

The Sabbath:

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel's Conception of Time and Holiness

1 hr Lesson

All Supplies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Whiteboard or flipchart 2. Printouts of quotations of paper—in large type (see appendix text options below) 3. Art materials (educator's choice)
Lesson's Essential Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What does time mean to Heschel vis-a-vis Shabbat?
Lesson's Enduring Understanding:	Heschel provides a framework for understanding Shabbat as a “palace in time”—a day of “soul as well as the body” where the hustle and bustle of the workweek is put aside and holiness takes precedence.
Recommended reading in “My Legs Were Praying” by Rabbi Or N. Rose	This lesson can serve as a deeper dive into specific thematic elements of the book “My Legs Were Praying”. For use alongside the book, the lesson plan below best aligns with themes highlighted in chapters 7, 8, 13, and 16.

WARM UP: Joy on Shabbat

Duration:	10-15 min.
Supplies:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. White Board or flip chart 2. Markers (white board or regular)
Directions:	<p>Write the following words on a large board:</p> <p>מעין עולם הבא, יום שבת מנוחה / כל המתענגים בא יזכו לרוב שמחה</p> <p>“A taste of the world to come, the day of Shabbat rest / All those who take pleasure in it will merit great joy”</p> <p>Ask participants to write on the board an answer to the following question, “What gives you joy on Shabbat?” **Optional: Have a few answers already written to inspire (i.e. rest, time with friends and family, prayer, etc.)</p> <p>Ask participants to read aloud an answer that is not their own that inspired them and prompt the person who wrote the one they chose to, optionally, share more. Collect three to five responses.</p>

Activity 1: Exploring Space, Time, and Shabbat

Duration:	Approx. 30 min.
Supplies:	1. Printouts of quotations of paper—in large type (see below) 2. Markers (white board or regular)
Directions:	<p>Introduce Heschel with a brief biography and a brief explanation of his book “The Sabbath”. Explain to participants that they will be exposed to brief excerpts and be asked to contrast their observance of Shabbat with what Heschel describes.</p> <p>Place pre-written, cut out pieces of paper—in large type!--with quotes from the following four categories: Space & Time; Judaism & Time; The Sabbath: “A Palace in Time”; The Sabbath & the Week. Texts are located below.</p> <p>In each round, ask different voices to read the quotes aloud and ask the following question, each time, upon finishing all quotes in a given section: What does time mean to Heschel? Have people write their answers as opposed to sharing aloud.</p>

Activity 2: Further Exploration through Art

Duration:	Approx. 15 min.
Supplies:	1. Art materials (educator’s choice)
Directions:	<p>Upon reading all the quotes, ask people to select two to three responses they wrote down and share with a neighbor. People should exchange between themselves.</p> <p>Provide art materials and ask people to visually depict, or poetically respond to, the responses their neighbor chose to share.</p> <p>After 10-15 minutes, ask people to share their creative response with their partner.</p>

Closing: Meditation on “A Palace in Time”

Duration:	Approx. 5 min
Supplies:	N/A
Directions:	<p>At the close, read aloud the following quote three times, slowly, asking people to meditate on it.</p> <p>“The seventh day is a palace in time which we build. It is made of soul, of joy and reticence. Indeed, the splendor of the day is expressed in terms of abstentions, just as the mystery of God is more adequately conveyed”</p>

Appendix: Text Options

Space & Time

“Technical civilization is man’s conquest of space. It is a triumph frequently achieved by sacrificing an essential ingredient of existence, namely, time.”

“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. 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?”

“The higher goal of spiritual living is not to amass a wealth of information, but to face sacred moments.”

“Every hour is unique and the only one given at the moment, exclusive and endlessly precious.”

Judaism & Time

“Jewish ritual may be characterized as the art of significant forms in time, as *architecture in 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.”

The Sabbath: “A Palace in Time”

“One of the most distinguished words in the Bible is the word *kadosh*, holy [and “set apart”]... Now what was the first holy object in the history of the world? ... It is, indeed, a unique occasion at which the distinguished word *kadosh* is used for the first time: in the Book of Genesis at the end of the story of creation... ‘And God blessed the seventh *day* and made it *holy*’ (Genesis 2:3).”

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

The Sabbath & the Week

“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*’ (Exodus 23:12).”

“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. However, after he ate of the tree of knowledge he was condemned to toil, not 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 experienced by man cannot exist in exile, a lonely stranger among days of profanity. It needs the companionship of all other days. All days of the week must be spiritually consistent with the Day of Days. All our life should be a pilgrimage to the seventh day... For the Sabbath is the counterpoint to living; the melody sustained throughout all agitations and vicissitudes which menace our conscience; our awareness of God’s presence in the world.”