What Should We Believe About Torah?



However you navigate this issue, Professor Joshua Berman's approach is crucial to consider. He is an accomplished academic in the field, whose new book, *Ani Maamin*, confronts the question of Biblical criticism in light of traditional Jewish thought.

Dr. Berman's thought and perspective are far-reaching, and he engages deeply with the limits of Biblical criticism. He has noted that his research is particularly critical in the contemporary era, as the walls around religious communities that were once tall enough to protect those inside from dangerous areas have crumbled. People too often learn about these topics—topics that deal with fundamental issues of religious belief—from the Internet and grow disillusioned by the lack of perspective provided by their own education. In facing these issues, Joshua comments that "people with deep emotional commitments to tradition veer off to simplistic beliefs, and people who are more intellectually inclined give up on finding how tradition speaks to them." He wrote *Ani Maamin* to present another option.

Joshua offers a perspective that thinks through Biblical criticism from both the religious perspective and the academic perspective. He spent eight years studying Torah in Yeshivat Har Etzion in the Gush, studied religion at Princeton University, and went on to receive a doctorate in Biblical studies from Bar-Ilan University, where he is now a professor. His parents did not grow up Orthodox, and Joshua chose a life of observance, which is strikingly important to his point of view:

> This is important for understanding this book because **my whole life has been spent examining the tradition from within and without**, and I had to find a way of dealing with challenging issues because my acceptance of observance was a choice.

With the particular perspective of the insider-outsider, his religious knowledge, and his academic erudition, Dr. Joshua Berman is well placed to engage with the questions of Biblical criticism. He has his sights set on nothing less than "returning honesty to its central place in our Orthodoxy as we stand before the Almighty in all realms … an Orthodoxy that embraces the world in which the Almighty has placed us, here and now." This is a religious life that faces questions head on, with openness and courage.

Tune in to this podcast with Joshua Berman.