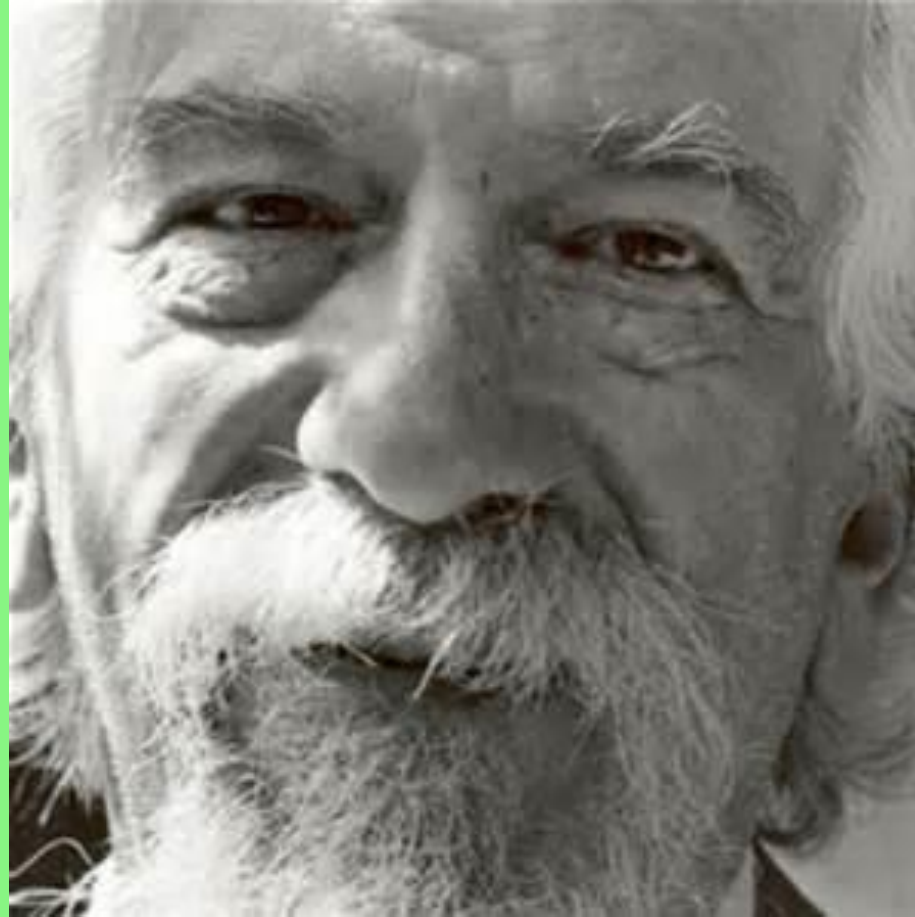


# ***Abraham Joshua Heschel***

***(January 11, 1907 – December 23, 1972)***



# Timeline

**January 11, 1907**, born in Warsaw, Poland, youngest of six children, to Rabbi Moshe Mordecai Heschel and Reizel Perlow Heschel; considered a blessed genius as a child



**1916**, father dies of influenza

**1927**, successfully completes his examinations at the Mathematical-Natural Science Gymnasium in Vilna

**1933**, obtains doctorate from the University of Berlin; releases his first book, a collection of poems, *The Ineffable Name of God: Man*

**1934**, ordained as a rabbi

**1937**, appointed by Martin Buber as Buber's successor at Lehrhaus in Frankfurt

**October, 1938**, arrested by the Nazis; deported to Poland; teaches at Warsaw Institute for Jewish Studies; immigrates to England

**1940**, immigrates to the U.S.; Assoc. Prof. of Philosophy and Rabbinics at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati

**1941-1945**, sister Esther killed in a German bombing; mother murdered by the Nazis; sisters, Gittel and Devorah, die in Nazi concentration camps

**1945**, becomes Professor of Jewish Ethics and Mysticism at Jewish Theological Seminary, NYC

**December 10, 1946**, marries Sylvia Straus, in LA, CA

**May 6, 1956**, birth of daughter, Susannah Heschel

**1962-1965**, first officially recognized Jewish advisor for Second Vatican Council

**March 21, 1965**, walks and demonstrates with Martin Luther King in the Selma to Montgomery march

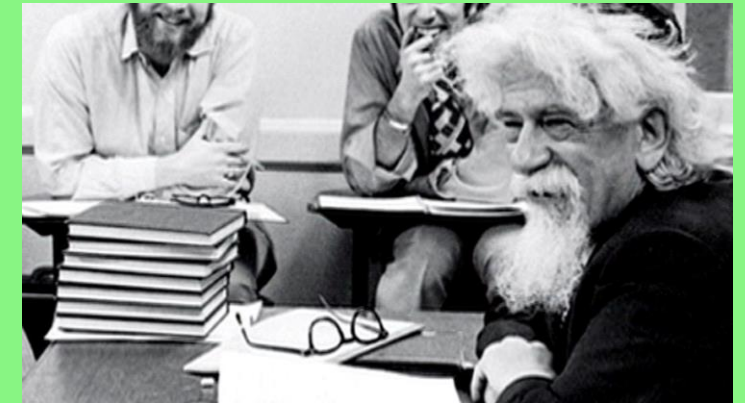
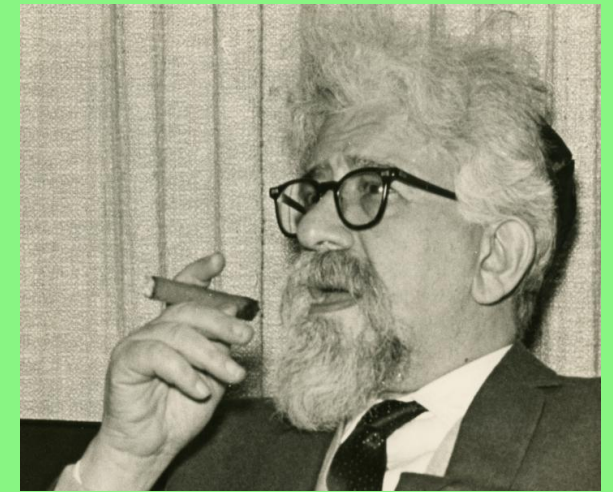
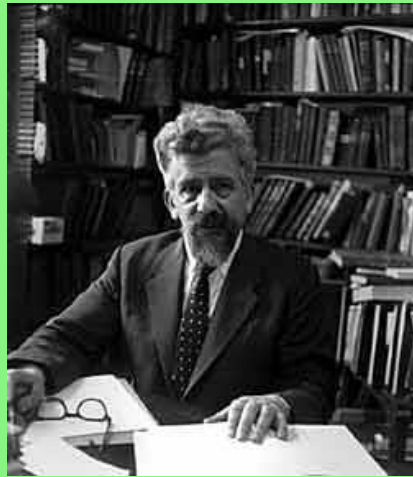
**Fall 1965**, helps to co-found Clergy and Laity Concerned about the Vietnam War (CALCVW)

**Shabbat, December 23, 1972**,

dies in his sleep, on the Sabbath, considered in Judaism as "kiss from God"

**Dec. 24, 1972**, funeral held at Park West Memorial Chapel, 115 W. 79th St., NYC; buried at Beth David Cemetery, Elmont, Nassau County, New York

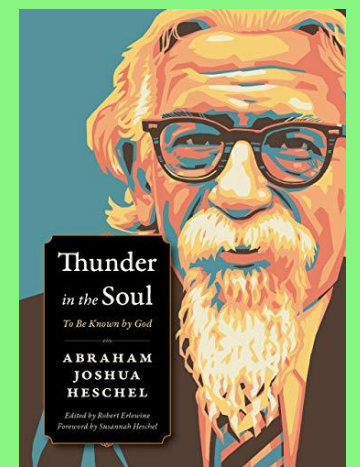
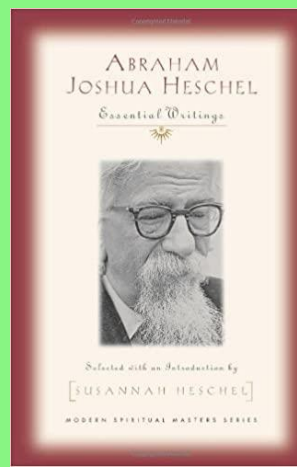
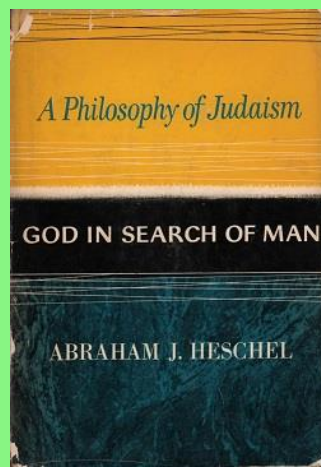
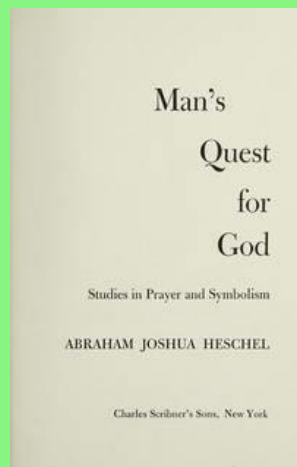
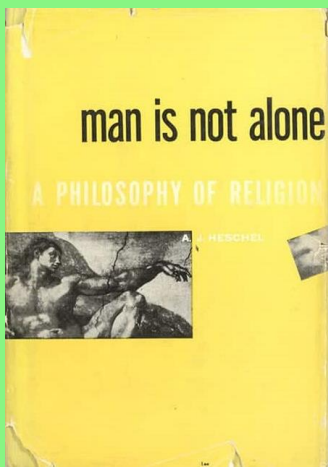
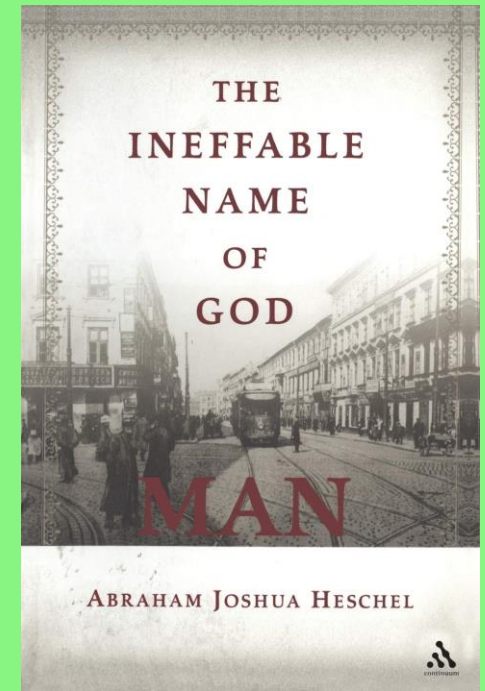
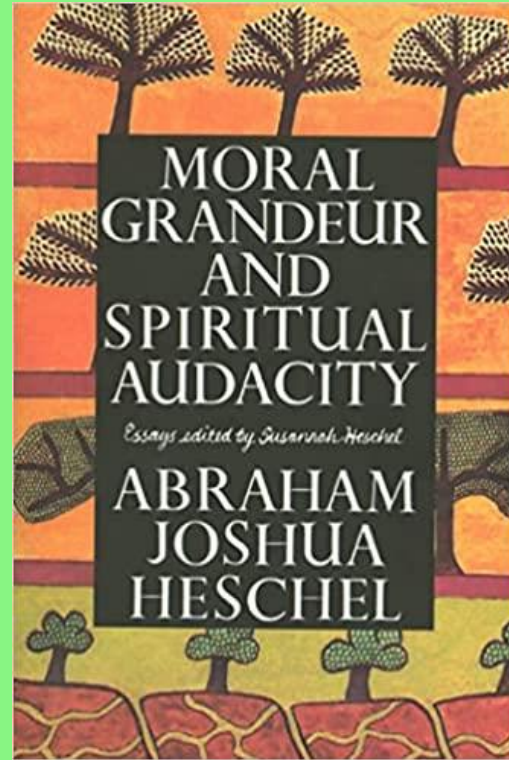
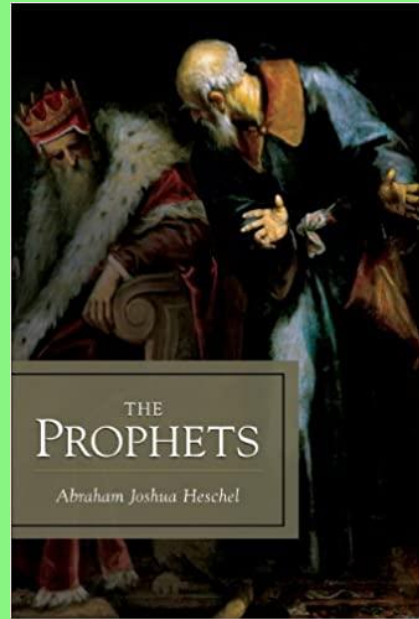




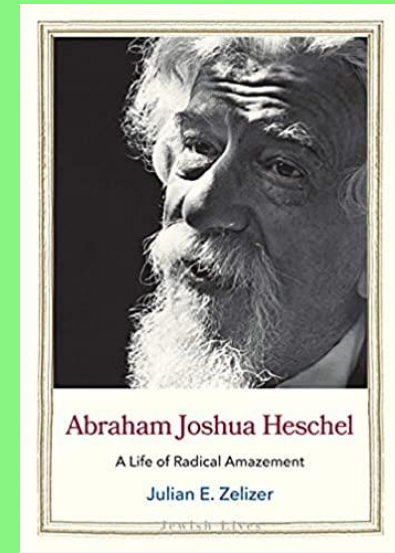
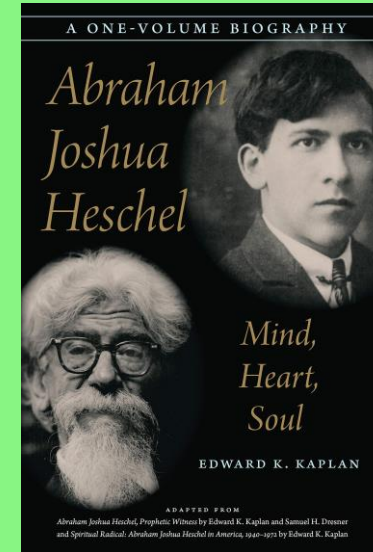
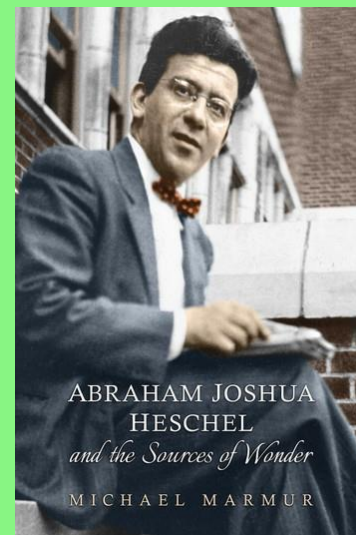
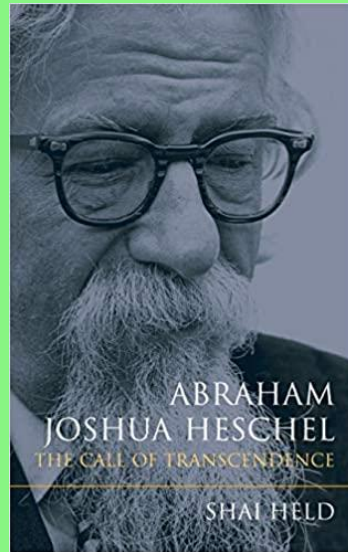
# A Few of Heschel's Memorable Quotes

- “My feet were praying.”
- *“The hour calls for high moral grandeur and spiritual audacity.”*
- “ . . . in a free society, some are guilty, but all are responsible.”
- *“We do not step out of the world when we pray; we merely see the world in a different setting. The self is not the hub but the spoke of the revolving wheel. It is precisely the function of prayer to shift the center of living from self-consciousness to self-surrender.”*
- “Pagans exalt sacred things, the Prophets extol sacred deeds.”
- *“We are closer to God when we are asking questions than when we think we have the answers.”*
- Human beings are “to live a life that would deserve and evoke an eternal Amen.”

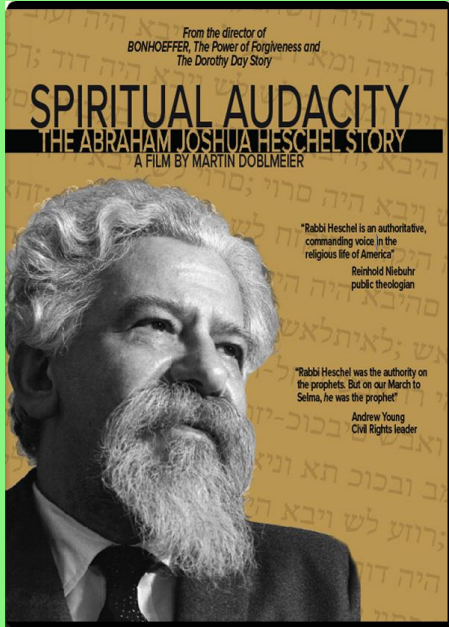
# Where to start??



# Where to start?? Books *about* Heschel



# Audio/Video resources



## ✓ **Spiritual Audacity:**

### **The Abraham Joshua Heschel Story (2019)**

A Film by Martin Doblmeier – Journey Films <https://journeyfilms.com/spiritualaudacity/>

PBS – free access (57:19)

<https://www.pbs.org/video/spiritual-audacity-the-abraham-joshua-heschel-story-i3ptfo/>

## ✓ **Abraham Joshua Heschel on Religion News Weekly – PBS (2008)**

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2008/01/18/january-18-2008-abraham-joshua-heschel/1789/> (9:27)

## ✓ **Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel as a Father (2018)**

(Susannah Heschel interviewed by R' Shmuly Yanklowitz)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rg9ZWWhc9B6E> (9:55)

# Audio/Video resources ... continued

✓ **NBC Interview by Carl Stern with Abraham Joshua Heschel (1972)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEXK9xcRCho> (37:13)

**Susannah Heschel - Growing up with her father, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (2015)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m46nqEjxxiw> (6:22)

**Praying with their Legs: Rabbi Abraham Heschel & Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.(2014)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-HrEVfE1vKw> (1:07:04)

**Abraham Joshua Heschel on the mystery of time (Audio) (1967)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2FxWuint44> (3:00)



# Video Clip

## **Spiritual Audacity: The Abraham Joshua Heschel Story (Trailer)**

<https://journeyfilms.com/spiritualaudacity/> (2:52)

# The measure of Heschel's Greatness

In the 20th century few religious figures in Judaism loomed larger or had greater impact than Abraham Joshua Heschel. In his brief 65 years of life, spent on two continents, he combined the knowledge of a genius intellectual with the passion of a prophet and the lyricism of a poet. His is a monumental legacy of magisterial importance.

- Scholarly work on the Hebrew prophets
- Passion for and sensitive engagement with interfaith dialogue
- Reveling in the joys and challenges of Hasidic mysticism
- Descriptions of authentic worship
- Emphasis on the hallowing the Sabbath
- Social justice activism on behalf of human rights for all people

**Heschel's grandest contributions are in his thinking, teaching, and writing about the fundamental dynamics of humanity's relationship with God.**

- ***All of life is holy and every human soul is precious.***
- God importunes humanity to be representative of God's presence in the world.
- ***Faith begins in reverential awe.***
- Prayer is constituted by practice and devotion to an unwavering principle: *"Just to be is a blessing. Just to live is holy."* Prayer is also *"subversive,"* in that it stimulates us *"to overthrow and to ruin the pyramids of callousness, hatred, opportunism, falsehood."*
- ***The Sabbath is a "sanctuary in time" by which we become "attuned to holiness in time....to the mystery of creation...."***

# Summary Estimations

“... an authoritative voice not only in the Jewish community but in the religious life of America.”

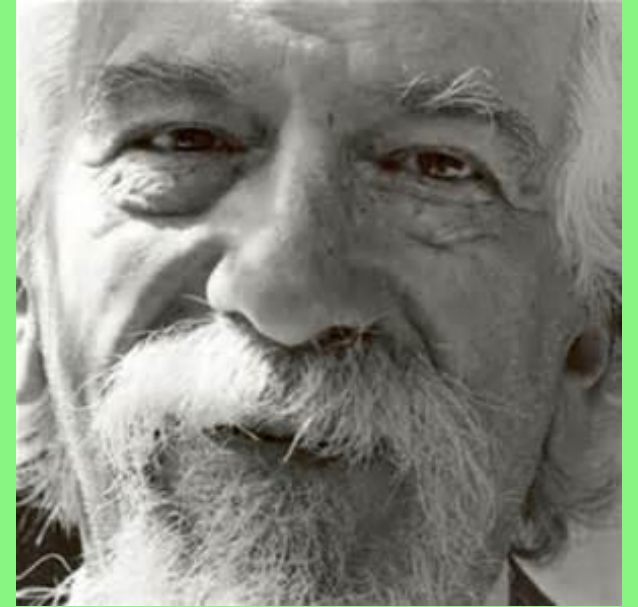
– Reinhold Niebuhr

“A prophet’s prophet.”

– Robert M. Seltzer

“I am still amazed by my father’s courage, after losing his family in the war, to fall in love, marry and have a child . . . . I must add: he was never depressed, never moody or withdrawn or melancholy. Our family home was filled with laughter, jokes and playfulness.... Despair is forbidden, he used to say. God is everywhere and never gives us a task without also giving us the strength to carry it out.”

– Susannah Heschel



# God Follows Me Everywhere (a found prayer)

God follows me everywhere –  
Spins a net of glances around me,  
Shines upon my sightless back like a sun.

God follows me like a forest everywhere.  
My lips, always amazed, are truly numb, dumb,  
Like a child who blunders upon an ancient holy place.

God follows me like a shiver everywhere.  
My desire is for rest; the demand within me is: Rise up,  
See how prophetic visions are scattered in the streets . . . .

**TIME's YOURS . . . .**

**Q & A . . . .**

**Discussion . . . .**

**Musings . . . .**