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The Thirst For Holiness and Joy and Combating Evil

Good morning.

This morning we continue our exploration or meditation on holiness. Remember this theme arose when we were dealing with evil. As Rabbi Heschel very wisely tells us,

The biblical answer to evil is not the good, but the holy. And the holy is an attempt to raise humanity to a higher level of existence, where humans are not alone when confronted with evil. Living in the 'light of the face of God' bestows upon humans a power of love that enables one to overcome the powers of evil.

Now, one way to meditate on holiness is to ask ourselves who are the people we admire, living or dead? What are their qualities that render them special, and mentors for us about their meaning of holiness? So we get very concrete that way.

But in my *Confessions* book, which is the basis of today's meditation, I lay out several principles of holiness. And the one that we've been dealing with lately in our daily meditations is that of joy.

But to be honest, I didn't have that when I wrote this book, well, the second edition about eight years ago. But we'll be dealing with the other signs of holiness as we move along this week. But here I just want to share a few thoughts that are present.

Karl Rahner, a Jesuit theologian, said:

In spite of every objective word, it is the saints who sustain our religion, who sustain church, who sustain people, that we look for those who are actually living out in a generous and full and courageous way the best of themselves and the messages that we inherit from our ancestors.

I do think some of the examples he gives of holiness are a bit dated and this is why I think, as history moves along, and as culture moves along, that we have to ask this question over again: what are the signs of holiness in our time, as distinct from several generations or even several centuries ago?

Some of the great saints of our ancestry still speak to us very strongly. But I think it is our job to ask what are the qualities of holiness in our time?

As I say, holiness is everybody's business. The way that we define it is everybody's business. But we're not ready, I think, to go more deeply and broadly into this theme of what are the signs. By their fruits you will know that but what are the fruits that we look for in time like ours, for that precious word that Heschel talks about, the most precious word in a religion, that of holiness.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow and continue this discussion.