

1: Choices in Modern Jewish Thought: A Partisan Guide by Eugene B. Borowitz

Choices In Modern Jewish Thought re-examines major Jewish thinkers of the 20th century. Choices In Modern Jewish Thought celebrates the achievement of those who addressed the unprecedented challenge to Jewish faith presented by modernity.

In this essay I want to suggest that alongside consideration of what a Jew believes and what a Jew does, there is a third category that distinguishes Jewish religious thinkers from one another—how and what a Jew quotes. Quotation has become the subject of significant attention in the fields of literary theory and cultural studies. My aim is to discuss some ways in which Jewish thinkers attempt to employ tradition to articulate, transmit and enhance a modern Jewish theology. The article will consider a number of recurrent themes in modern Jewish thought, such as the paradoxical relationship between divine power and human initiative and the role of the Jewish people after Auschwitz, and how this quotation is used by various thinkers to develop these and other themes. In so doing we may reflect on what this says about quotation and the horizon of interpretations a reading allows. The role that quotation plays in Jewish culture in general and in the formulation of modern Jewish theology in particular is significant and under-appreciated, and a consideration of this dimension yields doi: Published by Oxford University Press. For permissions, please e-mail: Borowitz refers to a number of thinkers in *Renewing the Covenant*: Martin Buber features on thirty-six pages, Downloaded from <http://www.oxfordjournals.org/>. Non-Jewish philosophers such as Kant also figure prominently. However, if a quotation is understood as a sentence explicitly excerpted from an earlier source, there are only sixteen cases of a quotation in *Renewing the Covenant*. In the overwhelming majority of cases, when an individual is mentioned it is without reference to any particular book, and no excerpt is actually quoted. Of the mentions of individuals, only 30 involve pre-modern Jewish sources—from the liturgy to Philo, from Maimonides to Midrash. By comparison, there are over 100 sources quoted, cited and mentioned in *God In Search of Man*. Of them, only a handful is mentioned in the style later adopted by Borowitz in *Renewing the Covenant*. *God In Search of Man* cites from twenty centuries of Jewish creativity. If that work contains some quotations and citations from rabbinic literature, we find over 100 such sources cited and quoted in his monumental three-volume *Torah min Hashamayim*. It should be pointed out that Eugene Borowitz has demonstrated his profound engagement with Rabbinical literature and other staples of the Jewish canon: *Use of Sources in Modern Jewish Thought* 3 In a future study I hope to present a systematic analysis of the quotational styles of a number of Jewish thinkers. In this article our emphasis will not be on the quantity of sources, nor on an analysis of the range of sources adduced. Rather, we will pay attention here to one midrashic tradition. It appears in *Sifre to Deuteronomy* and in a number of parallel sources,⁸ and, as already noted, it is based on a phrase which appears in Isaiah. The midrash, part of a longer tradition in the name of Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai, offers a daring reading: But if you are not my witnesses, I am not the Lord. This teaching, or the verse from Isaiah on which it is based, is to be found in a variety of iterations in the work of many central figures in modern Jewish thought. In the following section of the article we will survey the ideas that the source is used to exemplify, illustrate, or amplify. Ten distinct though related uses have been identified among the modern Jewish thinkers under discussion. Some attention will then be given to the connection between the ideas propounded by these thinkers and the ways in which the saying is quoted. In his late work *What Is Judaism?* It is paradoxical to be sure, in that it indicates. In this world God is not God unless we are His witnesses. Already in the early 1930s he had developed the notion of Divine pathos, and was prepared to risk a pristine theological concept of absolute omnipotence and impassability in order to promote the notion of a God who feels human suffering and is in search of human response. His subject is the realization of God through human decision and human action, which comes to expression in the world in three stages, three underlying strata. The first and earliest of these is *imitatio dei*. Our midrash is cited as a motto of the second stratum, in which human agency serves to thicken and intensify the presence of the Divine on earth. The more man realizes God in the world, the greater His reality. Modern Jewish theologians have framed this paradox in different ways. The Rabbinic teaching constitutes a supreme expression of a sublime paradox. He makes bold

claims in this regard: The Rabbinic tradition confirms this version of the belief in God as dependent on the behavior of man. The reality of God can be experienced only when mankind acts in a way that makes for its creative process. The Jew is the guarantor of the eternal Torah. The essay both traces and resists the influence of trends within Protestant theology on Liberal Judaism, and offers a spirited defense of the concept of revelation. It is not a deduction, or a construct. It is a commandment whose source is external to humanity. The response to which humanity is called is not intellectual in nature. A martyr is a witness, as the original meaning of the Greek term demonstrates. Willingness to die speaks louder than any argumentation. God is affirmed in self-conscious sacrifice. This is the core of the covenant. It can only be lived and enacted. No dogmatic piety can serve as substitute. After quoting the midrash, Fishbane adds: In the most recent of the theological works under review here, the testimony under discussion is not assessed in the currency of martyrdom, or in some abstract leap of faith. The faith of the soul testifies, in its faithfulness, to the love of God, and it gives to it permanent being. If you testify to Me, then I shall be God, and otherwise not – these are the words that the master of Kabbalah puts into the mouth of the God of love. The lover who surrenders himself in love is recreated in the faithfulness of the beloved, and from then on, it is forever. In confirming the love generated by the divine lover, the beloved realizes and renders permanent the love which has been offered. Commenting on a saying Downloaded from [http:](http://) Levinas emphasizes that the fear of which he speaks is not provoked by an external threat. A reciprocation of the Divine initiative of Love, and an expression of fear translating into profound ethical consideration – both of these can be understood as expressions of human response as testimony. The martyr of Baeck and Kaplan gives her life as testimony. Abraham Joshua Heschel cited Isaiah In his work *God In Search of Man* he quotes the verse and avers: The essence of Jewish religious thinking does not lie in entertaining a concept of God but in the ability to articulate a memory of moments of illumination by His presence. Railing against the tendency to speak of God as an abstraction, Heschel declares: There are no proofs for the existence of the God of Israel. There are only witnesses. You cannot define Him, you can only invoke Him. He is not a notion but a name. Against these tendencies, which Heschel regarded as futile and risible, he brings the words of Isaiah. One can only testify to its occurrence. This particular statement maintains: If there are no witnesses, there is no God to be met. There is a mystery, an enigma, a darkness past finding out. For God to be present there have to be witnesses. In one mini-chapter he argues that the disciples of Rabbi Akiva expanded his notion of the Shechinah, the Divine presence, going into Exile along with the people Israel. Commenting on the extraordinary daring of this teaching, Heschel suggests that the transcendent value of human actions can be learnt from it. On the one hand, the context relates to the exile of the people Israel. On the other hand, the lesson of the midrash is taken to be of universal import. Without the people Israel, the Bible is mere literature. Through Israel, the Bible is a voice, a power and a challenge. His book on Israel was penned hurriedly in the immediate aftermath of the Six Day War. He strove to argue that the eclipse of the Bible in the late twentieth century was a tendency to be resisted with vigor. The mission of Israel was taken to be inextricably linked with the centrality and perpetual relevance of the Bible. In that work Heschel omitted any direct Holocaust resonances to the source mandating the testimony of Israel although *An Echo of Eternity* contains more explicit references to the Holocaust than any of his other works. His use of the text relates to the eternal mission of Israel, rather than to any particular historical exigency. From generation to generation, this people was pledged to the One God against all gods, to the one way as opposed to all ways, to the one kingdom above all kingdoms, to the one hope beyond all hopes. Thus did the prophet of the Exile give Israel direction. To this end had Israel battled. In its striving, the soul had made and kept the spirit fertile. This striving had maintained its life, and its power had created new forms of living. Whether it be as guarantors of the Bible or as perpetual witnesses to the Divine, we find the words of Bar Yochai and Isaiah employed by these thinkers to speak to the mission of Israel. As Michael Fishbane notes in his commentary to the Haftarah for the first portion of the book of Genesis, which includes Isaiah The existence, the history and the survival of the Jewish people are themselves the most imposing witnesses to the Jewish encounter with God. In a footnote⁴⁰ Berkovits acknowledges the daring of the Rabbinic teaching, but he Downloaded from [http:](http://) A chapter on Covenantal Judaism in a recent work on Jewish-Christian relations begins thus: There he suggests that [a] careful reading of the text will show that

Israel does not witness, nor was it chosen, because it knows, believes, and understands.

2: Jewish philosophy - Wikipedia

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content: Are You My Witnesses? Recently, this idea has been challenged or undermined by the assertion that "the religious experience of modern Jews should concentrate far more on practice than on belief. In this essay I want to suggest that alongside consideration of what a Jew believes and what a Jew does, there is a third category that distinguishes Jewish religious thinkers from one another—how and what a Jew quotes. Quotation has become the subject of significant attention in the fields of literary theory and cultural studies. In this article, we will concentrate on the role played by one saying—"You are my witnesses" Isaiah My aim is to discuss some ways in which Jewish thinkers attempt to employ tradition to articulate, transmit and enhance a modern Jewish theology. The article will consider a number of recurrent themes in modern Jewish thought, such as the paradoxical relationship between divine power and human initiative and the role of the Jewish people after Auschwitz, and how this quotation is used by various thinkers to develop these and other themes. In so doing we may reflect on what this says about quotation and the horizon of interpretations a reading allows. The role that quotation plays in Jewish culture in general and in the formulation of modern Jewish theology in particular is significant and under-appreciated, and a consideration of this dimension yields [End Page] results which are sometimes surprising. Borowitz refers to a number of thinkers in *Renewing the Covenant*: Martin Buber features on thirty-six pages, Hermann Cohen on thirty-two, and the aforementioned Heschel on twenty-nine pages. Non-Jewish philosophers such as Kant 21 also figure prominently. However, if a quotation is understood as a sentence explicitly excerpted from an earlier source, there are only sixteen cases of a quotation in *Renewing the Covenant*. In the overwhelming majority of cases, when an individual is mentioned it is without reference to any particular book, and no excerpt is actually quoted. Of the mentions of individuals, only 30 involve pre-modern Jewish sources—from the liturgy to Philo, from Maimonides to Midrash. By comparison, there are over sources quoted, cited and mentioned in *God In Search of Man*. Of them, only a handful is mentioned in the style later adopted by Borowitz in *Renewing the Covenant*. *God In Search of Man* cites from twenty centuries of Jewish creativity. If that work contains some quotations and citations from rabbinic literature, we find over such sources cited and quoted in his monumental three-volume *Torah min Hashamayim*.

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Please click button to get dilemmas in modern jewish thought book now. This site is like a library, you could find million book here by using search box in the widget. Indiana University Press Format Available: These subtle and carefully reasoned essays explore the dilemmas of the post-modern Jew who would take history seriously without losing the commanding presence Israel heard at Sinai It is a pleasure to be nourished by a fresh mind exploring the tension between reason and revelation, history and faith. Morgan clarifies the tensions and dilemmas that characterize modern thinking about the nature of Judaism and clears the way for Jews to appreciate their historical situation, yet locate enduring values and principles in a post-Holocaust world. Cambridge University Press Format Available: Modern Jewish philosophy emerged in the seventeenth century, with the impact of the new science and modern philosophy on thinkers who were reflecting upon the nature of Judaism and Jewish life. This collection of essays examines the work of several of the most important of these figures, from the seventeenth to the late-twentieth centuries, and addresses themes central to the tradition of modern Jewish philosophy: The sixteen original essays are written by a world-renowned group of scholars especially for this volume and give a broad and rich picture of the tradition of modern Jewish philosophy over a period of four centuries. Morgan Probes the impact of the 20th century on Jewish belief and practice. Confronting the challenges of the 20th century, from modernity and the Great War to the Holocaust and postmodern culture, Jewish thinkers have wrestled with such fundamental issues as redemption and revelation, eternity and history, messianism and politics. From the turn of the century through the s, European Jewish intellectuals confronted alienation and the challenges of modernity by seeking secure grounds for a meaningful life. After the Holocaust and the fall of Nazism, the rich results of their thinkingâ€”on topics such as transcendence, redemption, revelation, and politicsâ€”were reinterpreted in an atmosphere of increasing disillusion and fragmentation. In *Interim Judaism*, Michael L. Morgan traces the evolution of this shift in values, as expressed in the work of social thinkers, novelists, artists, and poets as well as philosophers and theologians at the beginning and end of the century. Focusing on the problem of objectivity, the experience of the transcendent, and the relationship between redemption and politics, he argues that the outcome for contemporary Jews is a pragmatic style of religiosity that has abandoned traditional conceptions of Judaism and is searching and waiting for new ones, a condition that he describes as "interim Judaism. Responses to the Nazi Extermination. With Paul Franks, he has translated and edited Franz Rosenzweig: *Philosophical and Theological Writings*.

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Eugene Borowitz is considered the most original and influential Reform Jewish thinker today. A Reform rabbi and professor at Columbia University and the Hebrew Union College in New York, he is the founder and editor of *Sh'ma: A Journal of Jewish Responsibility*, a publication that promotes open discussion of controversial topics from all Judaic perspectives.

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Originally published in *Journal of Jewish Studies* Eugene B. Borowitz, *Choices in Modern Jewish* www.enganchecubano.comn House, New York, , xi, pp. \$ Professor Borowitz examines in this book the various responses made by Jewish thinkers to the problem of modernity, i.e., the challenges to Jewish life and faith presented

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