

What Do You *Really* Believe?

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

On Thanksgiving we are grateful for what we have and mindful of what others lack. It is a good time to ask — what do we really believe?

Some people believe in a God who grants good to the one who prays most or behaves best. Such people might wish to read the book of Job, or look out the window; they will discover that ease and anguish are unevenly distributed in this world and follow no discernible pattern of reward.

Others think God is completely arbitrary or absent. Such people might be mindful of the abundance of blessing that exists and how much we human beings are responsible for its poor distribution or unfair allotment.

Then there are those who find themselves in the third camp — the bewildered believers. They are like Rabbi Nahman, who said he was a 'moon man,' that his faith waxed and waned. Surely Rabbi Nahman would have understood Miguel De Unamuno, the great Spanish philosopher and man of letters: "Those who believe that they believe in God, but without passion in their hearts, without anguish in mind, without uncertainty, without doubt, without an element of despair even in their consolation, believe only in the God idea, not God Himself." Happy Thanksgiving.