

The Village Temple  
“Experience Shabbat” 12/13/08

## The Sabbath by Abraham Joseph Heschel

### Discussion Questions:

- 1) Quotation: “Shabbat comes with its own holiness: we enter not simply a day, but an atmosphere...For my father, the question is how to perceive that holiness: not how *much* to observe, but *how* to observe.”
  - **How do we shape sacred time if not through ritual?**
  - **How do we create a Shabbat atmosphere in our homes?**
  - **How do we create ‘menuha’ – the “state wherein man lies still, wherein the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.”?**
  
- 2) Quotation: “Time to us is sarcasm, a slick treacherous monster with a jaw like a furnace incinerating every moment of our lives...The intentions we are unable to carry out we deposit in space; possessions become the symbols of our repressions, jubilees of frustrations...Is the joy of possession an antidote to the terror of time which grows to be a dread of inevitable death?”
  - **How does Heschel differentiate time and space and their differential effects on our lives?**
  
- 3) Quotation: “The higher goal of spiritual living is not to amass a wealth of information, but to face sacred moments.”
  - **How do we define ‘sacred moments’?**
  - **How do we create them?**
  
- 4) Quotation: “We must conquer space in order to sanctify time.”
  - **What does this mean to you?**
  
- 5) Quotation: “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.”
  - **How do we attain independence from technical civilization?**
  - **How important for you is it to renounce technical civilization as part of Shabbat observance?**

- 6) **Quotation:** “This, then, is the answer to the problem of civilization: not to flee from the realm of space; to work with things of space but to be in love with eternity. Things are our tools; eternity, the Sabbath, is our mate.”
- **What does it mean to be “in love with eternity”?**
  - **How do you understand the symbol of Shabbat as a bride?**
- 7) **Quotation:** “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.”
- **After having studied Heschel’s book, do you have a different perception of Shabbat and its importance in Judaism?**
  - **Are you inspired to change your observance in some way(s), and if so, in what way(s)?**