

Finding Faith in Judaism

I am one of the lucky ones. When the wind blows and rustles the leaves, it makes me smile. When I was little and there was no one to play with, I didn't feel alone. When one of my children turns around, after making me pull out my hair all day, and gives me a hug, I know, something, besides me, is responsible. I have faith, and need faith in my Katherine Finnegan perspective of life. Many people feel that having faith allows a lot of questions to go unanswered, yet for me, it is all the answer I need and it probably keeps me sane and grounded.

Until I allowed Judaism to become the belief structure for my faith, what I did and what I felt inside never seemed to appropriately complement one another. As a result, I had no religious practice. When I became an adult I realized that doing nothing was essentially *choosing* to ignore my relationship with God, much the same way one can ignore a relationship with a spouse, child, friend or parent. It's not for lack of love or appreciation, but by *choosing not to* participate in a relationship, you isolate yourself and the relationship stops growing. Choosing not to do anything is a form of action and every action has its consequences.

For all the things God is not; man or woman, always right or always wrong, always good or always bad; God is always there, if one allows God's presence. I believe that one God can be different to each individual. I love the translation of the *Avot* prayer which mentions "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob". One's concept of God can be very individual and Judaism has always made room for this individualism.

How does having faith change my life? This is the big question. Lots of people have faith, it is both an incredible gift and an incredible opportunity. For me it means never being alone. It gives me a conscience, a "still, small" voice inside of me, another pair of ears to listen. Faith gives me a chance to make mistakes, and a chance to learn from them.

Educating myself and studying the belief structure of Judaism, increases my dialogue with God and therefore the quality of everything in my life. I have embraced Judaism because it enhances my faith in God. Its prayers, songs, and rituals bring God's presence into my life every day. No one asked me to allow Judaism to do that for me, it just did. Every day, I try to make the teachings I obtain from Judaism more of what I am and what I do. I do not feel like a convert who has had a revelation that here is where I belong; I feel like I am confirming my commitment to a belief system because it is the best way I know how to express, live and enhance my faith in God.

Katherine Finnegan