



HILLEL'S JOSEPH MEYERHOFF  
CENTER FOR JEWISH LEARNING

## Making a Day Special

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### Babylonian Talmud *Beitza 16a*

### ביצה דף טז/א

תנא: אמרו עליו על שמאי הזקן, כל ימיו היה אוכל לכבוד שבת מצא בהמה נאה אומר, "זו לשבת." מצא אחרת נאה הימנה מניח את השניה ואוכל את הראשונה. אבל הלל הזקן מדה אחרת היתה לו שקל מעשיו לשם שמים שנאמר "ברוך ה' יום יום." תנא נמי הכי: בית שמאי אומרים "מחד שביד לשבתיד." ובית הלל אומרים "ברוך ה' יום יום."

A teaching: It was said of Shammai, the elder that all his days he would eat in order to honor Shabbat. If he would find a nice calf he would say, "This will be for Shabbat." If he found one that was nicer, he would set aside the second one and then eat the first one.

Hillel, however, behaved differently, for all his deeds were for the sake of heaven, as it is written, "Praised be God each day."

It was also recorded in later generations: The House of Shammai said: "Each day should be for Shabbat." The House of Hillel replied: "Praise be God everyday."

### **Your Talmud Navigator**

1. What can Hillel and Shammai agree upon?
2. Can they agree that Shabbat is special?
3. If they can, then what is the essence of their disagreement?
4. Why doesn't Hillel want to save the best calf for Shabbat?
5. How does Shammai make his shabbat special?
6. Why does Hillel have trouble with that?
7. Can you draw any conclusions on how each of them view shabbat in terms of the rest of the week?
8. Can you determine how Hillel and Shammai relate to time?

## Care for the seed of eternity

Abraham Joshua Heschel

*The Sabbath*

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.

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; the Sabbath we especially care for the seed of eternity planted in the soul.

Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its meaning for modern man*. (New York: The Noonday Press), 1951, pp. 10, 13.

### **YOUR HESCHEL NAVIGATOR**

1. Is Heschel more like Shammai or Hillel, or does he present a third point of view?
2. When we celebrate birthdays, are we in the realm of space or time?
3. Do you find the idea that the world will survive without the help of humanity comforting or depressing?
4. According to Heschel, does anything creative happen on the Sabbath?