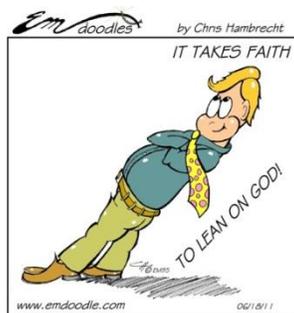


Aish HaTorah, Rav Aharon
Lichtenstein, Rebbe Nachman of Breslov and the
Source of Faith

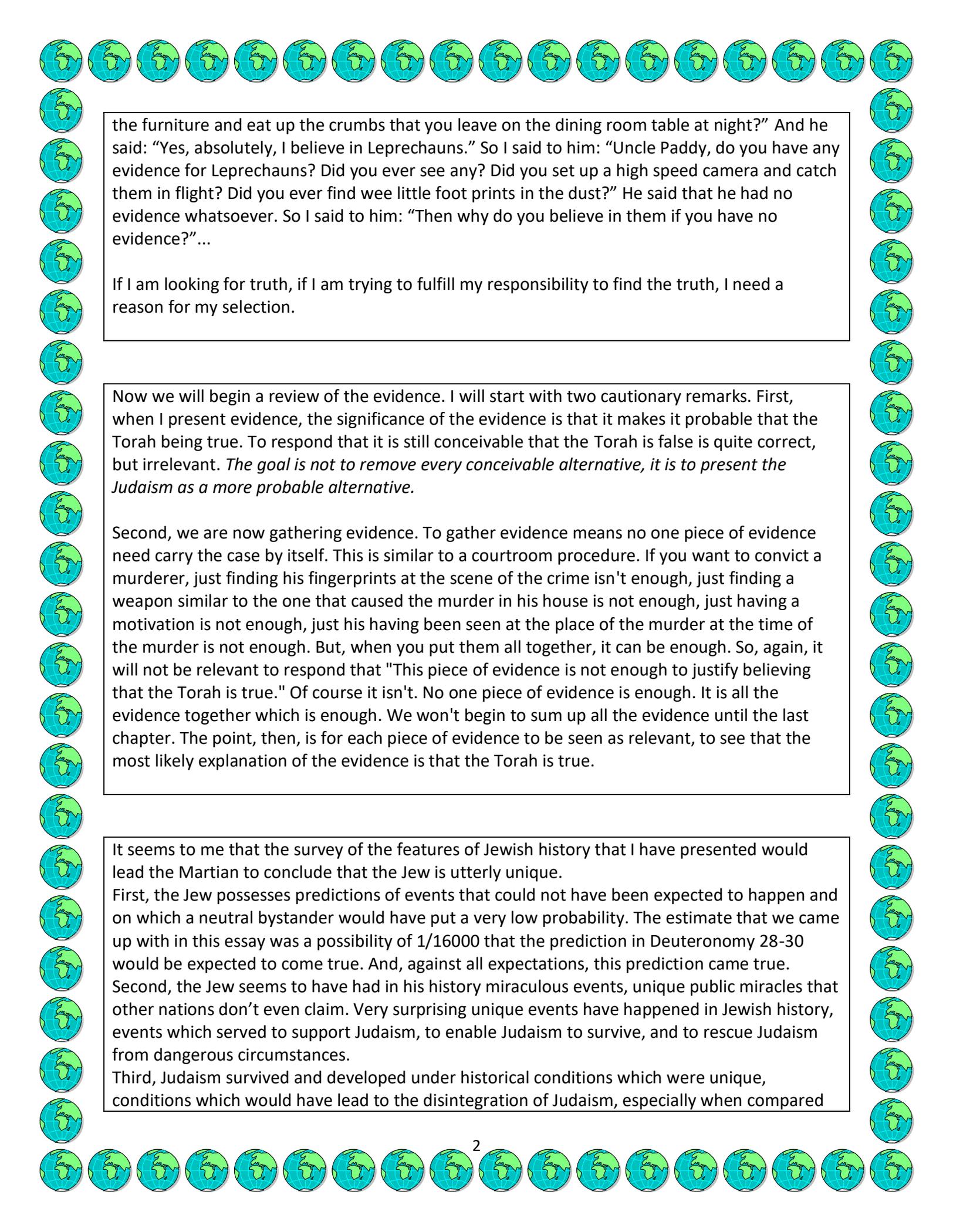


1) Rabbi Dr. Dovid Gottlieb, *Living Up to the Truth*, Available at http://www.ohr.edu/explore_judaism/living_up_to_the_truth/living_up_to_the_truth/992

So then, the question is how should we look for truth? How should we pursue it? And, if we are looking for the truth and we are to be objective and open-minded, shouldn't we give equal time to all of the candidates? Shouldn't we take time to familiarize ourselves with not only Judaism, but also Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Shintoism (just to mention the major world religions)? But, to become thoroughly familiar with the inner workings of a religion, as I am sure you know, is not a trivial matter. Even with six months for each religion, which is probably too short, you are talking about a four year investigation. Most people just don't have the time. Well, I hope to show you on general intellectual grounds that we can be objective and open-minded and yet drastically reduce the scope of the investigation.

The method of searching for truth, in my view, is the scientific method. It is the only method which we have. With all its limitations and all of its weaknesses, it is the only neutral method we have in searching for the truth. The trouble is, the scientific method is very poorly understood. (That includes scientists. The mere fact that you can do something does not mean that you understand what you are doing and why you are doing it.) So, I will take the remainder of this section to describe to you how the scientific method works in detail, and show you how it applies to the study of religion. And you will see, I hope, that when we apply the scientific method, the scope of the investigation can be drastically reduced.

The first element of the scientific method is that for an idea to be taken seriously as true, there must be positive evidence of its truth. Whoever offers an idea and claims that it is true, must present positive evidence of its truth. If that sounds obvious to you, consider the following. I want you to meet uncle Paddy from northern Ireland who believes in Leprechauns. I asked him once: "Uncle Paddy, do you really believe in Leprechauns, little green men who scurry behind



the furniture and eat up the crumbs that you leave on the dining room table at night?" And he said: "Yes, absolutely, I believe in Leprechauns." So I said to him: "Uncle Paddy, do you have any evidence for Leprechauns? Did you ever see any? Did you set up a high speed camera and catch them in flight? Did you ever find wee little foot prints in the dust?" He said that he had no evidence whatsoever. So I said to him: "Then why do you believe in them if you have no evidence?"...

If I am looking for truth, if I am trying to fulfill my responsibility to find the truth, I need a reason for my selection.

Now we will begin a review of the evidence. I will start with two cautionary remarks. First, when I present evidence, the significance of the evidence is that it makes it probable that the Torah being true. To respond that it is still conceivable that the Torah is false is quite correct, but irrelevant. *The goal is not to remove every conceivable alternative, it is to present the Judaism as a more probable alternative.*

Second, we are now gathering evidence. To gather evidence means no one piece of evidence need carry the case by itself. This is similar to a courtroom procedure. If you want to convict a murderer, just finding his fingerprints at the scene of the crime isn't enough, just finding a weapon similar to the one that caused the murder in his house is not enough, just having a motivation is not enough, just his having been seen at the place of the murder at the time of the murder is not enough. But, when you put them all together, it can be enough. So, again, it will not be relevant to respond that "This piece of evidence is not enough to justify believing that the Torah is true." Of course it isn't. No one piece of evidence is enough. It is all the evidence together which is enough. We won't begin to sum up all the evidence until the last chapter. The point, then, is for each piece of evidence to be seen as relevant, to see that the most likely explanation of the evidence is that the Torah is true.

It seems to me that the survey of the features of Jewish history that I have presented would lead the Martian to conclude that the Jew is utterly unique.

First, the Jew possesses predictions of events that could not have been expected to happen and on which a neutral bystander would have put a very low probability. The estimate that we came up with in this essay was a possibility of 1/16000 that the prediction in Deuteronomy 28-30 would be expected to come true. And, against all expectations, this prediction came true.

Second, the Jew seems to have had in his history miraculous events, unique public miracles that other nations don't even claim. Very surprising unique events have happened in Jewish history, events which served to support Judaism, to enable Judaism to survive, and to rescue Judaism from dangerous circumstances.

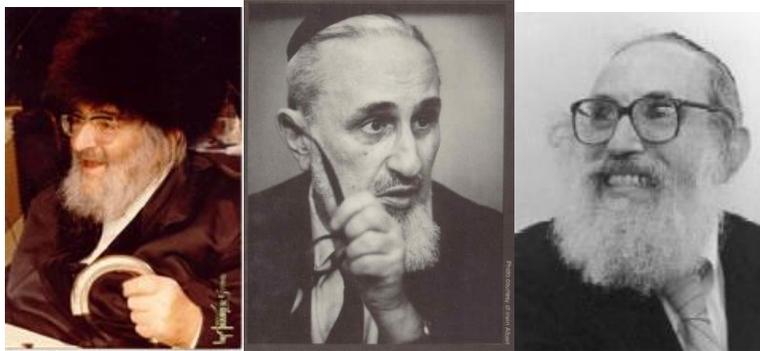
Third, Judaism survived and developed under historical conditions which were unique, conditions which would have lead to the disintegration of Judaism, especially when compared

to Christianity.



2) Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, “The Source of Faith is Faith Itself” available at [https://www.ou.org/jewish action/04/2015/the-source-of-faith-is-faith-itself/](https://www.ou.org/jewish_action/04/2015/the-source-of-faith-is-faith-itself/)

I refer, of course, to those who, in the words of the Mishnah, put me on the path to temporal and eternal life: my parents, *zecher tzaddikim l’verachah*, who were also my primary (in several senses of the term) teachers; and my *rebbeim*, of whom three—Rav Hutner, the Rav and Rav Aaron Soloveichik, *zecher tzaddikim l’verachah*—stand out far above the rest.



3) Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, “The Source of Faith is Faith Itself” available at [https://www.ou.org/jewish action/04/2015/the-source-of-faith-is-faith-itself/](https://www.ou.org/jewish_action/04/2015/the-source-of-faith-is-faith-itself/)

That faith has been persistently reinforced by Jewish history. And this, in two respects. First, I have envisioned Providence as revealed and refracted through its uniqueness, in the spirit of the response *Chazal* ascribe to *Anshei Knesset Hagedolah*: “These are His awesome effects, for were it not for awe of God, how could one nation survive among the nations?” (*Yoma*, 69b). Of course, I realized that, from a purely logical standpoint, one could rejoin with an analogue to Newman’s statement that he saw design in nature because he believed in God, not vice versa. But given the substratum of faith, our singular history has provided much reinforcement.



4) Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, "The Source of Faith is Faith Itself" available at https://www.ou.org/jewish_action/04/2015/the-source-of-faith-is-faith-itself/

The greatest source of faith, however, has been the Ribbono Shel Olam Himself.

At the level of rational demonstration, this is, of course, patently circular. I hold no brief for Anselm's ontological proof and I recognized the theoretical possibility of self delusion long before I had ever heard of Feuerbach. **Existentially, however, nothing has been more authentic than the encounter with *Avinu Malkeinu*, 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 *tamud Torah* (this is no doubt an aspect of *maor shebah*, "the light within it," of which Chazal spoke) but also through *tefillah* and the performance of *mitzvot*; or, if you will, by the halachic 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.

This will obviously provide little guidance for those to whom attaining encounter is precisely the problem...



4) מבקשי פניך 19-20

הרב מדבר כאן על תחושות פנימיות. האם רשאי האדם לסמוך על תחושותיו שנאמנות הן?

אדם יכול לחשוך בעצמו שתחושותיו דמיוניות. הרבה לפני ששמעתי על פוירברך, הבנתי שאדם יכול לחשוך בעצמו אבל אני חי בתחושה, שמבחינתי, הרגשת הקשר עם הקדוש ברוך הוא היא אמינה יותר וריאלית יותר מכל דבר אחר שאני יכול לחשוב עליו

דקארט אמר לנו: אני חושב משמע אני קיים. עוד הרבה יותר מתחושת הקיום, אני מרגיש שאני מאמין. אני חש קרבה לקדוש ברוך הוא יותר מכל דבר אחר.

אמת, מבחינה אפריורית תיאורית נכון לומר שאדם עלול לרמות את עצמו אם נוה לו, אבל אם כן, אדם צריך למחוק את עצמו כדי לשלול את תופעת אמונתו. איני מוכן לזה, ואני חושב שזו אינה אמת.

5) מבקשי פניך, 22

אני, איני יכול לומר על נפשי שאני מרגיש את התחושה העילאית הזאת בכל שעה, אבל אני חש התחושה אמיתית שבחיי המאמין יש שעות כאלו. שעות מהן הוא יונק חוויות עמוקות. חוויות המטביעות חותם בכל נימי נפשו. כל אישיותו נבנית מהן.

אני מבין שרציונליסט חילוני יכול לומר לי: אה, מה לך מספר על השעות הדתיות שלך, ומלביש אותן על השעות האחרות, השגרתיות. עשה כמוני, אני נוטל את השעות החילוניות שלי, ובהן אני מנגח את השעות שבהן אולי אני חש משהו טרנסצנדנטאלי, ואני מוחק אותן לחלוטין.

בסופו של דבר, האמת הפנימית של האדם היא הקובעת. ככל שהוא מכיר את אישיותו, בוחן את עצמו ומגלה את שורש יסודות הווייתו הרוחנית.



6) Rav Soloveitchik, *Lonely Man of Faith*, notes to Chapter 6

Does the loving bride in the embrace of her beloved ask for proof that he is alive and real? Must the prayerful soul clinging in passionate love and ecstasy to her Beloved demonstrate that He exists? So asked Soren Kierkegaard sarcastically when told that Anselm of Canterbury, the father of the very abstract and complex ontological proof, spent many days in prayer and supplication that he be presented with rational evidence of the existence of God.