

Present and Future

To this day, it seemed to us that developing a plan for our professional and personal life was one of the inalienable rights belonging to human life. That has come to an end. Through the weight of circumstances, we have been put into the situation where we must forgo “worrying about tomorrow.” But there is a crucial difference as to whether this results from the free response of faith, as the Sermon on the Mount states, or is coerced subservience to the demands of the present moment. For most people the enforced renunciation of planning for the future means that they have succumbed to living only for the moment at hand, irresponsibly, frivolously, or resignedly; some still dream longingly of a more beautiful future and try thereby to forget the present. For us both of these courses are equally impossible. What remains for us is only the very narrow path, sometimes barely discernible, of taking each day as if it were the last and yet living it faithfully and responsibly as if there were yet to be a great future. “Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land,” Jeremiah is told to proclaim—in paradoxical contradiction to his prophecies of woe—just before the destruction of the holy city; in light of the utter deprivation of any future, those words were a divine sign and a pledge of a great, new future. To think and to act with an eye on the coming generation and to be ready to move on without fear and worry—that is the course that has, in practice, been forced upon us. To hold it courageously is not easy but necessary.

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