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The Sabbath (FSG Classics)



Synopsis

Elegant, passionate, and filled with the love of God's creation, Abraham Joshua Heschel's *The Sabbath* has been hailed as a classic of Jewish spirituality ever since its original publication-and has been read by thousands of people seeking meaning in modern life. In this brief yet profound meditation on the meaning of the Seventh Day, Heschel introduced the idea of an "architecture of holiness" that appears not in space but in time. Judaism, he argues, is a religion of time: it finds meaning not in space and the material things that fill it but in time and the eternity that imbues it, so that "the Sabbaths are our great cathedrals."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Perhaps no aspect of Jewish religious observance has been so poorly understood by the outside world as the Sabbath. Gentile expressions such as "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" have tended to give the impression that the Jewish Sabbath is something oppressive. Not so, says Rabbi Heschel. The Sabbath, when understood properly, is a gift of freedom. In this now-classic book, first published in 1951, Heschel shows how the Sabbath is a "palace in time," a carefully structured retreat from the hustle and bustle of the marketplace. The laws of the Sabbath are the spiritual architecture with which the "palace in time" is built. Once you understand the blueprint for that palace, then all of the restrictions and to-do things on the Sabbath make sense. Heschel was the first Jewish theologian (as far as I know) to explain how traditional Jews live more in sacred time than in sacred space. While other religions have devoted their energy to building

physical temples and cathedrals in sacred places, Jews have erected sanctuaries in the form of sacred days. Time, like physical space, has a varied texture to it. Just as there are differences between mountains and oceans, so, too, are there are there differences between the Sabbath and the ordinary days of the week. The Sabbath is more than just a secular "day off." It's a specific creation made by God in the very dawn of Creation. The Sabbath is as real as the physical things we see and touch everyday in the natural world. But in order to experience the specialness of the Sabbath, one must step inside the structure of its special rules and observances -- to enter the "palace in time." This book is beautifully-written in poetic prose that will inspire both Jews and non-Jews. It goes in and out of print with various publishers, so, if it is not available on right now, track down a used copy or borrow it from the library. You will be very glad you did! s

Quite simply, this is one of the most beautiful, inspiring books I have ever read. Abraham Joshua Heschel, in a very short, accessible, clear manner, spells out the meaning of the Sabbath. I have been Jewish all my life, but realize now that I never truly understood Sabbath. The lessons in this book, which takes very little time to read, come back to me now every Friday night when I sit down with my family to say Shabbat prayers. It also has changed my approach to life the rest of the week, as Mr. Heschel explains the blessing of work and rest, and the place for each in life. Followers of other religions (certainly Christians) who have a day of rest will appreciate and benefit from the message of this book as much as Jewish individuals.

I never fully grasped the significance of Sabbath-keeping until reading this book. Heschel introduces several key ideas about the nature of time and how the Sabbath sanctifies time. I am a Christian minister and found this to be an excellent resource, so I would recommend this to anyone who is seeking to understand the importance of rest and rhythm in life.

Heschel's little 100 page book maybe the most important one I've read in the last year. He does not offer simplistic, pragmatic rationale for taking a day off, but the theological underpinnings for why God designed us to function in a pattern of work and rest. I won't ruin the many great surprises in the little book, but here are a few gems: Our need for more time, which we are always losing, is compensated by our search for more space, in our ongoing pursuit of more property. Time and space essentially struggle with one another through our lives. Yet time is eternal while the spatial is temporal. So, in essence, we have to make time for the eternal in our week. The parable about the body needing to celebrate with the soul on the Sabbath on page 19 is priceless. The criticism of

Philo's defense of the Sabbath, that it is more Roman than Jewish, is brilliant. The conclusion that the Sabbath is a day we recreate Eden and relive God's intention for us is so beautiful that I will need to take a day off this week to think about it. "The Sabbath" is articulate, deep, witty, and practical. I couldn't recommend it more.

The Sabbath is an awesome book to read for both Jews and Christians alike. Heschel's discussion of time, space and possessions is inspiring, and transforming. As a Christian, I thoroughly enjoyed this book, and found it to be a very enlightening description of Jewish heritage. It challenged me to think about what time I observe with God, and for what reasons; what are my priorities; and how effective am I in living out my faith.

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