

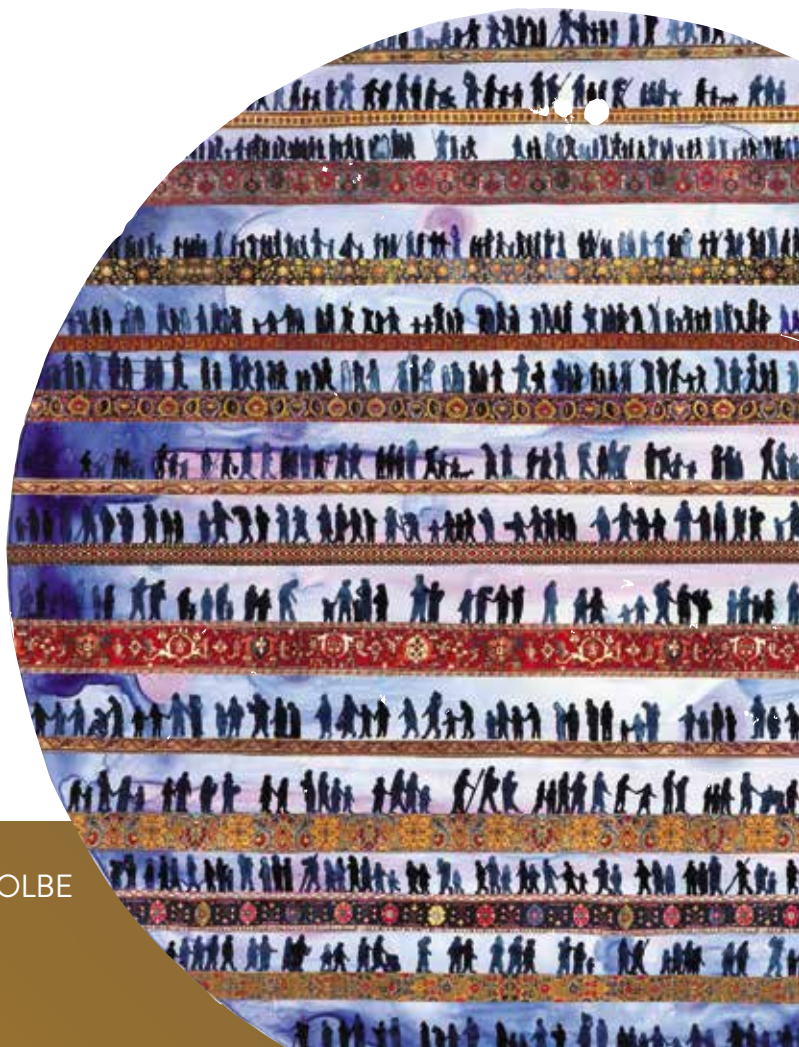
# *My* Elevator Pitch *for* God

IN 500 WORDS OR LESS,  
THOUGHT LEADERS  
FROM AROUND THE  
WORLD EXPLAIN WHY  
THEY BELIEVE

BOOK CLUB COLLECTION #3

CLOSING REMARKS BY RABBI YAAKOV WOLBE  
AND RABBI LAWRENCE KELEMEN

ARTWORK BY ANDI ARNOVITZ



My Elevator Pitch *for* God: In 500 Words Or Less, Thought Leaders From Around The World Explain Why They Believe  
This Book Club Collection #3 was compiled by Bruce Licht

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# Table of Contents

Foreword .....7

## **BARAK LURIE**

Former Atheist, Talk Show Host .....8

## **MICHAEL R. EGNOR, M.D.**

Neurosurgeon and Senior Fellow at the Walter  
Bradley Center for Natural and Artificial  
Intelligence .....10

## **ALEEZA BEN SHALOM**

The Netflix Jewish Matchmaker ..... 12

## **GITTY STOLIK**

Author, Educator, Promoter of Optimism  
and Joyful Living .....14

## **DAVID SACKS**

Award-Winning Hollywood Comedy Writer .... 16

## **GEORGE NOORY**

“Coast to Coast AM” Radio Host,  
Curator of the Curious. .... 20

## **DANIEL E. LEVY, Ph.D.**

MIT Ph.D., Chemist, Disease-Curing Scientist .. 22

## **MICHAEL SULLIVAN, Ph.D.**

Colonel (Retired), Military Expert, Professor of  
U.S. Military Strategies and Tactics .....24

## **PAUL STELZER, M.D.**

Pioneering Cardiothoracic Surgeon .....26

## **GERALD SCHROEDER, Ph.D.**

Nuclear Physicist, ‘Expert’ on God.....28

Closing Remarks

## **RABBI YAAKOV WOLBE**

Prolific, Innovative, Dynamic Torah Educator,  
Podcaster, Author.....32

## **RABBI LAWRENCE KELEMEN**

Philosopher, writer, Jewish continuity activist .... 38

Endnotes ..... 43

About the Artist

## **ANDI ARNOVITZ**

World-Renowned Multi-Media Conceptual  
Artist ..... 45

About the Compiler

## **BRUCE LICHT**

Entrepreneur, Author, Founder of  
My Elevator Pitch For God™ ..... 46



# Foreword

## Elevator Pitch [el-uh-vey-ter pich] *noun*

A brief talk intended to win approval for something, as a product, a business proposal, or a compelling idea.

**W**HY THIS TOPIC and why now? Because there is unquestionably a groundswell of interest and a real need for a non-religious conversation about God. The world is desperate for meaning, purpose, and wisdom; a glance at social media will show you that the struggle is real. Humans are by nature religious. We have an innate need to worship something. That might be health, politics, beauty, or money, but it might be something deeper and more meaningful.

Hoping to guide people in that search, the journey began by first talking about the project with friends, and brainstorming about whom to ask to participate. After composing an invitation explaining the mission, interesting, thoughtful people with a wide range of backgrounds and experiences were sought out.

Were the authors given any direction about what to address? Not at all. They all had their own ideas about how to approach the subject. The “Submission Package Information Sheet” that was provided to all the authors stated that the essays should not be written as a proof of one religion over another. These essays are not about “Proof of Christianity,” “Proof of Judaism,” or “Proof of Islam.” There is no theology in this collection.

What differentiates these essays one from the other is their reasoning, their analogies, their proof, if you will. What unifies them is their unshakable belief – hard-won, ingrained from birth, and everything in between – that God exists, that God created the world, and that God continues to take an active interest in what happens here. Is every essay in this book club collection a stand-alone proof of God’s existence? No, it is not. But every essay adds to the overall conversation. One of them might have a sentence, an example, or an analogy that will resonate with you. Each one comes from its author’s heart and aims to speak directly to yours. So open your heart, and your mind, take a deep breath, and dive in. You have nothing to lose and potentially, much to gain.

The aspiration in this book club collection is (in a non-religious way) to introduce more people to God and strengthen the faith of those who already believe. In doing so, the goals are to find common ground, bring people together, provide greater meaning to their lives, and start to transform the world in a positive direction.

Visit [mepfg.com](http://mepfg.com) (*My Elevator Pitch for God*) and read many more wonderful, inspirational, thought provoking essays from additional Thought Leaders from around the world.





## BARAK LURIE

### FORMER ATHEIST, TALK SHOW HOST

Barak Lurie is a former atheist who turned to God after using logic, science, and probabilities. Barak makes the case not only for the existence of God, but even more, for the dangers of world without God. He points out that just as the absence of law enforcement would lead to massive crime, it is the absence of God in society that is the true source of all our social ills.

Barak authored *Atheism Kills*, an instant #1 best-seller, about the dangers of godlessness. His second book, *Rise of the Sex Machines*, about how godlessness is destroying relationships, also became a #1 bestseller. *Atheism Destroys*, volume 2 in his *Atheism Kills* series, also reached #1 status. His latest book, *Keeping the Kids All Right*, about how parents can ensure their kids never fall prey to the new woke culture, was published in July, 2023. His final volume of the *Atheism Kills* series (*Atheism Steals*) is projected to come out in late 2024.

Barak Lurie is a managing partner of the firm Lurie & Kramer in Los Angeles, California. He obtained his BA with honors at Stanford University in 1985, and his JD and MBA at the UCLA School of Law and Anderson School of Business in 1989. He was the host of “The Barak Lurie Show,” a #1 Sunday morning radio program in Los Angeles. Barak also hosts the weekly “Barak Lurie Podcast,” with guest hosts discussing topics of the day with an eye to their impact on civilization.

Barak is an avid vegan and mountain biker. He and his wife Stacey live with their three children in Las Vegas, Nevada.

# God as Reality

BY BARAK LURIE

I WAS ONCE AN avowed atheist. I had determined that God was a tool to manipulate the masses. Devious men wrote the Bible for their own self-aggrandizement. I knew all the terrible history, too: Christianity in particular had been guilty of the Crusades, the Inquisition, priest molestations, and more.

Oh, the horror...

So I dismissed God. Anyone who believed in God was a fool, clutching for soothing answers in an uncaring and brutal universe.

They lived in fear. I didn't.

But questions nagged at me. I knew I had free will and consciousness. How and why do we have such things? What are the chances the Big Bang would result in the universe we now have? What are the chances that earth could form as it did with all the perfections of its ozone layer, its rotation locked in by our moon to create seasons, a perfect distance from the sun and a perfect placement in the Milky Way galaxy? What were the chances that life would form at all, let alone life that could reproduce, evolve into many animals, and culminate in a self-aware human capable of speech and abstract thought?

And if survival and necessity explained everything, then how could one explain our love of music, art, beauty, humor, and storytelling? What of our need for purpose, creation, and happiness? None of these is necessary for our survival.

I had to conclude one thing: However the universe and life started, randomness couldn't

explain it. This was the hardest moment in my journey to God. I realized that as an atheist, I hadn't so much not believed in God, as that I hadn't *wanted* to believe in God. Without God, there was no obligation to the past or to the future, only to what I fancied doing in the present. I wanted to believe that my life was finite and would vanish like a flame on a candle. Life was limited to the time between the sunrise of my birth and the sunset of my death.

Why? Because it was easier.

Dismissing a Creator allowed me to live in a world where I could booze it up, sex it up, and do whatever I damn well pleased — steal, lie, and even murder.

But with God in my life, I would be accountable. There was life before my sunrise, and I saw that there would be life beyond my sunset. What I do matters, not just in this life but beyond. I have obligations to the past and to the future, and to Civilization. It was not just a simple decision of whether to believe or not, it was an epiphany that rocked everything about my sense of life and the universe. It forced me to change who I was. Yes it was a burden, but it was meaningful and glorious, too.

My atheist's bias had clouded my head, preventing me from entertaining real science, actual logic, and simple observation. The atheist blinds himself to what's right in front of him, starting with his own free will and consciousness.

But it's easier.



## **MICHAEL R. EGNOR, M.D.**

### **NEUROSURGEON AND SENIOR FELLOW AT THE WALTER BRADLEY CENTER FOR NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

Michael R. Egnor, M.D., is a Professor of Neurosurgery and Pediatrics at the Renaissance School of Medicine, at Stony Brook University, New York. He graduated from Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons, and trained in neurosurgery at the University of Miami. He has been on faculty at Stony Brook since 1991. He is the neurosurgery residency director and has served as the director of pediatric neurosurgery at Stony Brook.

In 2005, "New York Magazine" named Dr. Egnor one of New York's best doctors. His research on hydrocephalus and intracranial dynamics has been published in leading medical journals including the "Journal of Neurosurgery and Cerebrospinal Fluid Research." He is a Senior Fellow at the Walter Bradley Center for Natural and Artificial Intelligence at the Discovery Institute, and has lectured extensively on medical and philosophical topics in the United States and Europe.



# Moral Law Demonstrates God's Existence

BY MICHAEL R. EGNOR

FOR MANY YEARS my love of science hindered my conversion from atheism to belief in God. Yet my faith in science left me with a haunting feeling that I couldn't explain where I really came from or why I was alive, and I couldn't shake the conviction that I needed to know truths that science couldn't provide, especially after a loved one had a miraculous recovery that my knowledge of medicine couldn't explain.

I began to read the work of skeptics of 'consensus science' — intelligent design advocates like William Dembski, Mike Behe, and Stephen Meyer — and I saw that the science of our origins wasn't so settled. I grew fascinated by the *rational* evidence for God's existence. That evidence pointed to a Mind at the source of nature. I studied the proofs for the existence of God — Aquinas' Five Ways, the Augustinian proof, the Rationalist proof, and more. I found that they gave compelling rational frameworks for my belief. But one proof in particular fascinated me. Unlike these subtle and complicated proofs of ancient theologians, it was simple but sublime.

Where do universal moral laws come from? You and I and every human being on earth (with very rare and pathological exceptions) have an intuitive sense of right and wrong. This moral sense is essential to our humanity. Of course, our moral sense isn't perfect, and goodness knows that we transgress the Moral Law on a

regular basis — but we *know* intuitively when we transgress it.

Moral Law is, by its nature, objective, meaning that it is something that arises from outside of us. We discover Moral Law, we don't invent it. We know it's wrong to torture people or to kill innocents or to steal from the poor, and the wrongness isn't just a matter of personal taste. There are things that are wrong intrinsically, and not even a human consensus to the contrary could make them right.

But Moral Law is still a judgment, not a material thing or a law of physics. It's an opinion, but it's an opinion that we discover, not one that we merely invent. But if it's not just a human opinion, whose opinion is it? No one human or group of humans authored our universal conscience, and virtually every human struggles with it, contests it, tries to evade it. Yet Moral Law is orderly, abstract, and clearly the product of an intellect.

The answer is that Moral Law originates outside and above the sphere of humanity, though it operates within us. Moral Law is God's will, written on our hearts. We experience it constantly in our most intimate thoughts. Every moral act, every comforting gesture, kind word, and helping hand, is God with us, even closer to us than we are to ourselves.

Moral Law is the most sublime proof of God's existence, whispering at every moment in every human heart.



## ALEEZA BEN SHALOM

### THE NETFLIX JEWISH MATCHMAKER

Aleeza Ben Shalom is a matchmaker, dating coach, author, speaker, and soulmate clarity expert who empowers marriage-minded singles to find and identify the one. Aleeza is the featured Matchmaker on Season 1 of the new Netflix series, “Jewish Matchmaking.”

Aleeza has written *Get Real, Get Married*, a guide to get people over their hurdles and under the chuppah, and *Virtual Dating: Your Guide to Relationships in a Socially Distanced World*. As the founder of “Marriage Minded Mentor” ([marriagemindedmentor.com](http://marriagemindedmentor.com)), she connects singles globally with skilled matchmakers and dating coaches, and has successfully led over 200 singles of all ages and affiliations through the steps to engagement. Media platforms including BBC World News, NPR, Aish.com, and HuffPost have featured her relationship advice.

For over 15 years, Aleeza has worked with singles to break unhealthy patterns and foster relationships that lead to marriage. She has trained more than 350 dating coaches and matchmakers worldwide.

Aleeza and her husband have been married for over 20 years and have been blessed to see her in-law’s healthy marriage of over 60 years thrive. A dedicated wife and loving mother of five children, Aleeza cherishes her family, which includes a lovable dog, Koda the kelev. She realized her lifelong dream of moving to Israel on March 1st, 2021, and she now resides with her family in Pardes Hanna, Israel.

# Divine Connections

BY ALEEZA BEN SHALOM

THE IDEA OF soulmates has captured people's hearts and minds across cultures and religions for thousands of years. This concept suggests that everyone has a partner, chosen by a higher power, with whom we are meant to be bonded not only in this life but also in the afterlife. The notion inherently implies the existence of a Divine Creator who orchestrates our destinies. Some interpret the search for a partner as a God-provided opportunity to refine our character and help us become better people and partners for our soulmates.

Ancient wisdom<sup>1</sup> tells of a Roman matron who approached several religious leaders and asked how long it took God to create the world? They responded that it took six days, as written in the Book of Genesis. *"If God can do all that in just six days, what has God been occupied with since then?"* she retorted. The sages responded that God has been making matches between couples.

The matron, wanting to prove how easy matchmaking was, gathered her maidservants and manservants, lined them up and, with the point of her finger, made matches. That night, she was awakened by the sounds of screaming and fighting. The next day, she returned to the sages saying, *"I now know that your God is true,"* confirming their claim that matchmaking is a Divine art.

Matchmaking is one of the oldest professions, having endured for thousands of years because it has a profound impact on people's lives. The process of bringing two individuals together in a harmonious union is an incredibly challenging

task. The need for Divine guidance and intervention suggests the presence of a higher power. For many, this seemingly Divine "Hand" behind their relationships is a source of hope, inspiration, and deepened connection to the spiritual realm.

People can have a hard time seeing themselves and others accurately. Sometimes they focus on the wrong things. Finding one's spouse, let alone one's soulmate, isn't an easy or intuitive undertaking. Most matchmakers feel a calling, that they're doing God's work. We see ourselves as God's helpers, because we believe that all matches are made in heaven.

In the world of matchmaking, it's not just physical attraction that matters but rather, finding partners who are spiritually and emotionally compatible. Matchmakers look for people whose unique character traits, values, and skills complement and enhance each other. This approach acknowledges the inherent value and potential of each individual, and recognizes that each person has something special to offer that is a gift from God.

So, while the concept of soulmates and matchmaking might not be universally accepted, it remains a powerful symbol of unity and the Divine. The idea that two people from different backgrounds and experiences can come together successfully for any significant length of time is a tremendous testament to the power of faith, hope, and love. And even more so if it lasts a lifetime. Many people see these perfect pairs as a profound proof there's a God.



## GITTY STOLIK

### AUTHOR, EDUCATOR, PROMOTER OF OPTIMISM AND JOYFUL LIVING

After 20 years dedicated to the two beloved arenas of raising a family and teaching junior high and high school Judaic studies, Gitty Stolik's career took an unexpected curve when, at the age of forty, she enrolled in a course to enhance her writing skills. This led to her receiving a B.A. in Psychology, summa cum laude, and an M.S. in Education. After graduating, she trained to become a Feuerstein Method clinician, turning her focus toward helping challenged children realize their potential, through teaching, consulting, and a unique play therapy model.

Mrs. Stolik then published two books on laughter, humor, and joy – the best-selling *It's Okay to Laugh Seriously* and *New Joy: Response to a Changing World*, based on the teachings of Kabbalah and teeming with life experience. After publishing the books, Mrs. Stolik began to engage with the ever-growing Joy community that her readership created, and which led her to launch of her current platform, the Joy Movement, which promotes optimism and Joyful living.

Today, Mrs. Stolik shares her 'simple formula' for genuine joy through her popular five-week "Joy Workout" courses, joy coaching, and inspirational speaking. As her books continue to gain popularity and are translated into other languages, she continues to strive towards another degree, an M.S. – Mastery of Simchah (joy).

If you want to live joyfully, Gitty suggests that you learn to uncover the redemptive spark in every challenge. Our practice of Joy today invites the Perfect Joy of Redemption. Let's rise above the fray of the daily calamities to see the grandeur of what we can create.

Gitty Stolik is a mother and grandmother living in Brooklyn, New York.

Her books are available on Amazon.com. For more information visit [okaytoloughseriously.com](http://okaytoloughseriously.com)

# Where Is God?

BY GITTY STOLIK

SANDRA IS VISITING a campus religious Organization,<sup>1</sup> and asks “I challenge you to prove that God exists!”

The religious leader asks for clarification. “Sandra, are you asking as a skeptic or a truth-seeker?”

Sandra is probably not challenging God’s existence (*Is there a God?*). More likely she longs to feel God’s existence in real-time. She is on a quest to discover.

Doubt is debilitating. Let’s reframe her question to find a more constructive way of going about our ‘God search.’ Talking about God is exciting, energizing. Stirring. God is elusive but God beckons. God is concealed and at the same time, God invites us to transcend our mundane existences.

Most people don’t question God’s existence, only God’s involvement. But if someone questions God’s very existence, we can prove it through the New York Times. “You know how yesterday’s New York Times got printed, don’t you? There was a terrible accident. A bus collided with a New York Times supply truck. The ink jars smashed and ran all over the paper rolls, and presto, the newspaper was printed and ready to deliver.”<sup>2</sup>

“Funny joke. Newspapers do not randomly generate,” Sandra laughs.

“Correct. And our intricate world did not randomly self-arrange. There is a Hand running every aspect of Creation.”

“Busted! Okay, granted, there is a God in the world. But I want to feel God in *my* world. God seems remote. I don’t feel God *in me*.”

Okay, let’s bring God in. Let’s make God’s presence personal.

“*Where is God?*” someone once asked a great sage.<sup>3</sup> “*Wherever you let Him in*” he responded.

So, how, my friends, do we let God in?

I let God in by reflecting God’s joy. Many think of God as the God of vengeance. No wonder people have a hard time believing in God; I wouldn’t want to hang out with that kind of God either. God *acts* angry, but God is not angry. God is the Source, the Epitome of Goodness. *God* and *good* – same word, with a typo.

And God is the source of Joy. God is the sole owner, CEO, and distributor of Joy – Joy, not Happiness. Big difference! Happiness is externally-based, from things you get. It is transient. Joy is internally-generated, loves to *give*, and is enduring.<sup>4</sup> Happiness is self-centered, Joy transcends our own needs – you find ego in Happiness; you find *God* in Joy. Joy is everlasting. It’s boundless.

Only something everlasting and boundless can generate something everlasting and boundless.

Kabbalah expounds on Joy’s powers. When we espouse Joy, *we* are Godly. We are passing on God’s Divine spark, God’s light. We even become God’s creation-partners. *God made Man. We make Man joyous!*

“And you know what? Joy is so blissfully Divine, it beams... broadcasts... bellows God’s existence!”

Looking for God? Search no longer. God is right here, waiting for *you* to allow God in. And then you can take on the world together.



## DAVID SACKS

### AWARD-WINNING HOLLYWOOD COMEDY WRITER

Born and raised in New York City, David Sacks attended Harvard College, graduating with a degree in Government. While there, he began his comedy writing career at the school's humor magazine, "The Harvard Lampoon."

Among the shows for which he's worked are "The Simpsons" (where he won an Emmy Award), "Third Rock from the Sun" (a Golden Globe Award), "Malcolm in the Middle," "Murphy Brown," and "Final Space" on Adult Swim. David is the co-founder of and Senior Lecturer at the Happy Minyan of Los Angeles. David is married and raises his family in Beverly Hills, CA.

David Sacks gives the weekly Torah podcast, "Spiritual Tools for an Outrageous World," and has spoken to enthusiastic crowds across the U.S., Europe, Israel, and South Africa. His topics range from the meaning of life, to Hollywood's impact on the world, to achieving happiness.



# That's So Random

BY DAVID SACKS

PEOPLE THINK THE world is random, but the truth is we live in an exquisitely ordered universe.

From the outer reaches of space, to the air we breathe, to our genetic makeup, down to the tiniest particles... all that exists is order.

In our galaxy alone, there are over 100 billion stars.

Did you ever wonder why they don't all crash into each other?

Factor in all the black holes and it should be total chaos.

And yet stars adhere to the most exacting of orbits, never veering from their Divine choreography.

The air we breathe is 78% nitrogen and 20% oxygen. If there were less oxygen, we'd suffocate. If there were more, every fire would become a conflagration.

On the DNA level, human beings have 23 pairs of chromosomes. If we had 24 pairs, we'd be melons, or snails, or tomatoes. If we had 22 pairs, we'd be opossums or beans.

The subatomic realm is even more precise. Add a single proton to an element and it changes into a different element entirely.

So then why do people think everything is random?

I don't think they do.

I think what they really mean is...

Life is mysterious.

People perplex us, and we are confounded by God.

We then project our bewilderment,

Onto the canvas of reality,

And conclude that everything is random.

But in truth, nothing is.

How do we reconcile these two extremes?

By not falling into the trap of thinking that just because we can measure the circumference of the earth, we're equally adept at unraveling the mysteries of life.

God desired the knowable and the unknowable to live side-by-side.

And so, we too should do our best to be good neighbors with the unfathomable and not take its "No Trespassing" sign too personally.

Once we grasp this, the pressure always to have an answer will fade, and in its place, will only be wonder.

And if it all that fails,

Well...

Here's a simple song that I wrote to help me through the befuddlement.

I don't know where I'm going,

I don't know where I'm going,

I don't know where I'm going,

But the Driver is Good.



ARTWORK BY ANDI ARNOVITZ

“How dreadfully has it  
tormented me (and torments  
me even now) this longing  
for faith, which is all the stronger  
for the proofs I have against it.  
And yet God gives me sometimes  
moments of perfect peace;  
in such moments I love and  
believe that I am loved;  
in such moments I have  
formulated my creed,  
wherein all is clear  
and holy to me.”<sup>1</sup>

**FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY**

RUSSIAN NOVELIST (1821-1881)



## GEORGE NOORY

### “COAST TO COAST AM” RADIO HOST, CURATOR OF THE CURIOUS

George Noory is host of “Coast to Coast AM,” the most-listened-to overnight radio program in the country. It airs on more than 600 stations in North America, and is broadcast live, Monday-Sunday from 1-5 a.m. ET. Noory captivates listeners with his discussions of paranormal phenomena, time travel, alien abductions, conspiracies, and all things curious and unexplained. He is driven, he says, by the desire to solve the great mysteries of our time. Since his first days as a radio broadcaster, “I’ve wanted to cover stories that the mainstream media never touch — the unusual, the paranormal, and things like that. I learned that broadcasting is the best business for exploring these issues, and I’ve been doing it for years.” He dates his interest in these matters to a book by Walter Sullivan, *We Are Not Alone*, that his mother gave him when he was 13. He was hooked.

Noory is the author of several books including: *Worker In The Light: Unlock Your Five Senses And Liberate Your Limitless Potential* and *Journey to the Light*, with best-selling author William J. Birnes; *Talking To The Dead*, with Rosemary Ellen Guiley, a leading expert on the paranormal and supernatural; *Someone is Hiding Something: What Happened to Malaysia Airlines Flight 370?*, with Richard Belzer and David Wayne; *Night Talk*; and *Mad As Hell*.

In December 2012, GAIAM TV launched “Beyond Belief with George Noory,” a new TV show exploring the unknown and mysteries of the universe. The one-hour, weekly series features Noory’s informative, investigative, and dynamic conversations, as well as some of his favorite guests from the radio program. Taped in front of a live audience at GAIAM studios in Boulder, Colo., “Beyond Belief with George Noory” is available exclusively on <http://www.beyondbelief.com/>. When he’s not busy hosting his radio show or writing his next book, Noory travels the U.S., meeting with fans at events like *Contact in the Desert* and the *Conscious Life Expo*, or his *George Noory Live* stage shows. He also launched *ParanormalDate.com*, and its companion site *ConspiracyDate.com*, for people who enjoy “Coast to Coast AM”’s subject matter. For more information, please visit [www.coasttocoastam.com](http://www.coasttocoastam.com). Noory was born, raised, and educated in Detroit. He has three children and six grandchildren. He served nine years in the U.S. Naval Reserve.

# Miracles

BY GEORGE NOORY

**M**Y GRANDPARENTS BUILT a multi-level apartment complex on top of the furniture store that they owned in the Fitchburg area, west of Boston, and lived there with about ten other families.

Late one night, when my family was visiting one summer, a fire broke out in the store. While we were sleeping, opaque black smoke quickly engulfed the building, seeping into the upstairs apartments. All of my family would have died had it not been for a fireman, in full-body protective clothing and gear, who woke me out of a sound sleep. I frantically got everyone else up and we sprinted down the stairs and out the front doors to safety. We even made the front page of the Fitchburg Sentinel newspaper, with a picture showing us fleeing a building engulfed in flames.

While standing outside the smoldering building that night, my parents walked up to the fire chief to thank him for his team member who had bravely woken me. The chief stopped them mid-sentence, *"I don't know what you're talking about. We never entered the complex. Your family came running out before we had a chance to enter!"* To this day, we have no idea who or what woke me up. I believe God, or one of God's angels, saved our lives that night.

Over the decades that I have hosted my national radio show, "Coast to Coast AM," I have received hundreds, if not close to a

thousand calls about miracles like this. Once a truck driver said he was traveling along a dark, dangerous, curvy mountain road when he dozed off and started heading towards the cliff's edge. Suddenly, he awoke to see a hand grab the steering wheel and turn the truck back toward the center of the road. The miracle was that there was no one else in the truck.

Once a police officer called with a similar, otherworldly story. He said that he and his partner had responded to a 911 call about a person who was dying of a heart attack. The officers got to the house before the EMTs arrived. They knocked on the door and an old man let them in. They saw a man lying on his stomach on the floor. They rolled him over but he was already dead. The miracle was that the dead man was the same person who had just opened the door.

If you had any doubts about God's existence, I hope these stories have changed your mind. There are so many basic, earthbound things we don't understand, not to mention complicated things like dark matter, wormholes, stargates, and the like. But why would we expect to comprehend everything? Who are we to know why God does things? What kind of world would we be living in if everything made perfect sense? I believe that some things are supposed to be hidden. Have some humility. Realize God knows what God is doing.



## DANIEL E. LEVY, Ph.D.

### MIT Ph.D., CHEMIST, DISEASE-CURING SCIENTIST

Dr. Levy is an experienced organic/medicinal chemist who contributed to the design of novel therapeutic agents targeting cardiovascular disease, cancer, and inflammatory and CNS disorders. Over his 30 years of contributing to the biopharmaceutical industry, Dr. Levy led interdisciplinary teams focused on kinase inhibitors, GPCR antagonists, matrix metalloproteinase inhibitors, and cell adhesion molecules. His work is documented in almost 30 peer-reviewed publications and has generated over 26 issued/published United States patents.

After holding positions at Glycomed, COR Therapeutics, Scios, and Intradigm Corporation, Dr. Levy's most recent role was Vice President of CMC at Mind Medicine, developing novel synthetic pathways, formulations, and new IP supporting key clinical assets. He has broad experience in the chemistry of amino acids/peptides, sugars/carbohydrates, heterocycles, steroids, polyethylene glycols, and lipids. As a consultant, Dr. Levy provides strategic guidance and program implementation services to companies interested in small molecule drug discovery/development, diagnostics, and drug delivery/formulations. Additionally, he provides technical due diligence services, facilitates intellectual property development, and supports the filing of grant applications.

As a consultant, Dr. Levy is currently assisting companies in areas including:

- Small molecule therapeutics targeting cancer, concussion, arrhythmia, congestive heart failure, and CNS disorders
- Novel formulations for steroid-based therapeutics
- Use of nanoparticles and transfection polymers for gene therapy
- Novel strategies for antibody-drug conjugation
- Medicinal chemistry,  $^{14}\text{C}$  radiolabeling, and multi-kg GMP manufacturing

Dr. Levy received his Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and his B.S. in Chemistry from the University of California - Berkeley. He is the author/editor of three books addressing aspects of carbohydrate chemistry and mechanistic organic chemistry.



# Life, Asymmetry, and the Existence of God – a Chemistry Discussion

BY DANIEL E. LEVY

SCIENCE AND RELIGION are complementary. Where science is unable to explain, religion provides answers. Among the greatest questions at the interface of science and religion is how life came to be.

All living beings are made of cells composed of a membrane, nucleus, DNA, proteins, and enzymes, without which they would die. To ensure function, survival, and proliferation, these components must both exist and work together. While the odds of such systems evolving spontaneously are too great to calculate, an examination of enzymes and their component amino acids provides some insight from which one can extrapolate the sheer magnitude of unique factors required to enable the formation of life.

Nature provides 20 amino acids – each exhibiting unique structural variations.<sup>1</sup> Enzymes are comprised of linear strings of amino acids that contain any number of individual and/or multiple selections from the 20. As arbitrary words out of order don't create sentences, amino acids randomly assembled don't form functional enzymes. Enzymes generally range from 60 to 35,000 amino acids in length,<sup>2,3</sup> and a random assembly of only 60 amino acids results in  $8.83 \times 10^{17}$  possible combinations.

Aside from having different structural features, amino acids are asymmetric and exist in two chemically identical forms that are mirror images of each other. We designate these forms “D” and “L.”<sup>4</sup> Enzymes essential for life are made up exclusively of “L” amino acids.<sup>5</sup> A specific 60 amino acid enzyme made from mixtures of “D”

and “L” amino acids has  $1.15 \times 10^{18}$  possible combinations – an unfathomable number of variations from which all “L” forms of that specific sequence must emerge.

Building perspective, a single enzyme does not define life. There are more than 1,000 distinct enzymes present in bacterial life forms,<sup>6</sup> each having well over  $1.15 \times 10^{18}$  possible “D” and “L” combinations.<sup>7</sup> The odds of this happening randomly or by chance are lower than the odds of picking a single designated water molecule out of all the oceans on earth.

When the earth was forming, before life existed, the fundamental chemicals in the atmosphere were methane and ammonia.<sup>8</sup> Without energy input, there's no possible way that these chemicals can combine to form an amino acid. Even if that input occurred with lightning, any formation of amino acids would be a random event resulting in formation of an equal mixture of “D” and “L” amino acids. To favor “D” or “L”, an influence (catalyst) must be present to “direct” the chemistry.

Chemists selectively create “D” or “L” amino acids using catalysts favoring formation of one form. These asymmetric catalysts are generally derived from chemicals provided by nature – “L” amino acids for example. Because these catalysts are derived from molecules that didn't exist in primordial earth, how could nature have produced the initial supply of “L” amino acids required for life? The answer must reside with an outside influence – a supreme intelligence consistent with the religious belief in God.



## **MICHAEL SULLIVAN, Ph.D.**

### **COLONEL (RETIRED), MILITARY EXPERT, PROFESSOR OF U.S. MILITARY STRATEGIES AND TACTICS, STAR WARS ENTHUSIAST**

Michael Sullivan, Ph.D., is the Director of Programs at Strategic Capacity Group (SCG), overseeing and managing SCG's global portfolio of projects.

Prior to his promotion to that position, Dr. Sullivan served as the Senior Programs Manager for both of SCG's \$12.1M five-country capacity Building and Logistics International Bureau of Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) Sahel cooperative agreement, and the \$6.5M global Law Enforcement Expertise Program (LEEP) grant for INL Knowledge Management. Prior to joining SCG, Dr. Sullivan served 28 years as a U.S. Army armor and infantry officer. His service included five deployments to Iraq, one to Afghanistan, and one to Kosovo, all of which were in a Security Force Assistance role. He served as the Chief of Plans for the 3rd Infantry Division at Fort Stewart, Georgia, the United States Army Garrison Baumholder Commander in Germany, and as the Director of the Chief's Initiative Group in the Office of Security Cooperation, Iraq, at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. His last assignment in the Army was at the College of International Security Affairs, National Defense University (NDU), where Dr. Sullivan taught irregular warfare, civil-military relations, counterinsurgency, and counter-terrorism courses to both U.S. and foreign military officers. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army's School of Advanced Military Strategy (SAMS) and a certified Red Team Thinker.

Dr. Sullivan has served as an online instructor with American Military University and as a professor at National Defense University, The Fletcher School, and Georgetown University. At NDU, he was the University Liaison officer to the Los Angeles Police Department, writing their leadership curriculum. Dr. Sullivan holds a Ph.D. from the Fletcher School, an M.A. from Kansas State University, an M.A. from the United States Army Command and General Staff College, an M.A. from American Military University, and a B.S. from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. In his free time, Dr. Sullivan supports the non-profit Shootout for Soldiers, a registered 501c3 using the sport of lacrosse to connect veterans with their local communities. He also continues to study civil military relations through the lens of the Star Wars Universe.

# Look Toward the Light

BY MICHAEL SULLIVAN

I WAS RAISED CATHOLIC. Mass every Sunday, religious education classes every week, and a strong belief in living a good life. However, it wasn't until I started seeing other parts of the world in conflict, that I truly discovered my faith in a higher power.

Over my 28-year Army career, I saw the worst of mankind: war, death, famine, suffering, and devastation. I witnessed terrible acts of retribution, families torn apart, fear permeating entire regions, and the threat of darkness covering entire countries. But in that darkness, no matter where it was, from Kosovo to Iraq, I quickly learned to look toward the light.

Despite the horrid conditions and acts of hatred, I always found those who spread the light. And it wasn't necessarily the American soldier or civilian, who was supposed to bring relief to those suffering. Often, despite the terrible conditions, you would see a smile on a child's face, a soldier committing an act of kindness by handing out coats before a cold winter, or the gathering of families for religious celebrations despite the threat of violence around them.

While these small acts seem insignificant during the overpowering drama that is war, to me they represent a way to push out the darkness and bring in the light. But you must look for them, capture these moments, appreciate them

for what they are, and when possible, share them with others. Is this evidence of God or a higher power? I am not the one to say. But perhaps these acts of kindness, of family, of caring, of love, are exactly what a higher power who believes in mankind would want. Is this not the way?

Too often we counter hate with more hate, violence with more violence. After witnessing the evil of which man is capable, seeing those small yet important signs of goodness always restored my faith in mankind, and in a higher power. It might sound trite to "hunt the good stuff," but in a world in which social media and our smartphones bombard us with bad news, stories of atrocities, and a constant drumbeat of negativity, it might be time for many of us to take a step back and reflect. Put the phone down. Stop scrolling. Look around you for the goodness of your fellow man. You might be surprised at what you see when you look up from the screen and realize that there is more to the world than the negative stories. Trust me. There are good people out there and all you need to do, no matter how bad a given situation might seem, is to look up and find them.

Losing faith in desperate situations often occurs in conflicts or when things seem the darkest. To keep that faith, I argue those in the darkness need to look to the light.



## PAUL STELZER, M.D.

### PIONEERING CARDIOTHORACIC SURGEON

Dr. Stelzer moved from the Midwest to New York City in 1968 to study medicine at what is now the Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons. He served in the U.S. Air Force as a surgeon for two years, and has spent most of the rest of his career in various New York hospitals. He has been practicing cardiac surgery at Mount Sinai Hospital since 2007, with a specialty in aortic valve and root surgery.

In 1988, he was the first to report doing an aortic valve replacement with the patient's own pulmonary valve as a full aortic root replacement. It is a challenging surgery, so few cardiothoracic surgeons do it routinely and most have never tried it at all. Having done just under 800 such operations, Dr. Stelzer has more experience with them than almost anyone in the world.

After all these years, he still never tires of seeing the amazing beauty and strength of the human heart. Its ability to pump so much blood around the clock for a lifetime is far better than any pump that man could make. With all its yet undiscovered mysteries, it inspires him to believe there is a power beyond us that can create such a thing, and that can give him the ability to make “miracles” happen when a heart needs help.

In his spare time, Dr. Stelzer enjoys jigsaw puzzles (including three with 18,000 pieces) and singing in a barber shop quartet (for 25 years). He and his wife enjoy traveling (especially to Italy), and spending time with their two children and three grandchildren.

# Why Do People Know Both Good and Bad?

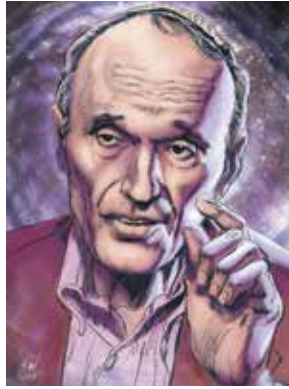
BY PAUL STELZER

**I**S EVERYTHING WE experience simply a random effect of chance or is there a thread of purpose and deeper meaning in and around us? It seems that even a “big bang” origin story leaves us with the question of where it came from. The concept of God solves that problem, and the amazingly orderly structure of the natural world suggests that this God cares about order. We see it around our little planet as an enormous universe and inside us in our own DNA, which multiplies its simple components into an enormous complexity that gives each person unique traits and abilities. Furthermore, there is not just order, but beauty. Flowers with colors of all kinds, majestic mountains, sunrises, sunsets, music from birdsong to symphonies, art, languages, and literature. Little wonder that ancient cultures from widely separated parts of the world developed traditions and detailed descriptions of supernatural beings that could have an influence on everything from the weather to individual human lives.

There are some very counter-intuitive aspects of human beings that also point to the existence of God. One of the most striking is our sense of right and wrong. It is not simply a matter of pragmatic instincts for the survival of the species but conscious choices that include placing value on an individual human life with the concepts of kindness, altruism, generosity, empathy, sacrifice, compassion, and forgiveness. But we also have the capacity to be selfish,

jealous, angry, hateful, brutal, and destructive – things we recognize as wrong, bad, or evil even when we don’t get caught. Could it be that the God who made these extremes possible did so like parents who hope that their children will opt for the good, but know that they are made with the freedom to choose otherwise? The good choice would bring little joy if that were the only choice we have. Would there be real happiness without God?

A host of traditions and behaviors from different cultures around the world, from ancient to modern, portray a yearning to be part of something beyond that which we can see and beyond our own lifespan, whether a Pharaoh in Egypt building his tomb or a grieving mother seeking hope for her child whose sibling was killed in a grade school mass shooting. There seems to be an unquenchable belief that things can be better, and we celebrate those among us who make a difference that nudges the world toward a brighter future. We mourn with the families of people lost in natural disasters but even more so, decry the atrocities of mass destruction of people by other people. Why are we made this way? Why do we care? Why do we experience guilt? Why do we get excited when the “little guy” wins? Why is gratitude so rare but so appreciated when it is sincere? Why do we love to win and hate to lose? What is love really all about? Could the best things in life really be possible without God in it?



## GERALD SCHROEDER, Ph.D.

### NUCLEAR PHYSICIST, 'EXPERT' ON GOD

Dr. Gerald Schroeder lives in Jerusalem with his wife, the author, Barbara Sofer. They have five children and a changing number of grandchildren. His formal education includes a BSc, MSc, and Ph.D., all from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His theological training includes twenty years of study under the late Rabbi Herman Pollack, Rabbi Noah Weinberg, and Rabbi Chaim Brovender.

He spent seven years on the staff of the M.I.T. Physics Department before moving to Israel and joining first the Weizmann Institute of Science, and then the Volcani Research Institute and the Hebrew University Isotope Separation Mass Spectrometer facility. His current teaching venues include Aish HaTorah College of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem. He lectures worldwide on the amazing confluence of ancient Biblical commentary and the discoveries of modern science. In addition, he is active in research in environmental radioactivity. Dr. Schroeder has over 60 publications in leading peer-reviewed scientific journals and has witnessed the detonation of a long series of nuclear weapons (atomic bombs) during research in nuclear physics.

Dr. Schroeder is author of *Genesis and the Big Bang* (Bantam Doubleday); *The Science of God* (Free Press of Simon & Schuster, and Broadway Books of Bantam Doubleday); *The Hidden Face of God* (Free Press); and *God According to God* (HarperOne). In the first full year of its publication, *The Science of God* was on the Barnes & Noble list of non-fiction best sellers and was Amazon's best-selling book in the field of physics/cosmology. His books appear in ten languages.

Dr. Schroeder's YouTube video, "Proof of God in 5 Minutes," has had over four million views.

His lecture venues have ranged from synagogues worldwide to the Mormon Tabernacle, NSA, and the Smithsonian, and from Chabad in South Africa to mega-churches in Brazil and outposts in Korea.

The greatest compliment he ever overheard: Two teenagers, following a lecture, "Finally it all makes sense."



# NASA Discovers the Fingerprint of God

BY GERALD SCHROEDER

AS A SCIENTIST with a fourteen-year academic history at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, I am often asked how I can believe in God. My reply is quite simple: How can I not believe in God? The very institution that has researched our cosmic origins, NASA, has discovered God, or if not directly God, then at least the fingerprint of God in the metaphysical force that created our magnificent physical universe from nothing physical. And NASA describes this revelation in a diagram (see page 187).<sup>1</sup>

What we learn in this extraordinary visual piece of NASA-generated knowledge is that our universe had a beginning, a fact that Albert Einstein's equations indicated but against which he argued for a decade, initially insisting that our universe must be static and eternal. It took a journey of 9,000 kilometers from Germany to California, to visit with Edwin Hubble and Milton Humason and observe the evidence firsthand, to convince him otherwise.

One would think that the discovery that our universe had a beginning would be proof enough of a "Beginner," a creating God, but it was not. In 1973, Edward Tryon, professor of astronomy at City University of New York, asked, "Is the universe a vacuum fluctuation?" in an article in *Nature*. Tryon described how a combination of relativity and a quantum fluctuation could yield the spontaneous creation of a universe from nothing. No God needed. But Tryon expanded on his extraordinary insight: If relativity and a quantum fluctuation

are the source of our existence, then "matter and energy would not be fundamental. They would be manifestations of underlying laws. Ultimate reality would be the laws themselves – the mind of Einstein's God."<sup>2</sup>

In other words, the laws of nature themselves would be the creating force. But what are the traits of the laws of nature? They are not physical, they're just abstractions that act on the physical – somehow. And somehow these laws created the physical universe from nothing physical. If they created the universe, that means they must have pre-dated the universe. That in turn means they are outside our concept of time.

A non-physical force that pre-dated our universe and is therefore outside of time created our physical universe from nothing physical. Sound familiar? That is the traditional theological description of the creating God, made manifest by acts in and on nature.

But is that creating God still active in creating the universe? That NASA diagram gives us a clue. Visually it tells us a magnificent truth: that the initial burst of energy, the super-powerful light-beams that marked the Big Bang creation of our universe, eventually evolved to produce beings alive and conscious and so clever that they could build the WMAP space probe to explore the wonders of existence. Those laws that governed that evolution continue to unfold and manifest in us. The light beams of creation learned to feel wonder, the majesty of love. They became you and me, surely the fingerprint of God in creation.



# Closing Remarks



## RABBI YAAKOV WOLBE

**PROLIFIC, INNOVATIVE, DYNAMIC TORAH EDUCATOR,  
PODCASTER, AUTHOR**

As the Director of Outreach at TORCH ([torchweb.org](http://torchweb.org)), Rabbi Wolbe has delivered thousands of classes, lectures, and workshops on a wide range of subjects, including Jewish history, Jewish life, parsha, Jewish philosophy, relationships, and ethics. Rabbi Wolbe launched his first Torah podcast show in 2013. Since then, he has expanded his production and currently hosts six Torah and Judaism podcasts: “The Jewish History Podcast,” “The Parsha Podcast,” “This Jewish Life,” “The Ethics Podcast,” “The Mitzvah Podcast,” and “TORAH 101.” Rabbi Wolbe has published more than 1,400 podcast episodes with more than 3 million downloads (as of September 2023), and growing.

Rabbi Wolbe is the author of *Upon A Ten-Stringed Harp: How Torah and Mitzvos prepare the Soul for Eternity*, published in 2022. He is currently writing a book about the Torah’s guidance on how to identify, develop, and actualize your potential. Rabbi Wolbe lives in Houston with his wife and children.

Reach him at [rabbiwolbe@gmail.com](mailto:rabbiwolbe@gmail.com).

# Closing Remarks

BY YAAKOV WOLBE

**D**OES GOD EXIST or not?

That is the most consequential question of our lives. If God does, in fact, exist, then existence is purposeful. Life must have meaning. The world, the universe, humanity, everything that exists does so for a reason. A believer understands that the existence of God mandates that we behave accordingly. A believer lives with a sense of existential and absolute morality. Believers know that there is a concurrent reality hiding behind the veneer of what we can see and measure. Believers understand that our soul, our consciousness, and our choices outlive our relatively short tenure here. A believer recognizes that God will extend the ultimate reward and mete out punishment. Faith governs every aspect of a believer's life.

Non-believers live very differently. If you are under the impression that the world is a cosmic, if fortuitous, accident, life has no ultimate purpose. For a non-believer, this is the only world that exists, and every moment you are inching closer to the end, when it all ceases and cuts to black.

The differences between the believer and non-believer make themselves manifest in every area of life.

A thinking person must determine the veracity of the claim that our universe and everything in it was the handiwork of an all-powerful Creator. But how can we prove it? How can we make a rational and logical decision about this all-important question? Perhaps this is a journey that each person must undertake on his or her own. But I think that with simple arguments that are accessible to everyone, reasonable, open-minded people can come to the realization that the world has a Creator.

Simplifying the question is key. Faith is not the product of the advanced study of theology, divinity, or astronomy. To arrive at faith, you don't need to understand string theory, black holes, or what happened a trillionth of a millisecond after the Big Bang. You don't need to be a philosopher schooled in the arguments of the ancients. Without advanced degrees, without relying on arcane jargon (epistemology, teleology, punctuated equilibrium, etc.), simply by examining simple, incontrovertible proofs, we can all come to the conclusion that the world has a Creator.

Belief does not rely on complex arguments. The opposite is, in fact, true: Non-belief is wholly reliant on muddling the subject with needless complexity. The existence of a Creator is so obvious and incontrovertible to the objective-minded, that the only way non-belief can endure is if there are sufficient layers of complexity surrounding the question of the existence of God. Wrapping the question with esoteric complications creates sufficient confusion to mask the hollow arguments of non-believers.

Simply put, the fingerprints of the Creator are visible everywhere we turn. The entire universe is screaming that it was designed by the Master Designer, that it was created by the Almighty Creator. One can only deny this obvious truth by shifting the subject in a way that adds complexity and confusion to it. Heresy might always exist (the principle of free-will demands that there must always be room for lack of belief), but only if the subject is unnecessarily complexified.

Consider the following line of questioning: Where did matter come from? Matter cannot create itself. Who or what created matter? This is

a simple question, but a deadly one for someone whose worldview obviates the need for a Creator.

Another simple challenge: Describe a process by which an amoeba can come into existence absent a Creator? How does inanimate matter come to life?

It doesn't end there. According to the doctrine of non-believers, speciation should grow exponentially, yet since humanity has begun to chronicle the world around it, there has not been a single documented instance of speciation. How do you explain the absolute dearth of any such proof? Why did speciation mysteriously stop as soon as we started keeping records?

These are just a few of the endless, maddening questions for non-believers. Non-belief demands mental gymnastics and a suspension of logic. It is not easy to be a heretic. And as we discover more about the universe, it is getting progressively harder.

Let's examine this simple argument: You have been reading this essay for two minutes. In that time, entirely invisible to you, the bone marrow in your body produced more than 100,000,000 blood cells. That is not a typo. Over a hundred million cells were created within you in the last two minutes. Each one of those cells is composed of billions of different, infinitesimally microscopic parts – an unfathomably complex network of intricate machinery making your body work.

If we combine the collected intellectual and technological prowess of all of humanity, deploying the most advanced microchip fabrication techniques, we cannot recreate a single cell. Who made the cell? Who made the system that creates millions of them every minute? Using a straightforward example – a single cell of stunning utility and masterful, intricate design – is sufficient evidence that there is a Creator whose creative prowess infinitely exceeds ours. It is that simple.

The non-believers argue otherwise. But stripping their argument down to its core exposes it as weak and illogical; they would have you believe that the intricate systems of fantastic utility that we harbor within our bodies – systems and functionalities that we could never replicate – were more likely created by a happy accident than by an all-powerful Creator.

If we bar complexity and jargon from the discussion, it would be obvious to everyone besides the stubborn that Almighty God created the universe and everything in it.

Job (19:26) tells us “From my flesh I can see God.” Simply by examining our body, we can arrive at the conclusion that it was designed by God.

I challenge believers and non-believers alike to undertake the following exercise:

Ask a physician to explain to you, in layman's terms, some of the absolutely incredible and awe-inspiring systems and functions of our body. Speak to an eye doctor and ask him to explain how vision works. How do we see? Ask an audiologist to explain the process by which audio waves get transmitted to and decoded by the brain. Ask a nephrologist why we cannot simply make synthetic kidneys to solve kidney failure. Get a neurologist to estimate just how little we know about how the brain works. Each one of these conversations should convince you that Job was spot on – through your own flesh you can see God. We are not the product of a series of accidents.

Jewish law codifies a blessing of gratitude to God to be said after using the restroom. It focuses on the vast network of transportation pipes (arteries, veins, capillaries, nerves, etc.) that crisscross the body free of blockages. Lying end to end, the pipes inside your body are longer than all the roads, rivers, canals, and subways in the United States. Even minor blockages can be fatal. Yet for most people, most of the time, everything works



seamlessly for years and decades. Your body is an engineering marvel.

Ingenious design that humans cannot replicate is everywhere: The miracle of digestion – filtering out harmful toxins and mining food for vital resources; the miracle of conception and the birth of a baby; how wounds self-repair, just to name a few.

Who created these systems? How did they come into being?

In no other context would theories such as the one that everything “evolved” over millions of years, be remotely viable. Arguing otherwise in any other setting would be laughable. No one would be persuaded that a wristwatch, laptop, or a basketball hoop was the byproduct of a series of fortunate accidents.

Using simple logic we know that the existence of design and purpose in anything are evidence of a creator for said thing.

As a species, we can indeed make a wristwatch. We cannot, however, make a cell, or a strand of DNA; we don’t even have sufficient computing power to calculate the folds of a protein (every cell has billions of them); we cannot make a lowly gnat; we cannot even make an atom with a nucleus in the middle and spinning particles revolving around it at breakneck speed.

If all would agree that a wristwatch must have a creator, it is illogical to argue that something infinitely harder to make does not.

These arguments are sufficient to prove that the world has a Creator.

Non-believers, terrified of the consequences of an Almighty God, respond in a variety of ways: dismissal (“It’s settled science” or “It’s beyond the scope of science”), derisive ad hominem attacks (“Are you really a young-Earth creationist?”), changing the subject (“Wars of religion killed more people than anything else” and “Why do bad

things happen to good people?”), and a relentless effort to add complexity to the discussion. Others engage in intellectual outsourcing (“One of the genius professors must understand how this all works. It doesn’t make any sense to me, but I am sure that they have the answers”). That is the only way that non-believers can advance their arguments.

Believers find comfort in the knowledge that simple logic dictates that design was designed, that engineering was engineered, that purpose was created purposefully.

Believers can rest assured that the absolute, overwhelming, preponderance of evidence points to the existence of God. Believers rely on the knowledge that disbelief is completely illogical and entirely devoid of evidence (and no, adding billions of years to the equation does not remedy the sheer lack of logic and evidence).

This is, however, unlikely to win believers any debates. When non-believers encounter these airtight arguments, they rarely enthusiastically embrace faith. Instead, they keep grasping at straws until they realize that the notion of God is much less terrifying than the alternative.

The true deterrent that keeps reasonable people from accepting the obvious fact that our universe and everything in it was created is not the lack of simple logic and evidence. What inhibits faith is the existential angst that comes with it. Even believers recognize the implications of a Creator. If God exists, then existence must have purpose, and it is incumbent on everyone to try to effectuate that purpose. Faith in God naturally extends to living a life that is congruent with God’s will. That requires us to govern our behavior according to God’s will, something that many are reluctant to do.

We are all subject to the dissonance of faith.

But regarding the question of whether God

exists or not, with simple logic and avoiding unnecessary complexity, it can become clear to all that our world did not emerge accidentally.

It is important to emphasize that believers do not reject science. Quite the contrary, a believer sees science as the study of God's handiwork. The great Medieval Jewish sage and philosopher, Maimonides, wrote that the study of science can be a means through which man deepens his faith. Provided that science is viewed as the study of God's creation, it reinforces rather than repels faith. Science is only problematic when one studies it as an alternative to faith.

Faithless science is also incomplete; it can never tell the full story. Decoupled from faith, the study of science is akin to the study of the locomotive that the Elders of Chelm conducted.

In Jewish folklore, a cadre of Elders who considered themselves to be wise and sagacious, but were actually bumbling dimwits, governed the city of Chelm.

In one classic tale, the Elders sent a delegation of wise men to the recently constructed train station to determine how trains move. They studied the train from every conceivable angle beginning with the 10th and final car. After several days of intensive analysis, they determined that the final car in the train is connected to the 9th car and that when the ninth car moves, it pulls the 10th car with it. But why does the 9th car move? After some time, they discovered that the ninth car moves because it is connected to the 8th car and when the eighth car moves, it pulls the ninth car with it. And so on until they got to the first car. When they studied the first car they

were completely mystified: How does it move? After weeks of fruitless study, they returned to the Elders and announced, "we discovered 90% of how trains move."

This is an apt analogy for the study of science without an acknowledgement of the one force animating the entire process, the Creator. The study of science without factoring in God ignores the force, the power, the first-cause that propels all of existence. Science without faith invariably encounters a *"first-car-problem,"* a point at which science cannot explain what, how, or why. The scope of science does not extend to the first car.

The question of the existence of God is one that we cannot ignore. If we avoid the unnecessary complexity that clouds the subject, it should be clear to most people that the universe and everything in it was created. We don't need to look that far. From my flesh I can see God. For the believer, science complements and even enhances faith. Every new development, every new discovery, every new revelation shows the believer more of God's unfathomable mastery.

Faith is not the endpoint in the life of a believer. Faith places great responsibility upon her shoulders. A believer is not free to act as she pleases. A believer must rein in her worst impulses. A believer must work assiduously to ensure that her behavior is compliant with the will of God. Acknowledging the existence of God is only the beginning of the believer's journey, but in this most consequential question of our lives, the answer is clear: The universe and everything in it was created by Almighty God.

“Know that the Creator is exalted above the comprehension of our imagination and the perfection of our intellect; that none but He comprehends His essence. He is not a body, nor can His power be compared to that of a body; He has no form, nor can anything in the universe be compared to Him.”<sup>2</sup>

**MOSES BEN MAIMON aka RAMBAM**

ANDALUSIAN PHYSICIAN, PHILOSOPHER, LEGAL SCHOLAR (1138–1204)



## RABBI LAWRENCE KELEMEN

### PHILOSOPHER, WRITER, JEWISH CONTINUITY ACTIVIST

Lawrence Kelemen is the founder of the Center for Kehillah Development, a leadership development project devoted to the growth and wellbeing of Jewish communities worldwide. He is also the Rosh Kollel of the Center's Rabbinical Training program, Ohr Chodosh. He created the International Organization of Mussar Vaadim, a network of dozens of self-development groups in North America and Israel. He has been honored as a visiting scholar at universities and communal organizations around the world.

During his decade-long tenure at Neve Yerushalayim College of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, Rabbi Kelemen influenced thousands of students. He is also the author of many journal articles and books, among them: *Permission to Believe*; *Permission to Receive*; *Planting and Building*; and *To Kindle a Soul*.

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# Closing Remarks

BY LAWRENCE KELEMEN

IT IS DIFFICULT to talk about monotheism (belief in one God) without talking about God's revelation at Mount Sinai in 1312 BCE. Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the Bahai Faith all teach that God appeared there. If that story is not true, we can't put much stock in these religions' affirmation that there is One God, or in any of their other claims. The astute reader will have detected this reality between the lines of almost every essay in this volume. Most if not all of the contributors to this volume believe that God first publicly introduced God's self at Sinai.

*It is important to understand that I am not trying to prove the validity of any religion or its Holy books here – my argument is that this unprecedented, unrivaled, and never-repeated historical event did in fact occur.*

Therefore, let me analyze a fundamental question: Is there any logical reason to accept the Sinai account? I have spent thousands of hours discussing this query with believers and non-believers, theologians and professors, with my teachers and with my students, and have developed what I believe is a complex and compelling argument. At the risk of losing some of its depth and subtlety, I would like to present a summary of my answer to this question. Consider this:

Throughout recorded history, Jews who were observant of Torah law claimed that their ancestors – every man, woman, and child alive at the time – received that law from God during a national revelation at Mt. Sinai, an event that they say took place more than 3,300 years ago. Even most non-Orthodox Jews can trace their

lineage within three to four generations to an Orthodox ancestor who believed in the Sinai national revelation. How did such a story start?

One possibility is that God indeed spoke to the Jewish nation at Mt. Sinai 3,300 years ago. This is what Orthodox Jews, religious Christians and Muslims, and a handful of smaller sects believe.

Another possibility is that at some point in history, a person or group of people fabricated and spread the myth that there had been a national revelation at Mt. Sinai. This is the most popular belief among non-Orthodox Jews and the secular.

Assuming that the story about the national revelation at Mt. Sinai is indeed a lie, whoever spread that lie also would have had to place the event temporally. People would naturally ask the cult leader(s), "Really, God spoke to the Israelites? When did this happen?"

What could the cult leader(s) say to the cult members? There are only three "periods" available. They could say that: (1) it happened to a previous generation of Jews; (2) it happened to you, the current generation of Jews; or (3) it hasn't yet happened, but it will happen to a future generation of Jews. In short, the initial lie had to take the form of "Past" (your ancestors heard God speak), "Present" (you heard God speak), or "Future" (your descendants will hear God speak).

It is difficult to assert that the "Future" lie was the origin of Jewry's historical belief in the Sinai revelation. That is because a widely accepted mythology should leave some trace in the historical record. If the fabricator(s)

of the myth claimed that “God has not yet spoken to us, but someday God will,” someone should have recorded that claim in the last few thousand years. We should find someone saying, “God hasn’t spoken yet, but God will.” Yet, no matter what Jewish community we study, regardless of its period and location, no one ever says this. In every community, the Jews believed that long ago God spoke to their ancestors.

In contrast, had the fabricator(s)’ initial claim been the “Present” lie (“You, all Jews alive in this generation, heard God speak”), it could have evolved to match what we find in the historical record. If someone could convince people in the first generation that they had heard God speak, then they would have told their children that lie, and the children would have told their children that “your grandparents heard God speak.” Generation after generation would pass along this story, generating exactly the sort of evidence we face: Thousands of years of consistent belief that “long ago our ancestors heard God speak.” *Prima facie*, it seems that a national revelation mythology could have been created by a cult leader or group of leaders telling the “Present” lie.

However, while it might be possible for a liar, call him Jack, to persuade his friend, Norman, that Jack was once a millionaire or an astronaut, it is very difficult for Jack to persuade Norman that Norman himself was recently a millionaire or an astronaut, etc. People might be gullible, but they have ample clarity about their own lives, and they will reject claims that are inconsistent with that clarity. No matter what Jack says or how he says it, and no matter how many people he gets to join him in swearing to Norman that during his adult life Norman was actually a millionaire or an astronaut (both of which wouldn’t even require believing in

the supernatural), Norman isn’t going to buy it. And if Jack and his friends had to persuade a few dozen or a few hundred people that they were recently millionaires or astronauts, the proposition becomes ludicrous. People are sometimes gullible, but they are not that stupid.

According to the “Present” lie theory, the fabricator(s) persuaded an entire generation – more than three million people – that they weren’t just millionaires and astronauts, but that they achieved the supernatural – prophecy. They heard God’s voice, “I am the Lord thy God... You should have no other gods before Me,” and they were so terrified that they begged God to speak to Moses instead because they felt they couldn’t survive more prophecy. Just as people would know that they weren’t millionaires or astronauts, and would have difficulty accepting a claim to the contrary from even the most charismatic cult leader, how much more so would a large group of people have difficulty accepting that they and everyone else they know had heard God speak. It takes a huge leap of faith to believe that the “Present” lie is what launched belief in the Sinai revelation.

In contrast, had the fabricator(s)’ initial claim been the “Past” lie (“God never spoke to this generation, but God did speak to your ancestors long ago”), people might have believed it. It’s hard to persuade someone that he was a millionaire or astronaut, since he feels confident about his own life experience; but he might believe that his great-great... grandfather was one, and that the story was just forgotten. It’s still not going to be an easy sell, since extraordinary events or accomplishments tend to be remembered (and since it would have required a miracle for someone to have been an astronaut generations before modern space travel). But the further back in history



the liar places the extraordinary event or accomplishment, the more reasonable it might seem. Of the three possible theories, explaining how people could create and spread a Sinai revelation mythology, the “Past” lie seems the most plausible.

However, there is another reason why it is difficult to assert with confidence that the “Past” lie was the origin of Jewry’s historical belief in the Sinai revelation:

How does the cult leader explain to his followers why no one heard about their parents or grandparents experiencing prophecy? After all, that would have been a big enough deal that some percentage of the population would have remembered it for a generation or two. To be credible, the liar needs to create lots of reasonable opportunities for the story to have been forgotten. The “Past” lie only works if it is cast as, “Hundreds (or thousands) of years ago, all of your ancestors heard God speak, but then there was a terrible (*insert disaster of choice*: flood, war, disease, assimilation, etc.), and the national revelation was forgotten. No one in your family has known about it for eons, until I, Fred, just reminded you.” The claim of this hero, whom we are calling “Fred” is believable because it is uncheckable; no existing evidence can contradict it. Even if every parent and grandparent alive tells their kids that they have never heard anything like Fred’s claim, their insistence doesn’t throw Fred’s claim into question; it matches exactly what he is saying – that the event happened long ago and was forgotten. To be believable, the “Past” lie must be cast as, “There was Moses; then at some point there was a very long gap with no memory of the Sinai revelation; and then there was a great leader (“Fred”) who reminded Jewry of their glorious Sinai experience.” Without

the very long gap, no one would accept the lie.

And here’s the problem with the “Past” lie theory:

Jewish scholars in every generation spoke and wrote about their teachers, providing details not only about their beliefs, but also about their religious and national accomplishments. These traditions appear conspicuously throughout Jewish religious literature over the millennia, providing a comprehensive map of Jewry’s religious leadership from before Moses through modern scholars, detailing who taught whom, and what each leader was most famous for.

We know the name of the person who the tradition says ascended Mount Sinai to meet God and led Jewry through the desert for 40 years. That was Moses. We know who took over Moses’ role and led Jewry into the Land of Israel. That was Joshua. We know who led Jewry back to Israel from Babylonian exile (Ezra), who redacted the Mishna (Yehuda HaNasi), and who redacted the Talmud (Ravina and Rav Ashi). Etcetera. In any year between Mt. Sinai and today, we can identify Jewry’s greatest leaders and their most famous accomplishments.

There is only one unrecorded and forgotten disaster, name, and accomplishment that is very obviously missing from the historical record. Nowhere do we find a story of Jewry forgetting about the Sinai event for hundreds or thousands of years, and a leader who, after Jewry forgot, reminded them that their ancestors were all prophets and heard God speak at Sinai. That leader would have contributed more to Jewish identity and theology than anyone else other than Moses himself. Yet there isn’t a single paragraph in the 24 books of the Bible that mentions this disaster, this savior, and this contribution. In 60 volumes of Talmud, which

discuss the lives of thousands of Jewish religious leaders in detail, there isn't a word about the many generations who didn't know anything about Mt. Sinai, or the prophet who gave that tradition back to God's chosen people.

Indeed, the first discussions of the possible existence of a "Fred"-type character appear in the literature of modern, secular Biblical critics who are aware that without a "Fred," their best theory (the "Past" lie) crumbles. These secular scholars themselves disagree over what the disaster was, when it happened, and who could be Fred, since there is no mention of such events or such a person in any historical text. There are dozens of proposed candidates, each rejected by other secular scholars. It's a mad scramble to find the solution to a major problem which is:

Either God indeed spoke to the Jewish

nation at Mt. Sinai 3,300 years ago, or at some point in history, a person or group of people fabricated and spread the myth that there had been such a national revelation. If there are only three possible lies – Past, Present, and Future – each of which fails to produce the Jewish belief in a mass revelation, that leaves only the possibility that God actually spoke to the ancient Israelites at Mt. Sinai. That is a serious problem for someone reluctant to consider such a possibility.

This argument should solidify the context for the essays that you have read, allowing them to form a cohesive body of thought. Although each one describes a very personal point of view, they are all translating a singular, ancient perspective. They are all tapping into the same fountainhead from which flows the human faith in the existence of One God.

# Endnotes

## “SAGES THROUGH THE AGES” QUOTES

1. *The Brothers Karamazov*, 1890. Trans. Constance Garnet (1912).
2. Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, Trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

## ALEEZA BEN SHALOM

1. The Babylonian Talmud (Sotah 2a)

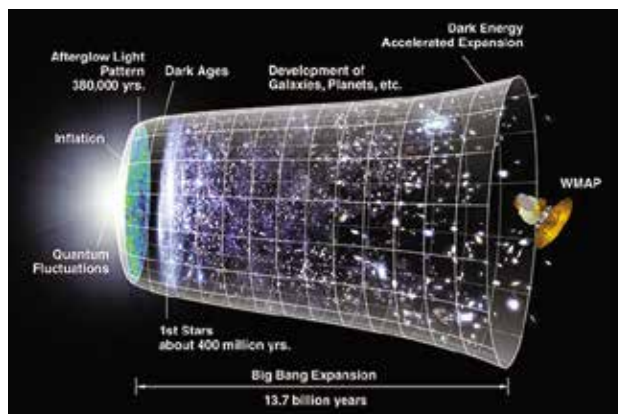
## GITTY STOLIK

1. Chabad (See chabad.org)
2. As heard on Rabbi YB Gordon's Tanya classes, in the name of his father. Tanya classes available on Chabad.org.
3. *Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk* - A Chassidic Rabbi and leader in Kotzk, Poland, 1857-1859.
4. When we act in accordance with the Divine will.

## DANIEL E. LEVY

1. <https://www.britannica.com/science/amino-acid>
2. Chen, Lorenzo H.; Kenyon, George L., Curtin, Francois, Harayama, Shigeaki, Bembenek, Michael E., Hajipour, Gholamhossein, Whitman, Christian P., *Journal of Biological Chemistry*, 1992, 267(25), 17716-21
3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/Web/Newsltr/FallWinter02/longest.html>
4. “D” stands for Dextrorotatory and reflects the property of a molecule to rotate the plane of polarized light clockwise or to the right. “L” stands for Levorotatory and reflects the property of a molecule to rotate the plane of polarized light counterclockwise or to the left.
5. “D” amino acids exist naturally in small amounts and are produced by microbes (Soda, Kenji; Kagaku (Kyoto, Japan); 1977, 32(7), 517-26).
6. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/medicine-and-dentistry/microbial-enzyme>
7. Depending on the number of “D,L” amino acids in the sequence.
8. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/evolution-of-the-atmosphere-1703862>

## GERALD SCHROEDER



1. NASA WMAP time-line diagram: the cosmic history of our universe, NASA.
2. E. Tryon, *Nature* 246, 1973; p396;/E. Tryon, *Discover Magazine*, winter 2011, p. 51.

# About The Artist



## ANDI ARNOVITZ

### WORLD-RENOWNED MULTI-MEDIA CONCEPTUAL ARTIST

Andi Arnovitz is a conceptual artist living and working in Jerusalem, Israel. Her work is in the permanent collections of the United States Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Museum, the Israel National library, Yale University Library, the Magnes Collection, the Yeshiva University Museum, the Museum of the Diaspora, Tel Aviv, the Ein Harod Museum of Art, and the Gottesman Israel National Aquarium. She has exhibited her pieces all over the world.

Her artistic practice focuses on the flashpoints where gender, religion, and politics meet and hinder personal agency. Her art has explored issues of domestic violence, reproductive freedom, abuses of power where church and state are entwined, and nuclear proliferation. Currently she is focusing on problems of climate change, displaced populations, and the impact of Covid on women.

Her art highlights these places of friction, the territory where things are not all black and white, and where we, as human beings, have the potential to create change, or to find common ground. Her work examines symbols, images, and archetypes that transcend tightly defined definitions and create a broad human platform for shared experiences.

Arnovitz works in a variety of media, with fabrics, printmaking processes, paper, and porcelain. As a conceptual artist, she often uses printmaking and digital information to create print series, artist books, and large-scale installations. Much of her artistic practice is focused on creating statements through the use of multiples: thousands of prayers, thousands of paper scrolls, thousands of rods of clay, thousands of pieces of paper, hundreds of pieces of resin or porcelain all painstakingly assembled.

Arnovitz's work has been exhibited all over the world, including solo and group shows in England, China, the United States, Israel, Spain, Poland, Germany, Finland, France, Lithuania, Canada, Italy, Mallorca, and Bulgaria. Her work is in private collections in both the United States and in Europe, as well as universities, museums, and institutions.

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## BRUCE LICHT

**ENTREPRENEUR, AUTHOR,  
FOUNDER OF MY ELEVATOR PITCH FOR GOD™**

Bruce grew up in Lafayette, California and received a BA in Political Science from UCLA as well as a Graduate Gemologist degree from the Gemological Institute of America. After graduating, Bruce operated his family's 100 year-old retail fine jewelry business for twenty-two years. Bruce had a passion for computers and graphic arts, so he changed careers and joined his best friend at a national technical publishing company for seventeen-years as the company's Publisher, where they invented the modern labor law poster industry, including the first "All-On-One Labor Law Poster" and "Labor Law Poster Compliance Plan."

Aside from being the Founder of the website, "My Elevator Pitch for God," Bruce was the co-editor of the book, *Elevator Pitches For God: Volume 1*, and author of the cookbook titled, *Immediate Chef: No Previous Experience Required*.

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