

Trouble-Making Judaism
by Elizabeth Tikvah Sarah.
David Paul, 2012.

In the interests of that much over-rated concept of 'transparency', I must start by disclosing that Elli Sarah is one of my very first students and a woman, and a rabbi, of enormous courage, piercing integrity, and complete unwillingness to indulge in dishonourable compromise. At times, as she herself makes clear in *Trouble-Making Judaism*, this has got her into trouble with communities whose members were not of her opinion, but otherwise it is clear that many of her ideas, once so challenging, are now merely commonplace, although I suspect that she would say, justifiably, that society still has a long way to go.

English Liberal Judaism, together with American Reform, has always prided itself on the fact that it was the inheritor of the prophetic tradition: according to the first book of Kings, Elijah was actual the first trouble-maker, but he was merely the first of a long and illustrious line. With *Trouble-Making Judaism*, Rabbi Sarah asserts her right to be considered a powerful 21st century voice in that tradition.

The book is divided into four parts: *Trouble-Making Precedents: The First Woman and Other Female Firsts*; *Making Trouble: The Struggle for Equality and Inclusion*; *The Struggle with Trouble: Making Communities Out of Who We Are*; *The Struggle with Israel: Taking a Step Back for the Sake of Peace*.

Elli Sarah sets out her principles and ideals, together with reflections on her own life story, with great candour and clarity, and it is this which makes the book even more engaging. Here, the reader may feel, is a rare opportunity to hear the workings of a prophetic mind, and to be challenged thereby.

With *Trouble-Making Judaism*, Elizabeth Sarah has thrown down a gauntlet to all Jews who wish to see their Judaism make an active, principled and powerful contribution to public debate and the needs of society. English Liberal Judaism is fortunate to have such a prophetic voice in its midst.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh