

Eternity Utters A Day

BY DAVID WOLPE

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

— ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL, *THE SABBATH*

Friday Night arrives. I know what my task is at this moment: I am to stop affecting the world and live in harmony with it. Even though I am a tangle of yearnings, on this day everything is to be perfect. I am to be satisfied with the many blessings that I have in my life. For once, I am to be at peace with the universe. My friends have no time. Their lives are crowded. They do not see their friends, play with their overscheduled children, put their feet up and stare out the window. They cannot; they must drive somewhere, check their email, return phone calls — in other words, conquer space.

But even if we correspond at the touch of a button with others around the world, technology does not sanctify time. We do. God's greatest gift is to endow human beings with the capacity to perceive — and to create — holiness. Jews have not, through their wanderings, had the leisure or the need to build grand cathedrals. Yet we have celebrated the Sabbath, a cathedral in time. It can be celebrated in a ramshackle hut, in a cave, in a barren field. The sanctity of time requires not technology but devotion of soul.

So on Friday night I stop. Before the candles and the wine we sing, and my wife and I bless our beautiful little girl. She is not yet four years old. She has not yet heard of Heschel, but she understands him. It takes only three things, wrote this sage, to create a sense of significant being: God, a soul and a moment. And the three, he said, are always present.

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