon (*Sanhedrin* 32b). Whereas *Hazon Ish* presented the secular Zionists as having an empty wagon, secular Zionism saw itself as a wagon laden with ideals and charged with a destiny, just like their religious counterparts.

II

The existence of destiny is, in my mind, the most important characteristic in the modern world. This was the destiny of ideologies which strove, dreamt, and had the pretension of fixing the world (*tikkun olam*), on both the left and the right. Much like the fate of the monstrous figure of Daniel’s prophecy, these ideologies collapsed. With their actualization, they became nightmarish. Their dreams of *tikkun* evolved into the shattering of the vessels (*shevirat ha-kelim*) of humanity. This was true, at least, of the social ideologies. Society still pays occasional lip service to these lost ideals. Some social ideology survived, especially in the radical leftist groups which were chased after by the communists. This is true as well with regard to Zionism. The hyphenated ideals, the unique coalescence of social thought and Zionism, did not survive.

In parallel fashion, though through different processes, the national ideologies also collapsed. Nationalism possessed a dual destiny: the positive destiny of national identity and the negative destiny of opposition to social uprisings from the left. The national destiny collapsed when it manifested itself as dictatorial nationalism which added fascism to its contaminated ideology. But this destiny was demolished with the rise of the political-economic framework. In the “cradle” of nationalism in Europe, there developed a meta-national identity and globalization conquered the world. The collapse of nationalism rendered Ahad ha-Am’s ideology an empty vessel which could no longer revive a meaningful national consciousness. This process bears responsibility for the collapse of secular Zionist culture.

Fifty years after *Kol Dodi Dofek*, it appears to me that we stand at the radical juncture of a crossroads between fate and destiny. The diag-

nosis of R. Soloveitchik proves itself with every passing day. It is here that the problems with religious-Zionism are rooted. The processes that I mentioned above caused a global collapse—save for peripheral exceptions—of the secular partnership with religious-Zionism. The partnership disappeared from the central cultural junctions where they once existed and which have now become post-Zionist, i.e., without destiny. This is not to say that the nationalistic consciousness has disappeared from the masses. But without ideological leadership, the consciousness depends on fate alone. “Fate” in today’s Israel is first and foremost the conflict with the Arab world. But fate alone cannot define direction.

Allow me to use an automobile as a banal metaphor to elucidate my claim. As with the engine and steering of a car, the individual and society are two discrete, but essential systems. The engine provides the energy for movement while the steering column provides the necessary information for the direction of movement of the car. An additional and essential component is the ignition system which facilitates the entire driving process. Fate functions as the ignition system, or more exactly, as the push which we would give at one time to an old car with a dead battery. But without someone’s hands firmly on the wheel and directing the steering, that push had the potential to end tragically. Indeed, fate is the ignition system; but it can only catalyze the release of energy, not direction. Direction needs to be mined from a different source: destiny. Destiny is not a mere exhibition of fate. Postmodern man has lost cognizance of the meaning of destiny, and this is how post-Zionism was born. The only ideal remaining in the metaphorical “wagon” of the post-Zionist is that of democracy. But this democracy is nothing but a cluster of negative attributes. It is an empty concept in and of itself; a concept which imparts the slogan which has become the mantra of our generation in a paraphrase of the words of Habbakuk: *ish be-emunato yihye* (to each his own).

Nevertheless, we find a tragedy within a tragedy. The post-Zionist is able to understand and even empathize with the enemy through incredible intellectual acrobatics, though he is not even capable of doing this for himself. He sees himself living in a postmodern world, well beyond the age of national defined states and the mystical loyalty to territory. They strive minimally for a country ruled by its citizens. Nonetheless, they are more than able to comprehend the plight of our enemy who dwells in the pre-modern era. For the enemy, it is permissible and even obligatory to undertake the entire process of nation-building, beginning with the most primitive model of nations. For “us” it is

forbidden to do the same, as it is considered too barbaric. Because of this flawed thought process, the post-Zionist understands the destiny of the “other” while he himself does not recognize a destiny of his own.

This dissolution of partnership is also exhibited with Adam I. Postmodern man exists with a different triumvirate of ideals than man of faith and Adam I: 1) doubt, 2) temptation, and 3) hopelessness. I have invoked these three terms as I believe that they can be utilized to explicate R. Nahman of Breslav’s doctrine of the menacing *sitra ahra* as well as the universal values of postmodern man. *Doubt* is no longer a threat; it is an ideal. There is no truth but perspectives; there is no theory but narrative. *Temptation* elucidates the current situation whereby there are no imperative values. Everything is framed in a cultural context and one cannot judge one system based on another. *Hopelessness* reflects the insufficiency of utopias where the utopias themselves have become more dangerous than the initial situations which induced their formation and which their founders wished to remedy. Utopia, redemption, and hope have become monstrous words which are perceived to endanger civilization. The clock has also transformed. No longer does the clock show the past and the future; it displays only the here and now.

Postmodernism is, without a doubt, open to variation. It is open to out of the ordinary phenomena such as classical hasidic garb. Nonetheless, from an existential standpoint, it has lost the ability to sacrifice for any ideal, value, family, or even the future. Ideals and goals do not bear any significance. Postmodern man has lost the capability to sacrifice anything personal on behalf of any ideal or aspiration beyond his own. I do not believe that humankind will remain postmodern. Humankind needs the inevitable onset of neo-modernism; until then, we live in the tragedy of the failed dual-relationship.

III

R. Kook portended these very developments over one hundred years ago when he wrote:

It is possible that the progeny of the secular-nationalists will repudiate their “Israeliness.” . . . Godless nationalism, bare of any semblance of religion or *torat hayyim* has the potential to bear fruit which we will not be proud of or boast of, nor may we even be sure that we will be able to say, “They are ours.” . . . It is possible and even probable that the children of those parents who extol this type of nationalism . . . will go

one step further; one step closer to the vast and broad world, which perhaps one day will be overcome by good spirit and greet them in a welcoming manner. . . . I fear that they will not (only)³ leave the flock with scorn and contempt; perhaps they will even stone . . . that nationalism that is foreign to their spirit . . . which their parents were crazed enough to instill within them, thereby adding only more conflict to the question of their lives which should be solved with a simple individual solution with the assistance of . . . the angel of forgetfulness.⁴

NOTES

1. *Mekhilta Mishpatim*, *Massekhet Nezikin* 2. Likewise, *le-olam* is classified as “until the Jubilee year” in *Kiddushin* (21b).
2. I am not fully satisfied with the popular translation of *ye’ud* as “destiny.” In this paper, “destiny” (which is the prevailing and accepted translation of *ye’ud* in this volume) denotes goal directed human activity.
3. The Hebrew text is missing this critical word, most probably due to a printing error.
4. *Otsarot ha-Re’iyah*, vol. 2 (Tel Aviv: Segal Press, 1988), p. 766.