“Even as he was immersed in his scholarship, my father [Abraham Joshua Heschel] was always concerned with his fellow Jews and the state of their spirit. He wrote to offer not comfort but challenge, yet in his words of challenge from the 1930s there is always hope: ‘moral and spiritual recovery in the face of political catastrophe.’ . . .

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—From Susannah Heschel’s foreword to In This Hour: Heschel’s Writings in Nazi Germany and London Exile

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Important writings by Heschel, in English for the first time

In This Hour offers the first English translations of selected German writings by Abraham Joshua Heschel from his tumultuous years in Nazi-ruled Germany and months in London exile, before he found refuge in the United States. Several of the works have, moreover, never been published in any language. Composed during a time of intense crisis for European Jewry, these writings both argue for and exemplify a powerful vision of spiritually rich Jewish learning and its redemptive role in the past and the future of the Jewish people.

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Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907–72) was a rabbi, scholar, and philosopher. In 1937 Martin Buber appointed him as his successor at the central organization for Jewish adult education in Frankfurt am Main. In time he became one of the most influential modern philosophers of religion in the United States. He formulated an original philosophy of Judaism, expressed in such foundational books as Man Is Not Alone (1951) and God in Search of Man (1955).

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• Since reciting Kaddish brought secular Jews to synagogue, the rabbis, aware of their captive audience, moved the prayer to the end of the service.
• Who’s Jewish? About a quarter of Nobel Prize winners, an estimated 80 percent of comedians at one point, and the winner of Nazi Germany’s Most Perfect Aryan Child Contest.

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Nancy Kalikow Maxwell is a librarian, an award-winning writer, and a frequent contributor to Jewish media. She is the author of six books and the creator of funny cards for Hallmark’s Tree of Life Jewish card line.

“As Maxwell takes readers on a humorous safari to observe Jews in their natural habitat, even Jews who have never set foot in a synagogue or JCC will recognize themselves with wondrous insight. And Jews who love learning—in other words, all of us—will delight in learning a lot. I definitely did.”—Maggie Anton, author of Rashi’s Daughters and Fifty Shades of Talmud


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Michael Carasik teaches biblical Hebrew at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the compiler and translator of the Commentators’ Bible series and author of Theologies of the Mind in Biblical Israel and The Bible’s Many Voices (JPS, 2014).

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