

Rabbi David Wolpe's

## *Off The Pulpit*

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### **Is Judaism Optimistic?**

The philosopher Schopenhauer criticized Judaism for being an optimistic religion. One could make a case for Judaism's pessimism based on a history of suffering, or even on certain verses from the *Tanach*, (e.g. Ecclesiastes 7:1: "the day of death is better than the day of birth"). Nonetheless Schopenhauer was right. Judaism is, in the end, optimistic.

The Torah teaches that the world is created by a God who cares, and therefore our losses are not ultimately meaningless and our struggles are not futile. Even though at times we feel dismayed by the injustice and anguish of the world — just the sort of sentiments to which Ecclesiastes gives voice — that is not the final verdict.

The greatest spirits of Judaism have known darkness. We read about depression in such spiritual titans as Maimonides and Rebbe Nahman. But in the end, each rose to a height that dwarfed the depth. The sin is not sadness, but despair; not pain, but the conviction that pain has the

final word. In the evening there will be weeping, writes the Psalmist, but joy will come in the morning.

[Watch Rabbi Wolpe being interviewed on Al Jazeera America on Anti-Semitism in Europe.](#)

Get Rabbi Wolpe's new book *David: The Divided Heart*.