



## **BRUCE LICHT**

### **FOUNDER OF *MY ELEVATOR PITCH FOR GOD*, ENTREPRENEUR, AND AUTHOR**

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, *My Elevator Pitch For God: Volume 1*, and author of the cookbook titled, *Immediate Chef: No Previous Experience Required*.

# Airplanes From Heaven

BRUCE LCHT

Three airplanes descend from Heaven...<sup>1</sup>

The first airplane lands in Athens. An old man exits the airplane. The airport attendant greets him and asks, *"What's your name?"* The man says, *"My name is Socrates. I gave birth to Greek Philosophy. Take me to the Acropolis to see how the Greek Empire is doing. Take me to the Temple of the god Zeus?"* The attendant says, *"What empire? The Acropolis is in ruins. We are just a small country that's part of something called the European Union. We don't worship Zeus anymore. We have the Greek Orthodox Church. And very few care anymore about Greek Philosophy."* Socrates says, *"Don't you speak ancient Greek?"* The attendant says, *"Not anymore."* Socrates concludes, *"Nothing's the same,"* boards the plane and leaves.

A second airplane lands in Rome. An old man exits the airplane. The airport attendant greets him and asks, *"What's your name?"* The man says, *"My name is Julius Caesar. Take me to the steps of the Senate, to the Coliseum, to my Gladiators. I want to see how the Roman Empire is doing?"* The attendant says, *"What empire? The Senate, the Colosseum, etc. are all in ruins. Rome is just one of many cities in Italy."* Caesar says, *"What's Italy?"* Caesar continues, *"I want to worship the god of Jupiter."* The attendant replies, *"I can take you to the Vatican where there's a Pope."* Caesar asks, *"What's the Vatican and what's a Pope?"* Caesar says, *"Don't you speak Latin?"* The attendant asserts, *"Not anymore. We speak Italian."* Caesar concludes, *"Nothing's the same,"* boards the plane and leaves.

A third airplane lands in Israel. An old man exits the airplane. The airport attendant says in Hebrew, *"Shalom Aleichem"* (which means 'Peace unto you') and the old man replies, *"Aleichem Shalom"* (which means 'Unto you Peace') followed by, *"I'm glad we speak the same language."* The attendant queries, *"What brings you here?"* The old man replies, *"My name is Moses. This is my land that I worked tirelessly for."* Moses tells him, *"I rushed to catch this flight and forgot a few things. Do you have a Tallit <sup>2</sup> and Tefillin?" <sup>3</sup>* The attendant says, *"Sure. You can get them all over."* Moses says, *"I'm hungry. Can I get some food?"* The attendant says, *"Sure. There are many restaurants in the Airport."* Moses says, *"I can't eat just any food. It must be Kosher."* The attendant says, *"Of course. They're all Kosher."* Moses declares, *"Baruch Hashem."<sup>4</sup> Nothing's changed."*

If Socrates and Caesar went to their homelands today, they wouldn't speak the same language, have the same faith, worship the same gods, or share the same lifestyle, rituals, culture, or values.

If Moses went to Israel today, he and the Israelis would still speak the same language, have the same faith, worship the same God, have the same Old Testament with its same 613 Commandments,<sup>5</sup> and have the same heritage, traditions, rituals, lifestyle, culture, and values.

What does this say about monotheism and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

## Footnotes:

1. I am unaware of the exact sources of the following language within footnote #1.
  - Some of it is drawn from a well-known short essay written by Mark Twain in Harper's Magazine, published in September 1899 called, "*Concerning the Jews.*"  
<https://ohr.edu/judaism/concern/concerna.htm>
  - Some of it is drawn from a public debate in 1958, at McGill University between Arnold Toynbee, (a non-Jewish, world renown historian from England who was not an advocate for Israel) and the Jacob Herzog (a Jewish Professor, Ambassador to Israel for Canada and an advocate for Israel).
  - Some of it is from a book by Ambassador Jacob Herzog titled, "*A People That Dwells Alone.*"
  - It is possible I have neglected to cite other sources and for that I am very sorry.

From the public debate in 1958, at McGill University:

Israel, from the moment it was created has had to defend its legitimacy since the day it was created until today.

Toynbee presented his case –

*Judaism is similar to Christianity and Islam in the sense that it is a religion, and not a nationality. Just as a British, Australian, Italian, or American Christian have different nationalities but the same religion - Jews are the same. You can have a British Jew, Australian Jew, Italian Jew, Russian Jew, Canadian Jew or an American Jew. They share the same religion but they are not from the same nation. And therefore, they are NOT entitled to a Homeland. A Homeland is not for a religion. A Homeland is for a people. And Jews are not a nationality – they are a religion.*

Herzog gave his response –

*I am going to tell you a story (the condensed, paraphrased essay above) but first I have to pose this question – How have we, the Jewish people, survived?*

He said -

*Mark Twain (famous American author, whose real name was Samuel Clemons, who had 7 patents on suspenders) penned a famous piece in Harper Magazine in 1899 and he asked a question to which he had no answer. He said the greatest Empires and civilizations of all time have been relegated to the dustbins of history. Where is ancient Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia or Persia today? Where is the ancient Greek Empire, Roman Empire, Byzantine Empire, etc.? They are in (history books). Mighty nations and Civilizations that ruled half the world, some of them for hundreds of years, are all gone, following the general rule of history that you rise, you reach your peak, you plateau and you decline. It is true with individuals and it is true with collective groups and nations.*

*But there is this one exception. A tiny nation that still does not remotely represent 1% of humanity – the Jews. And throughout history, this little group of people has been attacked by every single mighty Empire – for abuse, persecution, and usually for*

annellation. To this day, there has not been a generation of Jewish history where a major political and military force does not blame all of the world's ills on the Jewish people and is determined to exterminate them. And this has been in every century since the birth of Abraham, who was born 1948 years after Creation. (Israel interestingly was created 1948 years after the Common Era.) But still, this tiny, often dispersed nation, for some reason has survived, thrived and changed civilization for the better in so many ways.

And the question Mark Twain asked was why and how have we survived? What was the mechanism, the magic, the tools? What did the Jews have that the smartest people in the world at the time, the Greeks, didn't have? What did the Jews have that the strongest people in the world at the time, the Romans, didn't have? What was the secret ingredient that kept them alive, fresh and still creative? Mark Twain concluded the article with a question mark. He did not have an answer. But we, as Jews have to provide that answer, because if we don't understand the key ingredient that brought us here 3,335 years after our inception as a nation, how will we know how to go forward? If we don't know how to appreciate what brought us to this point, how will we know how to forge ahead? What is it that Mark Twain, despite his brilliance, lacked understanding of?

If we were doing a scientific experiment, we would ask, "What are the constants or characteristics that have always been present?" Is there one or more constants or characteristics that has been with the Jewish People for 3,355 years, since we became a nation, and continually accompanied us as a people, in different countries in the world, through thick and thin, in good times and bad, through our many exiles, until this very day? And if there is only one feature that is a constant, and everything else changes and fluctuates, it is logical and objective to assume that we have to credit the power of endurance to that one constant feature.

The most obvious answer of what keeps us together is a Homeland, a Nationality. Sadly, for most of our history, 98% of Jews have been exiled from their Homeland and dispersed across the entire globe. Most of our History is outside the Land of Israel so it can't be that. We have only been in Israel for a minority of our history. Until 1948, there were always Jews in Israel, but they were very few. So that can not be the reason.

So one could say, if not the land, it must be that we had a strong army. Unfortunately, for most of our history, we were defenseless. Fortunately, Israel has a strong army today, the IDF, and we pray for them, but most of our history, we were scattered and there was not an army protecting us. So that cannot be the reason.

So one could say, if not the land, and not a strong army, it must be it is our Jewish culture that has sustained us? But Jewish culture varies from millennium to millennium. And usually, Jews adopted the culture of their hosts. Believe it or not, all Jews don't know what "Gefilte Fish" is. The culture of Yemenite Jews is not the culture of Ashkenazic Jews. The culture of Iraqi Jews is not the culture of German Jews. The culture of Polish Jews is not the culture of Spanish Sephardic Jews. So that cannot be the reason.

So one could say, if not the land, and not a strong army, and not the culture, it must be our common language that has sustained us? A language holds a people together.

*Is there a language that most Jews have spoken over history? Absolutely not. Most Jews do not know how to speak Hebrew. Many of our prayers are in Aramaic, including the Kaddish. Yiddish was a combination of languages. And usually, Jews adopted the language of their hosts, or a different language, like we speak English. So that can not be the reason.*

*So one could start to question, is there anything or is there nothing? But what if there was just this one thing that was with the Jewish people since their inception and not present in any of the other nations that perished? Wouldn't the skeptic, scientist, objective thinking person have to start to think... Hummm. Maybe I need to give that one thing more credence than many Jewish leaders, thinkers, professors, scholars, authors, politicians, and journalists pay tribute to?*

But let's go back to the public debate at McGill University between Arnold Toynbee and Jacob Herzog that took place in 1958. Toynbee had presented his case that Jews don't need a Homeland because they are a religion.

Jacob Herzog responded -

*I am going to tell you a story" (and he told the story of three airplanes that descended from Heaven – that is condensed and paraphrased above).*

After the story was told, Jacob Herzog concluded –

*If Israel is not a Nation, then the Jewish people are not a people. And you tell me Professor Toynbee, what is a people? What is it that constitutes a nation?*

Toynbee was for once in his career, silent.

So this is the answer to Mark Twain's question. There was one feature that accompanied the Jews. It's called, The Old Testament with the 613 Commandments. From the four corners of the world, in good times and bad, phenomenal times and horrific times, there was the same Old Testament. When they didn't always have a Homeland, an army, a culture, or a language, they always preserved and celebrated the Old Testament and its daily Commandments. Day in and day out, with self-sacrifice, commitment, love and dedication. Whenever and wherever they may be and under all circumstances, there was the same Old Testament.

2. A "Tallit" is a rectangular Jewish prayer shawl. As per the Bible's instructions the *Tallit* has fringes attached to each of its four corners to remind the Jew of God and His commandments.
3. "*Tefillin*" are a pair of black leather boxes containing Hebrew parchment scrolls. A set includes two — one for the head and one for the arm. Each consists of three main components: the scrolls, the box and the strap. The Torah commands Jewish men to "bind" tefillin onto their head and upper arm every weekday, in fulfillment of the verse (Deuteronomy 6:8), "You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for a reminder between your eyes."

4. "*Baruch Hashem*" is Hebrew for "*Blessed be God,*" and is used by Jewish people in everyday conversation as a way of expressing gratitude to God for whatever we have.
5. There are 613 Commandments (or mitzvot) in the Torah; 248 "Positive Commandments" (things to do) and 365 "Negative Commandments" (things not to do).