

# “Fate and Faith”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

When did Israel become a nation? In Deuteronomy 26 we are told that our ancestors went down to Egypt and there became a nation. Yet previously, in Exodus 19, as they emerge from Egypt we are told they “became a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” So was it in entering slavery or emerging from it that Israel became Israel?

Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik offers a beautiful and profound answer: both. There are two covenants that bind us together, a covenant of fate and a covenant of faith. Fate is what we have suffered; going down to Egypt bound us in a covenant of fate. Emerging from Egypt and choosing to accept the Torah bound us in a covenant of faith — of promise for the future.

What is true of Israel is true of friendship, of marriage, of society. Each is marked by what it has endured — couples, friends, countries are tied together by a covenant of fate. But the trials of the past are not enough. There must be a certainty of promise, a commitment to what might still be done together. It is the covenant of faith, of the future, that keeps us going.

In this coming year may we honor the fate we have shared by recommitting ourselves to the faith that illuminates our lives.