

Responses To "Reasons to Believe:

Question:

What if any of the reasons to believe that Rabbi Jachter presented did you like the best and why?

- I liked the answer of how Judaism is the only religion to be based on an event witnessed by a massive group of people as opposed to other religions which only have a few people witnessing it. This is because I think that it's extremely easy for a small group to come up with an idea and spread it, even if it's not true. But I think that in order for 600,000 people to come up with a lie is not possible, therefore clearly proving that everything about Judaism must be true because of the amount of people that witnessed it.
- I liked portal three because it makes a lot of sense. It explains how the Jewish people are still alive today which would be impossible without Hashem continuously saving us throughout history.
- I feel like the rest answer he gave to why Hashem exists is that the world has such specific requirements for existence and if even the slightest changes in the sun or the atmosphere occurred, the world would not exist. I also like the proof that Judaism is the only religion in which G-d spoke to all the people and gave them the laws.
- I liked the one about science, and how if the sun was 5% hotter we'd all explode. I guess there are too many coincidences in the creation of the world that it is hard to doubt God's hand in it. I also like how he spoke about the Jewish people's ability to survive even though a lot of other nations try to wipe us out.
- I liked his idea that the reason we should believe is because of mass revelation. Even though one would think this would be the hardest thing to convince someone to believe because no one nowadays can say they witnessed the Sinai or other of Hashem's major miracles. Despite not seeing those major miracles performed by God some people still have devoted and unwavering faith towards Hashem. That to me proves that these people absolutely have faith in Hashem because they are believing in something they never saw.
- The fact that it's impossible for this world to have come into existence without a creator. I have always thought about the Big Bang, and how the scientists said it happened because two particles came into contact forming a huge explosion that created other forms of life. But I still questioned that because where did those two particles even come from? They had to come from somewhere! Spontaneous production is not real, so something had to be there to make the two particles. So of course God is real. That's just the way my mind has rationalized science with Hashem. But even without thinking about God, the whole theory of the Big Bang is frustrating.

- I liked his reason with the example of the sun. He explains how the reason that the sun is a specific temperature is because if it was hotter, the world would explode and if it was colder, we would freeze. Only G-d has the power to control the temperature of the sun and he is demonstrating how he is protecting human kind by keeping the sun at this temperature.
- I liked the argument that he made on Jews surviving as being proof of something special about them.
- Of all of the reasons Rabbi Jachter presented for reasons to believe, I only liked one idea. He talked a lot about how everything on this earth has a specific reason, and that reason is god. He is the reason why we have water, air, perfect temperature for our environment to properly function, etc. I liked and agreed with this idea because it allows us to have meaning in everything, nature especially, which most other religions don't value.
- I liked his first reason (Portal #1:Argument from Design, Anthropic Principle, Nature as Source of Love of Hashem) the best. I liked how explained how science fits into religion. Often, science is seen as a contradiction to religion, but for this reason he used it as a proof for belief. He brought believable and accurate proof, including the existence of water and air on Earth. He makes this reason very relatable because he says, believing is common sense, which everyone should have.
- I think that none of the reasons are convincing, but the fifth reason is the most convicting reason why to believe in god because when we see god's prophesies come to life in our own lives, there is now a personal side to my faith in god. Sometimes, god seems to be an abstract idea and the 'divine period' thousands of years ago is unrelatable.
- The Historic point of view - Mount Sinai, Prophets, and our survival until now speak to me because of their facts and proofs. I like when you have historic facts (even though i don't like history) to prove what you believe. these points made really strengthen my personnel belief.
- The reason that the Rabbi presents in portal 1, that nature proves that God exists, is a great reason. Common sense would push someone to believe that the world did not come to way it is spontaneously. Therefore there must be something that created it and that is God. Everything in nature is made to exact dimensions and are completely perfect and no other thing could do that besides God. This makes total sense to me. Seeing parts of nature from the mountains in colorado to the tiny insects that roam the ground it is truly amazing. I could not think of anything other than God to be the one who created all these amazing things.
- I agree with how Rabbi Jachter uses nature to prove that G-d exist. He talks about all the miracles of nature that people take for granted, and don't see G-D in. For instance, the Earth is just far enough away from the sun, to the point where we wont melt, yet close enough to the point where we won't freeze. Similarly, the fact that no matter what the sun will rise and set everyday. These regularities of our nature cannot be sheer coincidences, hence the fact that God exist

Question:

What is your opinion on using these types of reasons as a foundation of belief?

- I think that some of these are really good reasons to have belief because even though it might be ideal for someone to be able to believe without needing to prove it, if someone needs a proof and there is evidence for that person, then there's no reason he can't use it in order to believe.
- I think that these reasons can be proven wrong so I don't think that they can provide a strong sense of faith.
- I as a person with existing faith appreciate these small reasons which seem to prove that Hashem exists, however I know that if I had doubts these answers might not be satisfying, as I have heard them repeatedly. Especially the part that says "if Hashem didn't create the world, then how could it exist". Though I agree with that statement, I have seen that it is not a sufficient answer for people struggling with faith. I think these reasons are great to give to a person who already has a strong basis of faith because it makes them feel right and justified in their choice to believe and follow Judaism. However, in any other case, I don't think these answers would be enough.
- I think it's hard to rationalize faith and this is what he's trying to do. I feel like people can always point to luck or coincidences if they want to, thus refuting these 'proofs'.
- Using these reasons as foundations of belief is a good thing. because he states so many reasons it's easier for people to choose one, or two, or five to help them stay faithful.
- They're rational, as the title of the article states. There is background and explanation, and I like that. It makes it easier to explain faith to other people, and rationalize your own faith. It's not always good to rationalize God, but there are moments when you're filled with doubt, and need these "factual" beliefs to reassure us.
- I don't think that this should be the foundation of belief because belief is not a science and it shouldn't have to be proven through it.
- I think that his arguments were flawed or easily counterable, I also disliked how he made unfounded statements like "experts struggle to find an explanation outside of biblical prophecy for... Anti-Semitism," where he strikingly doesn't include a footnote, even though in even superfluous places he felt the need to include footnotes. Furthermore, his scientific comments like that the big bang's working out well needing a guiding force is simply not true; scientific evidence can show how it happened naturally.
- Although I do like some aspects of this idea, I don't believe that they can be the foundation of belief. Mainly because many people don't see God in things like temperature and water, so having that as the basis of belief would be challenging for them. In addition, I think a basis of belief should be more specific and direct, rather than just saying everything comes from God, with no proof of this statement.

- I felt that this article brought up many good reasons for a foundation belief. I didn't like how the article used these reasons as an excuse for someone to believe. He gives many very valid reasons for someone to believe as they cover all basis of life, for example science.
- I do believe that there is a rational reason for faith. The use of logic is refreshing for me because logic is not inherently based in religious dogma. Inside of religious boundaries, the reason for faith is essentially 'just believe'. For me, that is not enough.
- I feel like the historic facts are a strong "proof" of A God. I also believe Historic artifacts and events, like the exile from Egypt and Mount Sinai, cannot be ignored and therefore "proves" there is a ultimate being that supports the Jews. Recently there have been Jewish relics found that support historic Torah teachings
- These reasons relate to me because i have thought of these types of things in the past. The fact that the Jews are still around after being through so much is a clear proof of God. Seeing reasons like these makes it hard not believe in God.
- His three reasons to believe really speak to me. Looking at nature as a proof for G-d is something I've never thought about before. I have taken this for granted and after reading this, I can truly say that I fully believe that God exist

Responses to "A Prayer for the Days of Awe"

Question: Is this article inspirational to you in the "days of awe" or is it not? Do you relate to it? Explain.

- his article inspires me because sometimes I feel like we just think of Hashem as watching as and letting the natural world occur. But what Mr. Wiesel pointed out is that sometimes, when we feel like we're going through something frantic, instead of asking how Hashem can watch, we can think of it as Hashem is also suffering and it hurts him to see what's happening to us. This idea of Hashem suffering with us allows us to relate more to Hashem.
- It is inspirational but not to me. I still can't believe that the holocaust happened and it's one of my long unanswered questions: how can god let that happen? Similar to Elie Weisel i won't take others answers or her own for that matter.
- I find this so inspiring because its coming from a survivor who's seen such horrible things. He's seen everything he once knew destroyed, yet he still held on to his faith in the camps and beyond. i find that so impressive because even though he's seen the worst of the worst, he still believes and has faith. even more so, jews today, myself included, should look at this to strengthen our belief in god. because if Elie Weisel can still have faith in god after all he's seen, then so can we.
Liora Brainson
- Personally I do find it inspiring but that is because I find it relatable (on a much lower level of course because I of course have much different experiences). I relate very much to being angry at G-d, yet still wanting to be close to G-d and believing and following Him. I think his faith is ispirational because it shows that people do not have to always understand G-d, and they don't always have to suppress emotions they feel towards G-d in order to connect to Him and to have

faith. I think it is inspirational that he continues to believe despite the awful atrocities he went through- I think he must have a very strong form of faith.

- This article can definitely be inspiring during these days because its showing others that doubt is okay but we still have to look to God and thank him for everything and ask for forgiveness in hopes he can forgive us.
- I relate to his original statement of how he doubts Hashem's kindness and justice, though not with as extreme an example. However, I am not able to reach the same conclusion as Mr. Weisel. In the Holocaust, other people did those things to the Jews and therefore were going against Hashem. However, here, Hashem made these, and other laws, part of his own religion.
- Yes this is a huge inspiration to hear that someone who went through to holocaust still has faith in God. I can't really relate to His feelings because I haven't gone through the holocaust. For me it is so much easier to have faith in God because my life is full of blessings from Hashem. The fact that Elie Weisel still has faith makes my faith stronger.
- This article is inspiring because someone who has seen many horrors, like Elie Weisel, was still able to have a faith in God. Even though the events of the Holocausts can lead to Jews having doubt, Weisel was still faithful to God and was able to resolve this doubt. Its hard to completely relate to this because I have not had the same experiences as Elie Weisel.
- This article is essentially asking the question of theodicy, the question of why bad things happen to good people. His answer- that it is men and not God that perpetrate acts of violence and evil and therefore that God's role is simply as a father figure watching his children squabble- demeans the horror and devastation that was felt by many people, turning human affairs into petty fights watched by a horror struck God. It brings up the question of how God is involved in this world; is he an active participant in each person's destiny as their lives progress, or simply the decider of people's afterlives and pre-births? Judaism promotes not a deistic first cause but an active participant- leading to questions of free will- which really makes me want Judaism to have a defined answer as to how God is involved. If I am in danger, does praying to God have an effect, or is prayer simply Rav Hersch's interpretation of a reflexive activity meant for the person doing it, and not as a means to receive help? Weisel's answer to theodicy as it is simply humans and God is uninvolved seems to agree with Rav Hersch's interpretation, and taken together I find only a deistic God, so honestly I'm confused with what Judaism (Orthodox, though I think it's a given that I'm referring to it) actually promotes in terms of how God is actually active, or whether the mainstream view is that God just is, even though we can't understand how.
- Yes because Elie is trying to re-build his relationship with God even after losing trust in him. Throughout the whole year I have done sins because no body is perfect. These sins might have pushed me a little farther from God, but in these days I have the ability to re-build my relationship.
- Yes. I find inspiration in this article because someone who has gone through one of the most horrific things that has happened in history was still able to keep his faith.
- This article is inspirational to me because it addresses several points that I have not thought about. It is inspiration the recover of the survivors, by beginning new lives and new families. Also it is important to look at the holocaust from Hashem's perspective. For instance we always think

and talk about Jewish suffering but it is interesting to get a perspective on how the holocaust affected god.

- This article is relatable for me because he questions god, but still holds on and believes in god and has a connection with god. Weisel tries to solve his questions and wants us to keep questioning, but also try to resolve the questions and the problems that he has with god.
- It is quite inspirational actually. I relate the Elie Wiesel because I've felt the same things (obviously not about the Holocaust, but about my own life). I have been in the same place, angry with Hashem, and not knowing how to forgive. But I understood that Judaism and Hashem were too important to me for me to just give it up, but I still struggle with those issues I have until this day. This article made me want to Daven well on Yom Kippur and strengthen my relationship with Hashem despite by issues (especially because I relate to writing your own prayers, writing is my own way of expressing myself so I understand Elie's need to write this down).

Response to Faith and Doubt

Write your response to "Faith and Doubt" Make sure in your response that you reflect on the text in a way that it is clear that you read it

- I definitely agree with what was said. The fact is, we live in a world where Jews are a tiny minority. We should expect that, due to the influence of the outside world, questions will arise among Jews of all different walks of life and levels of observance. This is by no means heresy, as Judaism completely encourages questions (E.G the Talmud), and it's important that people not go through life with doubts in their mind.
- Faith and Doubt talks about the modern day problem of doubting religion. The belief that teaching faith is impossible is addressed which caught my interest. I like how the article didn't try to ignore the fact of doubt is in religion and that it will always be present. It showed different ways of doubting or ignoring doubt which I admired and though very informative. Dr. Norman Lamm's article is a very interesting read that enlightens the reader of the modern way of thinking and doubting religion.
- Dr. Lamm says that in This non religious age, everyone has doubts and that when people have doubts they should be met forthrightly. I don't know if I believe that everyone has a type of doubt that bothers them to the point where it is irrational for them to be expected to follow religion or continue with it if their doubts are not addressed. However I do see that many peoples doubts do disturb their faith and should be addressed in a way that they feel can bring them closer to Hashem. I do believe that there are different types of faith and that some stay away from doubt and have simple faith, some are rationalistic in their approach to faith, and some are in between. I very much agree when he says that you should not question a simple faith person 's faith and make them feel that your faith is so much better than theirs just because they you are more

rationaly minded. It actually really bothers me when people do this. I think real faith does have the acknowledgement, the relationship of trust, and the willing to act on such trust- a think real faith should encompass all of that.

- Dr. Lamm is making the point that this is not a religious age, that doubt exists, and that's okay, but we need to meet it head on and not let those doubts swirl into hate towards the faith. He makes it clear that there are different types of faith, and that its okay to be faithful in a different way--it doesn't make you less Jewish. I completely agree with Dr. Lamm's take on doubt and faith. It's not right to judge others in their faith, if they blindly believe in God or if they sometimes lean towards philosophy and rationalized thinking in order to help them strengthen their faith. I do think though that a big part of Judaism IS struggling with your faith, doubting in many part of Judaism but still smcoming back to Judaism even with your doubts and therefore strengthening your faith in Hashem. The different types of faith that Dr. Last discussed in his article: cognitive, emotional, and functional. Each produce their own type of faith and Jewish experience. I think that to truly have a successful faith you need all three. Maybe not at the same time, and maybe not all the time, but consistent. Be consistent in your faith but also grow with your learning. I think that blind faith is great, but I don't see many opportunities for growth, but with doubt, you can grow because by overcoming your doubt you are strengthening your faith and growing as a Jew.
- I agree with the line Dr. Lamm uses when he says "to think is to question." I like this because its so true. Its very rare that when you are thinking or learning about something to not come across any questions. How can you you learn something and not have questions. Not everything is easy to understand or straight forward. Also, like Dr. Lamm says, when we come to doubt or questions we should never brush things aside we should tackle then and try to figure them out. Even though sometimes questions cannot be answered we still have to ask and talk about them. The "double faith theory" is a key tool in working with these problems. If we can use the help of philosophy to answer questions that are not answered with judaism why not? We can use it as a tool to help us with our big questions :). People struggle with asking or who to ask questions. I feel like sometimes its hard to ask questions because if you really don't understand something, even forming questions about it can be hard. The idea of using these questions depends on each person individually. Personally, I think it is important to ask these questions and using philosophy can be very helpful.
- Dr. Norman Lamm made me think a lot about faith vs. questioning. First off I believe his opening comments about how this isn't either a religious time or a non religious time. We are in a time of confusion, where questioning and disbelief is prevalent. During these times it is important for us to have faith, but you cannot have full faith without a little questioning. For instance, if one believes that Hashem is in the room with him, he must always have doubt because you cannot physically see God. Dr. Lamm says that there is no mitzvah to question god but there is a mitzvah to believe in God. By this, I think he means that it is important and vital to question God in order to have complete faith, but we should not question to a point where it will conflict with our Judaism. When he discusses the three forms of faith he mentions acknowledgment, expressed in emotion

or action, and expressing faith to a point of behavior; I believe that in order to reach the maximum form of faith, expressing faith to a point of behavior, and taking god into your life to the point that you base your entire life off him and live by his mitzvot, it is almost necessary to question a little bit.

- I think that the article was very accurate in depicting the issue with the modern world and how addressing these philosophical questions are becoming more important. Meaning, before the modern time, rational thinking was not something integral to society, and it was something that wasn't really thought about at all. Therefore, the idea of questioning religion and addressing ones doubts wasn't something that was done. However, because in the modern secular world, the idea of thinking and rationalizing everything is so important and encouraged, it leads to the issue of the modern Jew and questioning his faith. I think that the best type of faith that a Jew in the modern time can have is the double-faith theory. The idea that if someone needs to, they can learn philosophy, but regardless, whether or not they do, they will accept god and religion. I think this idea is really important because it's giving someone the opportunity to question certain actions and beliefs that they have, but it also almost guarantees that no matter what, they will still accept it. One of the most dangerous things about philosophy is that we don't want Jews to decide that Judaism is not correct because of what they found, so this idea of double-faith almost ensures that the Jew, no matter what he finds, will still be part of the Jewish nation and won't be turned off. Also, this approach is very important because since we live in a modern world, it has almost become the norm to question everything. But at the same time, if a Jew is perfectly fine not questioning that, that is perfectly okay, and the double-faith approach allows that to be okay. I think that the main idea the article is trying to portray is that in the modern era, we inevitably will want to ask questions, and the most important thing is to be able to question but always remember the unbreakable faith you have with God.
- I agree with the "Single-Faith Theory of the Rationalist type" where we have faith but at the same time use reason when talking about torah. Doubt should not be avoided like in emunah temimah, but should be discussed and talked out. Doubt is a natural feeling that many people feel and like the article states, "there is no simcha, no joy, that can equal that of the resolution of doubt." Part of being an intelligent person is looking further into the things presented to you and asking questions to help you understand better. Pushing those things aside and blindly following the leader, might work for some people but most people experience doubt.
- I agree with what he said, especially the line, "There is no mitzvah to agonize over theological problems, whereas, according to many Rishonim, it is a mitzvah to believe fully and totally in God." His then continuing on to say that doubt in our society is an inevitability for most people was also very accepting and intellectually honest in my eyes for him to say. I think that while emunah temimah, blind faith, was necessary for Jews to survive- in fact, most of the religions didn't offer an alternative to blind faith until the Enlightenment period or Thomas Aquinas- it is not the best way nowadays to believe in God. R. Nachman Bratzlaver's point that the educated Jews converted to Christianity in the Spanish Expulsion while the blind faith Jews throughout history

martyred themselves and were prepared to die for their values, and thus are worse Jews, I disagree with. Obviously from a perspective of preserving Judaism through the continued practice of Jewry, distance from the Non-Jews and distinctions are necessary. A large part of our commandments are made for us to be separate- holiness is described as separating from something else - yet further distinction in our time than necessary- an example being not promoting or involving in philosophy- would only make a Jew that could not be on an intellectually equal level with others that he talks to. I also think that what he calls "Affective Faith," as well as "Functional Faith," are both reminiscent of the blind faith taken by Jews in the past. Personally, I find this faith to be weak, since the burden of truth rests on an argument for being religious, over not. Thus, without being able to defend why you're Jewish intellectually, behaviorally or emotionally following Judaism cannot function as a proof.

- I think that it is necessary to have doubt. If someone say that God is everywhere at all times, it is normal to doubt that because you can not see him. However, doubt might cause people to lose faith meaning if there is a mitzvah and you dont know the reason for it, if you doubt it will result in you not doing it. But if you do these mitzvot without doubt it shows ultimate faith. Having lots of doubt at times of persecution also may result in losing complete faith as it says in the article. During the time of Spanish persecution, Jews doubted God and turned straight to conversion. Rabbi Lamm believes that we should doubt certain things but the main focus is how we should respond to those doubts. He knows that in modern society doubt is inevitable but we need to find ways to balance doubt and faith.
- The first few pages really struck a cord with me. It talked about how in my generation, religion isn't always the first thing on our minds. We have grown up in a time were everything is fast pace and high demand. Therefor, the effort it requires to really build a relationship with god and build up your faith is, most of the time, too challenging. Its not easy, yet our parents have always told us that "this is just what we do," in response to questions they themselves find confusing. However, I think that questioning and having some doubt is healthy and actually required in raising a child in a faithful home. It's hard to just be born into something you didnt choose, which is why so many jews today choose to not practice the laws of judaism. However, the depth and instruction that Dr. Lamm goes into makes it that little bit easier to try and find your faith and build your relationship with God. I found it interesting that he describes finding your faith in todays world is an "elusive goal" because with all of the distractions, its very hard to solidify your faith.
- I feel that Dr. Norman Lamm has proggressed vastly since the Gemara source, and was more adapted to our time period. In the time of the Gemara it was a wuestion on weather or not you would read Greak philosipyu, but today it so deep rooted into our culture there is almost no way to escape it. Dr. Lamm brings up the point how we cannot teach Judisam to people without expecting there to be doubt. He said the most imprtant way to deal with doubt is how we encountar it. I am looking foward to doing that in this class. We can not shy away from doubt, and that was very comforting for me.

- This article made me understand that in order to have faith and believe in God you have to have doubt. God is not obvious because we can't see him, so there is doubt that God exists. We have to understand that doubt and overcome it with faith in God. If we have faith then it gives us ability to understand the doubt. Faith is equivalent to the Torah and doubt is philosophy I think that we need a little bit of both. We have to question our faith in order to Believe in it. If we live without questioning our faith then it will be very easy to get lost in doubt. I believe that because we live in a time of confusion, where people are not sure about god and there are religious and non-religious people, in order to stick to our faith we need to take the 3rd approach of faith because we need to act on our religion to stick to our faith.
- During the first part of the article, where Dr. Lamm writes about how people feel about Judaism today, i found myself agreeing with and even seeing myself in many of the statements, especially the ones about how people have an issue with moral problems in the Bible and historical conditioning and that gives them an excuse to not follow Judaism. I find many aspects of Modern Orthodoxy incredibly sexist, such as the fact that men are required to do mitzvot that women cannot do, and the reason for this is that women are exempt from time-bound commandments so that they can focus on their "main purpose"--taking care of the home and raising children. I find myself at a constant struggle with my religion and my liberal beliefs. In regards to the "Three Faith Theories" that Professor Wolfson came up with, I find that the "Single-Faith Theory of the Authoritarian Type" and "The Double-Faith Theory" are essentially the same type of faith. If you will believe in your religion whether philosophy goes together nicely with it or not, what is the point of trying to rationalize your faith?
- Faith and Doubt was an interesting article to read. The main takeaway for me was the issue of how to deal with doubt. As jews in a social environment that is different than the environment thousands of years ago, we will have many things that we do not understand. In my opinion, having doubt is normal. No matter which time period one lives in, it is impossible to be certain about hashem's existence, creation, or hashem's role in the world today because the idea of creation and God is an abstract concept that we can not relate to. There are no definitive answer, but we can try to get to a point where we are certain enough and our emunah 'finishes the job'.