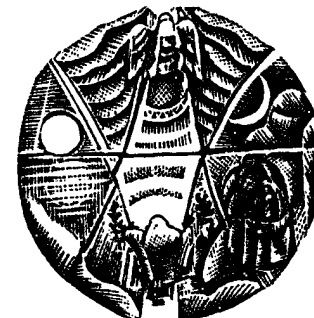


the S A B B A T H



its meaning for modern man

ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL WITH

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Introduction

by Susannah Heschel

When my father raised his kiddush cup on Friday evenings, closed his eyes, and chanted the prayer sanctifying the wine, I always felt a rush of emotion. As he chanted with an old, sacred family melody, he blessed the wine and the Sabbath with his prayer, and I also felt he was blessing my life and that of everyone at the table. I treasured those moments.

Friday evenings in my home were the climax of the week, as they are for every religious Jewish family. My mother and I kindled the lights for the Sabbath, and all of a sudden I felt transformed, emotionally and even physically. After lighting the candles in the dining room, we would walk into the living room, which had windows overlooking the Hudson River, facing west, and we would marvel at the sunset that soon arrived.

The sense of peace that came upon us as we kindled the lights was created, in part, by the hectic tension of Fridays. Preparation for a holy day, my father often said, was as important as the day itself. During the busy mornings my mother shopped for groceries, and in the afternoons the atmosphere grew increasingly nervous as she cooked. My father came home from his office an hour or two before sunset to take care of

his own preparations, and as the last minutes of the workweek came close, both of my parents were in the kitchen, frantically trying to remember what they might have forgotten to prepare—Had the kettle boiled? Was the *blech* covering the stove? Was the oven turned on?

Then, suddenly, it was time: twenty minutes before sunset. Whatever hadn't been finished in the kitchen we simply left behind as we lit the candles and blessed the arrival of the Sabbath. My father writes, "The Sabbath comes like a caress, wiping away fear, sorrow and somber memories."

My father rarely went to the synagogue on Friday evenings, preferring to pray at home, and our dinners were usually quiet, slow, and relaxed. My parents did not socialize very much, but every two months or so they would invite a few friends or colleagues to Shabbat dinner. The meal was always the same: our challahs came from our local bakery, and my mother made chicken soup, roast cornish hen, salad, and vegetables. For dessert, my father would peel a Golden Delicious apple, trying to keep the peel in one piece, and we would share apple chunks. My mother was not an enthusiastic cook and my father was always on a salt-free diet, so the food was not thrilling. Still, at the beginning of every meal, my father lifted his fork, looked at me, and said, "Mommy is a good cook."

We had one unusual custom at our Shabbat table: my father had received a gift from his brother-in-law, the Kopycznitzer Rebbe, of two long, braided silver spice holders, in which he kept myrtle and eucalyptus leaves. Although scented spices are usually blessed and smelled at havdalah, as Shabbat ends, we would bless and smell the spices just before kiddush, the prayer over the wine, in a Hasidic custom based on a rabbinic passage that my father discusses in *The Sabbath*.

When we had guests for dinner, they were nearly always academic refugees from Europe, and the conversation at the table was always focused on Europe. Invariably, they talked about German scholars they had known: Jews who had fled to the U.S. or Israel, others who had perished. They did not talk about the murder process of the Holocaust, nor did they use that word in those days, but they would talk about the non-Jewish scholars who had been exposed as Nazis in Max Weinreich's book *Hitler's Professors*. Like my father, most of my parent's friends had studied before the war at German universities and they remained shocked, twenty and thirty years after the war ended, that scholars whose work they had admired had become Nazis. German culture always colored those conversations. I grew up hearing about Goethe and Heine, Schopenhauer and Husserl, long before I read Hawthorne, Melville, Emerson, or Thoreau in school. Given the cultural world of my parents' home, I have always had a sense of being a tourist in America.

Just as often, the conversation centered on Eastern Europe, on the Hasidic world my father had come from. He loved to tell his guests stories about various Hasidic rebbes, or describe teachings from Hasidic texts. Few of my parents' friends came from that world, but for my father, the Sabbath was always a return to the Sabbaths of his youth and memories of his family and friends.

Indeed, on the Sabbath my father's reading habits shifted. He did not read secular books, works of philosophy or politics, but instead turned to Hebrew religious texts. Because writing is forbidden on the Sabbath, he would sometimes place a napkin or a paper clip to mark a page, so that years later I could tell which books had been his Shabbat reading. Those books brought him back each Sabbath to stories of his child-

hood and to the feeling that he had grown up surrounded by people of "religious nobility." (Something of a corresponding situation existed at one time with the French edition of *The Sabbath*, which was published in France under the title *Les Bâtisseurs du Temps* [Architecture in Time]. According to his letters, the great poet Paul Celan kept a copy of my father's book on his bedside table toward the end of his life.)

On Shabbat morning we attended services at the Jewish Theological Seminary, where my father taught, and in the congregation sat faculty and students from the seminary and from Columbia University. It was an Orthodox service, conducted entirely in Hebrew, and men and women sat separately. Many weeks we heard a sermon delivered by a graduating rabbinical student, and on the walk home from the synagogue faculty members commented, often severely, on the quality of the sermon. The walk took only fifteen minutes, but my father had a habit of taking a few steps, then stopping to talk over a point before moving on, so that the walk often lasted half an hour. When I was small, he sometimes carried me on his shoulders, and as I grew older, his colleagues helped him entertain me.

Shabbat lunch was informal and lighthearted, a time for joking and teasing. After lunch my parents took their weekly nap, followed by tea and a walk in Riverside Park, across the street. There we would meet friends and colleagues taking their Shabbat afternoon strolls.

There are really two kinds of Shabbat experiences: those of the fall and winter months, when the Sabbath begins around four o'clock on Friday afternoons and ends around five o'clock on Saturday, and those of the spring and summer, when the Sabbath starts at eight or eight-thirty and ends at nine o'clock or even later. In the winter months, our Friday nights continued long af-

ter dinner as my parents sat at the table, drinking tea and reading. During the spring months, the long Shabbat afternoons became the peaceful and quiet focus of the day.

Often my parents would invite students for a Shabbat afternoon high tea. My mother served cheese and crackers, various cakes, sometimes even a magnificent *Herrentorte*—a loaf of bread sliced lengthwise and filled with layers of various kinds of fish and egg salads and frosted with a cream-cheese-and-anchovy spread. My father was attentive to each student, asking about his studies, hometown rabbis, and goals for the future. As the afternoon turned dusky, he offered each one a Siddur, to pray the evening service. Together we made havdalah, the prayer concluding Shabbat, and then the students departed.

Sunday was once again a weekday. During the winter months, my father sometimes taught on Sunday mornings, and my mother was at her piano, practicing. Nearly every summer, however, my parents rented a house in Los Angeles, to be near my mother's brothers and their families. The houses were occasionally too far from a synagogue to walk, so friends would come to my parents' home for services on Shabbat morning. My mother would prepare a light kiddush for everyone, and guests stayed well into the afternoon. By the time the Sabbath ended on Saturday night, it was late and we went to sleep. Sunday mornings became the post-Shabbat moments of transition as my father went to his study and my mother to her piano. Sunday afternoons in the summer were filled with music: we would go to the home of my mother's brother, a physician who played the violin. He had a large music room with two pianos, and his friends would arrange themselves in trios, quartets, and quintets, and spend the day playing chamber music. The house had a large swimming pool

just outside the music room, and my father and I would float in the water, read a book, and listen to the music while my mother played.

At the time *The Sabbath* was published, in 1951, my father had been in the United States for only eleven years. When he had arrived in 1940, his English had been weak, but he mastered the language remarkably quickly and went on to write in an extraordinarily rich and poetic style. Indeed, my parents would often laugh because early readers of the book couldn't imagine my father was the author—they thought my mother had ghostwritten it! The book's language is intrinsic to its meaning; its elegiac, poetic tone evokes the mood of the Sabbath that he describes.

The Sabbath appeared at a time when American Jews were assimilating radically and when many were embarrassed by public expressions of Jewishness. Even among rabbis and Jewish leaders, a rejection of Jewish mysticism, Hasidism, and even of theology and spirituality was common. It was as if they desired a religionless Judaism—a Judaism without God, faith, or belief. For them, the Sabbath interfered with jobs, socializing, shopping, and simply being American.

In trying to reintroduce the importance of the Sabbath, my father did not berate Jews for their neglect of religious observance, nor did he demand obedience to Jewish law based on the absolute authority of rabbinic texts. Writing in an era in which books by clergy advocating the psychological health promoted by religion were coming into vogue, my father went against the trend. He insisted that the Sabbath is not about psychology or sociology; it doesn't serve to make us calmer or to hold the family together. Nor does the Sabbath represent a rejection of modernity or the secular world—for him, the Sabbath was a complement to

building civilization, not a withdrawal from it. In contrast to more recent approaches to the Sabbath, my father did not emphasize the importance of "ritual" (he believed that the words "customs" and "ceremonies" should be eradicated from the Jewish vocabulary), nor did he view the Sabbath as a vehicle for solidifying Jewish continuity.

Yet my father's approach to the Sabbath did reflect some of the political concerns and language of the day; the themes of freedom and liberty recur in the book. He writes that we need the Sabbath in order to survive civilization: "Gallantly, ceaselessly, quietly, man must fight for inner liberty" to remain independent of the enslavement of the material world. "Inner liberty depends upon being exempt from domination of things as well as from domination of people. There are many who have acquired a high degree of political and social liberty, but only very few are not enslaved to things. This is our constant problem—how to live with people and remain free, how to live with things and remain independent."

My father defines Judaism as a religion centrally concerned with holiness in time. Some religions build great cathedrals or temples, but Judaism constructs the Sabbath as an architecture of time. Creating holiness in time requires a different sensibility than building a cathedral in space: "We must conquer space in order to sanctify time." My father did not mean to imply, as some have suggested, a denigration of space or a denial of the significance of the land of Israel. His commitment to Israel and its sanctity is attested to in his book *Israel: An Echo of Eternity*. In the cases of both the Sabbath and Israel, he emphasizes that sanctification is dependent upon human behavior and attitude. Sanctifying the Sabbath is part of our imitation of God, but it also becomes a way to find God's presence. It is not in

space but in time, he writes, that we find God's likeness. In the Bible, no thing or place is holy by itself; not even the Promised Land is called holy. While the holiness of the land and of festivals depends on the actions of the Jewish people, who have to sanctify them, the holiness of the Sabbath, he writes, preceded the holiness of Israel. Even if people fail to observe the Sabbath, it remains holy.

How do we bring about the elusive atmosphere that is the Sabbath? Sanctity is a quality, my father emphasized, that we create. We know what to do with space; but how do we shape sacred time? Six days a week we live with a fury of acquisitiveness, he writes; Shabbat renews the soul and we rediscover who we are. "The Sabbath is the presence of God in the world, open to the soul of man." God is not in things of space, but in moments of time. How do we perceive God's presence? There are some helpful Sabbath laws—those that require shutting off secular demands and refraining from work. In enumerating the categories that constitute "work," the Mishnah describes types of activities necessary to build technological civilization. Yet my father goes further. Not only is it forbidden to light a fire on the Sabbath, but, he writes, "Ye shall kindle no fire—not even the fire of righteous indignation." In our home, certain topics were avoided on the Sabbath—politics, the Holocaust, the war in Vietnam—while others were emphasized. Observing the Sabbath is not only about refraining from work, but about creating *menuha*, a restfulness that is also a celebration. The Sabbath is a day for body as well as soul. It is a sin to be sad on the Sabbath, a lesson my father often repeated and always observed.

With the Sabbath comes a miracle: the soul is resurrected, an additional soul arrives, and the effulgence of Sabbath holiness fills every corner of the household.

Anger is lifted, tensions are gone, and there is a glow on the face.

Creating Shabbat begins with a sense of longing. Strikingly, my father turns our expectations around. It is not we who long for a day of rest, but the Sabbath spirit that is lonely and longs for us. We are the mate of the Sabbath, and each week, through our sanctification of the Sabbath, we marry the day. That marriage shapes us: "What *we are* depends on what *the Sabbath is to us*." Similarly, the Sabbath does not simply come into being on Saturdays; the depth of its experience is created, he writes, by how we behave on the other six days of the week; they are a pilgrimage to the Sabbath.

Shabbat comes with its own holiness; we enter not simply a day, but an atmosphere. My father cites the Zohar: the Sabbath is the name of God. We are within the Sabbath rather than the Sabbath being within us. For my father, the question is how to perceive that holiness: not how *much* to observe, but *how* to observe. Strict adherence to the laws regulating Sabbath observance doesn't suffice; the goal is creating the Sabbath as a foretaste of paradise. The Sabbath is a metaphor for paradise and a testimony to God's presence; in our prayers, we anticipate a messianic era that will be a Sabbath, and each Shabbat prepares us for that experience: "Unless one learns how to relish the taste of Sabbath . . . one will be unable to enjoy the taste of eternity in the world to come." It was on the seventh day that God gave the world a soul, and "[the world's] survival depends upon the holiness of the seventh day." The task, he writes, becomes how to convert time into eternity, how to fill our time with spirit: "Six days a week we wrestle with the world, wringing profit from the earth; on the Sabbath we especially care for the seed of eternity planted in the soul. The world has our hands, but our soul belongs to Someone Else."

On my father's last Shabbat we had a wonderful dinner with many friends, after which one of our guests read aloud some of my father's Yiddish poems, written when he was a young man. He went to sleep that night and never woke. In Jewish tradition, dying in one's sleep is called a kiss of God, and dying on the Sabbath is a gift that is merited by piety. For the pious person, my father once wrote, it is a privilege to die.

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Prologue



Architecture of Time

Technical civilization is man's conquest of space. It is a triumph frequently achieved by sacrificing an essential ingredient of existence, namely, time. In technical civilization, we expend time to gain space. To enhance our power in the world of space is our main objective. Yet to have more does not mean to be more. The power we attain in the world of space terminates abruptly at the borderline of time. But time is the heart of existence.¹

To gain control of the world of space is certainly one of our tasks. The danger begins when in gaining power in the realm of space we forfeit all aspirations in the realm of time. There is a realm of time where the goal is not to have but to be, not to own but to give, not to control but to share, not to subdue but to be in accord. Life goes wrong when the control of space, the acquisition of things of space, becomes our sole concern.

Nothing is more useful than power, nothing more frightful. We have often suffered from degradation by poverty, now we are threatened with degradation through power. There is happiness in the love of labor, there is misery in the love of gain. Many hearts and pitchers are broken at the fountain of profit. Selling himself into slavery to things, man becomes a utensil that is broken at the fountain.

Technical civilization stems primarily from the de-

sire of man to subdue and manage the forces of nature. The manufacture of tools, the art of spinning and farming, the building of houses, the craft of sailing—all this goes on in man's spatial surroundings. The mind's preoccupation with things of space affects, to this day, all activities of man. Even religions are frequently dominated by the notion that the deity resides in space, within particular localities like mountains, forests, trees or stones, which are, therefore, singled out as holy places; the deity is bound to a particular land; holiness a quality associated with things of space, and the primary question is: Where is the god? There is much enthusiasm for the idea that God is present in the universe, but that idea is taken to mean His presence in space rather than in time, in nature rather than in history; as if He were a thing, not a spirit.

Even pantheistic philosophy is a religion of space: the Supreme Being is thought to be the infinite space. *Deus sive natura* has extension, or space, as its attribute, not time; time to Spinoza is merely an accident of motion, a mode of thinking. And his desire to develop a philosophy *more geometrico*, in the manner of geometry, which is the science of space, is significant of his space-mindedness.

The primitive mind finds it hard to realize an idea without the aid of imagination, and it is the realm of space where imagination wields its sway. Of the gods it must have a visible image; where there is no image, there is no god. The reverence for the sacred image, for the sacred monument or place, is not only indigent to most religions, it has even been retained by men of all ages, all nations, pious, superstitious or even antireligious; they all continue to pay homage to banners and flags, to national shrines, to monuments erected to kings or heroes. Everywhere the desecration of holy shrines is considered a sacrilege, and the

shrine may become so important that the idea it stands for is consigned to oblivion. The memorial becomes an aid to amnesia; the means stultify the end. For things of space are at the mercy of man. Though too sacred to be polluted, they are not too sacred to be exploited. To retain the holy, to perpetuate the presence of god, his image is fashioned. Yet a god who can be fashioned, a god who can be confined, is but a shadow of man.

We are all infatuated with the splendor of space, with the grandeur of things of space. Thing is a category that lies heavy on our minds, tyrannizing all our thoughts. Our imagination tends to mold all concepts in its image. In our daily lives we attend primarily to that which the senses are spelling out for us: to what the eyes perceive, to what the fingers touch. Reality to us is thinghood, consisting of substances that occupy space; even God is conceived by most of us as a thing.

The result of our thinginess is our blindness to all reality that fails to identify itself as a thing, as a matter of fact. This is obvious in our understanding of time, which, being thingless and insubstantial, appears to us as if it had no reality.²

Indeed, we know what to do with space but do not know what to do about time, except to make it subservient to space. Most of us seem to labor for the sake of things of space. As a result we suffer from a deeply rooted dread of time and stand aghast when compelled to look into its face.³ Time to us is sarcasm, a slick treacherous monster with a jaw like a furnace incinerating every moment of our lives. Shrinking, therefore, from facing time, we escape for shelter to things of space. The intentions we are unable to carry out we deposit in space; possessions become the symbols of our repressions, jubilees of frustrations. But things of space are not fireproof; they only add fuel to the

flames. Is the joy of possession an antidote to the terror of time which grows to be a dread of inevitable death? Things, when magnified, are forgeries of happiness, they are a threat to our very lives; we are more harassed than supported by the Frankensteins of spatial things.

It is impossible for man to shirk the problem of time. The more we think the more we realize: we cannot conquer time through space. We can only master time in time.⁴

The higher goal of spiritual living is not to amass a wealth of information, but to face sacred moments. In a religious experience, for example, it is not a thing that imposes itself on man but a spiritual presence.⁵ What is retained in the soul is the moment of insight rather than the place where the act came to pass. A moment of insight is a fortune, transporting us beyond the confines of measured time. Spiritual life begins to decay when we fail to sense the grandeur of what is eternal in time.

Our intention here is not to deprecate the world of space. To disparage space and the blessing of things of space, is to disparage the works of creation, the works which God beheld and saw "it was good." The world cannot be seen exclusively *sub specie temporis*. Time and space are interrelated. To overlook either of them is to be partially blind. What we plead against is man's unconditional surrender to space, his enslavement to things. We must not forget that it is not a thing that lends significance to a moment; it is the moment that lends significance to things.

The Bible is more concerned with time than with space. It sees the world in the dimension of time. It pays more attention to generations, to events, than to countries, to things; it is more concerned with history

than with geography. To understand the teaching of the Bible, one must accept its premise that time has a meaning for life which is at least equal to that of space; that time has a significance and sovereignty of its own.

There is no equivalent for the word "thing" in biblical Hebrew. The word "*davar*," which in later Hebrew came to denote thing, means in biblical Hebrew: speech; word; message; report; tidings; advice; request; promise; decision; sentence; theme, story; saying, utterance; business, occupation; acts; good deeds; events; way, manner, reason, cause; but never "thing." Is this a sign of linguistic poverty, or rather an indication of an unwarped view of the world, of not equating reality (derived from the Latin word *res*, thing) with thinghood?

One of the most important facts in the history of religion was the transformation of agricultural festivals into commemorations of historical events. The festivals of ancient peoples were intimately linked with nature's seasons. They celebrated what happened in the life of nature in the respective seasons. Thus the value of the festive day was determined by the things nature did or did not bring forth. In Judaism, Passover, originally a spring festival, became a celebration of the exodus from Egypt; the Feast of Weeks, an old harvest festival at the end of the wheat harvest (*hag ha-kazir*, Exodus 23:16; 34:22), became the celebration of the day on which the Torah was given at Sinai; the Feast of the Booths, an old festival of vintage (*hag ha-asif*, Ex. 23:16), commemorates the dwelling of the Israelites in booths during their sojourn in the wilderness (Leviticus 23:42f.). To Israel the unique events of historic time were spiritually more significant than the repetitive processes in the cycle of nature, even though physical sustenance depended on the latter. While the deities of other peoples were associated

with places or things, the God of Israel was the God of events: the Redeemer from slavery, the Revealer of the Torah, manifesting Himself in events of history rather than in things or places. Thus, the faith in the unembodied, in the unimaginable was born.

Judaism is a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time. Unlike the space-minded man to whom time is unvaried, iterative, homogeneous, to whom all hours are alike, qualitiless, empty shells, the Bible senses the diversified character of time. There are no two hours alike. Every hour is unique and the only one given at the moment, exclusive and endlessly precious.

Judaism teaches us to be attached to holiness in time, to be attached to sacred events, to learn how to consecrate sanctuaries that emerge from the magnificent stream of a year. The Sabbaths are our great cathedrals; and our Holy of Holies is a shrine that neither the Romans nor the Germans were able to burn; a shrine that even apostasy cannot easily obliterate: the Day of Atonement. According to the ancient rabbis, it is not the observance of the Day of Atonement, but the Day itself, the "essence of the Day," which, with man's repentance, atones for the sins of man.⁶

Jewish ritual may be characterized as the art of significant forms in time, as architecture of time. Most of its observances—the Sabbath, the New Moon, the festivals, the Sabbatical and the Jubilee year—depend on a certain hour of the day or season of the year. It is, for example, the evening, morning, or afternoon that brings with it the call to prayer. The main themes of faith lie in the realm of time. We remember the day of the exodus from Egypt, the day when Israel stood at Sinai; and our Messianic hope is the expectation of a day, of the end of days.

In a well-composed work of art an idea of outstanding importance is not introduced haphazardly, but, like a king at an official ceremony, it is presented at a moment and in a way that will bring to light its authority and leadership. In the Bible, words are employed with exquisite care, particularly those which, like pillars of fire, lead the way in the far-flung system of the biblical world of meaning.

One of the most distinguished words in the Bible is the word *qadosh*, holy; a word which more than any other is representative of the mystery and majesty of the divine. Now what was the first holy object in the history of the world? Was it a mountain? Was it an altar?

It is, indeed, a unique occasion at which the distinguished word *qadosh* is used for the first time: in the Book of Genesis at the end of the story of creation. How extremely significant is the fact that it is applied to time: "And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy."⁷ There is no reference in the record of creation to any object in space that would be endowed with the quality of holiness.

This is a radical departure from accustomed religious thinking. The mythical mind would expect that, after heaven and earth have been established, God would create a holy place—a holy mountain or a holy spring—whereupon a sanctuary is to be established. Yet it seems as if to the Bible it is *holiness in time*, the Sabbath, which comes first.

When history began, there was only one holiness in the world, holiness in time. When at Sinai the word of God was about to be voiced, a call for holiness in man was proclaimed: "Thou shalt be unto me a holy people." It was only after the people had succumbed to the temptation of worshipping a thing, a golden calf,

that the erection of a Tabernacle, of holiness in *space*, was commanded.⁸ The sanctity of time came first, the sanctity of man came second, and the sanctity of space last. Time was hallowed by God; space, the Tabernacle, was consecrated by Moses.⁹

While the festivals celebrate events that happened in time, the date of the month assigned for each festival in the calendar is determined by the life in nature. Passover and the Feast of Booths, for example, coincide with the full moon, and the date of all festivals is a day in the month, and the month is a reflection of what goes on periodically in the realm of nature, since the Jewish month begins with the new moon, with the reappearance of the lunar crescent in the evening sky.¹⁰ In contrast, the Sabbath is entirely independent of the month and unrelated to the moon.¹¹ Its date is not determined by any event in nature, such as the new moon, but by the act of creation. Thus the essence of the Sabbath is completely detached from the world of space.

The meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to *holiness in time*. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world.

Part One

I



A Palace in Time

●

He who wants to enter the holiness of the day must first lay down the profanity of clattering commerce, of being yoked to toil. He must go away from the screech of dissonant days, from the nervousness and fury of acquisitiveness and the betrayal in embezzling his own life. He must say farewell to manual work and learn to understand that the world has already been created and will survive without the help of man. Six days a week we wrestle with the world, wringing profit from the earth; on the Sabbath we especially care for the seed of eternity planted in the soul. The world has our hands, but our soul belongs to Someone Else. Six days a week we seek to dominate the world, on the seventh day we try to dominate the self.

When the Romans met the Jews and noticed their strict adherence to the law of abstaining from labor on the Sabbath, their only reaction was contempt. The Sabbath is a sign of Jewish indolence, was the opinion held by Juvenal, Seneca and others.

In defense of the Sabbath, Philo, the spokesman of the Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria, says: "On this day we are commanded to abstain from all work, not because the law inculcates slackness. . . . Its object is rather to give man relaxation from continuous and unending toil and by refreshing their bodies with a regularly calculated system of remissions to send

them out renewed to their old activities. For a breathing spell enables not merely ordinary people but athletes also to collect their strength with a stronger force behind them to undertake promptly and patiently each of the tasks set before them." ¹

Here the Sabbath is represented not in the spirit of the Bible but in the spirit of Aristotle. According to the Stagirite, "we need relaxation, because we cannot work continuously. Relaxation, then, is not an end"; it is "for the sake of activity," for the sake of gaining strength for new efforts.² To the biblical mind, however, labor is the means toward an end, and the Sabbath as a day of rest, as a day of abstaining from toil, is not for the purpose of recovering one's lost strength and becoming fit for the forthcoming labor. The Sabbath is a day for the sake of life. Man is not a beast of burden, and the Sabbath is not for the purpose of enhancing the efficiency of his work. "Last in creation, first in intention,"³ the Sabbath is "the end of the creation of heaven and earth."⁴

The Sabbath is not for the sake of the weekdays; the weekdays are for the sake of Sabbath.⁵ It is not an interlude but the climax of living.

Three acts of God denoted the seventh day: He rested, He blessed and He hallowed the seventh day (Genesis 2:2-3). To the prohibition of labor is, therefore, added the blessing of delight and the accent of sanctity. Not only the hands of man celebrate the day, the tongue and the soul keep the Sabbath. One does not talk on it in the same manner in which one talks on weekdays. Even thinking of business or labor should be avoided.

Labor is a craft, but perfect rest is an art. It is the result of an accord of body, mind and imagination. To attain a degree of excellence in art, one must accept its discipline, one must adjure slothfulness. The seventh

day is a palace in time which we build. It is made of soul, of joy and reticence. In its atmosphere, a discipline is a reminder of adjacency to eternity. Indeed, the splendor of the day is expressed in terms of abstentions, just as the mystery of God is more adequately conveyed *via negationis*, in the categories of *negative theology* which claims that we can never say what He is, we can only say what He is not. We often feel how poor the edifice would be were it built exclusively of our rituals and deeds which are so awkward and often so obtrusive. How else express glory in the presence of eternity, if not by the silence of abstaining from noisy acts? These restrictions utter songs to those who know how to stay at a palace with a queen.

There is a word that is seldom said, a word for an emotion almost too deep to be expressed: the love of the Sabbath. The word is rarely found in our literature, yet for more than two thousand years the emotion filled our songs and moods. It was as if a whole people were in love with the seventh day. Much of its spirit can only be understood as an example of love carried to the extreme. As in the chivalric poetry of the Middle Ages, the "underlying principle was that love should always be absolute, and that the lover's every thought and act should on all occasions correspond with the most extreme feelings or sentiments or fancies possible for a lover."

"Love, with the troubadours and their ladies, was a source of joy. Its commands and exigencies made life's supreme law. Love was knighthood's service; it was loyalty and devotion; it was the noblest human giving. It was also the spring of excellence, the inspiration of high deeds."⁶ Chivalric culture created a romantic conception of adoration and love that to this day dominates in its combination of myth and passion the lit-

erature and mind of Western man. The Jewish contribution to the idea of love is the conception of love of the Sabbath, the love of a day, of spirit in the form of time.

What is so luminous about a day? What is so precious to captivate the hearts? It is because the seventh day is a mine where spirit's precious metal can be found with which to construct the palace in time, a dimension in which the human is at home with the divine; a dimension in which man aspires to approach the likeness of the divine.

For where shall the likeness of God be found? There is no quality that space has in common with the essence of God. There is not enough freedom on the top of the mountain; there is not enough glory in the silence of the sea. Yet the likeness of God can be found in time, which is eternity in disguise.

The art of keeping the seventh day is the art of painting on the canvas of time the mysterious grandeur of the climax of creation: as He sanctified the seventh day, so shall we. The love of the Sabbath is the love of man for what he and God have in common. Our keeping the Sabbath day is a paraphrase of His sanctification of the seventh day.

What would be a world without Sabbath? It would be a world that knew only itself or God distorted as a thing or the abyss separating Him from the world; a world without the vision of a window in eternity that opens into time.

For all the idealization, there is no danger of the idea of the Sabbath becoming a fairy-tale. With all the romantic idealization, the Sabbath remains a concrete fact, a legal institution and a social order. There is no danger of its becoming a disembodied spirit, for the spirit of the Sabbath must always be in accord with

actual deeds, with definite actions and abstentions. The real and the spiritual are one, like body and soul in a living man. It is for the law to clear the path; it is for the soul to sense the spirit.

This is what the ancient rabbis felt: the Sabbath demands all of man's attention, the service and single-minded devotion of total love. The logic of such a conception compelled them to enlarge constantly the system of laws and rules of observance. They sought to ennoble human nature and make it worthy of being in the presence of the royal day.

Yet law and love, discipline and delight, were not always fused. In their illustrious fear of desecrating the spirit of the day, the ancient rabbis established a level of observance which is within the reach of exalted souls but not infrequently beyond the grasp of ordinary men.

The glorification of the day, the insistence upon strict observance, did not, however, lead the rabbis to a deification of the law. "The Sabbath is given unto you, not you unto the Sabbath."⁷ The ancient rabbis knew that excessive piety may endanger the fulfilment of the essence of the law.⁸ "There is nothing more important, according to the Torah, than to preserve human life . . . Even when there is the slightest possibility that a life may be at stake one may disregard every prohibition of the law."⁹ One must sacrifice *mitzvot for the sake of man* rather than sacrifice man "*for the sake of mitzvot.*" The purpose of the Torah is "to bring life to Israel, in this world and in the world to come."¹⁰

Continuous austerity may severely dampen, yet levity would certainly obliterate the spirit of the day. One cannot modify a precious filigree with a spear or operate on a brain with a plowshare. It must always be remembered that the Sabbath is not an occasion for

diversion or frivolity; not a day to shoot fireworks or to turn somersaults, but an opportunity to mend our tattered lives; to collect rather than to dissipate time. Labor without dignity is the cause of misery; rest without spirit the source of depravity. Indeed, the prohibitions have succeeded in preventing the vulgarization of the grandeur of the day.

Two things the people of Rome anxiously desired—bread and circus games.¹¹ But man does not live by bread and circus games alone. Who will teach him how to desire anxiously the spirit of a sacred day?

The Sabbath is the most precious present mankind has received from the treasure house of God. All week we think: The spirit is too far away, and we succumb to spiritual absenteeism, or at best we pray: Send us a little of Thy spirit. On the Sabbath the spirit stands and pleads: Accept all excellence from me. . .

Yet what the spirit offers is often too august for our trivial minds. We accept the ease and relief and miss the inspirations of the day, where it comes from and what it stands for. This is why we pray for understanding:

May Thy children realize and understand that their rest comes from Thee, and that to rest means to sanctify Thy name.¹²

* To observe the Sabbath is to celebrate the coronation of a day in the spiritual wonderland of time, the air of which we inhale when we "call it a delight."

Call the Sabbath a delight:¹³ a delight to the soul and a delight to the body. Since there are so many acts which one must abstain from doing on the seventh day, "you might think I have given you the Sabbath for your displeasure; I have surely given you the Sabbath for your pleasure." To sanctify the seventh day does

not mean: Thou shalt mortify thyself, but, on the contrary: Thou shalt sanctify it with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy senses. "Sanctify the Sabbath by choice meals, by beautiful garments; delight your soul with pleasure and I will reward you for this very pleasure."¹⁴

Unlike the Day of Atonement, the Sabbath is not dedicated exclusively to spiritual goals. It is a day of the soul as well as of the body; comfort and pleasure are an integral part of the Sabbath observance. Man in his entirety, all his faculties must share its blessing.

A prince was once sent into captivity and compelled to live anonymously among rude and illiterate people. Years passed by, and he languished with longing for his royal father, for his native land. One day a secret communication reached him in which his father promised to bring him back to the palace, urging him not to unlearn his princely manner. Great was the joy of the prince, and he was eager to celebrate the day. But no one is able to celebrate alone. So he invited the people to the local tavern and ordered ample food and drinks for all of them. It was a sumptuous feast, and they were all full of rejoicing; the people because of the drinks and the prince in anticipation of his return to the palace.¹⁵—The soul cannot celebrate alone, so the body must be invited to partake in the rejoicing of the Sabbath.

"The Sabbath is a reminder of the two worlds—this world and the world to come; it is an example of both worlds. For the Sabbath is joy, holiness, and rest; joy is part of this world; holiness and rest are something of the world to come."¹⁶

To observe the seventh day does not mean merely to obey or to conform to the strictness of a divine command. To observe is to celebrate the creation of the

world and to create the seventh day all over again, the majesty of holiness in time, "a day of rest, a day of freedom," a day which is like "a lord and king of all other days,"¹⁷ a lord and king in the commonwealth of time.

How should we weigh the difference between the Sabbath and the other days of the week? When a day like Wednesday arrives, the hours are blank, and unless we lend significance to them, they remain without character. The hours of the seventh day are significant in themselves; their significance and beauty do not depend on any work, profit or progress we may achieve. They have the beauty of grandeur.

Beauty of grandeur, a crown of victory, a day of rest and holiness . . . a rest in love and generosity, a true and genuine rest, a rest that yields peace and serenity, tranquility and security, a perfect rest *with which Thou art pleased*.¹⁸

* Time is like a wasteland. It has grandeur but no beauty. Its strange, frightful power is always feared but rarely cheered. Then we arrive at the seventh day, and the Sabbath is endowed with a felicity which enraptures the soul, which glides into our thoughts with a healing sympathy. It is a day on which hours do not oust one another. It is a day that can soothe all sadness away.

No one, even the unlearned, the crude man, can remain insensitive to its beauty. "Even the unlearned is in awe of the day."¹⁹ It is virtually impossible, the ancient rabbis believed, to tell a lie on the sacred Sabbath day.

What does the word "Sabbath" mean? According to some it is the name of the Holy One.²⁰ Since the word *Shabbat* is a name of God, one should not men-

tion it in unclean places, where words of Torah should not be spoken. Some people were careful not to take it in vain.²¹

The seventh day is like a palace in time with a kingdom for all. It is not a date but an atmosphere.

It is not a different state of consciousness but a different climate; it is as if the appearance of all things somehow changed. The primary awareness is one of our being *within* the Sabbath rather than of the Sabbath being *within* us. We may not know whether our understanding is correct, or whether our sentiments are noble, but the air of the day surrounds us like spring which spreads over the land without our aid or notice.

"How precious is the Feast of Booths! Dwelling in the Booth, even our body is surrounded by the sanctity of the Mitzvah," said once a rabbi to his friend. Whereupon the latter remarked: "The Sabbath Day is even more than that. On the Feast you may leave the Booth for a while, whereas the Sabbath surrounds you wherever you go."

The difference between the Sabbath and all other days is not to be noticed in the physical structure of things, in their spatial dimension. Things do not change on that day. There is only a difference in the dimension of time, in the relation of the universe to God. The Sabbath preceded creation and the Sabbath completed creation; it is all of the spirit that the world can bear.

It is a day that ennobles the soul and makes the body wise. A tale may illustrate this point.

Once a rabbi was immured by his persecutors in a cave, where not a ray of light could reach him, so that he knew not when it was day or when it was night. Nothing tormented him so much as the thought that he

was now hindered from celebrating the Sabbath with song and prayer, as he had been wont to do from his youth. Beside this an almost unconquerable desire to smoke caused him much pain. He worried and reproached himself that he could not conquer this passion. All at once, he perceived that it suddenly vanished; a voice said within him: "Now it is Friday evening! for this was always the hour when my longing for that which is forbidden on the Sabbath regularly left me." Joyfully he rose up and with loud voice thanked God and blessed the Sabbath day. So it went on from week to week; his tormenting desire for tobacco regularly vanished at the incoming of each Sabbath.²²

It is one of life's highest rewards, a source of strength and inspiration to endure tribulation, to live nobly. The work on weekdays and the rest on the seventh day are correlated. The Sabbath is the inspirer, the other days the inspired.

The words: "On the *seventh* day God *finished* His work" (Genesis 2:2), seem to be a puzzle. Is it not said: "He *rested* on the *seventh* day"? "In *six* days the Lord made heaven and earth" (Exodus 20:11)? We would surely expect the Bible to tell us that on the sixth day God finished His work. Obviously, the ancient rabbis concluded, there was an act of creation on the seventh day. Just as heaven and earth were created in six days, *menuha* was created on the Sabbath.

"After the six days of creation—what did the universe still lack? *Menuha*. Came the Sabbath, came *menuha*, and the universe was complete."²³

Menuha which we usually render with "rest" means here much more than withdrawal from labor and exertion, more than freedom from toil, strain or activity of any kind. *Menuha* is not a negative concept but some-

thing real and intrinsically positive. This must have been the view of the ancient rabbis if they believed that it took a special act of creation to bring it into being, that the universe would be incomplete without it.

"What was created on the seventh day? *Tranquility, serenity, peace and repose.*"²⁴

To the biblical mind *menuha* is the same as happiness²⁵ and stillness, as peace and harmony. The word with which Job described the state after life he was longing for is derived from the same root as *menuha*. It is the state wherein man lies still, wherein the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.²⁶ It is the state in which there is no strife and no fighting, no fear and no distrust. The essence of good life is *menuha*. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters" (the waters of *menuhot*).²⁷ In later times *menuha* became a synonym for the life in the world to come, for eternal life.²⁸

Six evenings a week we pray: "Guard our going out and our coming in"; on the Sabbath evening we pray instead: "Embrace us with a tent of Thy peace." Upon returning home from synagogue we intone the song:

Peace be to you,
Angels of Peace²⁹

The seventh day sings. An old allegory asserts: "When Adam saw the majesty of the Sabbath, its greatness and glory, and the joy it conferred upon all beings, he intoned a song of praise for the Sabbath day as if to give thanks to the Sabbath day. Then God said to him: Thou singest a song of praise to the Sabbath day, and singest none to Me, the God of the Sabbath?"

Thereupon the Sabbath rose from its seat, and prostrated herself before God, saying: It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord. And the whole of creation added: And to sing praise unto Thy Name, O Most High." ⁸⁰

"Angels have six wings, one for each day of the week, with which they chant their song; but they remain silent on the Sabbath, for it is the Sabbath which then chants a hymn to God." ⁸¹ It is the Sabbath that inspires all the creatures to sing praise to the Lord. In the language of the Sabbath morning liturgy:

To God who rested from all action on the seventh day
and ascended upon His throne of glory.

He vested the day of rest with beauty;

He called the Sabbath a delight.

This is the song and the praise of the seventh day,
on which God rested from His work.

The seventh day itself is uttering praise.

A song of the Sabbath day:

"It is good to give thanks unto the Lord!"

Therefore, all the creatures of God bless Him.

The Sabbath teaches all beings whom to praise.

II



Beyond Civilization

Technical civilization is the product of labor, of man's exertion of power for the sake of gain, for the sake of producing goods. It begins when man, dissatisfied with what is available in nature, becomes engaged in a struggle with the forces of nature in order to enhance his safety and to increase his comfort. To use the language of the Bible, the task of civilization is to subdue the earth, to have dominion over the beast.

How proud we often are of our victories in the war with nature, proud of the multitude of instruments we have succeeded in inventing, of the abundance of commodities we have been able to produce. Yet our victories have come to resemble defeats. In spite of our triumphs, we have fallen victims to the work of our hands; it is as if the forces we had conquered have conquered us.

Is our civilization a way to disaster, as many of us are prone to believe? Is civilization essentially evil, to be rejected and condemned? The faith of the Jew is not a way out of this world, but a way of being within and above this world; not to reject but to surpass civilization. The Sabbath is the day on which we learn the art of surpassing civilization.

Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden "to dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15). Labor is not only the destiny of man; it is endowed with divine dignity.

Eden
in the
Garden
↓
Labor

However, after he ate of the tree of knowledge he was condemned to toil, not only to labor "In toil shall thou eat . . . all the days of thy life" (Genesis 3:17). Labor is a blessing, toil is the misery of man.

The Sabbath as a day of abstaining from work is not a depreciation but an affirmation of labor, a divine exaltation of its dignity. Thou shalt abstain from labor on the seventh day is a sequel to the command: *Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work.*¹

"Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is Sabbath unto the Lord thy God." Just as we are commanded to keep the Sabbath, we are commanded to labor.² "Love work . . ." ³ The duty to work for six days is just as much a part of God's covenant with man as the duty to abstain from work on the seventh day.⁴

To set apart one day a week for freedom, a day on which we would not use the instruments which have been so easily turned into weapons of destruction, a day for being with ourselves, a day of detachment from the vulgar, of independence of external obligations, a day on which we stop worshipping the idols of technical civilization, a day on which we use no money, a day of armistice in the economic struggle with our fellow men and the forces of nature—is there any institution that holds out a greater hope for man's progress than the Sabbath?

The solution of mankind's most vexing problem will not be found in renouncing technical civilization, but in attaining some degree of independence of it.

In regard to external gifts, to outward possessions, there is only one proper attitude—to have them and to be able to do without them. On the Sabbath we live, as it were, independent of technical civilization: we abstain primarily from any activity that aims at remaking

or reshaping the things of space. Man's royal privilege to conquer nature is suspended on the seventh day.

What are the kinds of labor not to be done on the Sabbath? They are, according to the ancient rabbis, all those acts which were necessary for the construction and furnishing of the Sanctuary in the desert.⁵ The Sabbath itself is a sanctuary which we build, a sanctuary in time. * → First Image

It is one thing to race or be driven by the vicissitudes that menace life, and another thing to stand still and to embrace the presence of an eternal moment.

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; a day on which handling money is considered a desecration, on which man avows his independence of that which is the world's chief idol. The seventh day is the exodus from tension, the liberation of man from his own muddiness, the installation of man as a sovereign in the world of time.

In the tempestuous ocean of time and toil there are islands of stillness where man may enter a harbor and reclaim his dignity. The island is the seventh day, the Sabbath, a day of detachment from things, instruments and practical affairs as well as of attachment to the spirit.

The Sabbath must all be spent "in charm, grace, peace, and great love . . . for on it even the wicked in hell find peace." It is, therefore, a double sin to show anger on the Sabbath. "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath day" (Exodus 35:3), is interpreted to mean: "Ye shall kindle no fire of controversy nor the heat of anger."⁶ Ye shall kindle no fire—not even the fire of righteous indignation.

Out of the days through which we fight and from

whose ugliness we ache, we look to the Sabbath as our homeland, as our source and destination. It is a day in which we abandon our plebeian pursuits and reclaim our authentic state, in which we may partake of a blessedness in which we are what we are, regardless of whether we are learned or not, of whether our career is a success or a failure; it is a day of independence of social conditions.

All week we may ponder and worry whether we are rich or poor, whether we succeed or fail in our occupations; whether we accomplish or fall short of reaching our goals. But who could feel distressed when gazing at spectral glimpses of eternity, except to feel startled at the vanity of being so distressed?

The Sabbath is no time for personal anxiety or care, for any activity that might dampen the spirit of joy. The Sabbath is no time to remember sins, to confess, to repent or even to pray for relief or anything we might need. It is a day for praise, not a day for petitions. Fasting, mourning, demonstrations of grief are forbidden. The period of mourning is interrupted by the Sabbath. And if one visits the sick on the Sabbath, one should say: "It is the Sabbath, one must not complain; you will soon be cured."⁷ One must abstain from toil and strain on the seventh day, even from strain in the service of God.⁸

Why are the Eighteen Benedictions not recited on the Sabbath? It is because the Sabbath was given to us by God for joy, for delight, for rest, and should not be marred by worry or grief. Should there be a sick one in the household, we might remember this while reciting the benediction: "Heal the sick," and would become saddened and gloomy on the Sabbath day. It is for this same reason that we recite in the Sabbath grace after meals the request that "there be no sadness or

trouble in the day of our rest."⁹ It is a sin to be sad on the Sabbath day.¹⁰

For the Sabbath is a day of harmony and peace, peace between man and man, peace within man, and peace with all things. On the seventh day man has no right to tamper with God's world, to change the state of physical things. It is a day of rest for man and animal alike:

In it thou shalt not do any manner of work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou.¹¹

Rabbi Solomon of Radomsk once arrived in a certain town, where, he was told, lived an old woman who had known the famous Rabbi Elimelech. She was too old to go out, so he went to see her and asked her to tell him what she knew about the great Master.

—I do not know what went on in his room, because I worked as one of the maids in the kitchen of his house. Only one thing I can tell you. During the week the maids would often quarrel with one another, as is common. But, week after week, on Friday when the Sabbath was about to arrive, the spirit in the kitchen was like the spirit on the eve of the Day of Atonement. Everybody would be overcome with an urge to ask forgiveness of each other. We were all seized by a feeling of affection and inner peace.¹²

The Sabbath, thus, is more than an armistice, more than an interlude; it is a profound conscious harmony of man and the world, a sympathy for all things and a participation in the spirit that unites what is below and

Authentic
States ←
the
Garden?

→ Further
Ajude
to
Creation.

what is above. All that is divine in the world is brought into union with God. This is Sabbath, and the true happiness of the universe.

“Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work (Exodus 20:8). Is it possible for a human being to do all his work in six days? Does not our work always remain incomplete? What the verse means to convey is: Rest on the Sabbath as if all your work were done. Another interpretation: *Rest even from the thought of labor.*”¹³

A pious man once took a stroll in his vineyard on the Sabbath. He saw a breach in the fence, and then determined to mend it when the Sabbath would be over. At the expiration of the Sabbath he decided: since the thought of repairing the fence occurred to me on the Sabbath I shall never repair it.¹⁴

Epilogue



To Sanctify Time

Pagans project their consciousness of God into a visible image or associate Him with a phenomenon in nature, with a thing of space. In the Ten Commandments, the Creator of the universe identifies Himself by an event in history, by an event in time, the liberation of the people from Egypt, and proclaims: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth, or that is in the water under the earth."

The most precious thing that has ever been on earth were the Two Tablets of stone which Moses received upon Mount Sinai; they were priceless beyond compare. He had gone up into the Mount to receive them; there he abode forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread nor drink water. And the Lord delivered unto him the Two Tablets of stone, and on them were written the Ten Commandments, the words which the Lord spoke with the people of Israel in the Mount out of the midst of fire. But when coming down the Mount at the end of forty days and forty nights—the Two Tablets in his hands—Moses saw the people dance around the Golden Calf, he cast the Tablets out of his hands and broke them before their eyes.

"Every important cult-center of Egypt asserted its primacy by the dogma that it was the *site* of creation." ¹ In contrast, the book of Genesis speaks of the

days rather than of the site of creation.³ In the myths there is no reference to the time of creation, whereas the Bible speaks of the creation of space in time.

Everyone will admit that the Grand Canyon is more awe-inspiring than a trench. Everyone knows the difference between a worm and an eagle. But how many of us have a similar sense of discretion for the diversity of time? The historian Ranke claimed that every age is equally near to God. Yet Jewish tradition claims that there is a hierarchy of moments within time, that all ages are not alike. Man may pray to God equally at all places, but God does not speak to man equally at all times. At a certain moment, for example, the spirit of prophecy departed from Israel.

Time to us is a measuring device rather than a realm in which we abide. Our consciousness of it comes about when we begin to compare two events and to notice that one event is later than the other; when listening to a tune we realize that one note follows the other. Fundamental to the consciousness of time is the distinction between earlier and later.

But is time only a relation between events in time? Is there no meaning to the present moment, regardless of its relation to the past? Moreover, do we only know what is *in* time, merely events that have an impact on things of space? If nothing happened that is related to the world of space, would there be no time?

A special consciousness is required to recognize the ultimate significance of time. We all live it and are so close to being identical with it that we fail to notice it. The world of space surrounds our existence.⁸ It is but a part of living, the rest is time. Things are the shore, the voyage is in time.

Existence is never explicable through itself but only through time. When closing our eyes in moments of in-

tellectual concentration, we are able to have time without space, but we can never have space without time. To the spiritual eye space is frozen time, and all things are petrified events.

There are two points of view from which time can be sensed: from the point of view of space and from the point of view of spirit. Looking out of the window of a swiftly moving railroad car, we have the impression that the landscape is moving while we ourselves are sitting still. Similarly, when gazing at reality while our souls are carried away by spatial things, time appears to be in constant motion. However, when we learn to understand that it is the spatial things that are constantly running out, we realize that time is that which never expires, that it is the world of space which is rolling through the infinite expanse of time. Thus temporality may be defined as the relation of space to time.

The boundless continuous but vacuous entity which realistically is called space is not the ultimate form of reality. Our world is a world of space moving through time—from the Beginning to the End of Days.

To the common mind the essence of time is evanescence, temporality. The truth, however, is that the fact of evanescence flashes upon our minds when poring over things of space. It is the world of space that communicates to us the sense for temporality. Time, that which is beyond and independent of space, is everlasting; it is the world of space which is perishing. Things perish within time; time itself does not change. We should not speak of the flow or passage of time but of the flow or passage of space through time. It is not time that dies; it is the human body which dies in time. Temporality is an attribute of the world of space, of things of space. Time which is beyond space is beyond the division in past, present and future.

Monuments of stone are destined to disappear; days of spirit never pass away. About the arrival of the people at Sinai we read in the Book of Exodus: "In the third month after the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, on *this day* they came into the wilderness of Sinai" (19:1). Here was an expression that puzzled the ancient rabbis: on *this day*? It should have been said: on *that day*. This can only mean that the day of giving the Torah can never become past; that day is this day, every day. The Torah, whenever we study it, must be to us "as if it were given us today." ⁴ The same applies to the day of the exodus from Egypt: "In every age man must see himself as if he himself went out of Egypt." ⁵

The worth of a great day is not measured by the space it occupies in the calendar. Exclaimed Rabbi Akiba: "All of time is not as worthy as the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel, for all the songs are holy, but the Song of Songs is the holiest of holies." ⁶

In the realm of spirit, there is no difference between a second and a century, between an hour and an age. Rabbi Judah the Patriarch cried: "There are those who gain eternity in a lifetime, others who gain it in one brief hour." ⁷ One good hour may be worth a lifetime; an instant of returning to God may restore what has been lost in years of escaping from Him. "Better is one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world than the whole life in the world to come." ⁸

Technical civilization, we have said, is man's triumph over space. Yet time remains impervious. We can overcome distance but can neither recapture the past nor dig out the future. Man transcends space, and time transcends man.

Time is man's greatest challenge. We all take part in a procession through its realm which never comes to an end but are unable to gain a foothold in it. Its reality is apart and away from us. Space is exposed to our will; we may shape and change the things in space as we please. Time, however, is beyond our reach, beyond our power. It is both near and far, intrinsic to all experience and transcending all experience. It belongs exclusively to God.

Time, then, is otherness, a mystery that hovers above all categories. It is as if time and the mind were a world apart. Yet, it is only within time that there is fellowship and togetherness of all beings.

Every one of us occupies a portion of space. He takes it up exclusively. The portion of space which my body occupies is taken up by myself in exclusion of anyone else. Yet, no one possesses time. There is no moment which I possess exclusively. This very moment belongs to all living men as it belongs to me. We share time, we own space. Through my ownership of space, I am a rival of all other beings; through my living in time, I am a contemporary of all other beings. We pass through time, we occupy space. We easily succumb to the illusion that the world of space is for our sake, for man's sake. In regard to time, we are immune to such an illusion.

Immense is the distance that lies between God and a thing. For a thing is that which has separate or individual existence as distinct from the totality of beings. To see a thing is to see something which is detached and isolated. A thing is, furthermore, something which is and can become the possession of man. Time does not permit an instant to be in and for itself. Time is either all or nothing. It cannot be divided except in our minds. It remains beyond our grasp. It is almost holy.

It is easy to pass by the great sight of eternal time.

According to the Book of Exodus, Moses beheld his first vision "in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed" (3:2). Time is like an eternal burning bush. Though each instant must vanish to open the way to the next one, time itself is not consumed.

Time has independent ultimate significance; it is of more majesty and more provocative of awe than even a sky studded with stars. Gliding gently in the most ancient of all splendors, it tells so much more than space can say in its broken language of things, playing symphonies upon the instruments of isolated beings, unlocking the earth and making it happen.

Time is the process of creation, and things of space are results of creation. When looking at space we see the products of creation; when intuiting time we hear the process of creation. Things of space exhibit a deceptive independence. They show off a veneer of limited permanence. Things created conceal the Creator. It is the dimension of time wherein man meets God, wherein man becomes aware that every instant is an act of creation, a Beginning, opening up new roads for ultimate realizations. Time is the presence of God in the world of space, and it is within time that we are able to sense the unity of all beings.

Creation, we are taught, is not an act that happened once upon a time, once and for ever. The act of bringing the world into existence is a continuous process. God called the world into being, and that call goes on. There is this present moment because God is present. Every instant is an act of creation. A moment is not a terminal but a flash, a signal of Beginning. Time is perpetual innovation, a synonym for continuous creation. Time is God's gift to the world of space.

A world without time would be a world without God, a world existing in and by itself, without renewal, without a Creator. A world without time would be a world detached from God, a thing in itself, reality without realization. A world in time is a world going on through God; realization of an infinite design; not a thing in itself but a thing for God.

To witness the perpetual marvel of the world's coming into being is to sense the presence of the Giver in the given, to realize that the source of time is eternity, that the secret of being is the eternal within time.

We cannot solve the problem of time through the conquest of space, through either pyramids or fame. We can only solve the problem of time through sanctification of time. To men alone time is elusive; to men with God time is eternity in disguise.

Creation is the language of God, Time is His song, and things of space the consonants in the song. To sanctify time is to sing the vowels in unison with Him.

This is the task of men: to conquer space and sanctify time.

We must conquer space in order to sanctify time. All week long we are called upon to sanctify life through employing things of space. On the Sabbath it is given us to share in the holiness that is in the heart of time. Even when the soul is seared, even when no prayer can come out of our tightened throats, the clean, silent rest of the Sabbath leads us to a realm of endless peace, or to the beginning of an awareness of what eternity means. There are few ideas in the world of thought which contain so much spiritual power as the idea of the Sabbath. Aeons hence, when of many of our cherished theories only shreds will remain, that cosmic tapestry will continue to shine.

(Eternity utters a day.)

Notes

Prologue

- ¹ See A. J. Heschel, *Man Is Not Alone. A Philosophy of Religion*, New York 1951, p. 200.
- ² According to Bertrand Russell, time is "an unimportant and superficial characteristic of reality . . . A certain emancipation from slavery to time is essential to philosophic thought . . . To realize the unimportance of time is the gate of wisdom." *Our Knowledge of the External World*, pp. 166-67.
- ³ "Time is an evil, a mortal disease, exuding a fatal nostalgia. The passage of time strikes a man's heart with despair, and fills his gaze with sadness." N. Berdyaev, *Solitude and Society*, p. 134.
- ⁴ See also A. J. Heschel, *The Earth Is the Lord's*, p. 13f.
- ⁵ This is one of the aspects which distinguishes the religious from the esthetic experience.
- ⁶ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Teshubah* 1,3, on the basis of *Mishnah Yoma*, 8,8. A more radical view is found in *Sifra* to 23:27, and *Shevuot* 13a (the Soncino translation): "I might think that the Day of Atonement should not atone unless he fasted on it, and called it a holy convocation (by including in the prayers of that day: Blessed art thou, O Lord . . . who sanctifiest Israel and the Day of Atonement; and by wearing holiday garments to signify his acceptance of the Day as holy; see *Tosafot Keritot* 7a), and did no work on it. But if he did not fast on it, and did not call it a holy convocation, and worked on it—whence do we deduce (that the Day atones for him)? Scripture says, It is a Day of Atonement—in all cases it atones." However, the view that the Day atones even for those who do not repent but actually sin on the very Day is not shared by most authorities. Compare also the opinion of Rabbi, *Yoma* 85b.—Significant is Rabbi Yose's con-

ception of special times, *Sanhedrin* 102a. See also *Tanhuma* to Genesis 49:28.

See also the views expressed by Rabbi Yohanan in *Ta'anit* 29a and by Rabbi Yose in *Erachin* 11b. Also Pederesen, *Israel I-II*, p. 488 and p. 512; E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pp. 69-93.

⁷ Genesis 2:3. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . . for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth . . . wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Exodus 20:8,11). In the Ten Commandments, the term *holy* is applied to one word only, the Sabbath.

⁸ See *Tanhuma*, Exodus 34:1 (31); *Seder 'Olam rabba*, ch. 6. Rashi to Exodus 31:18. See, however, Nahmanides to Leviticus 8:2.

Holiness of time would have been sufficient to the world. Holiness of space was a necessary comprise with the nature of man. The erection of a tabernacle was not commanded in the Decalogue. It was begun in answer to a direct appeal from the people who pleaded with God: "O Lord of the world! The kings of the nations have palaces in which are set a table, candlesticks and other royal insignia that their king may be recognized as such. Shall not Thou, too, our King, Redeemer and Helper, employ royal insignia, that all the dwellers of the earth may recognize that Thou art their King?" *Midrash Aggada* 27:1; Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, III, 148f.

⁹ Numbers 7:1.

¹⁰ Each revolution from one new moon to the next constitutes a lunar month and measures about 29 days and 12 hours.

¹¹ The Babylonian seventh day was observed on every seventh day of the lunar month; see J. Barth, *The Jewish Sabbath and the Babylonians*, *The American Israelite*, Nov. 20, 1902; also H. Webster, *Rest Days*, New York, 1916, p. 253f.

Chapter I

¹ Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus*, II,60 (Loeb Classics, Philo, VII).

² *Ethica Nicomachea* X,6.

³ Rabbi Solomo Alkabez, *Lechah Dodi*.

⁴ The Evening Service for the Sabbath.

⁵ *Zohar*, I, 75.

⁶ H. O. Taylor, *The Medieval Mind*, I, p. 588 ff.

⁷ *Mekilta* to 31:13.

⁸ *Genesis rabba* 19,3.

⁹ Except the prohibition of idolatry, adultery and murder.

¹⁰ *Otzar ha-Geonim*, *Yoma*, p. 30,32.

¹¹ *Duas tantum res anxius optat, panem et circenses*, Juvenal, *Satires* X,80.

¹² The Afternoon Prayer for the Sabbath.

¹³ Isaiah 58:13. "He who diminishes the delight of the Sabbath, it is as if he robbed the Shechniah, for the Sabbath is (God's) only daughter," *Tikkune Zohar* 21, ed. Mantua 1558, 59b.

¹⁴ *Deuteronomy rabba* 3,1; see *Midrash Tehillim*, chap. 90.

¹⁵ See *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, Koretz, 1760, p. 203c.

¹⁶ Therefore we say on the Sabbath . . . "Rejoice O heavens, be glad O earth" (Psalms 96:11). "Heavens symbolizes the world to come, the world of souls, while earth symbolizes this world which is earthly and mortal." Al Nakawa, *Menorat ha-Maor*, ed. Enelow, II, 182.

¹⁷ *Shibbole ha-Leget*, chap. 126.

¹⁸ The Afternoon Prayer for the Sabbath.

¹⁹ *Jer. Demai* II, 23d.

²⁰ *Zohar*, 88b. cf. 128a.

²¹ Rabbi Zvi Elimelech of Dynow, *Bne Issachar*, *Shabbat*, I.

²² B. Auerbach, *Poet and Merchant*, New York, 1877, p. 27.

²³ Quoted as a Midrash by Rashi on *Megillah* 9a; on Genesis 2:2; *Tosafot Sanhedrin* 38a.

According to the hellenistic Jewish philosopher, Aristobulus, on the seventh day was created the light in which all things can be seen, namely the light of wisdom. See Eusebius, *Præparatio Evangelica*, ed. Gifford, Book XIII, chap. 12, 667a.

²⁴ *Genesis rabba* 10,9.

²⁵ *Deuteronomy* 12:9; cf. *Kings* 8:56; *Psalms* 95:11; *Ruth* 1:19.

²⁶ *Job* 3:13,17; cf. 14:13 ff.

²⁷ *Psalms* 23:1-2.

²⁸ *Shabbat* 152b; see also *Kuzari* V,10; *Yalkut Reubeni*, Amsterdam, 1700, 174a, and the prayer *El male rahamin*.

²⁹ See *Shabbat* 119b.

³⁰ Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot*, Jerusalem, 1950, p. 27; see L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, I, 85; V, 110.

³¹ *Or Zarua*, II, 18c. See the emendation suggested by L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, V, 101; *Geonica* II, 48. Compare, however, the beautiful legend in *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Tehillim*, 843.

Chapter II

- ¹ Exodus 20:9; 23:12; 31:15; 34:21; Leviticus 23:3; Deuteronomy 5:13.
- ² *Mekilta de-Rabbi Shimeon ben Yohai*, ed. Hoffmann, Frankfurt a.M. 1905, p. 107.
- ³ *Pirke Abot* 1,10.
- ⁴ *Abot de-Rabbi Natan*, ed. Schechter, chap. 11.
- ⁵ See *Shabbat* 49b.
- ⁶ Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz, *Shne Luhot ha-Berit*, Frankfurt a.d. Oder, 1717, p. 131a.
- ⁷ *Shabbat* 12a.
- ⁸ "Rabbi Sheshet used to place his scholars in a place exposed to the sun in summer, and in a shady place in winter, so that they should arise quickly (when he lectured to them on the Sabbath). Rabbi Zera used to seek out pairs of scholars (engaged in learned discussion) and say to them, 'I beg of you do not profane it' (the Sabbath, by neglecting its delights and good cheer)." *Shabbat* 119a-b.
- ⁹ Al Nakawa, *Menorat ha-Maor*, II, 191.
- ¹⁰ *Sefer Hasidim*, ed. Wistinetzki, Berlin, 1924, p. 426; see *Jer. Berachot* 5b.
- ¹¹ Deuteronomy 5:15.
- ¹² K. Kamelhar, *Dor De'ah*, Bilgoraj, 1933, p. 127.
- ¹³ *Mekilta* to 20:9.
According to Edward Mahler, the verb "shabbat" does not mean "to rest" but "to be complete." *Shabbatu*, the noun, means in Babylonian a cycle in a chronological sense, the day on which the moon completes its cycle, the day of the full moon. *Der Schabbat*, ZDMG, LXII, 33-79.
- ¹⁴ *Jer. Shabbat* 15a.

Epilogue

¹ J. A. Wilson, "Egyptian Myths, Tales and Mortuary Texts," in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 8.

² The Legend of the *eben shetiyah* is of post-Biblical origin, cf. Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, V, 14-16. *Maqom* as an appellation for God in rabbinic literature does not imply the deification of space but, on the contrary, the subordination of space to the divine. Space is not the ultimate; it is transcended by God.

² See A. J. Heschel, *Man Is Not Alone, A Philosophy of Religion*, p. 200.

⁴ *Tanhuma*, ed. Buber, II, 76; see Rashi to Exodus 19:1; Deuteronomy 26:16.

⁵ *Mishnah Pessahim* 10,5.

⁶ *Yadayim* 3,5.

⁷ *Abodah Zarah* 10b, 17a, 18a.

⁸ *Abot* 4,22.

⁹ In the daily morning service we read: "The Lord of marvels, in His goodness He renews the wonders of creation every day, constantly." The preservation of the world or the laws that account for the preservation of the world are due to an act of God. "Thou art the Lord, even Thou alone; Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens with all their hosts, the earth and all things that are thereon, the sea and all that is in them, and Thou preservest them all" (Nehemiah 9:6). "How manifold are Thy works, O Lord . . . All of them wait for Thee, that Thou mayest give them their food in due season . . . Thou hidest Thy face, they vanish . . . Thou sendest forth Thy spirit, they are created" (Psalms 104:24.27.29.30). Note the present tense in Isaiah 48:13; 42:5; see also, 48:7. Job 34: 14-16; *Kuzari* 3, 11. On seeing the wonders of nature we pray: "Blessed art Thou . . . who performs the wonders of creation" (*Mishnah Berachot* 9,2; see the opinion of Résh Laqish, *Hagigah* 12b and Rashi ad locum). The idea of continuous creation seems to have been the theme of an ancient controversy. According to the School of Shammai, the benediction over the lights which is said at the outgoing of the Sabbath, is: "Blessed art Thou who created the lights of fire"; whereas, according to the school of Hillel, we recite: "Blessed art Thou . . . who creates the lights of fire" (*Mishnah Berachot* 7,5); see Joseph Salomo Delmedigo, *Ta'alumot Hokmah, Nobelet Hokmah*, Basel, 1629, p. 94.