

*And when Israel saw the wondrous power which the Lord had wielded against the Egyptians, the people feared/revered the Lord; they had faith/trusted in the Lord and His servant Moses. ---* Exod. 14:31

The verse seems redundant. If Israel believed in Moses, they certainly trusted that God was fighting their battle for them. Rather, it teaches that whenever one believes in the mission of a prophet of Israel, that individual necessarily accepts the existence of the Creator. Conversely, *And the people spoke against God and against Moses* (Numb. 21:5), which again appears to state the obvious: if the nation's trust in God had been shaken, they clearly would reject the right of Moses to lead them. Rather, the text teaches that whenever one challenges the authority of God's representatives, it is as if he has criticized his Creator. --- **Mekhilta d'Rabbi Shimon**

Awe/reverence and belief represent the two most fundamental conditions of faith, which are present in the heart of every Jew who stands before God. There is only one being in the world whom we must simultaneously revere and trust, and that is God, who is singular and unique. God's attribute of love is equal to His dimension of righteousness, and His attribute of justice is matched by His attribute of compassion. There are no limits to the might of God's strength when He exercises His attribute of mercy or executes divine justice. The salvation that Israel witnessed at the sea was an eternal one, unparalleled in its greatness. For the miracles at the sea incorporated three of God's dimensions: His readiness to judge humanity, such that all people should fear Him forever; His unbounded compassion, such that Israel might faithfully anticipate His assistance at all times; and His unlimited power, such that His creations will submit freely to His commandments. --- Samson Raphael Hirsch, 19<sup>th</sup> c. Germany

It does not have the meaning here that it has in later religious concepts. That is, it does not function in the sense of believing that a God exists. This notion of belief IN does not occur in Biblical Hebrew (nor in other ancient Near Eastern languages). In pagan religion the gods, being observable forces in nature (e.g., the sun, the sky, the storm wind), are not a matter of belief but of knowledge. So in the conception of YHWH in Exodus, God becomes known; God's existence and

power are a matter of knowledge, not belief. When one has seen ten plagues and a sea split and has a column of cloud and fire visible at all times, one does not ask, “Do you believe in God?” As the term is used in the Hebrew Bible, it means not belief in, but belief that, that is, it means that if YHWH says He will do something one can trust that He will do it. --- Richard Elliott Friedman

A “belief in...” proposition [affirmation of existence] always presupposes a “belief that...” proposition [affirmation of trust and confidence]. I cannot believe in the trustworthiness of my friend, for instance, unless I first believe that he and his trustworthiness are real and have been united in the past. My belief in him implies that he will be equally reliable in the future. “Belief that...” on the other hand, need not involve any kind of “belief in.” Hamlet’s belief that he had seen his father’s ghost was not in itself sufficient ground for trusting the ghost’s tragic tale and advice.

“Belief that...” is chiefly a matter of the intellect. The man who believes in ghosts does so because the arguments for their existence convince him. Even if his belief is not based on a careful weighing of the evidence, even if it is the result of a “hunch,” his mind is satisfied that the “hunch” is correct. Emotional factors are not, of course, absent. He may wish to believe in ghosts. The conviction that there are ghosts may, for some reason, be emotionally more satisfying than the conviction that they do not exist. But the affirmation is more mental than emotional or moral.

On the other hand, “belief in” is primarily a matter of the moral will. The man who believes in his friend (or in himself) does so not so much because he has weighed dispassionately all the evidence for trustworthiness, but because it seems right to him to place his trust in that which is worthy of his trust as he sees it. Moreover, the very attitude of trust in one’s friend may itself summon forth a response on the part of the friend and so be responsible for the vindication of trust. “Belief that...” involves the appropriation of a truth. “Belief in...” involves the determination to act on the truth one has seen. It follows that there can be no command to “believe that...” But “belief in...” can be commanded. We can meaningfully be ordered to be loyal to the truth we have seen, just as we can be commanded to obey any other moral imperative. --- Faith, Louis Jacobs, 20<sup>th</sup> c. England

Throughout the period of the ten plagues there were Jews who had doubts, who feared that everything was pure coincidence. However, when they reached the stage of *the people feared the Lord*, when they finally realized God's greatness, all knew that everything was from God. A single spark of fear of heaven is equivalent to all the plagues. --- Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgenstern, the Kotzker Rebbe  
*Reverence for God is the beginning of wisdom.* --- Ps. 111:10