

The God Who Hates Lies – Confronting and Rethinking Jewish Tradition
by David Hartman with Charlie Buckholtz.
Jewish Lights Publishing 2011.

Rabbi David Hartman, founder of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, is widely known and respected as a courageous and acclaimed author and speaker. *The God Who Hates Lies*, his latest work for Jewish Lights Publications, is in many ways the most personal book that he has yet written, and potentially – in certain Orthodox circles – his most controversial.

Hartman has clearly reached a point in his life where he both feels comfortable enough and determined enough to challenge some of the nostrums of his orthodox upbringing and early rabbinic career in the light of his life experience and broader education. It is moving to read his struggles and growing distance from some elements of classical Jewish tradition and teaching, and admirable to discern how he has found a way of living with the many contradictions that surround him while keeping his integrity intact.

The God Who hates Lies is divided into six chapters, preceded by an Introduction, subtitled “What Planet are You From?": A Yeshiva Boy's Pilgrimage into Philosophy, History and Reality, that gives a heavy hint as to the approach which Hartman will take: the chapters are Halakhic Spirituality: Living in the Presence of God; Toward a God-Intoxicated Halakha; Feminism and Apologetics: Lying in the Presence of God; Biology or Covenant? Conversion and the Corrupting Influence of Gentile Seed; Where did Modern Orthodoxy Go Wrong? The Mistaken Halakhic Presumptions of Rabbi Soloveitchik; *The God Who Hates Lies*: Choosing Life in the Midst of Uncertainty.

There is much in this book that Progressive Jews will applaud, not least the courage and integrity with which Hartman expresses himself – qualities lacking in some other high profile Orthodox spokesmen who shall remain nameless – but there should be no triumphalism over his challenges and questioning, for this is not a man about to embrace a Jewish alternative, rather one who is trying to save the form of Judaism he loves from a lingering death.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh