

Aaron Rakeffett-Rothkoff, Comments on Jeffrey R. Woolf's article "In Search of the Rav: The Life and thought of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik in Recent Scholarship" (*B.D.D.* 18, April 2007, pp. 5-28).

A student recently showed me the April 2007 edition of *B.D.D.* He pointed out to me the article "In Search of the Rav" by Professor Jeffrey Woolf. In his writings, Woolf cites my two volumes entitled *The Rav: The World of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*. I noticed, once again, that reviews of my fifth and sixth published books review a work that has never been published. *The Rav* was never intended to be a definitive study of my *rebbe*, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. It is probably a hundred years too soon for such an undertaking. It must await the passage of time and the publication of the many manuscripts and the thousands of audio tapes that the Rav left behind. I certainly could not be the one to write such a biography of my *rebbe*. I am his student and devoted disciple. I therefore possess my own prejudice regarding my *rebbe*.

I thought I had made it clear in my lengthy introduction that my only goal in writing *The Rav* was to reconstruct his world in accordance with his exact words. As Dr. Woolf aptly described in his article:

Rabbi Soloveitchik was an awe-inspiring figure, whose fiery brilliance and demanding standards did not encourage any but the bravest to approach him. In addition, as he remarked on innumerable occasions, he was an extremely shy, lonely and reticent person. He was also a warm, caring and profoundly gracious individual, though far too few experienced that side of him. One of the few times that this distance was closed was when he would tell stories. At those moments, a hush would fall over the study hall and the audience would press forward, straining to catch every word. In moments such as these, they sought not information, so much as an intimate moment with their teacher. With the present collection, Rakeffett has tried to introduce the approachable Rav to a wider audience (page 9).

This was the sole goal of my two volumes and they should be evaluated in this light. My monograph biography of the Rav which is indeed 78 pages long was only intended as an introduction to the heart of the work. It was necessary to have

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this biography to place the Rav's insights into the context of his life.

Woolf also calls attention to my not citing the scholarship of my students, Rabbi Dr. Marc B. Shapiro and Rabbi Dr. Seth Farber. In order to cite them I would have needed a double measure of רוח הקודש, Divine Spirit. Their scholarship was neither completed nor published when I was writing *The Rav*. I heard the Rav declare on a number of occasions that he did not possess רוח הקודש. If this is the case, then I certainly do not! What I am proud of is that I discharged a small role in inspiring and aiding both Professor Shapiro and Rabbi Farber to undertake their scholarship and to research the topics they later published. Their volumes are invaluable, and I am humbled that my own scholarship served as a stepping stone for their scholarly achievements.