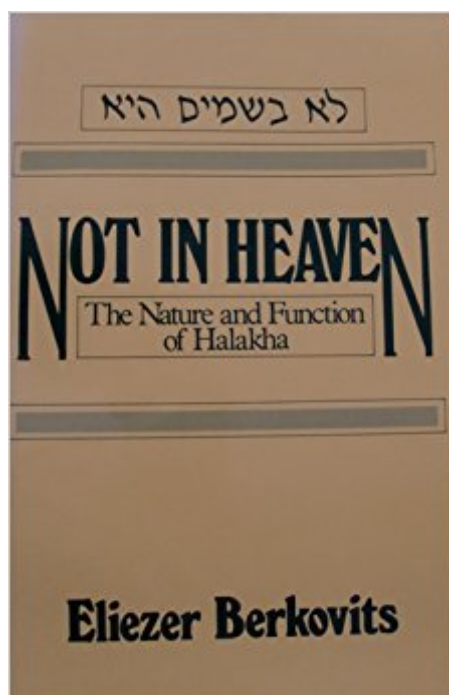


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Not In Heaven: The Nature And Function Of Halakha



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Customer Reviews

Rabbi Berkovits was one of the important Jewish thinkers of the twentieth century. In this work he strives to explain the way the Halachah(Jewish law) works. He explains the Nature and Function of Halachah, the Nature of Halachic Authority, the essential nature of Halachah, and the application of Halachah in our time. He is especially concerned with the role of Halacha in relation to women's role in the modern world, and discusses marriage and divorce laws. Rabbi Berkovits is an orthodox thinker but one who is aware of how needs of the time may require flexibility in Halachah. He considers the role of Halacha in democratic society.

Berkovits' goal is to explain that halacha can, and has in the past, been flexible. Berkovits discusses numerous examples of our Sages of blessed memory creatively interpreting halacha (Jewish law) in order to meet the needs of the day and the dictates of common decency, with a particular focus on agricultural and marital law. For example, the Sages gutted levirate marriage (a Biblical law which, if read overly literally, requires childless widows to marry the brother of their dead husband) and modified divorce laws to add protections for women. In his last chapter, he suggests that Israeli halachists think about how to apply halacha in a Jewish state. For example, total Shabbos observance works in a predominantly Gentile society where Gentiles staff the hospitals, police dept. etc. But what happens in a mostly Jewish state where the doctors, nurses, police officers etc. are Jewish? How do we balance Shabbos observance and public needs? Berkovits doesn't supply the answer but he raises the question. (Thus, I think this book would be even more interesting for Israeli

readers than for Americans like me). I think this book is worth reading for both Orthodox Jews (who can learn from this book that halacha has sometimes changed with the times, and that our Sages were not potted plants mechanically transmitting tradition) and for non-Orthodox Jews (who can learn that Orthodox Jews are smarter than they might think).

Rabbi Dr. Berkovits, an eminent and revered philosopher and teacher, was one of the twentieth century's most important thinkers in the field of halachah (Jewish law). This book clearly, cogently, powerfully and persuasively sets out his philosophy of Jewish law and how halachah is properly to be understood and applied in the modern world to re-establish its relevance, significance and moral authority. It is "must reading" for anyone having an interest in any aspect of these matters.

Berkovits' work is an essential read for any modern Orthodox Jew. He gives a thorough explanation of halacha, how it came about, and what its purpose is. Typical Berkovits, this book was enlightening, as well as inspiring. Being a highschool student, it clarified a lot for me. I recommend it to all.

The book gives the reader a good background in the history of Halakha (Jewish law) and contains the author's suggestions for its future. Truly stimulating and possibly life-changing. An easy read for a philosophy book.

This book is stunning! I read every word, and I can understand why fellow readers feel so passionately about this book. The writer is Orthodox, yet the book is a radical exposition of halacha for our times.

This book is one of the best books I've read this year; it is both enlightening and very human, and, as a previous reader said, potentially life-changing.

I was surprised to see that your site claims the book is unavailable. I found a number of copies at Pomeranz Bookseller in Jerusalem.

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