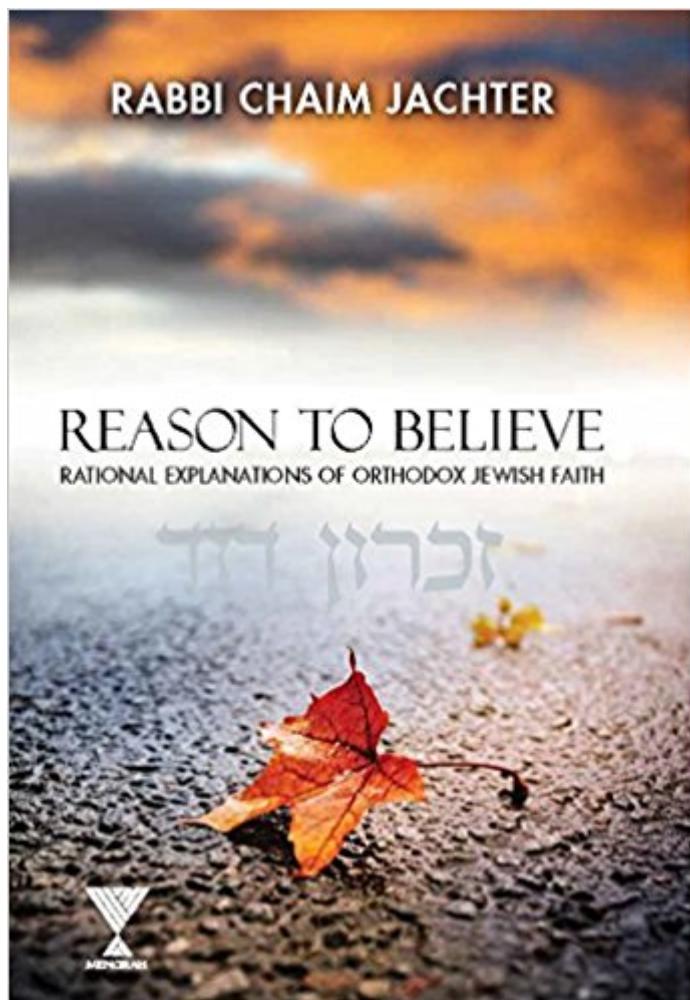


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# Reason To Believe: Rational Explanations Of Orthodox Jewish Faith



## **Synopsis**

Reason to Believe is veritable tour de force in defense of Orthodox Jewish faith. The author, a veteran teacher of Judaic Studies, an internationally known rabbi and dayan, faces the tough questions and perennial doubts head-on and offers compelling evidence in favor of Orthodoxy from science, philosophy, history, and Jewish tradition. A valuable and timely resource for those who seek answers, Reason to Believe will also anchor and amplify the faith of those who feel secure in their Orthodox beliefs and lifestyle.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Rabbi Chaim Jachter has earned an international reputation as a Get (Jewish Divorce) Administrator, a consultant for community Eruvin and a prolific writer. His publications include Gray Matter, a series of four acclaimed books on contemporary topics in Jewish Law. Rabbi Jachter is a veteran teacher of Judaic Studies at Torah Academy of Bergen County, Rabbi of Congregation Shaarei Orah (the Sephardic Congregation of Teaneck) and a Dayan on the Beit Din of Elizabeth. He has lectured internationally on topics of Jewish Law, lifestyle and significance. Rabbi Jachter lives with his wife and five children in Teaneck, New Jersey.

Judaism has long been under attack. To deal with that, there has been a long history of apologetic works. From the classic 12th-century The Kuzari: In Defense of the Despised Faith, 19th-century The Nineteen Letters by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, and up to the current times with The Non-Orthodox Jew's Guide to Orthodox Jews by my friend David Baum. Every generation has its

spiritual concerns and challenges that must be dealt with. If not, there's no way faith-based communities can realistically expect their members to stay within those walls of faith. Many believing Jews today struggle with legitimate questions and concerns, that for some; have often gone unanswered. For those looking for those answers, *Reason To Believe: Rational Explanations of Orthodox Jewish Faith* by Rabbi Chaim Jachter will be a most welcome book. Here, Jachter doesn't shirk away from dealing with numerous troubling and vexing theological and moral questions and quandaries. Jachter is no Anselm of Canterbury and doesn't attempt to use logical proofs to calm the reader. In fact, he notes that modern philosophers, including Descartes and Kant, have shown that one can prove very little, if anything. A recurring theme in the book is timing. For example, he notes that Greta Hort described a naturalistic approach to the Ten Plagues detailed in the book of Exodus. But if the Ten Plagues were natural events that were not in fact coordinated by God, they should have reoccurred at some point in the past 3,000 years. Timing again comes into play when he describes the modern state of Israel. He writes that Israel slipped into existence through a window that briefly opened and just as suddenly closed. The UN resolution of 1948 required Stalin and Truman to be on the same page, in addition to myriad other fortuitous timing incidents. What one calls timing, another calls divine providence. The book details both the rational basis for belief, and especially with the challenges of belief in the 21st century. Jachter deals with topics such as the gap between Torah and science, contradictions in Biblical texts, archeology and the Torah, and much more. The book is orderly, easy to read, heavily referenced, and Jachter often quotes from his students and congregants. At two points does the author err though. First, he misunderstood Rabbi Natan Slifkin's approach to Torah and science in *The Challenge of Creation: Judaism's Encounter with Science, Cosmology, and Evolution*. Slifkin details those issues in his recent blog post. In writing about the Six-Day war, Jachter quotes Rabbi Lawrence Keleman that many military experts are a loss to explain Israel's 1967 victory. Colonel Carl Singer U.S. Army (Ret.) told me that when he served with the Army Chief of Staff, he was part of a team that did study the Six-Day War. Dr. Singer, like Jachter, doesn't wrestle with the contention that God had a welcome hand in Israel's victory and survival during the Six-Day War. But Singer for one would attribute victory to more conventional causes. The book closes with a chapter on humanistic objections. Here, Jachter writes some of the finest vindications and defenses of difficult concepts such as human suffering, the destruction of life with Amelek and a condemned city, mamzerut and more. Jachter's brilliance is his ability to remove the bias from the underlying question, and answer it in a rational and intellectually honest manner. Until it's recent demise; Radio Shack had long used the slogan You've Got Questions, We've Got Answers.

There are many people who are troubled by the disconcerting spiritual questions they have and can't find answers to. While it doesn't profess to answer every vexing question; for those that want intellectually satisfying answers, Reason To Believe: Rational Explanations of Orthodox Jewish Faith would make Radio Shack proud.

This book is very readable, and it is interesting. The reader is left to decide if Rabbi Chaim Jachter has succeeded in proving that Orthodox Judaism is rational and obviously true. He writes that he is setting "forth in this book compelling reasons why Orthodox Jewish belief is far more reasonable than secular perspectives on the world and Torah." He also writes, "I believe that denying the existence of God and the divine origin of the Torah is as unreasonable and irrational as denying that other people exist." Here are some of the proofs the rabbi offers his readers. We can see God through the beauty and complexity of nature, what is called "The argument from design." God gave us a manual on how to live, just as a seller gives a car buyer a manual how to operate a car. The manual is the Torah. Judaism must be correct to have been able to survive centuries of persecutions to emerge a strengthened and influential nation. God was revealed not to single people as other religions contend, but to the entire nation of Israelites. Judaism does not require a leap of faith to accept it. Reasonable arguments "can lead one to know that Hashem revealed the Torah to our ancestors at Sinai." The miracles in the past prove God exists. We need to recognize that there are hidden divine miracles happening even today, daily, such as the reestablishment of the State of Israel, the military victory of 1948, and the Six Day War victory, the raid on Entebbe. Jewish halakhah is so beautiful that it must be from God. Ancient prophecies from God have been fulfilled.

Lifetime Questions "Lifetime Answers In Reason to Believe," Rabbi Chaim Jachter confronts the many nagging questions which people often have about belief in Judaism. He does not shy away from presenting the many objections that people have, and he responds rationally and logically to them all. He succeeds in weaving the ancient and the modern, the scientific and the religious, and the philosophical and the archaeological. His sources range from Maimonides to Mark Twain to Harry Truman, and run the gamut from ancient and contemporary rabbinic sages to MIT scientists. The result is an eminently engaging and readable text which is accessible to all, regardless of religious background and prior knowledge. Rabbi Jachter divides his book into a number of thematic sections. He begins with classical logical reasons for belief, including the near miraculous survival of the Jewish people and the fulfillment of various Biblical prophecies. He

proceeds to deal with many objections to faith, including questions about Biblical accounts of the ten plagues, seeming contradictions between Judaism and science, and a number of archaeological issues. From there, the reader is shown how God can be seen in modern times, mainly through miraculous events in the State of Israel. Finally, the book deals with emotional/humanistic objections to Judaism. Despite the seemingly heavy nature of the topic, the book is well-written and easy to read, in addition to being sprinkled with a number of fascinating anecdotes. These stories include everything from personal experiences to accounts of significant historical events, and are not random but rather clearly related to the issue at hand. In addition, any Hebrew terms are translated, and any necessary background information is provided. The author is eminently qualified to write a book of this nature. Rabbi Jachter is the recipient of an advanced form of rabbinic ordination achieved by only a small percentage of rabbis. He has written four books on Jewish law, where his wide breadth of knowledge and his erudition are clear. He also serves as a judge on a beit din (rabbinical court), where he deals with complex business and legal matters. Reason to Believe will be valuable to many different readers. From a skeptic with many questions to a believer desiring to reinforce his creed, all can benefit from this comprehensive, logical, and cogent book.

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