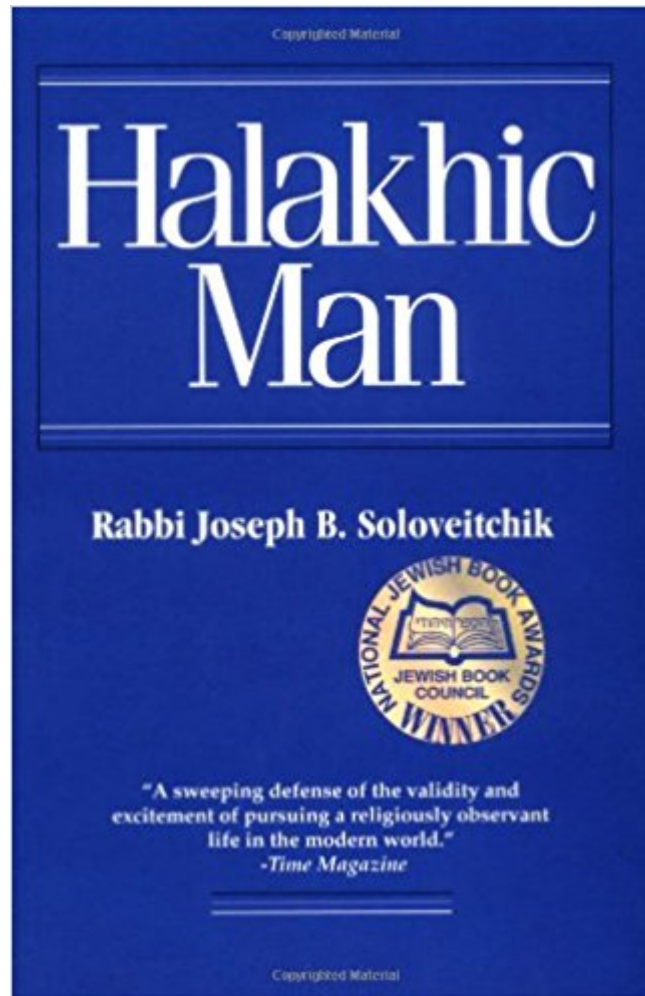




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Halakhic Man



Synopsis

Halakhic Man is the classic work of modern Jewish and religious thought by the twentieth century's preeminent Orthodox Jewish theologian and talmudic scholar. It is a profound excursion into religious psychology and phenomenology, a pioneering attempt at a philosophy of halakhah, and a stringent critique of mysticism and romantic religion.

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Customer Reviews

"The best single introduction to Jewish religious thought in print." •Theology Today (Theology Today)

Rabbi Soloveitchik is a unique and startling writer. What he's saying is right in front of you already, you just haven't listened to the tour guide enough. So you'll read it again and again. Wonderful book. Good price and delivery.

This book changed my life - it gave me a new religious direction and spoke to me in a way that no other work has ever done. However, this happened nearly 20 years after my first (and unsuccessful) attempt to read it ! My advice is not to be put-off by the difficult philosophical language of the book. Have a dictionary to hand and persevere !

Always Good - even if you, lie me have been reading it for 30 years

sooooo intense

Excellent!

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik's (the Rav) seminal work is *Halakhic Man*; and it both echoes a work it mocks, *The Organization Man*. Both books reflect the ethos of post-war America: the rise of collective bureaucracies in both the corporate world and government, the presence of massive totalitarian states in the Communist east, and the rising tide of discontent at the loss of personal identity and meaning. The Rav, of course, believes that *Halakhic Man*, the individual who follows Jewish religious dictates, is most situated for a meaningful life in the world. The other types of people he creates and explores, *Religious Man* and *Cognitive Man*, stand in distinction from *Halakhic Man*. Interestingly, *Religious Man* is farther from the human ideal than *Cognitive Man*. The Rav has little good to say about emotive forms of religion. Following in the Litvak tradition he hails from, he finds *Religious Man* far too prone to extremes of behavior to follow the straight line of Judaism. The Rav takes aim at Kabbalah, mysticism of all sorts, Chasidism, and even reading of psalms. These subjects and pursuits take a person out of the world. "Halakhic man will not dance on the streets on the Passover night, nor will he shout out his prayers on the Days of Awe." "Cognitive Man, the person of science and empiricism, is much like *Halakhic Man* in that she obeys certain immutable laws of nature, and puts them into practice in living reality. *Halakhic Man* experiences religious enthusiasm, but this "experience is modest, retiring, very delicate, but strong as flint." "Halakhic Man is an existentialist: "The Halakhah does not aspire to a heavenly transcendence| it fixes its gaze upon empirical reality and does not allow its attention to be diverted from it." He does not brook spiritual dualities: "The true sanctuary is the sphere of our daily, mundane activities, for it is there that the realizations of Halakhah takes place." The Rav believes that intellect should guide Jewish practice. I think his characterization of *Religious Man* is often misguided. He sets up a straw man in order to raise the stock of *Halakhic Man*. Despite this, and certain opaque prose near the center and end of the book (particular in part two) this is an important work which sheds vital life and light on the Jewish experience.

This is from the book-jacket. "A profound excursion into religious psychology and phenomenology; a pioneering attempt at a philosophy of Halakhah; a stringent critique of mysticism and romantic

religion-all held together by the force of the author's highly personal vision. Exuding intellectual sophistication and touching upon issues fundamental to religious life, Rabbi Soloveitchik's exploration, in sum, seeks to explain the inner world of the Talmudist-or as he is referred to typologically, halakhic man in terms drawn from Western culture. This is as I understand it Rabbi Soloveitchik's defense of the ideal Jew, the Jewish way of life, the kind of Jewish life his family and he himself stood for for generations. I myself reading the work found it quite difficult to understand and its philosophical complexity often beyond me. But it is the central statement of one of the greatest of all modern Jewish thinkers. And I believe all those interested in the deepest Jewish thought should know this work.

It may be a tough go at first but if the reader works his way through the elegant and highly intelligent prose of HALAKHIC MAN, the book ultimately yields a starkly simple but profound truth--that the Torah was brought down from heaven and given to the Jewish People here on earth, so that this nation of priests can reshape the physical realm into something holy. That is the awesome task of Halakhic Man. In the words of this sage we can see, with breathtaking clarity, that the 613 mitzvot or commandments are not collection of dusty, restrictive rituals. On the contrary, those holy precepts embody a timeless and priceless formula that changes lives and reshapes worlds. The brilliance of Rav Soloveitchik should speak to the heart and mind of any reader who genuinely wants to comprehend the central tenets of Torah. Highly recommended.

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