

REASON TO BELIEVE
Rational Explanations of Orthodox Jewish Faith

זכרון דוד



Rabbi Chaim Jachter

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לע"נ
דוד משה בן יוסף ז"ל
David Morris Wagner

Husband, Father, Grandfather, and Great-grandfather

A man of quiet faith who embodied the phrase

אמור מעט ועשה הרבה... (משנה אבות א טו)

His deeds for his family, his community, and Klal Yisrael were many.

Roselin S. Wagner

Barry and Marcia Wagner Levinson

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Anna Wagner

Kenneth and Sarah Wagner
Simcha, Meira, and Eliana

Reviews

Rabbi Haim Jachter's extraordinary blend of scholarship, talent and experience makes him uniquely qualified to have authored this essential volume.

In Reason to Believe Rabbi Jachter brings to bear vast Torah knowledge, decades as a master educator and sensitive personal insight; as he tackles the critical questions of faith and belief that confront young and old in today's world.

Readers of all backgrounds and outlooks throughout the Jewish community will be amazed and reassured as the author openly raises the very questions that they themselves have been asking and as he provides an array of profound, convincing responses to those questions.

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin, Past President, Rabbinical Council of America; author, *Unlocking the Torah Text*; Rabbi, Congregation Ahavath Torah, Englewood, N.J.

Though the foundations of Jewish belief are immutable they require modern articulation and timely refreshment in the face of recent cultural shifts. Rabbi Jachter has skillfully addressed a wide range of issues including perceived clashes between Torah and science, the reconciliation of Torah and human morality, and the obscuring of God in our world. His insights stream through fresh explanations of Tanach, classic tenets of Jewish philosophy, perspectives upon recent shifts in Jewish history and modern voices of the Orthodox world. Thank you for providing a modern repository to help reinforce the integrity of Judaism and belief in an age of intellectual turbulence and existential tumult.

Rabbi Moshe Taragin, Rebbe, Yeshivat Har Etzion, Gush Etzion, Israel.

Rabbi Jachter, a masterful teacher and prolific writer, has once again produced an excellent work, the influence of which will be felt for years to come. In the past Rabbi Jachter has successfully focused on making Halakha accessible to the English-speaking community. His Halakhic works are masterpieces of clarity, allowing the reader access to the profundity of Jewish law.

In Reason to Believe Rabbi Jachter has now used this same talent while addressing the philosophic issues of faith that confront and challenge modern man. With intellectual rigor Rabbi Jachter tackles the pressing issues offering answers that our youth and adults alike are desperate to hear.

Rabbi Elazar Muskin, Senior Rabbi, Young Israel of Century City, Los Angeles, CA.

Reason to Believe will strengthen the faithful and encourage our youth to keep the faith in an age of rampant doubt. Rabbi Jachter analyzes profound and perennial questions in a pleasant and accessible style. A masterful and timely contribution.

Rav Mordechai Willig, Rosh Kollel at Yeshiva University; Segan Av Beth Din of the Beth Din of America; Rabbi, Young Israel of Riverdale, N.Y.

With the proliferation of a myriad of opinions, beliefs and ideas throughout the vast recesses of the internet, our youth are growing up in a most challenging time to develop a deep and steadfast Orthodox religious ideology and relationship with Hashem.

Rabbi Jachter's thoughtful yet straightforward answers to many of the most basic questions vexing modern skeptics will arm students and their teachers with the necessary tools to deepen and strengthen the religious commitment of the next generation of Orthodox Judaism. Mechanchim and parents owe Rabbi Jachter profound thanks for providing this valuable resource in the fight against intellectual apathy and confusion, written in an engaging style teenagers and adults can relate to.

Rabbi Yisroel Kaminetsky, Rosh Yeshiva, Hebrew Academy of Long Beach; Menahel, Davis Renov Stahler Yeshiva High School for Boys, Woodmere, N.Y.

The Pesach Haggadah instructs us to conduct the Seder in accordance with educational background and experience: a lesson for the Tam, the simple one, may not be appropriate for the Chacham, the wise one.

Rabbi Jachter's "Reason to Believe" is an exception to that principle. Topics dealing with faith, origins of Torah, identifying the presence of God in today's world are topics not typically discussed in the curriculum of most yeshiva high schools. Hence, not only would the child lacking the ability to ask or the simple one be challenged by these issues, but even the wise one, who is well equipped to discuss the debate between Ramban and Rabbeinu Tam as to what constitutes Bittul Chametz, is often lost and perplexed when dealing with elements of faith.

Rabbi Jachter provides a framework for adults, as well as modern-day yeshiva students, to begin a vast exploration of these issues. He is a master teacher and skilled writer, a combination can only lead to success.

Rabbi Yosef Adler, Rav, Congregation Rinat Yisrael; Rosh HaYeshiva, Torah Academy of Bergen County, Teaneck, N.J.

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Introduction

It is the question of all questions and the issue of all issues: Is there a God, and did He author the books of the Torah? We set forth in this book compelling reasons why Orthodox Jewish belief is far more reasonable than secular perspectives on the world and Torah. Our goal is to deepen the belief of Orthodox Jews and to motivate those outside the Orthodox Jewish community to further explore the best possible lifestyle and belief system available to mankind.

The nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries have posed great challenges to Orthodox belief, most of which are connected with the rise of the scientific, materialistic world-view. Scientists have investigated the history of the universe and the origins of life and have come up with a story which on the surface appears to contradict the account in Genesis. Secular scholars have “analyzed” the Torah and argued that it is a human document put together at different times. Archaeologists have dug the soil of the Holy Land and some claimed to find evidence contradicting the biblical history – a few, with an obvious political agenda, even going so far as to deny the existence of an Israelite kingdom! Humanists have questioned the ethical status of some of the Torah’s provisions. On the level of history, the massive suffering of the Holocaust has led some to deny the existence of a just and merciful God. And finally, present-day

Reason to Believe

Western culture, with its cult of instant gratification, has caused many to view Torah restrictions as senseless and outmoded inconveniences.

Not all of these challenges are really new. Indeed, Jewish sages and scholars have been wrestling with the underlying issues for a long time, and have articulated compelling answers to them. In the contemporary era, leaders such as Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik have updated those answers, and Orthodox scholars have responded to the challenges posed by secular scholars. In this book, after an introduction on the nature of faith itself, we will present a significant portion of their answers.

Our hope is that the arguments put forth in this book will convince those who are considering leaving or have already left the Orthodox Jewish fold, to reconsider their decision in favor of remaining loyal to the faith of our ancestors. We also hope that within the Orthodox community this book will serve as a game-changer, elevating many from what has been termed “social Orthodoxy” to a more committed “substantive Orthodoxy” in which devout actions and firm belief fully align.

Orthodox Jewish belief is far from antiquated. In fact, modern times offer *new reasons* to affirm the traditional belief system of the Jewish people. We hope that readers of all backgrounds will find many opportunities set forth in this work to deepen their level of belief and commitment to God and His Torah.

Chapter 1

Emuna: What is Faith?

E*muna* – faith, which for the Jew means belief in Hashem and in the divine origin of the Torah – is a rather straightforward concept that can be explained in five minutes or less. In fact, Charlie Harary does a fine job setting forth a simple formula in a brief yet compelling video available on Youtube.¹ I shall start by summarizing his presentation.

The Truth of Hashem and Torah: Basic Arguments

Song of Songs compares our relationship with Hashem to that of a bride and groom.² This endearing parable offers profound advice to help us properly approach our relationship with Hashem.

A marriage can succeed only if both parties actively *choose* to commit to one another. Since Hashem, indeed, desires this intimacy, we are given the opportunity to join Him. However, if Hashem would reveal Himself completely, surely we would be left with no choice but to

1. “*The Six Constant Mitzvos with Charlie Harary: Mitzva #1*,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dv2PgYwzW7g>.

2. See Rashi’s commentary on Song of Songs. This parable of the relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people is a recurring theme in Torah literature. Hos. 2 is an excellent example.

acknowledge Him, because His omniscience would be irrefutable.³ This would rob us of our choice whether to enter into the relationship. Therefore Hashem elects to conceal Himself, challenging us to discover Him and exclaim, “Behold He stands behind our wall, He looks in through the windows, He peers through the lattice.”⁴

On the other hand, Hashem must make it *possible* for us to discover Him in order for the relationship to be achievable. Thus, Hashem hides Himself but not to the extent that we are unable to encounter Him. In Deut. 32:11, Hashem is compared to “As an eagle stirs up her nest, broods over her young.” Rashi explains that Hashem is *nogei’a ve’eino nogei’a*, “He touches but does not touch.” Hashem hovers above us, making Himself known in a subtle manner. Though His presence is understated, intimate knowledge of His presence is accessible to all.

Charlie Harary outlines various phenomena through which we can recognize Hashem. The first is nature. While we generally know how the body works, we are overwhelmed by its complexity and amazed by how efficiently it operates. There are millions of parts in the body, all functioning seamlessly in sync. Could this just be a matter of chance? We should ask the same of the entire world! Why do all the billions and billions of parts all work together unfailingly? Could this be mere coincidence as well?⁵

3. See the *Meshekh Hōkhma* (Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk [1843–1926]) on Ex. 19:17, citing the talmudic assertion (Shabbat 88a) that we were coerced into receiving the Torah at Sinai. This is a difficult statement in light of the fact that according to Ex. 19 and 24 we chose to accept the Torah. But the *Meshekh Hōkhma* explains that at Sinai Hashem revealed Himself so starkly as to leave no room for choice, so that it was *as if* we were coerced. The Gemara states that we later accepted the Torah voluntarily during the time of Ahasuerus. This certainly fits with the *Meshekh Hōkhma*’s idea. Only when Hashem reveals Himself in a subtle manner, as in the Book of Esther, can we enter into a voluntary relationship with Hashem.

4. Song. 2:9.

5. Maimonides (*Hilkhot Yesodei Torah* 2:2) observes that observing the vast beauty of the universe is a means to both respect and love Hashem. Ezra Ghazal, a member of Congregation Shaarei Orah of Teaneck, New Jersey, who has fifty years experience as an engineer, notes that as an engineer he knows that every system, no matter how well designed and built, will eventually fail. Engineers routinely plan for such failure. The universe, by contrast, never breaks down. The processes of sunrise and sunset, for example, function every day without fail. Mr. Ghazal views nature as an

The same applies to the history of the Jewish people. Just a glimpse into our nation's past reveals a relentlessly-persecuted people who managed not only to survive centuries of humiliation, but to emerge a strengthened and influential nation. How can we account for a nation that has escaped the threat of destruction time and again to build a thriving homeland? How can the State of Israel survive among a sea of hostile neighbors bent on its destruction? It is an ongoing *Hanukka* miracle of "the many in the hands of the few," unfolding right before our eyes!⁶

Finally, the fact that Hashem revealed Himself not to an individual, but to an entire nation of our ancestors – which stands in stark contrast to every other belief-system in the world – is a precious piece of our story that strengthens our ability to believe in the authenticity of His words.

Two Ways of Recognizing Hashem: "General Recognition" and "Marks"

If acquiring *emuna* merely requires a brief physiology or history lesson, why the need for the extended discussions of *emuna* in this book?

In his book *Abraham's Journey*,⁷ Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik notes that there are two means of identifying an object. One is to describe the item by signs or marks (*simanim*). The other means of identification is from a general recognition of its form, without knowing its marks. This type of recognition is called *tvi'at ayin*.

Rabbi Soloveitchik explains that in a situation where a person seeks to claim a lost item, "halakha considers general recognition to be far superior to identification by naming marks." This is because "configurative recognition is solid, a certainty"... whereas "identification by *simanim* is not instantaneous; it consists of an act of inferring," and

opportunity to marvel at the amazing nature of Hashem's work which never fails, which so dramatically exceeds the handiwork of human beings which inevitably fail.

6. When asked why, for all his skepticism, he still believed in God, Voltaire replied: "Had it not been for the miracle of the survival of the Jewish people, I would have given up this proof as well" (quoted in Walter Wurzburger, *God is Proof Enough* [New York: Devora Publishing, 2000], 62).

7. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Abraham's Journey: Reflections on the Life of the Founding Patriarch* (Jersey City: Ktav Publishing House, Inc, 2008), 29-31.

the decision of the court to accept this type of identification depends upon “probability and statistics.” By contrast, “identification based upon a general impression of the configuration or the whole is spontaneous, instantaneous,” which is why it is considered superior.

Many of us come to recognize Hashem through *tvi’at ayin*. It can come through the opportunities outlined by Charlie Harary. It can also come from recognizing the grandeur of Torah,⁸ appreciating its profundity compared to all other disciplines. Anyone who had the privilege to hear a lecture delivered by Rav Aharon Lichtenstein or by his student Rabbi Michael Rosensweig has surely been in a position to acknowledge the depth of Torah. In the words of my colleague Rabbi Raphi Mandelstam, a devoted student of Rabbi Rosensweig, “Hearing Rabbi Rosensweig deliver an extended, in-depth *shiur* [lecture], in which he ties together all the various and nuanced aspects of a *sugya* [topic] is like experiencing the revelation of Torah at Har Sinai.” Anyone who studies the majestic lectures delivered by Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik in memory of his father, can relive the “Sinai revelation” experienced by the attendees of these lectures. Many other profound Torah works, such as the *Ketzot HaHoshen* and Nahmanides’ commentary on the Torah, are masterpieces which offer the opportunity for a revelation experience.⁹

In an article entitled “The Source of Faith is Faith Itself,”¹⁰ Rav Lichtenstein beautifully articulates his *tvi’at ayin* experience:

The greatest source of faith, however, has been the Ribbono Shel Olam Himself.... Existentially...nothing has been more

8. Maimonides calls this “recognition of the crown of Torah” (*Hilkhot Issurei Biah* 21:32). The ignorant Jew, writes Maimonides, is not acquainted with the crown of Torah. One of the most important goals of a Jewish education is for students to acquire an appreciation of the crown of Torah.

9. An English-language opportunity to gain entry into the highest level of Talmud study is Rabbi Daniel Mann’s *A Glimpse of Greatness: A Study in the Works of Giants of Lomdus* [halakhic analysis] (Jerusalem: Eretz Hemdah Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, 2013).

10. *Jewish Action*, fall 1992. This essay was republished in April 2015 (https://www.ou.org/jewish_action/04/2015/the-source-of-faith-is-faith-itself/).

authentic than the encounter with *Avinu Malkeinu* [our Father, our King], the source and ground of all being. Nothing more sustaining, nothing more strengthening, nothing more vivifying. Encounter, of course, has been varied. In part it has been channeled – primarily through Torah study, but also through prayer and the performance of the commandments; or if you will, by the halakhic regimen in its totality. In part, it has been random – moments of illumination while getting on a crowded bus or watching children play in a park at twilight. Obviously, it has also been greatly varied in intensity. In its totality, however, whatever the form and content, it has been the ultimate basis of spiritual life.¹¹

Nonetheless, despite the superiority of *tvi'at ayin* as a way of recognizing Hashem and His Torah, when it comes to responding to the skeptic the Gemara engages in identification by *simanim*. Moreover, *simanim* can also serve to deepen and broaden the belief of those who intuitively recognize Hashem and the divine origin of the Torah.¹² As Rav Soloveitchik concludes: “Recognition of God is an art in itself. It is a double one: by *simanim* and by *tvi'at ayin*.”¹³

11. In this essay Rav Lichtenstein writes how his teachers serve as a great inspiration for his belief in Hashem and Torah. As a student of Rav Lichtenstein, I find it difficult to express the depth of the impact he has had upon me and undoubtedly upon thousands of others in bolstering our faith. Rav Lichtenstein was a role model and pillar of faith for those who had the privilege to sit in his shadow. The depth of Rav Lichtenstein's commitment and spirituality was breathtaking. Most of all, the fact that this great man emerged from Harvard University as a spiritual luminary who was thoroughly devoted to Torah serves as an inspiration for anyone who doubts the authenticity of Hashem and our Torah. Since Rav Lichtenstein, a man with such brilliance, vast Torah and secular knowledge, integrity, dignity, kindness and morality, believed, it must be true.

12. Hullin 60b.

13. Rabbi Dr. Walter Wurzbarger, a leading student of Rav Soloveitchik, presents a full, eloquent, and moving articulation of *tvi'at ayin* in his work *God is Proof Enough* (see note 6). A briefer but very compelling presentation of *emuna* generated by *tvi'at ayin* is Rav Aharon Lichtenstein's beautiful essay “The Source of Faith is Faith Itself” (see note 10). Rav Lichtenstein was another leading student of Rav Soloveitchik.

The Purpose of this Book: *Simanim* to Bolster the *Tvi'at Ayin*

It has been very gratifying to hear from many believing Jews, even many practicing rabbis, who enjoyed my writings on *emuna* because they helped strengthen their faith in Hashem and Torah.¹⁴ These are people who already recognize the divine truth with a *tvi'at ayin* recognition; adding *simanim* served to concretize and enrich their appreciation.

An example from our writings will help illustrate this point. God-conscious individuals find it intuitive that God's hand was involved in Israel's establishment, the Six Day War and the Entebbe raid. One need not have a thorough knowledge of these events to arrive at this conclusion. However, a careful examination of these events, to which we devote a number of chapters in this book, strengthens and confirms the *tvi'at ayin* recognition of the miracle.

Why Some Do Not Believe: Noise Drowning Out the Subtle and Quiet Voice

Every human being is naturally inclined to believe in God. Hashem has given this capacity to everyone.¹⁵ The *Meshekh H'okhma* adds that "the Jewish soul is naturally inclined with an intense desire to fulfill God's will."¹⁶ If that is the case, then why do some who were raised in observant families and given a Jewish education choose to discard their belief and Torah observance?

I gained insight into this phenomenon while walking on a busy and loud street when my cell phone rang repeatedly. Unfortunately, I failed to hear the subtle ring of my mobile telephone. This was

14. My writings on *emuna* have been published in Torah Academy of Bergen County's weekly Torah bulletin, *Kol Torah*.

15. However, Hashem does not coerce as we said earlier, due to His desire for an authentic relationship with us.

16. The *Meshekh H'okhma* (Ex. 19:17) bases his assertion on the celebrated teaching of Maimonides (*Hilkhot Gerushin* 2:20) that every Jew fundamentally wishes to observe the Torah, but is swayed from doing so only due to the influence of his Yetzeir Hara (pleasure drive). Maimonides's source appears to be the Gemara (Nidda 30b), which tells us that when a child is in the womb, the child is taught the entire Torah and at birth forgets it all. This teaches that Hashem implants a natural love and proclivity for Torah in every Jew.

reminiscent of an incident recorded in Tanakh (the Bible) regarding the prophet Elijah.

In I Kings 18 Elijah essentially demands that Hashem reveal Himself in an absolute and indisputable manner at Mount Carmel in an effort to motivate the Jews of Northern Israel to return to His service. Elijah goes so far as to blame Hashem, attributing the Jews' lack of faith to His failure to provide sufficient evidence of His presence.¹⁷

When Hashem responded and proved His existence beyond a shadow of a doubt, the Northern Jews responded "Hashem is God, Hashem is God (*Hashem Hu HaElokim, Hashem Hu HaElokim*)!"¹⁸ Surprisingly, the Jews' newly acquired faith quickly dissipated, and Elijah retreated to Sinai in deep despair.¹⁹ Hashem then encountered Elijah to explain that He is not made apparent in fire, earthquake or hurricane. Rather, Hashem deliberately prefers to announce Himself in a "subtle and quiet voice (*kol dmama dakka*)."

When Hashem appears in an obvious manner, the impact is fleeting because it does not involve any effort on the part of the people. As the Mishna teaches, "the reward is commensurate with the effort invested (*lefum tza'ara agra*)."²⁰ Therefore, He interacts with the world in an unobtrusive, natural manner in order to require us to make an effort in order to discover Him. When man invests in this quest for the Divine, this will have a more lasting effect. Hashem told Elijah that the way to bring people closer to God is not by performing overt miracles, but rather by training people to appreciate His *kol dmama dakka*.

Unfortunately, the efforts made by parents and teachers to instill this appreciation do not always bear fruit. Sometimes various noises can overpower the *kol dmama dakka* and inhibit a person's ability to connect to it, just as I did not hear my cellular phone's soft ringtone on a

17. I Kings 18:37. See Berakhot 31b for the Gemara's criticism of Elijah's demand.

18. We echo these statements on Yom Kippur because one can reach the same level of certitude regarding Hashem's existence through the intense religious experience of Yom Kippur, even without witnessing a violation of the laws of nature such as occurred on Mount Carmel.

19. See the commentary of the Malbim (Rabbi Me'ir Leibush ben Yehiel Mikhel Wisser [March 7, 1809 – September 18, 1879]) on I Kings 19:2.

20. Avot 5:23.

busy street. The noise may be in the form of external negative influences such as a spiritually impoverished environment that is deaf to the call of the Almighty. Internal noise pollution can also overshadow the subtle voice of Hashem. The noise may present as unrestrained passions and desires for (a misleading) independence from halakhic discipline and from God, or as lingering, unresolved psychological tensions created by various traumatic situations. Whatever the form of the noise, it can prevent Jewish souls from tuning into the call of the Divine.

The return of those who have strayed depends only on them. “Hashem is close to those who sincerely reach out to him (*karov Hashem lekhol korav, l’chol asher yikra’uhu ve’emet*).”²¹ This means that Hashem will *respond* to man, but only if man initiates the conversation. Similarly, “Hashem is good to those who yearn for Him, to the soul that seeks Him.”²² Hashem proposes, “Open for Me an opening as narrow as the eye of the needle and I will open for you gates as wide as the entrances of palaces.”²³ All the articles and arguments in the world cannot convince someone to connect to Hashem and Torah unless he is willing to take the first step to eliminate the noises that create a barrier between himself and the *kol dmama dakka*.

A comparison may be made to physical exercise. Hashem has created us to love exercise due to His concern for us. Those of us who make time to exercise know that once one makes the commitment, a momentum is created and he will naturally be drawn to exercise, most likely enjoying the experience. However, one must initiate an effort if he is to reap the natural benefit of the process.

Rav Lichtenstein, in his aforementioned article about faith, writes, “The motto I inscribed in my college notebook was David’s plea: *Tuv ta’am vada’at lamdeni key b’mitzvotcha he’emanti* [teach me good discernment and knowledge; for I have believed Thy commandments]. Answers, I of course continued –and continue – to seek, and have found many.”²⁴

21. Ps. 145:18.

22. Lam. 3:25.

23. Song of Songs Rabba 5:2.

24. “The Source of Faith is Faith Itself” (see note 10). I have inserted the translation of Ps. 119:66.

Rav Lichtenstein took the first step and constructively dealt with his questions and concerns about Torah. We can all make the same life-altering decision. We can experience and encounter God as Rav Lichtenstein did, if we are willing to invest the effort.

Is *Emuna* More Difficult in the Contemporary Era?

A contradiction exists between the Gemara, which frequently mentions *shedim* (demons), and Maimonides, who utterly denies their existence.²⁵ Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky²⁶ brilliantly resolves the inconsistency by citing King Solomon to the effect that “God created the one as well as the other (*zeh le’umat zeh asah Elokim*),” i.e. God creates a level playing field.²⁷ This means that at a time when God’s presence is quite apparent, He makes a spiritual counterpart in order that we have a choice about believing in Him.²⁸ Hence in Talmudic times, when Hashem revealed Himself through a heavenly voice and other miracles recorded in the Gemara, Hashem also introduced the spiritual counterweight of demons to challenge us. But in the time of Maimonides such miracles had ceased, and there was no need for Hashem to introduce counterbalances such as *shedim*.²⁹

Undoubtedly it was easier to sense God’s presence in pre-modern times. Medicine then was primitive, and therefore one felt very vulnerable and dependent on God. With the advent of modern medicine, man does not feel as reliant on Hashem. Thus, it is not surprising that Jews in the east European shtetl (village) used to cry on Yom Kippur, while most contemporary pious Jews do not. Of course in truth, man’s fate was and is entirely dependent on God in all situations, but the *perception* of man’s circumstances is the differentiating factor.

25. *Perush HaMishnayot to Avoda Zara*, Chapter 4 Mishna 7.

26. *Emet L’Yaakov*, Ex. 7:22.

27. Eccl. 7:14.

28. As we explained earlier, if we have no choice but to believe, then we cannot have a relationship with Hashem, since a relationship involves choice.

29. This is also the deeper meaning behind the encounter between R. Ashi and Menasseh (Sanhedrin 102b) in which Menasseh told R. Ashi, “Had you lived during my times, you would have run after idolatry.” During an era when the presence of God was very intensely felt, the pull toward idolatry was much greater in order for the service of Hashem to be challenging and therefore meaningful.

Moreover, the temptation to sin is far greater today than only fifty years ago. Severe violations of the Torah, with all their spiritually corrosive impacts, are accessible with one click of a computer mouse. Although such activity is self-destructive and against one's long-term interest, the short-term attraction can be intense.

Nonetheless, King Solomon's principle of "God created the one as well as the other" still resonates in our time. With the enormous spiritual challenges of modernity, there is an equal abundance of spiritual prospects. Most prominently, the thriving State of Israel presents boundless spiritual opportunities. Whereas only a century ago a visit to the Western Wall was experienced only by a privileged few among our people, today it is routine for observant Jews to connect with this very holy space many times during their lives. After years of displacement and exile to the four corners of the earth, Biblical predictions of the Jewish mass return to our homeland have begun to materialize.

Conclusion

This book is intended to enrich its readers' belief in Hashem and Torah, and to spread awareness of opportunities to gain closeness to the Almighty. However, the most effective means of promoting belief in Hashem is the behavior of observant Jews. When Orthodox Jews relate to the broader society in a peaceful, moral and productive manner, this serves as the most compelling evidence of the divine origin of the Torah. When Orthodox Judaism is identified not only with ritual observance such as Kashrut and Shabbat, but also with honesty in business, well-mannered comportment in all areas of life, and contributions to humanity, belief in Hashem and His Torah are confirmed and enhanced.

Isaiah teaches that we are Hashem's witnesses³⁰ and that Hashem should be glorified by us.³¹ This is the collective mission statement of our people, as we embrace the challenge to lead satisfying and enjoyable lives while upholding the Torah's ideals. Fulfillment of this goal will serve as the most compelling testimony that the Torah is the divine plan for the ultimate way a human being can conduct himself.

30. Is. 43:10.

31. Is. 60:21.

SIMPLE FAITH OR PERFECT FAITH? ABRAHAM'S DISCOVERY OF GOD

The Debate – Age 3 or Age 40?

The Midrash records a debate regarding the age at which Abraham recognized Hashem's existence.³² One opinion holds that he was three years old, and another opinion claims that he was forty.³³ This dispute continues to rage among scholars of subsequent generations. Maimonides and his contemporary Rabbi Avraham ben David (Ravad), for example, debated this issue.³⁴

This argument is most peculiar. Why does it matter whether Abraham discovered Hashem at age three or age forty? The Gemara dismisses such issues with the comment “what was, was (*mai de hava hava*),” i.e. it is simply not worth the time and effort to debate the past if there are no ramifications for the present or future.³⁵

One may suggest, however, that these sources are essentially debating the ideal type of *emuna*. Abraham was the pioneer who discovered Hashem and led the first campaign for belief in the Almighty; thus his path to achieving awareness of the Divine should serve as a blueprint for the rest of us. Accordingly, the opinion that Abraham's epiphany occurred at age three teaches that simple and straightforward faith (*emuna pshuta*) is the ideal prototype. According to this view, the truth of Hashem's existence is so obvious that it is apparent even to a young child; any further investigation is therefore unnecessary and perhaps even counterproductive.

The other opinion holds that such basic *emuna* – while representing a decent foundation – is hardly the optimal form of belief in Hashem. The optimal form of belief is *emuna shlema* – full and proper *emuna* – which requires careful, thorough, mature reasoning. Only when one reaches the age of wisdom is he capable of attaining full and proper *emuna*.³⁶

32. Genesis Rabba 64:4.

33. See *Kesef Mishneh* on Maimonides' *Hilkhot Avodat Kokhavim* 1:3.

34. *Hilkhot Avodat Kokhavim* 1:3.

35. Yoma 5b.

36. The talmudic sages teach that one achieves *binah* (wisdom), only at the age of 40 (Avot 5:21).

Maimonides' Compromise

Interestingly, Maimonides presents a compromise approach to this issue. Maimonides argues that Abraham began to recognize Hashem at age three but did not reach a conclusion until he was forty. Maimonides sees great value in the *emuna pshuta* of the very young child; however, *emuna* is able to fully blossom only when one reaches the age of forty and can process God's involvement in a sophisticated way.

It is most surprising that the arch-rationalist Maimonides attaches great significance to the *emuna* of a three-year-old child. One would have expected Maimonides to unreservedly embrace the opinion that Abraham arrived at his conclusion at age forty. Maimonides, however, teaches us the invaluable lesson that meaningful *emuna* is accessible to all. One need not be able to formulate well-structured and logical arguments in order to be considered a proper *ma'amin* (believer).³⁷

My wife Malca is fond of explaining Hashem to young children in the following manner: When visiting a park one sees people flying kites. They hold the string at the bottom and slowly let their kites out until they are so high that the tops of the kites are no longer visible because they have ascended high into the clouds. One sees only people holding a string. How do they know that their kites remain in the sky if they are no longer visible? The answer is that they can feel the tug of the kite as it flies in the clouds; though the kites cannot be seen, they are felt. Similarly, although we cannot see Hashem, we feel the tugs implying His constant presence. Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik describes this phenomenon as "the metaphysical pull" that Hashem implants in all of us allowing us to connect with Him.³⁸

The Gemara specifies that young children who comprehend that their blessings are directed to Hashem may be counted towards a *zimmun*, the required number for saying grace in company.³⁹

37. This, in part, is the lesson of the sages when they teach (see *Ein Ya'akov* on *Berakhot* 63a) that even a thief calls out to Hashem right before he engages in theft. The natural connection to Hashem emerges in stressful situations; as people are wont to say, there are no atheists in foxholes.

38. Soloveitchik, *Abraham's Journey*, 42.

39. *Berakhot* 48a.

Rav Ovadiah Yosef similarly rules that Sephardic Jews⁴⁰ may count a child from the age of six as the third or tenth person for a *zimmun*⁴¹. To illustrate this point, the Gemara tells a charming and instructive story: When the great Abaye and Rava were children they met Rabba, who asked them to whom we recite blessings. Rava responded: “To the All-Merciful One.” Rabba then asked where the All-Merciful One is, and Rava pointed to the ceiling. Abaye went outside⁴² and pointed upwards.⁴³

When learning this passage in the Morasha Kollel in the summer of 1978, our Rebbe, Rabbi Yitzchok Cohen, conducted this experiment on his very young son Yaakov, then age three, to see if he knew to whom he recites blessings. Yaakov pointed to the ceiling. In my experience, even children with significant developmental disabilities can grasp the role of Hashem in their lives at a very young age.

What If One Does Not Feel the Tug?

What about those who claim that they cannot feel the tug or experience the metaphysical pull? Referring to the analogy between our relationship with Hashem and the husband-wife relationship, we may cite a story related by Rabbi Ben Tzion Shafier: a student once told him that he did not find his wife attractive. Rabbi Shafier thought this strange in the light of a talmudic passage which categorically states, “Husbands find their wives attractive and charming (*hen isha al ba’alah*)”⁴⁴ – Hashem ensures that husbands find their wives attractive. Upon exploring further, Rabbi Shafier discovered that the husband had gotten into the destructive habit of looking at pornography. This ugly psychological baggage had polluted his soul and inhibited his appreciation for his wife, the great gift Hashem had bestowed upon him.

40. *Yehave Da’at* 4:13.

41. Ashkenazic practice does not allow a pre-Bar Mitzva child to count towards a *zimmun*.

42. Echoing Genesis 15:5, where Hashem instructs Abraham to go outside and gaze at the stars.

43. Rabba predicted that these two children would grow up to be rabbis. This childhood dispute was a foretaste of the many that Abaye and Rava would have as adults.

44. Sota 47a.

Similarly, Hashem has instilled within us a natural inclination to connect with Him.⁴⁵ As King David writes, “As the hart pants after the water brooks, so my soul pants after You, O God. My soul thirsts for God.”⁴⁶ But poor habits and exposure to negative influences create a barrier that clogs the natural feelings that should exist. Psychological challenges such as an abusive experience with a parent or religious figure may also disable the natural attraction one should feel for Hashem.

King David writes: “Who can scale the mountain of Hashem . . . One with clean hands . . . who has not taken My Name in vain.”⁴⁷ One who has sullied his soul will find it difficult to scale the mountain of God. Proper spiritual and even psychological guidance is likely to be necessary to remove the grime obstructing his spiritual portals to Hashem.

Unfortunately for those with significant exposure to secular society, their personality and thought patterns may be influenced or even formed by television programs and advertisements, lyrics of popular songs, and the behavior of unfitting role models.⁴⁸ This poison needs to be removed from the soul in order to form a proper relationship with Hashem. This is similar to the experience of Abraham, who was able to receive prophecy only after he separated from Lot. Similarly, Maimonides writes of the spiritual negativity that surrounded Abraham before he fully recognized Hashem. Such influences might explain the long delay from age three until age forty when Abraham finally achieved complete recognition of the Master of the Universe.⁴⁹

45. Rav Soloveitchik writes: “There is a natural desire, a natural yearning in every human being, Jew and gentile alike, who were all created in the image of God, to come as close as possible to the Master of the Universe.” Rav Soloveitchik cites the *Tanya*, (*Likkutei Amarim* chapters 12, 19 and 38) which calls this drive “*ahava tivit*,” the natural love for God (Soloveitchik, *Abraham’s Journey*, 59).

46. Ps. 42:1-2.

47. Ps. 24:3-4.

48. Cf. *Hagiga* 15b, which attributes Elisha b. Abuya’s downfall to his being steeped in Greek culture.

49. Rashi (Genesis 13:14) states that “as long as the wicked one was with Abraham, Hashem separated from him.” Rav Soloveitchik writes that there are those who “repress the drive for God or are not cognizant of it due to the environment or friends who smother the still, small voice of the human personality” (Soloveitchik, *Abraham’s Journey*, 59).

A Third Opinion: Abraham discovered Hashem at age 48.

Finally, we need to analyze a third opinion presented in the aforementioned Midrash – that Abraham recognized Hashem only at the age of forty-eight. One might reasonably ask what would have prompted Abraham to recognize God specifically at age forty-eight. The choice of this age seems arbitrary and without a basis in the *Humash* (Pentateuch).

However, Rabbi Menachem Leibtag explains: “Abraham reached age 48 in the same year that Peleg died (see Rashi on Genesis 10:25), which according to the Talmud corresponds to the precise year of the Tower of Babel.” In other words, Abraham’s transformation resulted from his witnessing, or at least hearing about, Hashem’s dramatic disruption of the construction of the tower of Babel. Hearing of this astounding miracle radically changed Abraham and drew him closer to Hashem.⁵⁰

Why did not many more people did react in the same manner?⁵¹ Perhaps there were indeed many who shared Abraham’s reaction, and these are the people whom Abraham and Sarah deeply impacted in Charan.⁵²

Alternatively, one may answer that it is hardly surprising Abraham acted alone. The Zohar (*Parashat Yitro* s.v. *Vayishma Yitro*) teaches that the entire world heard about the great miracles of Egypt and the revelation at Sinai, yet Yitro was the only non-Jew who joined the Jewish people as a result. For everyone else, life went on as usual.

In our times, how many people became religious as a result of the miracles of the 1948 and 1967 Arab wars against Israel? These were undoubtedly miraculous events, acknowledged as such even by many non-observant Jews. As recently as the summer of 2014, when hundreds of rockets fell on Israel and caused relatively little damage, how many changed their lives dramatically after witnessing this incredible manifestation of divine intervention?

Do Not Bother Me with Inconvenient Facts

Most individuals are not interested in hearing facts that make them uncomfortable, especially if they encourage a radical change in routine

50. <http://www.tanach.org/breishit/noach/shiuri.htm>.

51. Torah Academy of Bergen County student Tani Greengart posed this question.

52. Rashi (Genesis 12:5).

and belief. The Midrash⁵³ presents a remarkable dialogue between Nimrod and Abraham that epitomizes the phenomenon of people flippantly dismissing an inconvenient reality.

When Nimrod ordered Abraham to worship fire, Abraham asked, “Why not worship water which extinguishes fire?” Nimrod then ordered Abraham to worship water; Abraham replied, “Why not worship the clouds from which water comes?” Nimrod ordered Abraham to worship the clouds: Abraham replied, “Why not worship wind which moves the clouds?” Nimrod ordered him to worship the wind and Abraham then asked, “Why not worship man who can withstand the wind?” Nimrod, realizing that Abraham had proven that worshipping fire was senseless, responded, “You are playing word-games with me.” Even after witnessing Abraham’s miraculous survival in the fire, Nimrod does not change his way of life, as demonstrated by his throwing Abraham’s brother Haran into the fire for expressing support for his brother’s stance.

Abraham is characterized by intellectual honesty, flexibility, and courage to act on the truth. Nimrod simply dismissed the inconvenient fact which Abraham soundly demonstrated and faithfully upheld. Such is the intellectual ignorance of those like Nimrod who lack the courage to face and live up to the truth. Others produce incredibly far-fetched answers to escape the “inconvenience” of living a Torah life. For such people, demonstrating the truth is insufficient; they must also be shown and taught how the Torah is a divine recipe for leading the most spiritually and psychologically compelling life possible.

Haran as a Bad Example

The aforementioned Midrash records that Haran was watching this episode unfold and was unsure of whom to support – his brother or Nimrod. He decided that if Abraham emerged unscathed, he would tell Nimrod that he supported Abraham. If Abraham died, he would support Nimrod. Abraham was thrown into the furnace and came out unharmed. When Nimrod demanded that Haran pledge his allegiance, he said that he supported his brother. They threw Haran into the furnace, and he was burned to death.

53. Genesis Rabba 38:13.

Why did Hashem not save Haran, as He had saved Abraham minutes before from Nimrod's fire? After all, Haran did express his support for Abraham. The answer is that Haran hardly deserved a miracle due to the shallow nature of his commitment, which was immediately preceded by an expression of agnosticism. Hashem expects unwavering commitment, just as a spouse demands and deserves unconditional loyalty, not one born simply of crass opportunism.

In a case where one genuinely wonders if the Torah is true, we can consider the Jewish version of "Pascal's wager." According to this calculation, one reasons that if the Torah is true, he will receive considerable punishment in the afterlife if he fails to observe its statutes. Since there is no considerable downside to observance – the Torah way of life is meaningful and enjoyable – he chooses to act as if he believes, because the risk of punishment if he does *not* believe outweighs the possible advantages of believing otherwise.

We could argue that one who lives an Orthodox life due to this calculation is better off than one who does not observe Torah at all. After all, we believe in the potential of *mitokh shelo lishmah ba lishmah* (by doing something from impure motives one may come to do it from pure motives). If a person observes the Torah with flawed motives, this may eventually lead to his or his child's observance of the Torah for noble motives.

Nonetheless, Haran's tragic death sounds a jolting alarm for those who observe Torah out of doubt. Such an attitude did not save Haran from Nimrod's fire and may not motivate children, who will inevitably notice their parents' shallow commitment, to live observant lives as adults.

A healthy connection with a spouse cannot emerge when one marries due to a "Pascal's wager" reckoning. So too, a healthy and life-affirming relationship with Hashem is possible only when one is fully committed.

As Elijah said on Mount Carmel:⁵⁴ "How long will you go limping between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him: but if Ba'al, then follow him." Elijah suggests that it may be preferable to worship

54. I Kings 18:21.

idols than to serve Hashem inconsistently. There is abundant reasoning to support a full commitment to observance of the commandments. A Torah life lived in doubt will ultimately fail, as did Haran's brand of vacillating spiritual commitment.⁵⁵

Conclusion

Abraham set a powerful example by boldly following the truth and unconditionally committing to Hashem's command. *Hazal* (our sages)⁵⁶ say that "the acts of the fathers are a sign for the children (*ma'aseh avot siman labanim*),"⁵⁷ which means that we are both blessed with the ability and charged with the responsibility to follow the undiluted faith of our forefathers. This is the only assurance for a spiritually satisfying life.

SIMPLE FAITH

Simple Faith and Conventional Faith

Simple faith (*emuna pshuta*) must be carefully distinguished from the faith of someone who keeps the commandments "simply" out of convention, because he was raised that way.

Someone who keeps the commandments out of convention is the reverse image of what Maimonides called "a child taken captive by gentiles (*tinok shenishba bein hagoyim*)," i.e. a person who was captured and raised in a non-Jewish environment. Such a person is a victim of circumstances beyond his control, and therefore we do not condemn him harshly for his failure to adhere to traditional Jewish belief.⁵⁸

If we do not make an effort to deepen our belief in Hashem and the divine origin of the Torah, we are creating a "reverse *tinok shenishba*" scenario.⁵⁹ The *tinok shenishba* is pardoned because he is merely a product

55. Nahmanides comments on Deut. 6:16 (in regards to the prohibition against testing Hashem): "It is improper to serve Hashem in a manner of doubt."

56. This term, an acronym for *hakhamenu zikhronam livrakha* (our sages of blessed memory) refers specifically to the Jewish sages of mishnaic and talmudic times.

57. This is the idea that our forefathers set the standard of behavior for future generations (Nahmanides on Gen. 12:6).

58. *Hilkhot Mamrim* 3:3.

59. This remark was made by Maurice Rabbenou, an alumnus of Torah Academy of Bergen County.

of his surroundings and is thus not entirely “responsible” for his actions. But by the same token, the person who believes and observes the commandment simply out of conformity to his social environment does not receive much credit for his actions. In order to make our actions meaningful and to avoid the situation of a “reverse *tinok shenishba*,” it is highly worthwhile to invest the time to enhance and deepen one’s *emuna*.

In contrast, one who finds belief in Hashem and other traditional Torah beliefs to be intuitive and obvious (*emuna pshuta*) is *not* a “reverse *tinok shenishba*.” He or she readily and intuitively perceives the Light of Torah that draws us near to Hashem.⁶⁰ For such a person, every prayer and every encounter with Torah further deepens his or her faith without the need for the discussions in this book.

Strengthening *Emuna*

Nevertheless, even a person of *emuna pshuta*, simple faith, can benefit from thinking about matters of faith.

Many Torah educators throughout the ages have not discussed *emuna* with their students. Perhaps they feel that through serious study of Torah, their students will be exposed to its inherent majesty and independently arrive at the conclusion that the Torah is a divine document. And for some this is certainly true. I personally, from a young age, found it intuitive that the Torah is a divine document and understood that our history is so unusual that it must be guided by God’s hand. In high school I studied two Shakespeare plays, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. I found them enthralling, magnificent, and far superior to any other secular literature I had ever encountered. But I recognized even then that while these were outstanding works, they paled in comparison to the Torah’s depth, manifold interpretations, and continued relevance. It was obvious to me that while Shakespeare may represent the pinnacle of human achievement, the Torah is unparalleled because it is the product of a divine author.⁶¹

60. *Petiḥa* to Lamentations Rabba 1:2.

61. This experience is reminiscent of a Gemara passage (Berakhot 19b), which encourages taking the opportunity to see non-Jewish kings, for if one merits he will be able to distinguish between Jewish and non-Jewish kings.

However, an insight from the Book of Exodus supports delving into matters of *emuna*. The Book of Exodus records that after the splitting of the Red Sea we proclaimed our belief in God and Moses.⁶² Now, it is clear that we trusted in Hashem even prior to the splitting of the Red Sea, as the Torah explicitly states that we believed in God and Moses much earlier in the Exodus process.⁶³ Thus it seems that Ex. 14:31 does not mean that *only* after the splitting of the Red Sea we believed in Hashem; rather, it means that our faith was enhanced and deepened as a result of that intense experience. Perhaps one of the reasons we recite this verse in our daily prayers is so that by reminding ourselves of this event we can once again enhance our faith and thereby deepen our commitment to meticulous Torah observance.

Maimonides writes that the commandment is to “know” that God exists.⁶⁴ One can know that God exists and that the Torah is a divine document based on rational arguments such as those we are setting forth in this book. One does not require a “leap of faith” to believe in the Torah; ⁶⁵ reasonable arguments can lead one to know that Hashem revealed the Torah to our ancestors at Sinai.

Aviad Shely, a Torah Academy of Bergen County student and a voracious and insightful reader of fine literature, told me that he concluded that the Torah is a divine document based on the profundity of the *Humash* (Pentateuch): how else could every single story in a book written thousands of years ago yield such a rich and wide variety of interpretations with manifold and profound life lessons that are as relevant today as they were at the time they were written.

62. Ex. 14:31.

63. Ex. 4:31.

64. *Hilkhot Yesodei HaTorah* 1:1.

65. Rabbi Yehuda Amital noted that Judaism does not require us to believe in anything illogical. This is an application of the principle of *deracheha darchei noam* (the ways of the Torah are pleasant) (Prov. 3:17). Rav Amital believes that just as the Gemara (Sukka 32b) applies this verse to teach us that the Torah does not require us to take a stinging plant as part of the “four kinds” of Sukkot, so too the Torah does not force us to believe something which violates the laws of logic, the intellectual equivalent of a stinging plant. One may add that for this reason the Torah does not obligate us to believe in anything that contradicts a scientifically proven fact, as seen in Maimonides’ *Guide to the Perplexed* (2:25), *The Kuzari* (1:67), Nahmanides (Gen. 9:12) and our chapters on Torah and science.

A Remedy for Shallow *Emuna*

Rashi surprisingly describes Noah's *emuna* as shallow.⁶⁶ He observes that even Noah did not enter the ark until the floodwaters overwhelmed him. The Steipler Gaon explains that although Noah believed in Hashem, he did not believe in the truth of Hashem's word on the same level as he believed in the reality of the mundane world.⁶⁷ Proper belief is when one trusts in Hashem and His Torah with the same conviction as he believes, for example, that the sun and the moon exist.

The Steipler Gaon explains that this is the essential lesson of the deathbed advice offered by Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakai: "One's fear of Hashem should be the same as his fear of man."⁶⁸ The existence of Hashem and the truth of His Torah should be just as obvious as the existence of other people. Otherwise, one's *emuna* is shallow, and the resulting level of commitment to proper Torah observance is limited.

Engaging students in discussions of *emuna* has the potential to transform superficial *emuna* into deep-rooted belief that results in a firm, enduring commitment to Torah observance. Rabbi Moshe Wolfson remarked that Jews have *emuna* etched into their DNA just as a beaver's ability to make a dam or a bird's ability to make a nest is a part of its genetic makeup. However, given the considerable countervailing cultural forces that challenge us today, many can no longer rely only on this natural, intuitive foundation of *emuna*. By presenting healthy-minded Jews with the rational basis of Judaism, we can help to bolster their *emuna* during spiritually turbulent times.

Bava Batra 89b: To Speak or Not to Speak

Some will argue that it is better not to examine issues of *emuna* with students and young people because it may cause those who already believe – or at least have not questioned our core beliefs – to challenge those principles.

This concern is reminiscent of a dilemma recorded by Ḥazal: Honesty in weights and measures is forcefully commanded by the Torah

66. Gen. 7:7.

67. Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky (the Steipler Gaon), *Birkat Peretz* on *Parashat Noah*.

68. Berakhot 28b.

and should be strictly enforced by the authorities in a Torah community. Ḥazal were aware of all the tricks a swindling merchant might do to deceive his customers, such as using metal weights worn out with use and employing heavy sticks to smooth out measured flour to the disadvantage of the buyer. R. Yoḥanan ben Zakkai agonized over whether or not to make this information public: “*Oi li im omar oi li im lo omar* (Woe to me if I speak, woe to me if I do not speak).”⁶⁹ If he reveals these strategies, there is a danger that swindlers will learn from him how to fool their unknowing customers. If he refrains, his silence may be interpreted as an indication that the sages are unaware of their tricks. R. Yoḥanan ben Zakkai finally resolved his dilemma on the basis of Hosea: “for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just do walk in them: but the transgressors shall stumble in them.”⁷⁰ The ways of Hashem must be made known to all, and it is up to the free will of man to utilize the information for good or for evil.

Will there be those who will react to discussions of *emuna* with contrived and unreasonable responses that employ tortured logic? Unfortunately, the answer may be yes. Measures should be taken to manage this concern properly, such as presenting the issues in an interactive yet intimate setting. Caution should be exercised, but this concern should not deprive the vast majority of Orthodox Jews of the benefit they will derive from an effective, well-presented, rational explanation of the basis for Torah living.

Conclusion – Mainstream Orthodox Education for *Emuna*

Discussions of the rational basis for belief in Hashem and the divine origin of the Torah have, generally speaking, been confined to Jews who engage in outreach to non-observant Jews. However, it is appropriate for rabbis, educators, and parents throughout the Orthodox community to discuss these matters occasionally with observant Jews. The risk of *refraining* from addressing the rational basis of our faith, in the hope that it will somehow be inculcated naturally, is readily apparent. Shallow or lapsed commitment is, regrettably, not a rare occurrence in

69. Bava Batra 89b.

70. Hos. 14:10.

all segments of the Orthodox community. Since the evidence for the existence of Hashem and the divine origin of the Torah is accessible and readily understood, it behooves every Jew who is concerned about preserving our national legacy to devote some time to strengthening his *emuna* and that of his fellow Jews. Even if one prefers to engage in substantive Torah study in lieu of mere discussion *about* the Torah, it is vital for us all to be able to articulate to ourselves, to those around us, and to the succeeding generations of our people, a rational basis for our faith and practices.

It is important to stress again that there are many portals to *emuna*. This book contains the arguments and sources that satisfy this author, but may not necessarily address all concerns. One who is not satisfied by the evidence we present should consult other rabbis, teachers, and texts that can provide alternative directions.⁷¹

71. A good source of essays and presentations on *emuna* appear online at www.simpletoremember.com. Rabbi Lawrence Keleman's *Permission to Believe* (Southfield, Michigan: Targum Press, 1990) and *Permission to Receive* (Southfield, Michigan: Targum Press, 1996) are good resources as well.