

Review

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writes Heschel. "Truth is inwardness, inwardness is authenticity, and authenticity is attained through intense, passionate inner action. Only integrity can save man and his faith" (*A Passion for Truth*, p. 127).

Like the Kotzker, Heschel criticized the "spiritual vapidness of his fellow Jews," his fellow rabbis who "canonized religious mediocrity," the "salesmen of their own delusions." Like the Kotzker, he sees a Judaism that "had been weakened from within, its insights had become clichés, its loyalties stale" (*A Passion for Truth*, pp. 153, 318, 20, 314). Like the Kotzker, he denounced "the equation of religion and self-interest whether it is the survival of the people within the Jewish context or the personal salvation that is the center of concern in Christianity" (*A Passion for Truth*, p. 316). For Heschel, the issue is not "to be or not to be" a Jew, but why and how to be a Jew. The prime directive for Jews, even after the Holocaust, is not sheer survivalism (*Moral Grandeur*, p. 30). Rather, "the gravest sin for a Jew is to forget what he represents" (*The Earth is the Lord's*, p. 109). For Heschel, American Jewry has forgotten what it represents; it has become a messenger who has forgotten the message. And, that message is the spiritual legacy of East European Jewry. Devoid of its wisdom, American Jewry has become a conclusion without a premise, a fallacy; a community characterized by smugness and "intellectual vulgarity," wrapped in its own self-delusions of inauthenticity, and engaged in its own spiritual suicide, a "second holocaust." American Jewry had become the epitome of the Kotzker rebbe's observation that it's bad enough to be in a state of exile and alienation, but it's even worse to be in such a state and not even to know it.

Byron L. Sherwin

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**The Sabbath**, by Abraham Joshua Heschel. New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951).

*The Sabbath* is likely Abraham Joshua Heschel's most widely-read book. Widely translated, it merited a second translation into a resonant Hebrew. It achieved fame when published jointly with *The Earth is the Lord's* (1950). The books complement each other: the earlier portrays the sanctity of space, the later expounds the sanctity of time. Together they express the Heschelian space-time dialectic.

From its biblical inception to its modern expression, no practice of Judaism has garnered more attention than the Sabbath. Heschel's *The Sabbath*, subtitled "Its Meaning for Modern Man," culminates a series of such attempts. In the century prior to Heschel's *The Sabbath*, major explanations of the Sabbath were proffered primarily by German and Hasidic thinkers. In the late

nineteenth century, Samson Raphael Hirsch stressed the idea that one rules the world six days a week, but ceases on the seventh in order to realize one's creatureliness and appreciate one's Creator. Herman Cohen in his essay on the Sabbath (1869) and in his book *Religion of Reason* (1919) stressed the social significance of the Sabbath as a realization of ideal human existence, the day on which God's love is manifest, and a demonstration to humanity of pure monotheism. Two of Cohen's followers, Leo Baeck and Franz Rosenzweig, also made contributions. Baeck underscored the Sabbath as a day of liberation for slaves and the oppressed, and as a balance to the bustle of the week. For Rosenzweig, the Sabbath whets our appetite for eternity by getting us to commemorate creation, sense revelation, and anticipate redemption. In the same year that *The Sabbath* came out, Erich Fromm published *The Forgotten Language* with its essay on the Sabbath, based on his German essay of 1927. For Fromm, the Sabbath is "man's victory over time," for "by stopping interference with nature for one day you eliminate time." "Instead of a Sabbath on which man bows down to the lord of time, the Biblical Sabbath symbolizes man's victory over time."

None of these figure in Heschel's otherwise heavily documented presentation (Cohen is cited once, but on a different subject) though he incorporates many of their insights when he writes, "Man's royal privilege to conquer nature is suspended on the seventh day" or "The seventh day is the armistice in man's cruel struggle for existence, a truce in all conflicts, personal and social, peace between man and man, man and nature, peace within man" (p. 29).

Instead, references to Rabbinic literature, the liturgy, Kabbalah, and Hasidic literature predominate. *The Sabbath's* immediate precursors, especially on the subject of the sacredness of time, are *Kedushas Shabbat* of R. Zadok ha-Kohen of Lublin (1823–1900) and *Sefas Emes* of R. Yehudah Leib of Gur (1847–1905). Albeit rabbinically based, Heschel's portrayal is drawn with liturgical-mystical hues. His chapters revolve around time, (Divine) Presence, eternity and holiness. The balance between space and time can be gauged by the ratio of their mention in the table of contents: five for time, two for space, and two more for time extended—eternity. His opening metaphor for the Sabbath, "A Palace in time"—elsewhere called "cathedrals in time"—is a classical kabbalistic image. Kabbalah loves to mix temporal and spatial metaphors. In fact, its focus on the Sabbath and Jerusalem is a focus on the sacred in time and space. Both the Sabbath and Jerusalem are the centers of their respective categories of the sacred. Jerusalem is the spatialization of the holy as the Sabbath is its temporalization. Therefore, were one to profane the Sabbath by treating it as one of the six days of the week, one could be ejected from the sacred center in space to the periphery of the exile. In the same vein, were one to

properly observe the Sabbath in time, one could be restored from the profane periphery to the sacred center in space, namely Jerusalem. Thus the rebuilding of Jerusalem is dependent upon Sabbath observance.

Still Heschel rarely employs kabbalistic terminology, though it pervades his analysis. In his discussion of the feminization of the Sabbath, he says: "The idea of the Sabbath as a queen or a bride is not a personification of the Sabbath but an exemplification of a divine attribute, an illustration of God's need for human love; it does not represent a substance but the presence of God, His relationship to man" (p. 60). This is the kabbalistic understanding of *Shekhinah* or *Malkhut*, the sefirah that hovers over humanity. As Heschel further expounds, "The Sabbath is the presence of God in the world, open to the soul of man. It is possible for the soul to respond in affection, to enter into fellowship with the consecrated day." Were one to translate this into kabbalistic Hebrew, one might think it came straight out of *Sod ha-Shabbat* of Meir ibn Gabbai. Like ibn Gabbai, Heschel succeeds in integrating temporal, human, and divine axes. In general, Kabbalah operates on four levels, frequently simultaneously: the spatial, the temporal, the human, and the sefirotic. Its multivalent language embraces the totality of space, time, humanity, and the sefirot under the canopy of the holy in order to bring about a world/age that is wholly Sabbatical.

As Heschel notes, the expression *Kabbalat Shabbat* has two meanings. In early post-talmudic legal literature, it denotes the assumption of the obligation of Sabbath observance. In aggadic literature, especially kabbalistic literature, it connotes the welcoming of the Sabbath as a bride. Additionally, in early legal literature the Sabbath is personified primarily as king, whereas in post-Zoharic kabbalistic literature the personification as bride or queen predominates. The feminization of the Sabbath is a victory of kabbalistic literature. Its victory is due to the fact that it understood the welcoming of the Sabbath and the acceptance of its authority through a series of integrated metaphors such as the acceptance of kingship, the acceptance of the crown, the acceptance of a supernal soul, the welcoming of the bride, and the entrance into the canopy of marriage. Viewing the coronation metaphor through the prism of a marriage metaphor led to the comparison of a king without a queen or a people to that of a man without a wife.

After Heschel, there appeared two academic kabbalistic books on the Sabbath which took their cue from *The Sabbath*. The first was *The Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah* by Eliot Ginsburg. Its opening citation is from *The Sabbath*. The second is my Hebrew, soon to be translated, *The Mystical Meaning of*

'*Lekhab Dodi*' and '*Kabbalat Shabbat*.' In a sense both, especially the latter, are footnotes to my teacher's book *The Sabbath*.

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**Man Is Not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion**, by Abraham Joshua Heschel.  
New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951.

I was earning a Ph.D. in French literature, with a specialty in poetry, when I first read *Man Is Not Alone*. Enthralled by the intensity of Heschel's prose, I was seduced by lyrical sentences such as this: "Words expire when uttered, and faith is like the silence that draws lovers near, like a breath that shares in the wind" (p. 73). Most significantly, it was the first Jewish book that convincingly evoked for me the presence of God. What I did not find in Hindu philosophy, Buddhism, or even in Martin Buber, I found in Heschel, an entrance to Jewishness that aspired to a concrete experience of the divine. I met Heschel and participated with him in the religious opposition to the Vietnam war, deciding to entrust my personal quest to Judaism.

*Man Is Not Alone* is both poetic and philosophical, expressive, analytic, and mystical. It is Heschel's blueprint for a theological revolution, intended to train readers to receive nothing less than divine revelation. He developed the book from articles he wrote in the 1940s on prayer, faith, and "The Quest for Certainty in Saadia's Philosophy." The book's biographical unity is demonstrated by Heschel's germinal essay, "An Analysis of Piety," first published in 1942 and transported almost verbatim, with only subtitles added, to form the concluding chapter, "The Pious Man." This model of devoutness as a constant awareness of God's presence should inspire readers to lead a holy and righteous life.

The book is divided into two parts. Part I, "The Problem of God" (chapters 1–17), appeals to thoughtful, open-minded, and self-critical seekers, introducing the "cognitive emotions" of awe and wonder leading to a state of "radical amazement." Awareness of "the ineffable" prepares the mind for receptivity to transcendence. These opening chapters deploy a sort of philosophical housecleaning, a rigorous questioning of conventional ways of thinking about ultimate meaning. Heschel compels the person to abandon secular preconceptions and even drives the mind into a state of despair. Plunged into anguish, the person can surrender the ego; radical amazement should lead to radical insight. Heschel's philosophical goal was to train readers to achieve "certainty" in the divine reality.

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