

The Sabbath by Abraham Joshua Heschel

The introduction is written by the author's daughter with a retelling of her own experiences of Sabbath in the family home. In the few short pages, her accounts spoke to me of the blessing of ritual, the focal nature it gave to her week, the importance of intentional preparation and the laying down of busyness to attend to the Sabbath. It excited me to read on and explore what practical advice her father's writing might offer today's Christian, in particular those overwhelmed in service of others.

I was looking for valuable insight (and practical applications) on how we as readers, might achieve a day of rest in the busyness and demands of life; what I received however, was a compelling inspiration to change my very mindset.

Heschel writes of time and space, exploring mankind's attention to conquering space through the acquisition of knowledge and tangible things, and in this a resulting blindness to the value of time and its sacred blessing.

The Sabbath, described by Heschel is a turning from space and attuning to time, holy time, and a caring of our souls. Supporting his position, Heschel draws on the Bible's use of the word *qadosh*, establishing the seventh day as holy. The beauty of this day unlike any other in the week, is found not in the significance of our activity or lack of it, but in the beauty of its character, sanctified by God.

As anticipated of a Jewish scholar, Heschel sets out that the art of perfect rest begins with the discipline of abstinence from 'noisy acts' but he far exceeds a call to adherence of commands. For him, the Sabbath is not a date in time but an atmosphere ennobling the soul: a palace. He caused me to wonder at the potential if I but *loved* the seventh day with deep emotion cultivating a joy and excellence of focus and an openness to delight in this treasure from God. Could I prepare for the Sabbath and passionately greet the day, as I might for a loved One visiting my home?

Examining what the Sabbath is and isn't with reference to Jewish traditions, allegories and scripture, Heschel inspires his reader to build more than an interlude to the week, rather a sanctuary in time, a tasting of eternity.

As Christians convicted of the existence of after-life, what are we losing by remaining engaged in temporary life instead of enjoying a weekly foretaste of the world to come - let us connect with the holiness of this sanctified day.

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