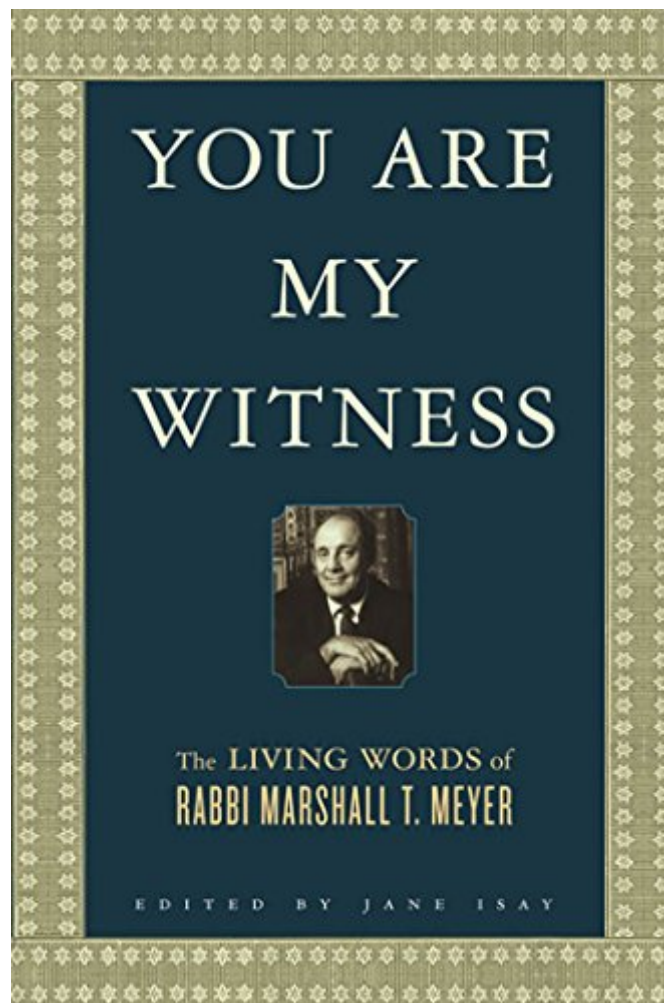




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You Are My Witness: The Living Words Of Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer



Synopsis

Marshall Meyer, who died at age 64 in 1993, was a human rights leader and a powerful voice for justice. People flocked to hear him in Argentina, where he served as a rabbi for twenty-five years. In the mid-1980's, he became the spiritual leader of the fastest growing Jewish congregation in the U.S., Congregation B'Nai Jeshurun. People like Sam Freedman, Richard Bernstein, and Jan Hoffman of the New York Times are members. Harvey Cox, Elie Wiesel, and William Sloan Coffin were close friends. After the rabbi's untimely death, Jane Isay had urged his widow, Naomi Meyer, partner in faith and action, to create a book from his writings so that his voice would not be silenced forever. Instead of finding the yellowing pages of rabbinic prose or the dry papers of a rabbi-scholar, Jane Isay encountered a powerful voice that implores readers to see the cruelty of our greedy world, begging them to understand the pain of the oppressed, urging them to awaken from their slumber of inactivity, and directing them to act for justice out of respect for the great prophetic vision that is the Jewish gift to civilization. There is a long Jewish tradition of master rabbis, who attract large followings through their lives and whose teachings live long after they die. The writings collected in this gem of a book combine the best of Jewish prophecy with social action and a great sense of joyfulness.

Book Information

File Size: 338 KB

Print Length: 190 pages

Publisher: St. Martin's Press (September 30, 2014)

Publication Date: September 30, 2014

Sold by: Amazon Macmillan

Language: English

ASIN: B00MLND6VE

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #501,922 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #14

in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Sermons #686 in Books > Religion &

Customer Reviews

In 1986, during a visit to New York, I was introduced to Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer (Z"L) by our friend Jacobo Kovadloff (Z"L). We talked for a while and from then we became friends and he invited me to study at his Latin American Rabbinical Seminary, in Buenos Aires, for a six-month special training. Then I learned little by little on Rabbi Meyer, his tenacity and creativity in reviving the Jewish conservative communities, his bravery in defending human rights and saving human souls (Jews, Christians, atheists, simply human beings) during Argentinian military regime (1976-1983). His speeches and writings always were remarkable, and I recommend this book showing how much this valuable man had to tell us. I remember our last phone conversation in late 1993, his words of support for my new life in the United States, and he didn't mention his life was ending... A few days later he passed away. Read him, he was one of the just ones.

I picked up this book because I'm a member of congregation B'nai Jeshurun. While I don't agree with Meyer's stance on faith in God as completely necessary to Judaism, his writings on this topic are moving and poetic. Where the book really "packs its punch" is in Meyer's discussions of fascism and activism; via faith, he somehow gets to the same place that Theodor Adorno does, passionately reminding his audiences that fascism is not merely what happens when an evil dictator takes over, but what happens when people ignore the "burning bushes" in their lives, i.e. the screams of the suffering. This is a take on Jewish responsibility that does, indeed, "remember," departing from the typical American line on what fascism is.

I found this a most moving and inspirational book. But then I'm not an unbiased reviewer: I was Marsh Meyer's roommate for four years at Dartmouth. He passed away some years ago but this little book brought him back to life for me.

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