



NONFICTION

## The Shabbat Effect: Jewish Wisdom for Growth and Transformation

Alan Morinis

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Categories  
Ritual & Practice  
Shabbat

### Review

By Beth Ricanati – December 2, 2025

Mussar is a 1,100-year-old Jewish tradition of Jewish ethics. Imagine it synthesized into eight practices to deepen our spiritual and religious experience of Shabbat. Now take those eight practices and bring them into the rest of the week to enhance how you live. This is what Alan Morinis describes in his latest book, *The Shabbat Effect: Jewish Wisdom for Growth and Transformation*. The author incorporates ancient commentary and modern storytelling, which is fitting given he is an anthropologist, a filmmaker, and—as the founder of the Mussar Institute—a prominent figure in the Mussar movement today. His thesis is compelling in the fast-paced, modern world.

*The Shabbat Effect* is an accessible guidebook, as Morinis writes his introduction: “The central message of this book is that taking on a structured practice with a spiritual core can bring about a transformation of a key set of inner traits, not just every seventh day, but with an effect that extends through every day of your life.” To practically achieve this, he lays his thesis out through eight concepts, one per chapter: awareness, rest, enoughness, joy, peace and harmony, silence, trust, and holiness. In each of the chapters, he weaves ancient text and commentary together with modern storytelling in order to create a compelling narrative. At the conclusion of each chapter, Morinis suggests several prompts—action items, if you will—to help readers bring the focus on the chapter into their lives. A wholehearted believer in journaling, he encourages the reader to write about what they’ve learned and/or experienced when following each of the prompts.

Much like other mindfulness practices, like meditation or yoga, the success of a Shabbat practice that incorporates these eight principles starts with the importance of intention: approaching Shabbat with intention creates an environment that will allow one to lean into and embrace any one of these traits. Morini’s resonant example is the use of phones. We are not focused when we are on our phones; we are distracted and lose the ability to act with intention. Early in *The Shabbat Effect*, Morinis writes that to fully commit to Shabbat, to experience the joy and presence, we need to put our (proverbial) phones down. I did that as I read this book, and I felt so much better for it.

So whether you finish the whole book in one sitting—a great plan for a Shabbat afternoon—or you read a chapter here or there and try the prompts at the end, *The Shabbat Effect* will leave you feeling more grounded and present just for having read it. More importantly, not only will the practices it leaves you with create a more meaningful Shabbat, but also their effects will radiate out into the other days of your life.

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*Dr. Beth Ricanati is a physician, speaker and the author of Braided: A Journey of a Thousand Challahs, a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award.*

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