

FC: NL to be published
see also Zev Elff
under misc "E"

Introduction

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"Is not My word like a fire? says the Lord; and like a hammer that breaks the rock into pieces?"

The divine word, says Jeremiah, is layered or multi-dimensional. Like the many splinters of a rock split by a hammer, so the divine message lends itself to manifold situations and interpretations.

Torah, like its Giver, is capable of many explications and applications. The same holds true for teachers of Torah: they are not monochromatic, and their teachings, like Torah itself, are multivalent; they can be understood at many levels, reveal many secret aspects of the Torah, and throw light on the most obscure passages.

Such a person was our great teacher, the Rav, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, of blessed memory. The essays in this volume give us a glimpse of the complexity of his personality as well as the universality of his legacy as perceived by his students. His genius, his probing intellect, his unassailable loyalty to the God of Israel, his incredible mastery of *Halakhah* and *Aggadah*, and the broad sweep of his knowledge of so many other disciplines—all made him resistant to easy classifications. He was a man who could never be bored and, equally, could never be boring. He was the Teacher par excellence, and we were honored to be allowed into his class.

His complexity and coruscant creativity were such that he rarely repeated interpretations of a text when he came to it at a later date. Thus, when I was a student of his we learned the tractate *Shabbat*. His *shiurim* were, of course, masterful. Several years later, I heard that he had given *shiurim* on the same tractate. I managed to obtain the notes of some of his very good students—and there was hardly any relation between the interpretations he gave when I was in his class and the new ones! He simply approached the material with a