

# *My* Elevator Pitch *for* God

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

BOOK CLUB COLLECTION #5

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 #5 was compiled by Bruce Licht

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# Table of Contents

Foreword .....	7
----------------	---

## **ARI SACHER**

Rocket Scientist, Iron Dome Development Team...	8
---	---

## **ANDI ARNOVITZ**

World-Renowned Multi-Media Conceptual Artist.....	10
---	----

## **RABBI CHAIM BUCSKO**

Scholar, Philosopher, ‘The Average Rabbi’...	12
--	----

## **LUBA AHUVA PERLOV**

Artist, Life Coach, Author.....	14
---------------------------------	----

## **JULIE HARTMAN**

National Media Host, Award-Winning Essayist ...	16
---	----

## **DAVID JOHN CASPER**

Pro Football Hall of Fame, Pro Bowl 1976-1980, First Team All-Pro, 1976, 1977, 1978, and 1979.....	20
--	----

## **RABBI YITZCHAK BREITOWITZ**

International Legal Authority, Senior Lecturer, Modern-Day Sage .....	22
---	----

## **MARK BRAZILL**

Hollywood Comedy Writer, Creator of “That ‘70’s Show” .....	24
---	----

## **KABIR HELMINSKI**

One of the 500 Most Influential Muslims ..	26
--	----

## **LARRY ELDER**

National Talk Show Host, Presidential Candidate, Author, Filmmaker .....	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.



## ARI SACHER

### ROCKET SCIENTIST, IRON DOME DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Ari Sacher is a rocket scientist who has worked on the design and development of missiles for over thirty years. He has held senior engineering roles in ground-breaking anti-missile programs including the Iron Dome and David's Sling. He has briefed hundreds of U.S. lawmakers on Israeli Missile Defense and Israeli-U.S. Defense collaboration, including multiple briefings on Capitol Hill at the invitation of the House Majority Leader and the Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. Ari is a highly requested speaker, enabling even the layman to understand the intricacies of "rocket science." Ari has appeared on CNN, Fox News, i24news, and The Discovery Channel.

Since 2000, Ari has been publishing an essay on the weekly portion (parashat hashavua). These essays, which Ari calls "Rocket Torah," appear on the Times of Israel blog and are circulated in synagogues around the globe.

Ari came on aliya from the USA in 1982. He, his wife, children and many grandchildren live in Moreshet, a town in the Western Galilee that he helped to found. He currently works in the Land and Naval Warfare Division at RAFAEL, where he dabbles in Program Management and International Business Development and other topics that he is not at liberty to discuss.



# Choosing to See God

BY ARI SACHER

**D**ISCLAIMER: I DO not believe that it is possible to prove that God exists, no matter how many words I use. I *do* believe that it is possible to explain why I believe in God in a way that my fellow passengers on the elevator will not find incongruous with my thirty-year history as a rocket scientist.

We must first explain the meaning of the word “belief.” We often hear statements like “scientists believe that computers will become smarter than humans in our lifetime.” This “belief” is synonymous with the word “estimate.” Given the speed with which technology is advancing, scientists *estimate* that there is a high probability that computers will eclipse human intelligence. My “belief” in God is something more deep-seated.

Kurt Gödel, a twentieth century mathematician, published his “Incompleteness Theorem” in 1931. I can incompletely summarize this theorem as follows: Any system complex enough to be useful must rely upon unprovable axioms, defined as “statements or propositions that are regarded as being established, accepted, or self-evidently true.” One example is Euclidean geometry in a two-dimensional plane. Everyone who rides elevators “knows” that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. Anyone who suggested that the shortest distance from the first floor to the second floor goes through the third floor would be laughed out of the elevator. And yet, this statement is unprovable. There might exist some singular case in which the shortest distance between two points is

some fantastically curved line. We do not *know* for a fact that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line – we *believe* this to be true and unchanging. By accepting this belief, we can access the wonderful edifice of geometry that allows us to build bridges and shoot down rockets. I *believe* that God created the universe and gave the Torah at Mount Sinai to the Jewish People. Accepting this belief grants me access to the wonderful edifice of Judaism that infuses my life with meaning and purpose.

Once we accept the axiom of the existence of God as the source of belief, we can supercharge that belief with the “Confirmation Bias,” which the psychologist, Peter Wason, first described in 1960. In a nutshell, the Confirmation Bias asserts that humans have a tendency to interpret facts in a way that confirms their pre-existing views or beliefs. People who support gun-control see every shooting as proof positive that firearms need to be regulated, while opponents look at the same shooting and suggest that had there been more gun-carrying citizens in the vicinity of the shooting, they would have neutralized the shooter earlier. My beliefs enable me to see the world through the lens of God’s existence. When I see a missile defense system intercept 4,000 rockets at a success rate of greater than 90%, I see the Hand of God. Others see intelligent engineers and robust planning. Neither hypothesis can be proved or disproved. But I guarantee that the first one is infinitely more fulfilling.



## 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.



# When God and Art Meet

BY ANDI ARNOVITZ

**I**MMERSING ONESELF DEEPLY, deliberately in a work of art is one of the easiest ways to experience the Divine. You won't get there by taking a casual jaunt through an art gallery or a museum. You need to take a deep dive into a specific work. Contemplate it. Search for what the artist is trying to say. Open yourself to the possibility that the artist is, through a Divine gift, giving over an idea or concept that transcends time and place. It is at this point that you also might comprehend that creativity has no logical explanation other than some perfect collision of inspiration, God, and the physical act of creating.

It is easy for any artist to say, "I made that." But where did the inspiration and that idea come from? Most artists will tell you that their lightbulb moments have bordered on a spiritual and metaphysical epiphany. Very often they looked up and *somehow the work had come into being...* They cannot explain how it happened or why they made the choices they did: it is as if the work created itself, for reasons the artists themselves do not even understand. Not surprisingly, the greatest works of art express ideas, emotions, and passions, and turn them into something timeless — universal, transcendent human experiences. This creative process defies words and cannot properly be explained in a linear, cohesive way.

History has provided a constant and consistent hum of new artistic expressions

— starting with stubs of charcoal on cave walls to today's virtual reality. Very often these works of art are created using color: Cadmium red. Egyptian blue. Imperial yellow. Ultramarine. These luminous and iridescent hues have dazzled our senses and moved us deeply over the millennia. Mankind has spent millions of dollars refining the process of creating these color pigments, even closely guarding the formulas for certain blues and reds. *This is because these colors come so close to what we observe and what is rare in the world.*

Yet no matter how hard we try or how many algorithms we program, there will never be a color that doesn't already exist. And man will never stop trying to reproduce what his eyes have seen. Go snorkeling in the Maldives and your only thought will be that there simply has to be a God. Who could come up with such wild and radiant colors, shapes, and sizes? I'm not even sure whether people are capable of painting or photographing these colors accurately. We all recognize that instance when we have photographed a landscape or a sunset of such exquisite colorful nuance, only to be deeply disappointed when it doesn't come close to capturing what our eyes saw. Mankind's constant desire to create and transmit what our eyes have seen, what our minds have imagined, is infinitely easier to explain if we just surrender to the notion that there is an artist far more talented and experienced out there than we are.



## RABBI CHAIM BUCSKO

### SCHOLAR, PHILOSOPHER, 'THE AVERAGE RABBI'

After graduating from high school in Johns Creek, Georgia, Rabbi Chaim Bucsko attended the University of Pittsburgh, where he began to discover the meaning of his Jewish identity. In December of 2009, he participated in a 10-day Birthright trip. While in Israel, he determined that there was more to be learned in the ancient city of Jerusalem than back at university, and canceled his return ticket.

Ten years of full-time study later, he returned to the United States with a wife and children. Having learned and taught at, among other institutions, Aish HaTorah, Rabbi Bucsko brought back the inspiration to share the ancient wisdom of the Torah with the estranged American Jews.

Today, he operates out of Houston, Texas, with TORCH, one of the leading Torah outreach organizations in the United States. He and his wife, Tzaitel, head the newest Jewish community in Texas, "Torchwood," servicing the local millennials and providing an encouraging atmosphere to grow in Jewish learning and commitment. They have three children.

Get a taste of his off-beat style on his YouTube channel where he goes by the moniker, 'The Average Rabbi' at [youtube.com/theaveragerabbi](https://www.youtube.com/theaveragerabbi).

For podcasts and other content, please visit [torchweb.org](https://torchweb.org).

Learn more about the Torchwood community at [torchwoodcommunity.org](https://torchwoodcommunity.org).

# Uncomfortable Faith

BY CHAIM BUCSKO

EXPERIENCE HAS PROVEN the words of 13th century philosopher Thomas Aquinas, “To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without faith, no explanation is possible.” But what validity does faith have, if it isn’t founded in reason? Furthermore, how and why should “one without faith” acquire it?

Let us address a problem: If God’s existence is real, there should be no fact that is more obviously true. For example, we do not require proof of our own existence because it is obvious. This is what Descartes expressed with, “I think, therefore I am.” Do not mistake this for a logical proof, because it amounts to saying, “I know I exist because I know I exist.” Rather, we know it is true because we experience it imminently. The same should be true of the infinite source of all things’ existence, which we call “God.” After all, if God does exist, it would be the most basic and fundamental of all facts, and the simpler a truth is, the more apparent it ought to be. Why, then, is the matter of God so vague and confusing?

We are all familiar with confirmation bias – the tendency to interpret reality along the lines of our preconceived notions. We prefer to believe that we are objective observers of our domain, intellectually brave and honest. In reality, what we perceive to be true almost always conforms to what we are *comfortable* believing. With this in mind, we should be wary of all notions that we patently accept as fact, and suspect ourselves of bias. It seems,

then, that truth-seeking requires not only fact-finding and philosophical debate, but, primarily, a courageous search of the soul to find and eliminate the bias of comfort. This is most challenging, because it requires the willingness to change, which we always meet with resistance, conscious or otherwise.

An atheist might claim that belief in God and religion is the easy and convenient path – the soothing “opiate of the masses.” (Marx) Consider for a moment that it is uncomfortable and distasteful to accept that there is a God. The ego finds it intolerably abrasive to acknowledge a higher authority, let alone to be bound to a moral code.

In actuality, there is no proof of The Almighty, there is only the willingness to accept that we ourselves are not God. Knowing any truth requires the objectivity to accept it, and that objectivity is only possible with the work of subduing the stubborn ego. If we do this work in earnest, then the most obvious fact will become boldly clear to our minds: God is the Creator of all things.

Faith is not “unfounded belief”; it is acknowledgment of the simplest and most difficult truth. And if faith is blind, it is because the ego is blinding. I cannot prove this to you, but I implore you to breach the fortified walls of your heart and fearlessly face what lies underneath, whatever it might be, and Whomever you might find waiting for you.



## LUBA AHUVA PERLOV

### ARTIST, LIFE COACH, AUTHOR

Luba Ahuva Perlov, is a Chassidic artist, psychosomatic spiritual life coach, journalist, inspirational speaker, and performer. She has illustrated more than 25 Jewish books for both children and adults, including 12 volumes of Menucha Fuchs's series *Sipur veSefer*. Luba is the author of the bestseller, *Let It Stay Between Us*, a collection of inspirational contemporary stories on Taharas haMishpaha, which has been published in Russian, Hebrew, and English. Born in Odessa, Ukraine, Luba, her husband, and her younger children now reside in Northern California, where she's involved in Chabad outreach programs.

Luba is excited to support teenagers and adults, especially through psychosomatic coaching. Topics with which she can help are: self-confidence, fears, worries, psychological traumas, difficulties in spousal relationships, and with children.

She combines music and humor with authentic stories in her live performances. Favorite topics include family purity and her story of the underground chuppah in Soviet Moscow.

She has a new book, *Diary of a Dreamer: One Soul's Journey* (available on Amazon.com).

Reach Luba at: [lperlov770@gmail.com](mailto:lperlov770@gmail.com)

# Where Do I Find the Creator?

BY LUBA AHUVA PERLOV

**W**HERE DO I find the Creator?  
I think that each of us knows that God exists, and denies it when God does not fit into our understanding.

It doesn't matter how religious and observant a person is, the struggle is always there.

At the assemblage point, when our ideas break down, when our world collapses, when we try to gather pieces of the puzzle, gain courage, and take a step out of our comfort zone – there we find God again. Each time it happens at a new stage of life, at a new level.

You can go on a long journey and find the Creator. You can find God when you can delve into scientific research or through the harmony and beauty of the world, which was the starting point of my journey to the Creator. One can simply live and recognize God in one's daily life because the Creator is always nearby.

Most often, we don't let ourselves account for the fact that we are always together with the Creator, that we live in the space, time, and dimension that God created for us.

Where is God not? God is not where our ego reigns, where there is despair or a desire to get full control of the situation, when a person refuses to live his life fully, adapts and bends under difficulties, when a person distorts his nature, refusing to take full responsibility for his life and true destiny...

God is there, where there is no falsehood, and the truth is not always pleasant to face.

God is where we admit our mistakes and delusions, that we have created an idol. God is Truth, never for a moment has the Creator left us. God patiently waits for our return!

God can be found where an honest internal dialogue takes place.

We are with God when we fully accept our past, aware of our true value and mission, and where there is humility, gratitude, and joy at following the true path.

God is near when we do acts of kindness and compassion for others.

We are with the Creator when we reach our life's goals, built on God's guidelines; when a person realizes his smallness and takes responsibility for himself and for that part of the world that the Almighty has entrusted to him.

I'm grateful to the Creator for the ability to grow, to realize more potential than I ever dreamed I had!

I am grateful to God for believing in me and for leading me through so many transformations, making me a leader, revealing my strength, and giving me freedom of choice, while remaining unnoticed!

Throughout my life I continue to grow and try to be honest with the Creator. It is very important to me.

I am happy that I am where I am now, sharing the pure light with which God endowed me!



## **JULIE HARTMAN**

### **NATIONAL MEDIA HOST, AWARD-WINNING ESSAYIST**

Julie Hartman was raised in Los Angeles. She graduated cum laude from Harvard University (class of '22), where she won the History Department's William S. Ferguson Prize for her essay on Patrice Lumumba's assassination.

In July of 2020, she discovered Dennis Prager's work and emailed him to thank him for his influence on her thinking. In response, he invited her as a guest on his radio show. The following summer, Julie became a weekly on-air contributor to his nationally syndicated radio program. In August, 2021, at the age of 21, Julie guest-hosted three-hour broadcasts for both "The Dennis Prager Show" and "The Mike Gallagher Show," becoming the youngest person to substitute host solo on a national program. Julie now has a show with Dennis — "Dennis and Julie" — that airs every Monday. Julie continues to serve as a standing guest radio host for all of Salem's nationally syndicated shows, and three times a week hosts a show of her own, "Timeless," on which she discusses timeless, eternal subjects.



# The Poverty of our Abundance

BY JULIE HARTMAN

**I**NDIFFERENCE TO GOD characterized my upbringing, but in time, the deficiencies of this approach became impossible to ignore.

What changed?

First, the realization that science does not offer a full understanding of the universe. Evolution tells how we developed from our ancestors, but how did first life emerge? Plant germination describes a tree's growth, but how to account for the first seed? What is science's first cause? There's no hypothesis for this. Urges to survive and mate explain our primitive emotions, but not our full inventory: joy, wonder, and hope, as well as wistfulness, regret, and grief. Are creative masterpieces just the result of genomic code producing the capacity to (re)act to hard-wired impulses? Science used to have a sure-footed balance of modesty and confidence — it knew what it did know, what it didn't know, and what it suspected but couldn't prove. No more. You Will Follow The Science or You Will Suffer the Wrath of Its Inquisitors. To wonder whether there is more is to contemplate the Divine. And I did.

Next was to explore God's channel to humanity: the Bible. Scripture makes visible our invisible potential. Its timeless insights about choices and consequences are unsurpassed, even by Shakespeare and Dante, the silver and bronze medalists. The eternal relevance and practical success of the Bible's counsel signals Divine inspiration, evincing God's presence.

The final phase was to look with new eyes at modern society and to observe the deadened souls

of our contemporaries. Do you see what I see? The explanation: disdain for religion among the stylish and the self-promoting, those who worship status and its rewards, and whose mirror is the opinion others have of them. An always at-the-ready insult for all things religion is the membership pledge for our *soi-disant* sophisticated ruling class. We who respect God should recall the words that President Franklin D. Roosevelt proclaimed in another context: "*They are unanimous in their hatred of me — and I welcome their hatred!*" To deny God is to consign yourself to a diminished interior life. No thank you, not for me. One who does not recognize what I mean might be in the early stages of the disorder.

Some, like Sam Harris, will object that the "formerly Christian countries of Europe," as Professor Bernard Lewis called them, continue on without God or religion. But Europe's engine is now running on the dregs and fumes of the Judeo-Christian high-octane cultural fuel that earlier generations supplied in abundance. The tank is empty. Without the stability and trust that a critical core of belief in God creates, the consequences are grim, and they are unfolding for Europeans before their atheistic, agnostic eyes, as if in time-lapse video. Europe is returning to its primitive, pagan origins. The New Dark Ages are nigh — and without dramatic course correction, we Americans are next in line.

God whispers His existence through the beneficial results that fidelity to His guidance secures and the harmful results that rejection of His principles guarantees. Shouldn't we listen?



ARTWORK BY ANDI ARNOVITZ

“I find it interesting that the meanest life, the poorest existence, is attributed to God’s will, but as human beings become more affluent, as their living standard and style begin to ascend the material scale, God descends the scale of responsibility at commensurate speed.”<sup>1</sup>

**MAYA ANGELOU**

AMERICAN POET (1928–2014)



## DAVID JOHN CASPER

**PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME, PRO BOWL 1976-1980,  
FIRST TEAM ALL-PRO, 1976, 1977, 1978, AND 1979**

David Casper was born in Bemidji, Minnesota, in 1952. He is known for his achievements on the American football field, but is most proud of his family, his marvelous wife of 49 years, Susan, his three children, and their five grandchildren.

He had early success on the football field when, in 1969, his senior year at Chilton High School in Chilton, Wisconsin, his team out-scored its opponents 363-0.

David attended the University of Notre Dame, graduating with honors in Economics in 1974. He was a member of the Omicron Delta Epsilon Honor Society for Economics. Playing for head coach, Ara Parseghian, he was named an honorable mention All American at offensive tackle in 1972, and then a consensus All American at tight end in 1973. He was captain of the 1973 National Champion team. Parseghian called Casper the finest athlete he ever coached! He was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 2012.

The Oakland Raiders picked David, nicknamed “Ghost,” in the second round of the 1974 NFL draft. Casper was heavily involved in the first Raider Super Bowl victory and played 11 years in the NFL, finishing his career with 378 receptions and 52 touchdowns in 147 games. He was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2002 and the NFL All 1970s Team. He was a first team all-pro in 1976, 1977, 1978, and 1979, and the Pro Bowl, 1976-1980.

David was at the center of two of the NFL’s most famous plays during his career, “*Ghost to the Post*” and the “*Holy Roller*.”

Following his retirement from football, David represented the Northwestern Mutual Financial Network for 25 years, helping business owners with business and personal financial planning. He now is retired and enjoying life in Florida with Susan.

# I Don't Know Any More

BY DAVID CASPER

WHEN I WAS three or four years old, I started counting. Although words and names challenged me, numbers did not. I soon realized that there were really only ten numbers, and you could “stack” those numbers forever. My only limitation was knowing the words for the bunch of the numbers with the next three zeros that came after billion, trillion, and quadrillion, as they marched on to infinity.

In kindergarten, our teacher asked us to count as far as we could. I was scared. This assignment meant I would be there “forever.” I solved the problem by telling a little lie. When I got to the number 32, I said, “*I don't know any more.*”

I ran into a similar problem years later, when I started to study space. I could easily see the sun, moon, and stars. They seemed right there. But after learning that they were so many lightyears away, I'd contemplate how monstrously large they must be for us to see them as that small. Then, when I tried to imagine what came past the stars, I became deeply perplexed, realizing I couldn't name a value or a number that would limit space. It seemed that no one could really be able to tell us what is there beyond the stars because there is no “there” in the usual sense of the word. The “there” goes on to infinity, too. At this point I think we all tell ourselves little lies like I did in kindergarten, saying “*I don't know any more.*”

It's frightening to come to the limits of what we can count and measure. But the problem doesn't stop there. We don't even know how basic things like gravity actually work. It's supposed to be the force that binds the universe together. We know what it does and how to measure it, but we can't explain how it works. We seem for now to have come to the limits of understanding. Then there are even greater mysteries beyond. There seems to be something called “dark matter,” which we know must exist because it makes the calculations about the universe work. But we don't even know how to ask all the questions about it, let alone explain what it is and how it functions. At least not yet.

Just as I knew that there must be something beyond what my mind can count, I know that something exists that is larger than the universe, and that makes this all work. When I jump and come back down to earth, something is working, whether or not I can explain it. Something went BANG to create the cosmos itself, with its gravity and dark matter and other mysteries that always seem to be there beyond the limits of what we can explain.

We know it exists, that number beyond which we can count and the “there” that lies beyond the stars, the thing that is more than we can see. This Something is there and it's really big!



## RABBI YITZCHAK BREITOWITZ

**INTERNATIONAL LEGAL AUTHORITY, SENIOR LECTURER,  
MODERN-DAY SAGE**

Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz lectures on medical, business, and family ethics. He has written and published on the interface between Jewish law and contemporary society, with an expertise in medical, family, business, and legal ethics. His articles discuss topics such as stem cell research, cloning, organ donation, and land for peace. He received his BA from Johns Hopkins University and his JD, magna cum laude, at Harvard Law School in 1979. In 1979 he also obtained rabbinic ordination from Ner Israel Rabbinical College

Rabbi Breitowitz has published widely on Jewish law and ethics. Among his articles are those on the right to die, physician-assisted suicide, brain death, the status of frozen embryos, the desecration of ancient burial sites through archaeological excavations, business ethics, peace in the house, and spousal abuse. His major work, *Between Religious and Secular Law: The Plight of the Agunah* (Greenwood Press, 1993) is a comprehensive and far-reaching study of one of the most complex issues of Jewish family law. As Educational Consultant to the Atlantic Seaboard Region of National Council of Synagogue Youth (NCSY), he compiled several sourcebooks on a variety of topics.

He lives and works in Jerusalem, where he makes the rounds on the lecture circuit.



# Faith Versus Reason Versus Knowledge

BY YITZCHAK BREITOWITZ

**M**AIMONIDES OFTEN USES the word “knowledge” when he describes faith, and many people grapple with this. I think that most people approach their religion with a combination of both reason and faith.

It is important that your religion makes sense, that you can justify and explain it on rational grounds. But unfortunately, even those rational grounds will not get you to the 100% level of proof. As a result, there will be a leap of faith. It’s a leap that is inseparable from logic, however. It is a leap of faith that is based on countless logical premises, even if those premises are not established to a 100% degree of certainty.

I do want to point out though, and maybe this is more of a mystical idea, that there is a certain momentum that occurs as a result of that leap. If you are willing to take that first step and embrace living with integrity through your closeness to God, your heart will give you certain intuitions of truth that go beyond the brain. This is very important.

There are many things that we just know are right even if we can’t prove them conclusively. Maybe this sounds anti-philosophical or anti-intellectual, but proofs are only one of the tools by which human beings ascertain truth. Proof and the scientific method are indeed important but they are not all there is.

There’s also something called the “*Truth of*

*the Heart*,” a truth that goes beyond logic. I think what happens is that you might start developing a relationship with God and becoming religious because probabilistically it makes sense, even though it is not 100% certain. Then, during the course of your life, God might bring you to 100% certainty. I am not saying God “will,” but God “might,” because that is the Truth of the Heart, which can transcend the Truth of the Mind. Nevertheless, if the system is logical to begin with and the leap of faith is not deciding to “jump off the roof and trust that things will be ok,” which would be an absurd decision to make, then the logic can be enough to convince you that this is a rational path to follow.

Somebody asked me, “If your religion can only be proved to 90%, why do you follow it?” I answered, “So instead of following what I believe is the 90% probability, I should follow what I believe is the 10% probability?” That doesn’t make a lot of sense. I mean if you have a strong probability, then logically that is how you should run your life, because it is certainly better to follow a strong probability than a weak one.

So what logic accomplishes is the creation of a very strong probability, a probability that justifies a leap of faith, which in turn will lead to intuitions and the opening up of the heart. That’s how it works.



## MARK BRAZILL

### HOLLYWOOD COMEDY WRITER, CREATOR OF “THAT ‘70’S SHOW”

Mark Brazill was born in Buffalo, New York, in 1962. He started delivering papers when he was 13. At 16, he lied about his age and got a job at a dog food factory, Ralston Purina, but they fired him when they discovered how young he was. He (barely) graduated from high school and that was all the formal education he wanted. For a while he worked as a dishwasher, waiter, cook, parking attendant, salesman, and more.

When he was 19, Brazill moved to California, where he lived on the border of Mexico and sold cars at a Volvo dealership in Chula Vista. He quit to become a comedian in 1984. He had stage fright and a slight speech impediment but that job is a compulsive endeavor if one feels the calling.

He joined the WGA at 29, when Dennis Miller hired him to write for his talk show. He went on to write for “In Living Color” and “3rd Rock,” and then created “That 70’s Show.” He quit the 70’s to build a ranch in Ojai and raise cattle but eventually moved back to LA. He has written on over 1,000 episodes of television and some films, and still does stand-up and writes.

He lives in Santa Monica with his partner, Elea, who was born in Paris and is an actress as well as a writer/producer and a delightful soul. They have two dogs, Mitzi and Pickles.

His life will be complete if the Buffalo Bills win the Super Bowl.

# Slouching Towards the Deity

BY MARK BRAZILL

I'VE HAD A complicated relationship with God and even the concept of God. I heard stories from the Bible in church almost every morning for eight years, until I was thirteen. I hated it at the time, but eventually I came to love the stories. And somehow, even in my particularly dark atheist period, I retained their lessons.

I turned away from God after my divorce. I begged God to make things work but obviously, God had different plans. Sadly, my anger made me rebel and deny God's existence when I needed God most. But fortunately, too much of my foundation was built on rock and my own nature began to abhor that vacuum.

I've come to believe that God's will isn't a mystery; it's what's happening, has happened, and will happen. Doesn't that take some of the pressure off? Albert Einstein said, *"I cannot imagine a God who rewards and punishes the objects of his creation, whose purposes are modeled after our own – a God, in short, who is but a reflection of human frailty."*

I believe he's correct. All anyone can say of God is subjective; it's all opinions. If we had undeniable proof, we wouldn't need faith and I believe faith is imperative, especially when God's will doesn't sync with our own. Even in my angriest moments, I still thought God believed in me, whether I believed in God or didn't.

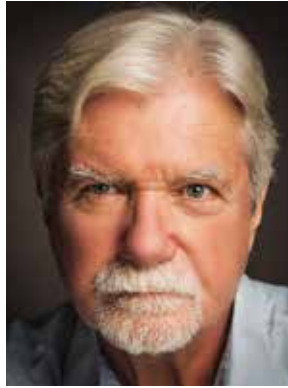
When things happen, I try to pause to allow a little grace (the God moment) to come in

before I react and do something stupid. It doesn't always work. Haruki Murakami said "pain is inevitable but suffering is optional." God is in every moment that we allow God to be in.

I'd see homeless people and wonder why God would allow that. Then a voice inside me said, "why do YOU allow it?" I believe we're an extension of God. Can I change the world with two dollars for someone who's hungry? Yes. Large or small, kindness is kindness. Water drops dripping onto a stone will eventually break it.

I see holy men in all religions as having a purpose in our evolution. And any God you can believe in is your God, so be it. I dreamt of Buddha once. He was huge and bronze, sitting on top of a mountain. As I made my way toward him, I complained that the climb was slow and difficult, and he laughed, saying, *"I know, but you want to get here, don't you?"* My answer is yes. I see God's existence every day in acts of bravery, kindness, decency, and charity. I see God in the stars, the earth, and all God's creatures.

Those Bible stories taught me story construction, which helped me to become a writer. In hindsight, the divorce was best for everyone, and so it goes. I have to try to love God and God's will, and even when I hate it, if I just keep climbing, I believe I'll receive God's grace.



## KABIR HELMINSKI

### ONE OF THE 500 MOST INFLUENTIAL MUSLIMS

Kabir was included on the 2023 list of the “500 Most Influential Muslims in the World.” He has toured North America as Shaikh with the Whirling Dervishes of Turkey, bringing Sufi culture to more than 100,000 people.

Kabir has explored the sacred traditions of the world, seeking to understand what they can teach us about consciousness and the human heart. The focus of his work is contributing to a new language of spirituality that can meet the unprecedented challenges of our times.

His most recent book is *The Mysterion: Rumi and the Secret of Becoming Fully Human* (Shambhala Publications, 2023).

His books on spirituality, *Living Presence* and *The Knowing Heart*, have been published in at least nine languages. He is a respected translator of the works of Rumi and others, and is a co-director of The Threshold Society (Sufism.org). He teaches internationally, often at inter-spiritual events. His articles writing have appeared in The Huffington Post, Tikkun, Patheos, and The Times of India, among others.

# Yearning and Cosmic Intelligence

BY KABIR HELMINSKI

## YEARNING

Is there a Supreme Being, an eternal and infinite Spirit? And what is our relationship to It? Do our thoughts and actions elicit some response from It? Can we cultivate a relationship with It?

Can we recognize in our lives a yearning for a relationship with *something*, a “Holy Unknown,” a longing that persists even after our material and personal needs are satisfied?

Religious beliefs and dogmas might intervene and fill the gap of yearning with concepts and doctrines, which can, to some extent, erect a barrier against this existential yearning. Beliefs can be mere second-hand information. Such beliefs then become mere accessories to the ego, subjects to argue about.

Apart from our habitual ego-based emotions, thoughts, and beliefs, we might also recognize a longing for something more, for subtle experiences like awe, wonder, reverence, a sense of the sacred, that carry us beyond the ego-self. These feelings might be so strong that some human beings make them central to their life, cultivating a deeper sense of a numinous, spiritual presence. What they report to us is that this relationship with “X” is more satisfying, more enduring, even more beautiful than the experience of their ego-bound feelings. Should we pay more attention to this portal of yearning?

## COSMIC INTELLIGENCE

In the complex, intelligent, and beautiful phenomena of the natural world we glimpse exquisite design, function, and beauty – down to the deepest, darkest trenches of the oceans. But the more we learn about how the natural world

operates with interdependent consciousness and purpose, the more we sense that a vast sentence is at play. Nature’s intelligence has not only accomplished these majestic feats of engineering, but the natural world seems to arrange itself in ways that bring balance, provide support, and respond to changing conditions, including even subtle, intangible communication. Nature seems to have an aptitude for looking after life, for nurturing creation. Is the individual human psyche somehow excluded from this interdependent system of communication and nurturing?

It’s curious that we recognize this Intelligence in the natural world and yet we imagine that the realm of inner human experience is merely random and purposeless. Is the Intelligence that is visible in the depths of the oceans absent in the depths of individual consciousness? Is the world of physical nature governed by a “universal intelligence,” while the inner life of the human being is random and accidental, without design, meaning, and purpose? Is the human psyche not equipped to know something about this other dimension of existence? Could it be that we can experience and communicate with this dimension of Intelligent Beneficence? Synchronicity, effective prayer, saintly intervention, and angelic agency are examples of a dimension beyond the materialist paradigm.

Is our yearning for something unknown and transcendent actually the call of the Transcendent Itself? Or as Jalaluddin Rumi says:

*The thirsty one moans, “Water, water!”*

*The Water calls, “Who will drink me?”*

*Our thirst is the magnetism of the Water:*

*We are Its, and It is ours.*



## LARRY ELDER

**NATIONAL TALK SHOW HOST, PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE,  
AUTHOR, FILMMAKER**

Larry Elder, the former host of a nationally syndicated show for Salem Radio Networks, writes a weekly column distributed nationally through Creators Syndicate, and produces videos for YouTube and television in partnership with Epoch Times.

In 2021, he ran for Governor of California in a special recall election, receiving 3.5 million votes, more than the 45 other replacement candidates combined.

Larry was the executive producer of the 2020 documentary, *Uncle Tom: An Oral History of the Black Conservative*, and received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. He hosted two daily nationally syndicated television shows – “Moral Court” and “The Larry Elder Show” – and received a Los Angeles Emmy.

Larry’s latest book, *Dear Father, Dear Son: Two Lives, Eight Hours*, a New York Times bestseller, is a story about his dad, who grew up fatherless in the Jim Crow South and was kicked out of his house when he was 13, at the beginning of the Great Depression.

He has a B.A in Political Science from Brown University, 1974, and a law degree from University of Michigan School of Law, 1977.



# Morality, Virtue, and God

BY LARRY ELDER

GROWING UP, I attended church weekly and played piano in Bible class. My mother taught Sunday school. In our house, belief in God was a given, and my belief only grew stronger as I matured.

My father was a believer, but rarely attended church. He worked back-breaking hours. Come Sunday, dad needed to sleep. Also, when he was growing up poor to a single mother in Georgia, the person who had the biggest house, the nicest clothes, and fanciest car was the local pastor, a married man having affairs with several women at the church. It made him skeptical about pastors and congregations. Yet, it did not shake dad's faith in God.

For years I was angry with my dad, because I didn't understand who he was and what he had overcome. But that changed after an eight-hour heart-to-heart talk with him, during which I came to understand how much my parents had sacrificed for us during their fifty-six-year marriage. My father, with just an eighth-grade education, had towering wisdom. He told us, "Hard work wins. You get out of life what you put in. You cannot control the outcome, but you're in complete control of the effort. And before you moan about what someone did or said, ask yourself, 'What could I have done to change the outcome?'"

As we ask questions about God, morality, and our life's purpose, we find that there cannot be morality without God and the Ten Commandments – the Golden Rule that God gave us. Sadly, a growing number of

people around the world no longer believe in Judeo-Christian values, which are the foundation of the U.S. republic. Founding Father John Adams said: "Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It's wholly inadequate to the government of any other. Morality and Virtue are the foundation of our republic and necessary for a society to be free."<sup>1</sup>

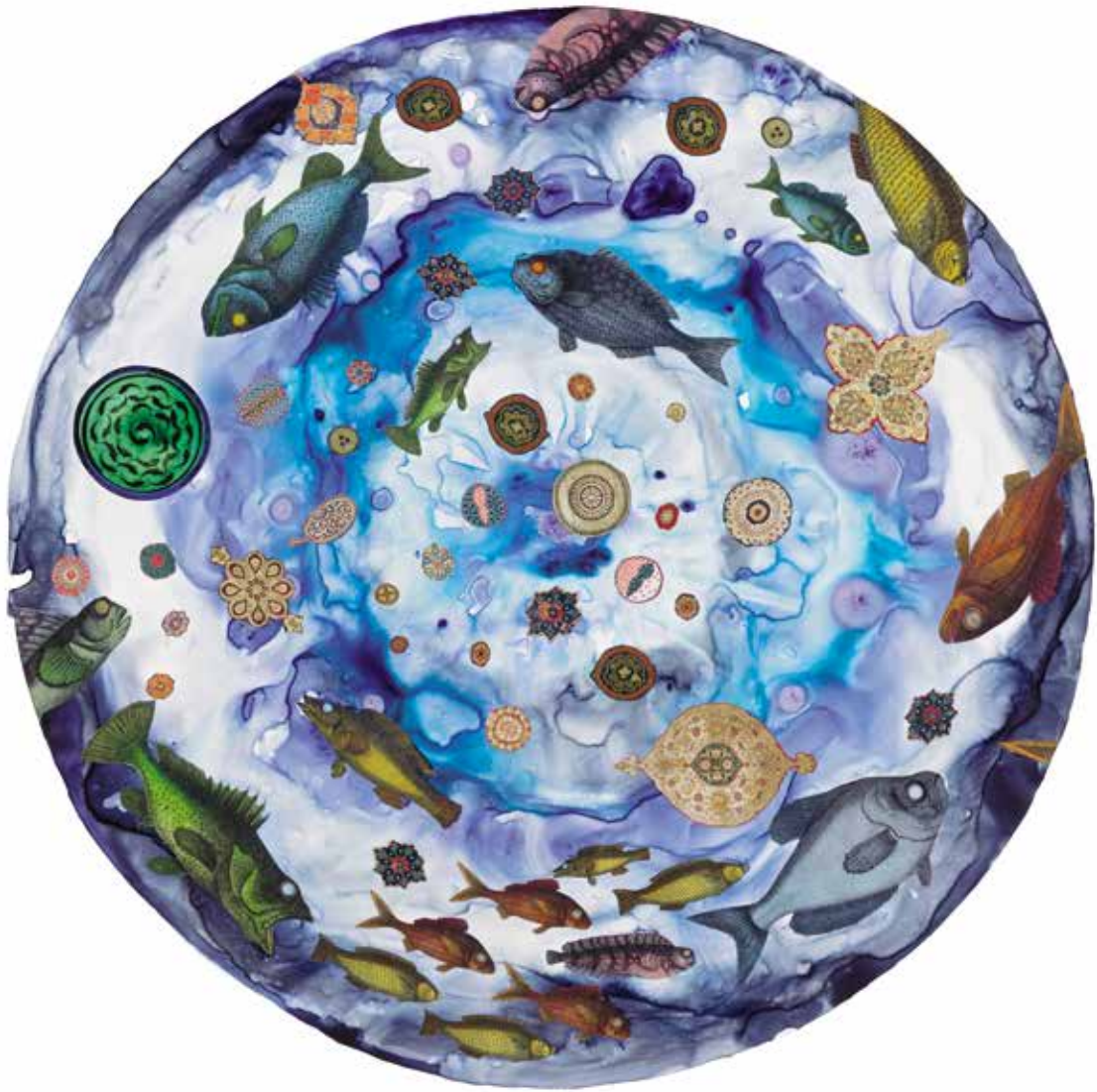
I worry that people don't understand God's indispensable role in the U.S.'s creation. Secular critics often dismiss history as patriarchal, sexist, ethnocentric, and racist. When it comes to Christianity and faith, they focus on Christianity's wrongs, be they the Inquisition, the Crusades, or the Salem witch trials. Did they expect humans, sinners all, to get it perfect? What an impossible standard!

What of the Judeo-Christian gifts of justice, free speech, law and order, the primacy of family, the protection of women and children, the hospital system, charity, the sanctity of life, modern scientific methodology, and liberty and freedom themselves?

By undermining Judeo-Christian values, skeptics rob their descendants of the benefits of the most successful, prosperous, and free nation the world has ever known.

We wouldn't abandon the police, the court system, and doctors because some are corrupt. Yet, because of the corruption of some, many want to abandon religion and God.

We need God in our daily lives. Our futures depend on countries of believers who accept and embrace a loving God.



# 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.

“There is so much frustration in the world because we have relied on gods rather than God. We have genuflected before the god of science only to find that it has given us the atomic bomb, producing fears and anxieties that science can never mitigate. We have worshiped the god of pleasure only to realize thrills play out and sensations are short-lived. We have bowed before the god of money only to learn that there are such things as love and friendship that money can't buy and that in a world of possible depressions, stock market crashes, and bad business investments, money is a rather uncertain deity. These transitory gods are not able to save us or bring happiness to the human heart.”<sup>2</sup>

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.**

AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST (1929-1968)



## 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*.

His audio and video presentations are available on many websites, and at [LawrenceKelemen.com](http://LawrenceKelemen.com).

# 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. Maya Angelou, *Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now* (New York: Random House, 1993).
2. *Strength to Love* (New York: Harper & Rowe, 1963).

## LARRY ELDER

1. From John Adams to Massachusetts Militia, 11 October, 1798.

# 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.

# About the Compiler of this Book Club Collection Series



## 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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