

## Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks on Faith and Doubt

### Rabbi Sacks on Faith & Doubt

Read the following quotes from Rabbi Sacks writing and reflect on the ideas of faith and doubt.

“For Judaism, the search for religious certainty through science or metaphysics is not merely fallacious but ultimately pagan. To suppose that God is scientifically provable is to identify God with what is observable, and this for Judaism is idolatry.” (Crisis and Covenant p. 258)

1. How can we respond to the need to find a proof for our belief in God?

“Faith is not a form of ‘knowing’ in the sense in which that word is used in science and philosophy. It is, in the Bible, a mode of listening.” (The Great Partnership p. 74)

2. What do you think is meant by listening as a form of faith?

“Creation testifies not merely to God’s power but also, as it were, to His belief in mankind. At the heart of religion is not just the faith we have in God. No less significant is the faith God has in us.” (Faith in the Future p. 73)

מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם שֶׁהַחַיּוּת בִּי נִשְׁמְתִי בְּחַמְלָה, רַבָּה אֶמְוֹנְתְּךָ:

I give thanks to You living and everlasting King for You have restored my soul with mercy.  
Great is Your faithfulness.

3. How do you perceive God’s faith in humankind? How does it convey a call to responsibility?

“Jewish faith is not about believing the world to be other than it is. It is not about ignoring the evil, the darkness and the pain. It is about courage, endurance and the capacity to hold fast to ideals even when they are ignored by others. It is the ability to see the world for what it is and yet still believe that it could be different. It is about not giving up, not letting go.” (Radical Then, Radical Now p. 182)

4. How does Rabbi Sacks address the problem of evil in the world?

## Faith and doubt in biblical prophecy

As you read the following pesukim that are related to faith and doubt try to find a source that is a:

- Mirror - reflects what you feel or think**
- Window - can give you a new understanding to what others feel and think**
- Sliding Door - moves you to action**

בראשית ז'

א

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לְנֹחַ בֹּא-אִתָּה וְכָל-בֵּיתְךָ אֶל-הַתֶּבֶת כִּי-אֵתְךָ רָאִיתִי צְדִיק לְפָנַי בְּדוֹר הַזֶּה:

Then יהוה said to Noah, "Go into the ark, with all your household, for you alone have I found righteous before Me in this generation.

ב

מִכָּל הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּהוֹרָה תִּקַּח-לָךְ שִׁבְעָה שִׁבְעָה אִישׁ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וּמִן-הַבְּהֵמָה הָאֲשֵׁר לֹא טְהוֹרָה הוּא שְׁנַיִם אִישׁ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ:  
Of every pure animal you shall take seven pairs, males and their mates, and of every animal that is not pure, two, a male and its mate;

ג

גַּם מֵעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם שִׁבְעָה שִׁבְעָה זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה לְחַיּוֹת זָרַע עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ:

of the birds of the sky also, seven pairs, male and female, to keep seed alive upon all the earth.

ד

כִּי לִימֵים עוֹד שִׁבְעָה אָנֹכִי מִמְטִיר עַל-הָאָרֶץ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וְאַרְבָּעִים לַיְלָה וּמַחֲיִיתִי אֶת-כָּל-הַיְקוּם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה:

For in seven days' time I will make it rain upon the earth, forty days and forty nights, and I will blot out from the earth all existence that I created."

ה

וַיַּעַשׂ נֹחַ כְּכָל אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּהוּ יְהוָה:

And Noah did just as יהוה commanded him.

ו

וְנֹחַ בֶּן-שֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וְהַמַּבּוּל הָיָה מֵיִם עַל-הָאָרֶץ:

Noah was six hundred years old when the Flood came, waters upon the earth.

ז

וַיָּבֹא נֹחַ וּבָנָיו וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְנִשְׁי־בָנָיו אִתּוֹ אֶל-הַתֶּבֶת מִפְּנֵי מֵי הַמַּבּוּל:

**Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, went into the ark because of the waters of the Flood.**

רש"י

Rashi

בראשית ז', ז'.

**מפני מי המבול.** אף נח מקטני אמונה היה, מאמין ואינו מאמין שיבא המבול, ולא נכנס לתבה עד שדחקוהו

המים:

**BECAUSE OF THE WATERS OF THE FLOOD** מפני מי המבול — (properly means "from before") — Noah, also, was of those people who are wanting in faith: he believed and he did

not believe that the Flood would come, and he would not enter the Ark until the waters forced him to do so (Genesis Rabbah 32:6).

במדבר י"א

כא

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה שֵׁשׁ-מֵאוֹת אֶלֶף רַגְלֵי הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִנֹּכִי בְקִרְבּוֹ וְאַתָּה אֹמֵרֶת בְּשָׂר אֲתוֹן לָהֶם וְאֶכְלוּ חֹדֶשׁ יָמִים:  
But Moses said, "The people who are with me\* number six hundred thousand foot soldiers;  
yet You say, 'I will give them enough meat to eat for a whole month.'

כב

הֲצֹאן וּבִקָּר יִשְׁחַט לָהֶם וּמִצֵּא לָהֶם אִם אֶת-כָּל-דְּגֵי הַיָּם יֹאסֹף לָהֶם וּמִצֵּא לָהֶם: (פ)  
Could enough flocks and herds be slaughtered to suffice them? Or could all the fish of the sea  
be gathered for them to suffice them?"

כג

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה הֲיֵד יְהוָה תִּקְצֹר עֲתָה תִּרְאֶה הִיקָרָה דְבָרִי אִם-לֹא:  
And יהוה answered Moses, "Is there a limit to יהוה's power?\* You shall soon see whether what  
I have said happens to you or not!"

מלכים א', י"ח

כא

וַיִּגַּשׁ אֵלֵיהֶם אֶל-כָּל-הָעָם וַיֹּאמֶר עַד-מַתִּי אַתֶּם פֹּסְחִים עַל-שְׁתֵּי הַסַּעֲפִיִּם אִם-יְהוָה הָאֱלֹהִים לְכֹן אַחֲרָיו וְאִם-הַבַּעַל  
לְכֹן אַחֲרָיו וְלֹא-עֲנֵנו הָעָם אֹתוֹ דְּבַר:

Elijah approached all the people and said, "How long will you keep hopping between two  
opinions?-c If the LORD is God, follow Him; and if Baal, follow him!" But the people answered  
him not a word.

ירמיהו ב'

ב

הֲלֹךְ וְקִרְאתָ בְּאָזְנִי יְרוּשָׁלַם לֵאמֹר כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה זְכַרְתִּי לָךְ חֶסֶד נְעוּרָיִךְ אֲהַבֶּת כָּל-יְלֻתֶיךָ לְכַתֵּךְ אַחֲרַי בְּמַדְבָּר  
בְּאַרְץ לֹא זְרוּעָה:

Go proclaim to Jerusalem: Thus said the LORD:

I accounted to your favor

The devotion of your youth,

Your love as a bride—

How you followed Me in the wilderness,

In a land not sown.

יונה ג',

ה

וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ אֲנָשֵׁי נִינְוָה בְּאֱלֹהִים וַיִּקְרְאוּ-צוּם וַיִּלְבְּשׁוּ שִׁקְיִם מִגְדוּלָם וְעַד-קִטְנֵם:  
The people of Nineveh believed God. They proclaimed a fast, and great and small alike put  
on sackcloth.

In small groups use the previous sources and other you found to debate the following ideas:

- a. Having doubts is part of the process of reaching faith
- b. Faith means trusting that something you can't prove is true
- c. Faith is the courage to live with uncertainty

Change groups for every debate.

Support your arguments with a quote from the biblical or Rabbi Sacks resources.

### **Summery**

Using your experiences and interactions with the topic of faith and doubt write a letter to someone your age who is struggling in this area and is looking for answers and / or support.

Use at least two types of resources in your letter:

1. Biblical
2. Rabbi Sacks resources
3. Siddur
4. Peers' input