LEHRHAUS
Over Shabbat

Re'eh

Vol. 10, Issue 45 • 24 Av 5786 / August 7, 2026

CONTENTS: Wolowelsky and Taler (Page 1); Mohl (Page 7)

Sponsorships for future editions of Lehrhaus over Shabbat are available at
https://thelehrhaus.com/sponsor-lehrhaus-shabbos/

Covenant in Retrospect: Rereading the Brit Bein Ha-Betarim (Gen. 15)

Joel B. Wolowelsky is Dean of the Faculty Emeritus at the Yeshivah of Flatbush, where he taught for 55 years before making aliyah to Jerusalem. Avner Taler was the chairman of the Bible department at Yeshivah of Flatbush Joel Braverman Highschool, as well as a teacher in a few other departments for close to 40 years.

At a first reading, the chronological timeline of Abraham – still called Abram – in Parashat Lekh Lekha appears straightforward. God commanded him to go to Canaan when he was 75 (Gen. 12); he then went to Egypt and returned (Gen. 13); he then went to war to save his nephew Lot (Gen. 14); he experienced the *Brit Bein Ha-Betarim*, the Covenant of the Pieces (Gen. 15); and he had a son at age 86 (Gen. 16). Thus, at the time of the Covenant, Abraham was between 75 and 86. Let us say that, for convenience in this discussion, he was around 80.

However, in various traditional Jewish exegeses, Abraham's age at the time of the Covenant was calculated to be 70.[1] The suggestion that the

[1] The Torah explicitly states that Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old (Gen. 21:5). At the *Brit Bein Ha-Betarim* (Genesis 15), God informs Abraham that his descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs and will be enslaved for 400 years. However, in Exodus (40:41) a period of enslavement is given as 430 years. According to *Seder Olam Rabbah*, the 400-year decree began precisely with the birth of Isaac. Hence, the count of 430 must have begun when Abraham was informed of the decree, which was at the *Brit Bein Ha-Betarim*. Subtracting 30 years from Abraham's age of 100 at Isaac's birth means that Abraham was 70 years old at the time of the Covenant. The Tosafot commentaries on *Berakhot* 7b (s.v. "*Lo haya adam*") discuss the timeline of Abraham's life, specifically agreeing that he was 70 at the Covenant.

chapters in the Torah are not in chronological order is in and of itself not problematic, as we have the principle of *ein mukdam u-me'uhar ba-Torah* (there is no chronological order in the Torah, *Pesahim* 6b). However, we present here a rereading of chapter 15 that maintains both the chronological sequence of the chapters and the suggestion that Abraham was 70 at the time of the Covenant.

Our reading takes us back to chapter 10. When Abraham was 48, his society was freed to think and explore as the Tower of Babel was liberated, so to speak.[2] He found God, and over the next decade or so brought Terah into his spiritual community. Shortly before he was 70, Abraham and Terah felt a draw to leave Ur and search out the Land of Canaan. They set out together, stopping in Haran when he was 70.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's description of how Jerusalem later drew Abraham once he had entered Canaan from the north applies just as well to the magnetic effect Canaan wielded over Abraham and Terah while they were still in Ur:

> Here is a central idea in Judaism: *kedushah* attracts. This was perhaps the greatest discovery made by Abraham. The generation of the flood thought that beauty is fascinating and that it is man's duty to respond quickly to the aesthetic challenge, to succumb to the beautiful and pleasant. The generation of the dispersion thought that power is the idea that overwhelms man; technological achievement takes man prisoner, making him worship the genius who made this kind of achievement possible. Abraham proclaimed to the world that *kedushah* is the great attractive force. [3]

Terah's draw to Canaan waned. He remained in Haran and Abraham, committed to *kibbud av* (honoring his father), stayed with him.[4] After a few years, when Abraham was

[2] See Joel B. Wolowelsky, "The Tower of Babel in Human Language," *Tradition*, 58:3 (Summer 2026), 197-203.

[3] R. Soloveitchik, *Abraham's Journey*, 62.

[4] The Torah tells us (10:32) that Terah died before informing us (12:1) that God tells Abraham to leave Haran, giving the impression that Abraham left after Terah died. But Terah was 70 years old when Abraham was born (11:26), and Abraham left Haran at age 75 (Gen. 12:4). Therefore, Terah was only 145 years old (70 + 75) when Abraham left him. Since Terah lived to be 205 years old (11:32), Terah was still very much alive and lived for another 65 years after Abraham left him. Rashi explains that the Torah masks the chronological reality to avoid it looking like Abraham was abandoning his filial duties. God explicitly gave Abraham permission to leave his living father, but the Torah records Terah's death early so that the general public wouldn't judge Abraham harshly.

75, God told him to move on and leave Terah in Haran.[5] Over the next few years he underwent various trials and journeys. Chapter 15 opens with the timestamp of "It was after these things," when Abraham was about 80.

In verse 1, God promises Abraham protection and great rewards, but in verse 2, Abraham responds not with gratitude but a challenge: "What is whatever you offer worthwhile if I do not have the children you promised?" At approximately 80 years of age, Abraham found himself shaken by the realization that Lot will not be his heir. God does not respond immediately, as the next verse begins not with God's reply but "*Vayomer Abram*," an indication of Abraham's continued soliloquy after a pause waiting for a response. Then, while in verse 2 Abraham speaks with formal restraint, by verse 3 he drops the diplomatic protocol to state his painful reality directly. Abraham completely drops the formal titles. He does not say "Lord God" this time; he simply launches straight into his grievance. He stops asking questions and starts stating facts. He uses the exclamations *"Hen"* ("Behold!") and *"Hinei "* ("Look!") in a single sentence to demand immediate attention.

In verse 4, God responds forcefully with a straightforward statement that Abraham will indeed have the promised children. Abraham was explicit: "A servant born in my house is to be my heir." God issues an un-nuanced, absolute refusal: "This man shall not be your heir." He answers Abraham's directness with total clarity, instantly eliminating Eliezer from consideration. Moreover, God subtly strengthens the language of His previous promises. Earlier, He spoke generally about giving Abraham "seed" or "descendants." Now, in response to Abraham's deeply personal crisis, God uses

[5] Maharal (*Gur Aryeh* commentary on Rashi to Shemot 12:40) says that Abraham traveled to Canaan twice, the first time when he was 70 years old, at the time of the *Brit Bein HaBetarim*. He calls this opinion "*divrei Hazal*." (See *Bereishit Rabba* 39): "Rabbi Nehemiah said, '*Lekh lekha,*' 'Go,' two times [to Canaan], one from Aram Naharaim and one from Aram Nahor." So, too, R. Eliyahu Mizrahi argues that God actually took Abraham out of Haran temporarily at age 70 to make the Covenantin Canaan, after which Abraham returned to Haran for five years, before permanently moving to Canaan at age 75. Presumably, he returned to Haran to be with his father.

> intensely visceral and physical language: the heir will come "out of your own body/bowels (*mi'me'e[k]ha*)."

Then, in verse 5, God tells Abraham to look up at the stars and try to count them. The stars had long ago provided Abraham with the awareness of God and now would in some way reassure him:

> "God brought him outside" – by his lapels, so to speak – and said, Stop brooding, Abraham! Remember the nights in Mesopotamia when you were a boy, a young lad, how you used to watch the stars, observe them, study them, trying to find out the position of each star and each constellation, to find all the galaxies. You were so full of enthusiasm and ecstasy. You failed so many times, but you never gave up. "Look up at the sky." …. Look up, the way you were accustomed to do in your youth, and begin to count the stars. Count long and don't give up. The command is an allusion, a hint, comparing the old Abraham with the young Abraham, telling Abraham to act young.[6]

God told Abraham to look up at the stars with the same wonderment and curiosity that brought him to discover God in his youth.[7]

Then, God waits for a response from Abraham, as indicated by the word "*Vayomer*" mid-verse 5 without a change in speaker. Not getting a response, God makes it clear that "Such shall be your seed!" Verse 6 then tells us that Abraham had recaptured his faith in God, [8] and "*vayahsheveha lo tzedakah,*" (he reckoned it as a righteousness). The deliberate ambiguity in the antecedent of the pronoun allows for two interpretations: God credited Abraham's faith as a meritorious, righteous act and, on other hand, Abraham acknowledged that God's faithfulness and reliability are inherently righteous. The Torah

---

[6] R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Abraham's Journey: Reflections on the Life of the Founding Patriarch*, eds. David Shatz, Joel B. Wolowelsky, and Reuven Ziegler (Toras HoRav Foundation, 2008), 141f.

[7] Poetically paraphrasing *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Idolatry 1:3, Rabbi Soloveitchik writes: "When Abraham was a lad, when he was a shepherd and remained in the field at night, he could not sleep because he was restless. He could not understand the cosmos; the grandeur of the cosmic drama puzzled him. Chaldea was the land where astronomy was born. They were the first to describe the skies and draw maps of the heavens. And Abraham counted the stars; he discovered God with the stars" (*Abraham's Journey*, 142).

[8] In verse 6, "*he'emin*" is generally translated as "he believed." This traditional reading views the verse as a direct result of the instructions in verse 5: Abraham looked up at the stars and then he believed in God. Verse 7 follows by initiating a historical flashback to Abraham's past. Normally, we would expect the narrative prose to use the standard form "*vaya'amein,*" but the text uses a different form of this verb that is not found anywhere else in the Bible. This might suggest that "*he'emin*" is better translated as "he had [already] believed." This reading turns verse 6 into a clear, logical segue to the flashback in the next verse. It states that Abraham had already believed in God a decade ago.

uses this grammatical ambiguity to reflect the dual nature of the breakthrough: a human reclaiming youthful faith, and God validating it.

Verse 7, however, seems to present a difficulty. Having just affirmed Abraham's renewed faith, why would God repeat now the promise for the Land that He had made when Abraham was 75 (Gen. 12:7) and spark a new challenge from Abraham? Rather, we suggest that verse 7 is not a continuation of God's reassurance to the eighty-year-old Abraham. It marks a shift from Abraham's present crisis to his recollection of an earlier divine encounter when God spoke to him the words "*Ani Hashem Elokekha*."

The memory analeptic shift (flashback) [9] is triggered by God's command to gaze at the stars. It reconnects Abraham with the wonder and confidence of his youth. God is not announcing a new promise to the eighty-year-old Abraham in Canaan. Instead, the narrative moves into Abraham's recollection of a covenantal encounter that occurred when he was 70, a time at which he still maintained his youthful amazement. God had then revealed Himself as the source of the magnetic pull that had drawn Abraham out of Ur toward Canaan, when he was just short of 70.

Now, in verse 7, Abraham revisits how, when God had revealed Himself as the source of this spiritual magnetism, He revealed its purpose: to give the land to which Abraham had been drawn as an inheritance to him.

In verse 8, Abraham re-experiences how he had then asked how he can be sure this will come to fruition. God tells him to butcher various animals and arrange them in a particular way. This surely seems strange to the modern reader. However, as Rashi notes on verse 10, "It was the custom of those who made a covenant to divide an animal and pass between its pieces, as it is stated later, 'Those who passed between the pieces of the calf' (Jeremiah 34:18)." Similarly, Rabbeinu Bahya comments on verse 18, "For such is the way of those who make a covenant. They first swear an oath, and afterward they make the covenant. The covenant consists of passing between the pieces of the animal, as it is written (Jeremiah 34:18), 'The calf which they cut in two and passed between its pieces.' This covenant was like a *heirem* (ban/curse), and it served as the confirmation of the oath that they had already sworn, as if to say, 'Let whoever transgresses the oath be cut in pieces like this animal.'" God did not speak to Abraham in an inaccessible, alien

[9] Rabbi Elchanan Samet ("Reuven's Attempt to Save Yosef," Yeshivat Har Etzion, VBM) defines the biblical flashback, or "retrospective storytelling," as a deliberate narrative tool where the Torah withholds past data to reframe a character's present psychological state. This structural mechanism serves to delay information to maintain plot momentum and forces a re-evaluation of a character's emotional state during a crisis by introducing hidden, past experiences. Here it facilitates a vital contrast between Abraham's emotional state at age 80 with that which it was when he was 70, which helps him regain that former perspective.

language; He met him exactly where he was, utilizing the strict Near Eastern legal rituals Abraham grew up observing in Ur.

Strikingly, modern archaeological discoveries of Hittite and Amorite treaties have corroborated this centuries-old insight. Cuneiform tablets from the Bronze Age demonstrate that sealing a pact required literally 'cutting' the treaty—slaughtering and separating animals to form a corridor of a 'self-maledictory oath.' The vassal would walk between the halves, inviting his own destruction if he were to breach the terms.[10]

God uses this familiar Ancient Near Eastern legal framework, but subverts it. In a standard Hittite treaty, the weaker party (the vassal) walked the path, because the weaker party bore the risk of default. Here, Abraham, the human vassal, is cast into a deep sleep and is prevented from walking the path. Instead, the smoke and fiery torch representing God passes through the pieces alone. In a theological reversal of secular law, the Sovereign King takes the curse upon Himself, transforming a standard conditional treaty into an unconditional, eternal divine guarantee. Then, in verse 18, the narration returns to the then-present. We are told in closing that *bayom hahu*, on that day – the one a decade before that we have just relived with Abraham in the flashback – God had made a Covenant to give Abraham's descendants the land from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates.

This rereading of Genesis 15 allows us to preserve the plain chronological flow of Abraham's life while also accounting for the traditional view that the *Brit Bein Ha-Betarim* occurred when he was seventy years old. More importantly, it reveals the Covenant not merely as a divine promise about the future, but as a remembered experience that restores Abraham's confidence in a moment of crisis. The chapter thus becomes a study in religious memory. Faced with doubt at age 80, Abraham is led back to the vision and certainty of his younger self, reexperiencing formative moments of divine disclosure. The Torah's use of retrospective narration transforms the *Brit Bein Ha-Betarim* from a historical episode into a living source of spiritual renewal, suggesting that faith is sustained not only by new revelations but also by the capacity to revisit and reengage past encounters with God.

[10] See, for example, Jared T. Parker, "Cutting Covenants," BYU Religious Studies Center, available at https://rsc.byu.edu/gospel-jesus-christ-old-testament/cutting-covenants.

"A Nation for all its Citizens": A Halakhic Analysis

Reuven Mohl edited three books compiled from the writings of Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits on the Haggadah, Megillat Esther, and Megillat Ruth (Urim/Ktav).

Introduction

In this article, I will examine Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's (the Rav's) conception of *areivut* — mutual responsibility — as laid out in *Fate and Destiny*.[1] The Rav offers a five-stage model[2] of the "covenant of fate" (*Brit Goral*) in which *areivut* is not an independent axiom, but the third and crucial turning point in a comprehensive process, preceded by shared historical circumstances and shared suffering, followed by shared activity and then love.

The Rav's understanding of *areivut* forces an investigation into his covenantal philosophy. First, he insists that halakhic interdependence cannot be understood without the two prior, non-halakhic foundations of shared fate and shared sympathy; *areivut* only makes sense once an ontological unity has already emerged. Second, he places this halakhic mechanism inside the Covenant of Fate, *before* Sinai's Covenant of Destiny (*Brit Yi'ud*), signaling that halakhic responsibility grows out of togetherness already forged in Egypt and not only from the commanded world of destiny. Third, the Rav essentially adopts Ran's claim that one has not truly fulfilled a mitzvah while his fellow remains unfulfilled, yet he embeds this idea in his anthropology rather than in technical legal analysis. And fourth, by aligning *areivut* with Ritva's view that Israel is *guf echad*, one body, the Rav roots the legal mechanism in his extensive theology of *Knesset Yisrael*. This marks the moment where existential wholeness becomes halakhically operative, where collective identity becomes functional, and where the Rav reverses the usual assumption that halakhah alone creates covenantal identity. Instead, *areivut* expresses a unity that fate has already forged in creating *Knesset Yisrael.*

I. Rav Soloveitchik's Five-Stage Model of Fate

The Rav first delivered this lecture in Hebrew on Yom Ha'atzmaut in 1956, in Lamport Auditorium at Yeshiva University. It later became the book *Kol Dodi Dofek*.[3] The work is well known for its opening section on the "six knocks," the unforgettable reading of *Shir Ha-Shirim* as a theological response to the founding of the State of Israel. Yet the second half of the lecture, his profound analysis of Fate and Destiny, is no less significant, even if it has received less attention in the decades that followed. When the work was

[1] *Fate and Destiny: From Holocaust to the State of Israel*, by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, translated by Lawrence Kaplan, Ktav Publishing House, 2000.

[2] I believe there are five stages, although the Rav numerically only counts four, (*Fate and Destiny*, 46). I consider the last stage of love as a distinct stage and not a part of stage four.

[3] The Hebrew version can be found in *Divrei Hagut ve-Haarakhah*, World Zionist Organization, 1982, 9-55.

eventually translated into English, the title was shifted to *Fate and Destiny* to highlight these concepts and bring the Rav's philosophy of Jewish peoplehood to the foreground.

In *Fate and Destiny*, the Rav offers a systematic analysis built around five ascending stages: shared fate, shared sympathy, halakhic *areivut*, shared activity, and love. Though embedded in homiletic and historical reflections, the framework is highly deliberate. These are five stages in what the Rav calls the "Covenant of Fate," which, he argues, was forged in Egypt. It is a shared, unchosen (involuntary) fate imposed by external circumstances. The "Covenant of Destiny," of Mount Sinai, takes place after these five stages. This is a chosen, voluntary mission transformed from the previous covenant.

"First," the Rav writes, "the consciousness of shared fate manifests itself as a consciousness of shared circumstances."[4] Jews are bound together, he argues, by the simple brutal fact of their shared experiences of exile, persecution, and hatred. A Jew may wish to assimilate or to cast off religious obligation, yet in the eyes of the world, and before God, he remains part of the Jewish collective. Jewish existence begins in an involuntary togetherness.

The second stage deepens fate into shared suffering. Once the Jew recognizes that he does not suffer alone, that every blow that falls on an individual Jew has an effect on the entire people, then fate becomes morally charged. A sense of comradeship in affliction arises, that my brother's pain is my own pain and his humiliation is my humiliation. The Rav writes: "If boiling water is poured upon the head of the Jew in Morocco, the fashionably attired Jew in Paris or London has to scream at the top of his voice, and through feeling the pain he will remain faithful to his people. The fragmentation of the people and the blearing of its image are concomitants of the absence of the feeling of sympathy."[5]

Only at the third stage does the Rav introduce *areivut* in the narrow halakhic sense. Building upon this development established in the first two stages, he turns to the familiar rule that one who has already fulfilled a commandment may nevertheless fulfill it on behalf of another.[6] The possibility of such vicarious performance, the Rav insists, rests upon *kol Yisrael areivim zeh la-zeh*: the obligations of one Jew are in some sense the obligations of all, and the failure of one Jew leaves the religious life of the entire people deficient. This principle becomes the juridical expression of an already-existing communal oneness revealed in history and suffering. I will analyze this step later in the essay.

In the fourth stage, he turns from the legal category of *areivut* to the practical world of communal *hesed*, where "shared historical

[4] *Fate and Destiny*, 46.

[5] Ibid., 49.

[6] Ibid., 50.

circumstances give rise to shared activity."[7] Once Jews recognize that they are bound by a common fate and share in one another's suffering, this consciousness naturally manifests itself in concrete acts of mutual aid. The Rav underscores that the Jewish people do not remain a theoretical unit but become a community that acts helping one another in distress, sustaining one another in crisis, and building patterns of care that no individual could ever maintain alone. This *hesed* constitutes the everyday realization of solidarity. It is where ethical bonds of fate and duty find tangible illustration in deed. Jews enact their identity that unites them, affirming that the fate and the well-being of one Jew are inseparable from the fate and well-being of all.

The final stage is love. Although the Rav does not specifically numerically count it as the others, in my opinion, this is a distinct stage and not part of stage four. The Rav understands *ahavat Yisrael* as the culmination of the previous stages. Love is what Jewish solidarity feels like when fate, sympathy, *areivut* and shared activity are fully internalized. He writes: "The obligation to love one another stems from the consciousness of this people of fate, this lonely people that inquires into the meaning of its own uniqueness. It is this obligation of love that stands at the very heart of the covenant made in Egypt."[8]

After these five stages of Fate, the Rav then develops the Covenant of Destiny, the responsibility to live a life inspired by Torah and commanded purpose. The Covenant of Destiny gives the united entity forged in the Covenant of Fate its mission and spiritual direction. Both Fate and Destiny are mandatory. The Rav writes:

> "A Jew who participates in his people's suffering and fate but does not bind himself to its destiny, which expresses itself in a life of Torah and mitzvot, violates a fundamental principle of Judaism and impairs his own singularity. Conversely, a Jew who does not grieve over the afflictions of his people, but seeks to separate himself from the Jewish fate,

[7] Ibid., 52.

[8] Ibid., 54. See also *Halakhic Morality: Essays on Ethics and Masorah*, by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, edited by Joel B. Wolowelsky and Reuven Ziegler, Maggid Books, 2017. See especially the chapter addressing *ve'ahavta le-re'akha kamokha* and interpersonal ethics called *Tzedakah: Brotherhood and Fellowship*, 123-180, particularly 159-164. There the Rav contrasts love formed out of fear in the Covenant of Fate within the *machaneh*, the camp, and an added level of ideal love founded in the Covenant of Destiny within the *Edah*, the community (parallels page 58 in *Fate and Destiny*). For a philosophic parallel, compare Hermann Cohen's reading (on whom the Rav wrote a doctoral dissertation) of the same command in *Hermann Cohen's Philosophy of Judaism*, by Jehuda Melber, Jonathan David Publishers, 1968, Chapter 13: *Love of Friend; The Meaning of Rea,* 214-234 where "love of the neighbor" is likewise understood as a rational-ethical imperative rather than a mere emotion.

> desecrates the holiness of Israel, even if he observes the commandments."[9]

With this formulation, the Rav clarifies that neither covenant can stand alone. Fate without Destiny is missing direction and sanctity; Destiny without Fate lacks solidarity. Jewish existence is whole only when both covenants are embraced together.[10]

II. The Sugya of *Motzi*

The Talmud in Rosh HaShanah 29a establishes a striking rule: "*Af al pi she-yatza, motzi*," even though one has fulfilled one's own obligation, one may nonetheless discharge the obligation of another in certain mitzvot, such as shofar, the recitation of Kiddush, or the reading of Megillah.[11]

The classical question is why this should be so. Ordinarily, once a person has fulfilled a duty, the personal obligation is extinguished – so what empowers someone to act again on behalf of someone else?

Rashi[12] answers succinctly: because *kol Yisrael areivim zeh la-zeh*—"all Israel are guarantors for one another." That is, the obligation of the other still binds one through the bond of *areivut*, and therefore one can act in the other's stead. Rashi, however, does not explain how this works. He presents *areivut* as a given halakhic fact that justifies the unusual result, without probing its inner logic.

Ran,[13] in his commentary to this *sugya*, offers a more radical formulation.[14] He suggests that due

---

[9] *Fate and Destiny,* 61.

[10] *Worship of the Heart: Essays on Jewish Prayer*, by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, edited by Shalom Carmy, Ktav Publishing House, 2003, 33. The Rav interprets Ruth's declaration "Your people are my people; your God is my God" (Megillat Ruth 1:16) as representing both Fate and Destiny. According to the Rav, every convert must accept both Covenants displaying the devotion to *Knesset Yisrael*. See "On Conversion," by Aharon Lichtenstein, Tradition, Issue 23.2, Winter 1988, 1-18 especially footnote 27 where he writes "On these two sides of *gerut*, see the work of my master, Rav J. B. Soloveitchik, *Kol Dodi Dofek*… The Rav there sees two aspects of conversion as embodied in the two covenants that evolved from two historical events, the exodus from Egypt and the Revelation at Sinai. The major thrust of this article is based on the essential cornerstone laid down in that work".

[11] For an analysis of other sources of *kol Yisrael areivim zeh la-zeh*, see "Kol Yisrael Areivim Zeh Ba-zeh" by Reuben M. Rudman, Tradition, Issue 42:2, Summer 2009, 35-49. For a different treatment of *areivut*, see Rabbi Ahron Soloveichik, *Logic of the Heart, Logic of the Mind* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 1991), chap. 5, "Jew and Jew, Jew and Non-Jew." Like the Rav, his brother Rav Ahron invokes the principle of *kol Yisrael areivim zeh la-zeh* and the halakhic discussion of *motzi* in Rosh HaShanah 29a, but develops it primarily as an ethical and halakhic doctrine of mutual responsibility rather than as an expression of covenantal peoplehood.

[12] Rosh HaShanah 29a, s.v. "*af al pi she-yatza, motzi*"

[13] Ran to Rosh HaShanah 8a in the Rif pagination, s.v. "*ve-af al pi she-yatza, motzi*"

[14] See Rabbi JJ Schachter, https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/972721, October 8, 2020, who describes this Ran as "mind-boggling," "scary," "far reaching," and a "powerful" formulation of *areivut*. He also quotes Rabbenu Manoach (First Perek) on Rambam, Hilchot Brachot, who holds the same opinion as Ran.

to *areivut*, each Jew in a certain sense has not fully discharged their personal obligation so long as a fellow Jew's obligation remains unfulfilled.

According to Ran, when the Gemara says that one who has already fulfilled a mitzvah may nevertheless perform it again on behalf of another, it does not mean that they are acting from a position of exemption. In his formulation, the first Jew has not actually completed the mitzvah in the fullest sense, because a fellow Jew has not yet become exempt from their own obligation.

The collective obligation has not yet been completed and the guarantor carries the lingering burden of the other's duty. This may even imply that when one performs the mitzvah again, one is not simply repeating an act already done, but is fulfilling a mitzvah that was never fully completed the first time. The difficulty, of course, is that there is always someone, somewhere, who has not yet fulfilled the commandment, suggesting that no Jew ever achieves absolute, final fulfillment of certain mitzvot. For Ran, mitzvot are declarations of a shared, ongoing responsibility that belongs to the people as a whole.

III. Stage Three: The Vital Middle Stage

This stage is not just a technical halakhic interlude tucked into a philosophical argument within *Fate and Destiny*, rather, it is the anchor of the Rav's five-stage covenant of fate. It performs four essential functions for the Rav's larger project. First, it reveals that he is effectively adopting Ran's interpretation of *kol Yisrael areivim zeh la-zeh*, albeit without naming the Ran. One Jew's mitzvah-performance remains incomplete until their fellow fulfills their own obligation. Second, the Rav insists that this halakhic principle cannot stand on its own. It only works once the prior two stages of fate, shared circumstances and shared suffering, have created the foundations upon which halakhic interdependence can operate. Third, he deliberately situates halakhic *areivut* inside the Covenant of Fate, and not the Covenant of Destiny. This form of mutual responsibility precedes Sinai and belongs to the basic architecture of Jewish existence even before the Torah is given. The Rav traces the formal emergence of *areivut* to the covenant enacted at Har Gerizim and Har Ebal, using as reference Sotah 37b. This covenant, which was established forty years after Matan Torah, marks the transition from a bond of shared suffering to a fully articulated halakhic framework of mutual responsibility. At the same time, he stresses that this later covenant does not stand independently but rather presupposes and builds upon, with the same phrases, the covenant forged in Egypt, which he anchors in "*ve-lakachti etchem li leʿam"* (Exodus 6:7). In this way, the Rav presents the Sinaitic covenant as the fulfillment of the Exodus experience, giving legal and covenantal form to a peoplehood already constituted through fate. The Rav writes, "Here the concept of shared fate has risen from the plane of socio-political suffering to the plane of ethico-halakhic *areivut*".[15] Fourth, although the Rav does not cite Ritva,

[15] *Fate and Destiny,* 50.

which I will discuss later in this essay, his depiction of *Knesset Yisrael* as a single organism mirrors Ritva's statement of Israel as *guf echad*, one body, a metaphysical unity that gives *areivut* its halakhic coherence. Properly understood, then, stage three is the vital step of the entire model as it expresses a pre-Sinaitic covenantal reality, and becomes a main example within his broader theology of peoplehood.

Against this background, the Rav's treatment of *areivut* in *Fate and Destiny* gains new distinction. He writes, "Here the concept of shared fate has risen from the plane of sociopolitical suffering to the plane of ethico-halakhic *areivut*. We are all mutually responsible for one another, we are all each other's guarantors." [16] Only after he has established that Jewish existence is historically and morally bound together does he turn to the legal mechanism allowing one Jew to fulfill a mitzvah for another. The Rav builds a two-step prelude—shared fate and shared suffering—before introducing *areivut* at stage three.

What is most striking in the Rav's presentation is *halakhic areivut* appearing in Egypt, within the Covenant of Fate, even before the Torah was given at Sinai. Yet he places it in Egypt quite intentionally. The communal self of Israel, the "one ethico-halakhic unit," already comes into being under the pressure of oppression and shared suffering. Sinai later provides the commandments through which this unity becomes actionable, but that unity itself predates revelation. In Egypt, the Jewish people already were responsible for one another and bound to one another. The Rav's placement of *areivut* inside the Covenant of Fate therefore means that the halakhic power of *motzi*, the capacity of one Jew to act on behalf of another, is rooted not in the technical corpus of mitzvot but in the reality of the unity of the people. *Areivut* translates into the language of halakhic obligation a pre-existing experience of shared fate and shared suffering.

If Jews are bound in a covenant of fate and have internalized a sense of mutual responsibility, then the halakhic principle that one Jew's obligation can be discharged by another is no longer surprising, as it is simply the declaration of a pre-existing unity. The halakhah works because the Jewish people already form a spiritual entity.[17]

The Rav writes in *Fate and Destiny*:

> A collective ethico-halakhic responsibility devolves upon the entire Jewish people. The individuals coalesce into one ethico-halakhic unit, possessed of one conscience and all-encompassing normative

[16] Ibid.

[17] See Gerald Blidstein in *Society and Self*, OU Press, 2012, 87, where he writes "The reality of the Jewish peoplehood in the twentieth century is, of course, a largely secular reality." The Rav "develops a model for identification with this secular Jewish reality, even as he asserts that it must be transcended." Acknowledging the halakhot in a pre-existing national framework is vitally important to one of the main goals of the essay *Fate and Destiny.*

> consciousness. The halakhah has already declared that all Jews are guarantors for one another. Consequently, the halakhic ruling is that a person who has already discharged his obligation to fulfill a commandment for his fellow Jew who has not as yet performed it and thereby enable him to discharge his obligation. The fact that the first person has already performed the commandment does not result in his being included in the category of those who are exempt from a particular obligation, who cannot enable the many to discharge their obligation. The "I" is not himself exempt as long as his fellow has not performed the commandment required of him.
>
> A special covenant was made in order to effect the mutual "areivut (suretyship) of all Jews for one another.[18]

The Rav's language matches Ran almost verbatim. When he writes that "the 'I' is not himself exempt as long as his fellow has not performed the commandment required of him," he is describing Ran's idea that one Jew's fulfillment remains incomplete until the other Jew attains fulfillment as well. He is giving a philosophical voice to what Ran stated. The mitzvah-obligation of the individual is intertwined with, and partially dependent upon, the mitzvah-obligation of the entire people. The Rav is, therefore, not only applying Ran's insight but developing it. He turns Ran's halakhic mechanism into an existential understanding of Jewish unity. The halakhah works because a deeper communal reality already exists.

This structure also has implications for the Rav's own portrait of "Halakhic Man." In that work,[19] halakhic categories appear largely autonomous; the halakhist constructs a world out of pure law, building a model of reality out of legal categories and concepts. In *Fate and Destiny*, by contrast, the halakhic category of *areivut* is explicitly dependent on two prior, non-halakhic stages. Halakhic Man requires the prior voice of "Covenantal Man," who experiences shared fate and suffering, in order for the halakhic principles to make sense.[20]

---

[18] *Fate and Destiny,* 49–50.

[19] *Halakhic Man*, by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. Translated by Lawrence Kaplan, Jewish Publication Society, 1983.

[20] Halakhic principles are also rooted in reality. See, for example *The Halakhic Mind*, by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Seth Press, 1986, 85. The Rav writes, "Halakhah is the act of seizing the subjective flow and converting it into enduring and tangible magnitudes. It is the crystallization of the fleeting individual experience into fixed principles and universal norms. In short, Halakhah is the objectifying instrument of our religious consciousness, the form-principle of the transcendental act, the matrix in which the amorphous religious hylo is cast." Also see *Majesty and Humility*, by Reuven Ziegler, OU Press and Urim Publications, 2012, Chapter 31, especially the quote from the Rav on page

The contrast between *Halakhic Man* and *Fate and Destiny* becomes especially vivid when one reads how the Rav characterizes the halakhist's fundamental stance. "When halakhic man approaches reality," he writes, "he comes with his Torah, given to him from Sinai, in hand. He orients himself to the world by means of fixed statutes and firm principles." He is "well furnished with rules, judgments, and fundamental principles," and "draws near the world with an a priori relation," beginning with "an ideal creation" and only afterward relating it to concrete reality. Even when he confronts a simple natural phenomenon—"a spring bubbling quietly"—he already possesses "a fixed, a priori relationship" to it, viewing it immediately through "the complex of laws regarding the halakhic construct of a spring."[21]

We must therefore revisit whether the Rav's theology is derived solely from halakhah and propose a rethinking of how halakhah actively organizes and interprets historical-experiential reality. The Rav here does center the theme of Halakhah as *a priori* (the idea that a halakhic person perceives the world through halakhic categories). In other instances, though, the Rav's account of halakhic thought is grounded in the deeper insight that halakhic concepts are themselves rooted in human experience — in real emotions, moral dilemmas, and existential conditions. Seen this way, the Rav's use of halakhah is not reductive but expansive and shapes how Jewish history, suffering, and community are understood and lived. This approach is not only consistent with the Rav's broader writings, but offers a compelling example of his belief that halakhah functions as an interpretive system, one which gives form and meaning to Jewish existence across time. There exists a pre-halakhic framework which the halakhic framework has "objectified," and that can be "reconstructed" from the halakhic norms and concepts.[22]

A broader scholarly debate also displays the importance of the Rav's placement of halakhic *areivut* within a pre-halakhic framework. Rabbi Shubert Spero argues that for Rabbi Soloveitchik, Jewish ethics and theology cannot be derived

---

343, quoting *Community, Covenant and Commitment*, edited by Nathaniel Helfgot, Toras HoRav Foundation/ Ktav Publishing House, 2005, 276, where the Rav writes "I cannot see how it is possible to divorce halakhic cognition from axiological premises or from an ethical motif."

[21] *Halakhic Man,* 19-20.

[22] *Majesty and Humility*, by Reuven Ziegler, Chapter 31 "Subjectivity and Objectivity in Halakha," 334-343. See also *Society and Self*, by Gerald Blidstein, 41, where he writes that the Rav acknowledges that his own use of intuition "was far from halakhic." Blidstein writes, "The Rav would look to the midrash that tells that Joseph mustered the fortitude to resist Potifar's wife's advances when he saw the image of his father's face in the window. It was not the normative rule that proved decisive but the vision of the ideal figure." Blidstein quotes sources from *Community, Covenant and Commitment*, edited by Nathaniel Helfgot, of the Rav's methods to portray his point: "My inquiry consisted only in translating a vague intuitive feeling into fixed terms of halakhic discursive thinking" (25); "He has always been guided by a dim intuitive feeling which pointed out to me the true path" (276).

exclusively from halakhah, rather, they draw on existential aspects of Jewish life. Spero writes, "'Halakhic Judaism' is not a Judaism that is derived solely from the halakha, but a Judaism in which the role of the halakha is both practical and philosophical." [23] By contrast, Dr. Marvin Fox contends that the Rav maintains the opposite view, namely, that a genuinely Jewish theology must emerge from halakhic categories and cannot be rooted elsewhere, as the Rav writes: "To this end there is only a single source from which a Jewish philosophical *Weltanschauung* could emerge; the objective order - the Halakhah."[24] As Fox summarizes the Rav's position: "Religious and philosophical accounts of Jewish spirituality are sound and meaningful only to the extent that they derive from the halakha. The deepest religious emotion, the subtlest theological understanding, can only be Jewishly authentic to the extent that they arise from reflections on matters of halakha."[25]

In this light, the Rav's treatment of *areivut* in Stage Three offers powerful support for R. Spero's claim. Here, too, the Rav explicitly builds a halakhic institution, mutual responsibility, not in halakhah itself but in a meta-halakhic principle of peoplehood that precedes the giving of the Torah. The Rav insists that the concept of *Knesset Yisrael* did not originate at Sinai but emerged in Egypt, forged through suffering and shared history. This selfhood is not created by law but discovered and especially shaped, molded, and defined by it. Halakhic *areivut*, then, does not generate Jewish unity; it presupposes it. The Rav's placement of the Ran-like mechanism of *motzi* specifically *before* Sinai, inside the Covenant of Fate, is therefore a clear example of the Rav constructing halakhic meaning atop a prior ontological foundation.

In *Halakhic Man*, the Rav famously extrapolates the halakhist as one who confronts reality with an a priori halakhic world-view: the halakhic system, with its categories, appears to precede experience. Halakhic Man seems to operate in a closed, self-sufficient universe of law, in which religious meaning is generated by the application of the abstract to real situations.[26] In *Fate and Destiny*, by contrast, the halakhic principle of

---

[23] "Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik and the Philosophy of Halakha", by Shubert Spero, Tradition, Issue 30:2 Winter 1996, 52, see also "From Cooperation to Conflict: Rabbi Prof. Emanuel Rackman, Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik, and the Evolution of American Modern Orthodoxy," by Lawrence Kaplan, *Modern Judaism* 30, no. 1, 2010, 46–68.

[24] *The Halakhic Mind,* 101.

[25] "The Unity and Structure of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's Thought," by Marvin Fox, Tradition, Issue 24:2 Winter, 1989, 49. The difference between Spero and Fox may not be absolute. Fox acknowledges, on page 53, that halakhah responds to and molds pre-existing human experiences and feelings, such as grief and loss. For a broader exploration of the relationship between ethics and halakhah within modern Jewish thought, see Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein's classic essay "Does Jewish Tradition Recognize an Ethic Independent of Halakha?," in *Modern Jewish Ethics: Theory and Practice*, editor Marvin Fox, 1975, 62–88, along with the extensive recent scholarship it inspired, including a symposium at http://www.theapj.com/symposium-on-aharon-lichtensteins-paper-does-jewish-tradition-an-ethic-independent-of-halakha.

[26] There are other passages that do support a halakhic system that is reality-based. See *Majesty and Humility* by

areivut is explicitly shown to presuppose a prior layer of existence, a covenant of fate, without which the legal mechanism would be unintelligible. He is not abandoning the autonomy of halakhah, but he is insisting that, at least in the realm of the Jewish collective, halakhic categories sometimes rest on pre-halakhic conditions.

One might say that *Fate and Destiny* introduces one who stands "before" Halakhic Man: 'Covenantal Man,' or perhaps 'Historical Man,' who experiences exile, persecution, and solidarity prior to any formal halakhic formulation. The Rav's five-stage model suggests that there are domains in which halakhah does not create the basic facts of religious life *ex nihilo*, but rather gives legal manifestations to an already-existing historical reality.

The Rav, in *Fate and Destiny*, conceptually locates the logic of *areivut* in the Covenant of Fate. In most realms, Halakhic Man begins with halakhah; in *areivut*, he must begin with peoplehood. *Fate and Destiny* enriches the Rav's portrait of Halakhic Man by demonstrating that the Jewish people, their shared fate, and their mutual sympathy form the basis upon which his halakhic creativity can operate.

Rabbi Judah Goldberg presents *Brit Avot,* a Covenant of the Patriarchs*,* as analogous or a substitute to the Covenant of Fate in some of the Rav's writings. [27] He questions if both these covenants are a condition imposed from suffering and the inescapable identification of the Jew by the external world. R. Goldberg notes that in other writings of the Rav there is a patriarchal covenant that carries an explicitly positive, aspirational dimension with covenantal historical destiny. This, he notes, "strikes a different tone" from the stark, negative fate-orientation in *Fate and Destiny*. However, a closer reading reveals that the Covenant of Fate itself contains a positive dynamic.

As Rabbi Mosheh Lichtenstein suggested to Rabbi Goldberg, neither *Brit Avot* nor *Brit Sinai* corresponds exactly to 'fate' and 'destiny,' as the Rav elsewhere assigns destiny-like content to *Brit Avot*, and fate-like compulsion to *Brit Sinai*. The same can be said about the *Brit Goral*, the Covenant of Fate. Once we observe that *halakhic*

Reuven Ziegler, 377, quoting *U-Vikashtem mi-Sham/And From There You Shall Seek*. The a priori categories categorize the halakhic man, who experiences the world through the lens of halakhic categories that have previously been established. He also summarizes the Rav's theory of "halakhic cognition as having two stages: the creation of the ideal world, and its correlation with the real world" (308). The creative human intellect which forges the halakhic concepts of the first stage is guided by personality, emotion, and experience of the world. The application of the abstract to real situations is relevant to the second stage of halakhic cognition.

[27] For an excellent series of lectures online, see https://etzion.org.il/en/series/sinai-jewish-values-and-jewish-law by R. Dr. Judah Goldberg discussing ethics, halakhah and peoplehood. Specifically https://www.etzion.org.il/en/halakha/studies-halakha/philosophy-halakha/jewish-peoplehood-9-zionism-and-non-orthodox-jews footnote 5.

areivut, a purposeful and communal responsibility emerges already within the Covenant of Fate, then the sharp line between passive fate and active destiny begins to blur. Fate, in the Rav's own formulation, is where peoplehood, obligation, and responsibility are forged, and therefore contains its own internal positivity and proto-destiny.

The Rav writes regarding stage four of the Covenant of Fate that immediately follows the stage of *areivut*:

> It is precisely this consciousness as a source of the people's togetherness that gives rise to the attribute of *hesed*, which summons and stirs the community of fate to achieve a positive mode of togetherness through ongoing, joint participation in its own historical circumstances, in its suffering, conscience, and acts of mutual aid. The lonely Jew finds consolation in breaking down the existential barriers of egoism and alienation, joining himself to his fellow and actively connecting himself with the community. The oppressive sense of fate undergoes a positive transformation when individual personal existences blend together to form a new unit - a people.[28]

Fate itself is already "teleological" while the Covenant of Destiny "possesses both significance and purpose." [29] The Rav emphasizes that Fate does contain constructive elements within. Even if Destiny is more overtly voluntary and free-willed, Fate in the Rav's description is not merely passive or negative, as it contains positive and active characteristics that generate *areivut* and peoplehood.

IV. Knesset Yisrael

The move from halakhic *areivut* to *Knesset Yisrael* is not a leap from law into mysticism, as it is already stated clearly in the Rishonim themselves. Ritva, on Rosh Ha-Shanah 29a, makes this explicit:

> "All blessings over commandments, even though one has already fulfilled his obligation, he may still discharge that of another. For even though the commandments are placed upon each individual, behold all Israel are guarantors for one another, and they are all as one body, and like a guarantor who repays his fellow's debt."

As the Rav invokes Ran's logic almost verbatim without quoting him, he does the same by not mentioning Ritva's powerful formulation that

[28] *Fate and Destiny*, 53-54.

[29] Ibid, 71.

"and they are all as a single body (guf echad), like a guarantor who repays his friend's debt."[30] In *Fate and Destiny*, the Rav does not cite it explicitly but his own doctrine of *Knesset Yisrael* supplies a philosophically deep version of the same idea elsewhere in his writings.[31] While Ritva states legally that the Jewish people function as one body, the Rav develops ontologically that *Knesset Yisrael* is a real existence in which each Jew is a limb acting on behalf of the whole. This Ritva is almost a one-line summary of the Rav's whole project. *Areivut* does not erase individuality; it declares that there is also a deeper corporate self that can act, through any of its limbs, on behalf of the rest. When one Jew is *motzi* another, that Jew is not simply "helping" from the outside; they are a different limb of the same body assisting another.

Before he even introduces the five stages, the Rav describes the primordial moment in Egypt when Israel ceased to be a collection of individuals and rose to the level of a *people*—a metaphysical being whose members cling to one another and stand apart from the surrounding world:

> This special, incomprehensible reality of the individual clinging to the community and feeling alienated from the foreign, outside world became crystallized in Egypt. It was there that the Israelites raised themselves up to the rank of a people, peoplehood signifying both togetherness (the Hebrew word for "people," '*am,* is related to the Hebrew word '*im*, meaning "with," "togetherness") and the uniqueness that derives from togetherness. This consciousness of a covenant of fate in all of its manifestations is an integral part of our historical-metaphysical being.[32]

By the end of stage three, the Rav draws out the halakhic implications of this shift. Once Israel exists as a single unit, the actions of any one Jew necessarily have an effect on the whole. At the outset of the Covenant of Fate, the Rav insists that in Egypt the Israelites "raised themselves up to the rank of a people," where peoplehood means both togetherness and the "uniqueness that derives from togetherness," a metaphysical state in which "the individual clings to the community" as part of its very being.

Individual conduct is never merely private because the self is never merely individual, as each Jew acts as part of a communal body whose honor,

[30] Ritva's idea can be found in other sources as well. In connection with *areivut* see (in a philosophical, rather than halakhic context) Maharal's *Netiv Ha-Zedakah* Chapter 6, and (in a halakhic context) Radbaz to *Hilkhot Mamrim* 2:4.

[31] Gerald Blidstein in *Society and Self* devotes a chapter entitled "The Jewish People" (77-104), to analyzing *Knesset Yisrael*.

[32] *Fate and Destiny*, 44.

liability, and sanctity are shared. This is why the Rav brings *Kiddush Ha-Shem* and *Hillul Ha-Shem* directly into the discussion of *areivut*:

> The commandment of the sanctification of the divine Name and the prohibition against the desecration of the Divine Name (Rambam, Laws of Foundations of the Torah 5:11) can be explained very well in the light of this principle of shared responsibility and liability. The actions of the individual are charged to the account of the community. Any sin he commits besmirches the name of Israel in the world. The individual, therefore, must answer not only to his own personal conscience but also to the collective conscience of the people. If he behaves properly, he sanctifies the name of Israel and the Name of the God of Israel; if he sins, he casts shame and disgrace on the people and desecrates the Name of its God. [33]

Although the Rav never employs the exact term "*guf echad*" in *Fate and Destiny*, his language leaves no doubt that he is describing that reality. When he writes that "the actions of the individual are charged to the account of the community" and that "any sin he commits besmirches the name of Israel in the world," he is articulating a pattern in which the individual Jew's deeds have an effect through the entire people, just as the pain or health of one limb affects an entire body.

What *Fate and Destiny* implies, his *On Repentance* makes explicit. In his chapter on "The Individual and the Community," the Rav writes:

> Judaism has always viewed man from a dual perspective. It sees every person as an independent individual and also part of a community, a limb of the body of Israel. Jewish thinkers have conducted an on-going dialectic on this subject through the ages.[34]

In other words, every Jew is both a singular self and literally a limb of the communal body. This is almost word-for-word Ritva's formulation that "all Israel are guarantors for one another, and they are all as one body (*guf echad*)." The Rav's descriptions of shared liability, collective conscience, and togetherness in *Fate and Destiny* thus function exactly like the Ritva's language of *guf echad*: a single body in which every member's

[33] Ibid, 52.

[34] *On Repentance: The Thought and Oral Discourses of Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik*, by Pinchas H. Peli, editor of English translation Pnina Peli, *Jason Aronson Inc. 1996,* 114. For the Hebrew version see *Al Hateshuva*, Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik, by Pinchas H. Peli, World Zionist Organization Department of Education and Culture of Torah scholars in the Diaspora, 1987, page 86.

actions, virtues, and failures belong to the entire organism. In *Fate and Destiny*, the Rav simply provides the covenantal vocabulary for what the halakhic tradition calls "one body," grounding halakhic *areivut* in the deeper unity of *Knesset Yisrael*. He specifically uses a homiletical equation, quoting a preacher, in which *am Yisrael* compared to a two-headed man whose one head cries in pain when the other head is scalded with boiling water.[35]

As I stated earlier, the last stage of the Covenant of Fate is love. Although the Rav does not elaborate on it in *Fate and Destiny,* beyond noting that the preceding stages culminate in this final one, we know that there is also a specific Torah commandment. Rambam writes: "It is a mitzvah incumbent on all to love everyone from Israel as their own body, *kegufo*, as it states (Vayikra 19:18), 'Love your neighbor as yourself'".[36] It is therefore fitting that the Rav concludes the Covenant of Fate with love, for it serves as the fullest manifestation of the unity he seeks to reveal. It is a reminder of Rambam's "*kegufo,"* the very body-like oneness that underlies *areivut* and *Knesset Yisrael*.[37]

Throughout his writings, the Rav consistently affirms that the Jewish people constitute not merely a sociological collective but a spiritual unit in which every Jew is bound to every other. *Knesset Yisrael* is the bearer of the covenant at Sinai. In *On Repentance*, the Rav specifically invokes *Knesset Yisrael* alongside the concept of "one body," thereby explicitly linking the two.

The Rav sharpens this further by insisting that Israel is not merely a collection of individuals but a genuine collective subject. *Knesset Yisrael* possesses an independent existence, a covenantal community whose identity transcends the sum of its members.[38] Accordingly, Jewish belonging is not contractual or sociological but ontological: each Jew participates in a larger communal self. The Rav develops this theme in a number of writings, describing the Jewish people as a living unity that endures across generations and serves as the bearer of Israel's covenantal destiny.

Seen in this light, *areivut* acquires a deeper significance. If all Jews participate in a single covenantal community, then mitzvah observance cannot be viewed as a purely private undertaking. The ability of one Jew to discharge another's obligation reflects the fact that their religious lives are intertwined within the framework of *Knesset Yisrael*. The halakhic principle of *af al pi she-yatza, motzi* is therefore not merely a technical rule; it gives legal expression to an underlying communal

[35] *Fate and Destiny*, 47-48.

[36] *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot De'ot* 6:3. For Rav Soloveitchik's analysis of this Rambam as presenting a passive, contemplative mode of love in contrast with the active, deed-oriented formulation in *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchot Evel* 14:1, see *Halakhic Morality*, 164–172.

[37] The literal meaning of the language of the verse is "love your neighbor as yourself," and I am reading the explanatory *gufo* literally, "love your neighbor as part of your own body."

[38] *Halakhic Morality,* 184–185, on the Jew as both an individual and a representative of "*Knesset Yisrael*, an idealized, hypostatized, invisible entity."

reality. *Areivut* becomes the halakhic manifestation of a prior unity, the concrete legal form through which the shared identity of Israel is expressed.[39]

V. Conclusion

Many studies have addressed different aspects of the Rav's covenantal thought in general. The present article proposes a more focused claim. The Rav's treatment of *areivut* reveals that halakhic interdependence rests upon a prior covenantal reality. In this respect, stage three also lends support to readings such as Shubert Spero's that identify pre-halakhic foundations within the Rav's thought, even as those foundations attain their full expression through halakhic categories. By locating *af al pi she-yatza, motzi* within *Brit Goral*, he implicitly adopts the Ran's expansive understanding of mutual responsibility and aligns with the Ritva's conception of Israel as *guf echad*. Stage three therefore serves as the conceptual core of *Fate and Destiny*, transforming existential solidarity into halakhic obligation and *areivut* into a halakhic expression of the Rav's theology of *Knesset Yisrael.*

Managing Editor:
Davida Kollmar

Editors:
David Fried
Shayna Herszage-Feldan
Chesky Kopel
Tamar Ron Marvin
Chaya Sara Oppenheim
Michael Weiner

Consulting Editors:
Miriam Krupka Berger
Michael Bernstein
Elli Fischer
Miriam Gedwiser
Yosef Lindell
Chaim Saiman
Jeffrey Saks
Jacob J. Schacter
Sara Tillinger Wolkenfeld
Shlomo Zuckier

Please contact us at editors@thelehrhaus.com

[39] See R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Community," Tradition, Issue 17.2, Spring 1978, 9; *Blessings and Thanksgiving: Reflections on the Siddur and the Synagogue*, by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. Edited by Shalom Carmy and Joel B. Wolowelsky, OU Press and Maggid Books, 2019, 179-180.