



(Headshot Image Credit: Rebecca Kowalsky)

PROFESSOR MOSHE KOPPEL

PROFESSOR OF COMPUTER SCIENCE; THINK TANK HEAD

Moshe Koppel is professor (emeritus) of computer science at Bar-Ilan University and the author of over 100 articles in leading academic journals and proceedings in mathematics, computer science, linguistics, law, economics, political science and other disciplines.

Koppel is founding chairman of the Kohelet Policy Forum, which Haaretz calls “the most successful initiative of the right in the past decade” and which is widely regarded as Israel’s most influential pro-Zionist, pro-liberty think tank. The Wall Street Journal has called him one of the “three American immigrants who have left the biggest mark on Israel.”

He is the founding director of Dicta, a research institute devoted to developing AI tools for the analysis and processing of modern and classical Hebrew texts.

Koppel is also the author of three books on Jewish thought, most recently *Judaism Straight Up: Why Real Religion Endures*, published by Koren.

He and his wife Channah live just south of Bethlehem and are proud parents and grandparents.

Truth-Seeking's Hidden Premises: How Writing this Essay Assumes God

PROFESSOR MOSHE KOPPEL

Imagine standing at a funeral, reciting an ancient prayer in a language you barely understand. You feel part of something vast—something that remembers and promises, as if your life were woven into a story larger than any one moment or generation. Such moments offer a glimpse of what I recognize as God's presence.

By "God," I don't merely refer to abstract doctrines, but to the profound reality they point toward—the necessary foundation that makes human meaning possible. When believers speak of divine presence, they're gesturing toward the preconditions for meaningful existence. This emerges from what I call the Foundational Assumption: that we can pursue truth to live meaningful lives. This assumption underlies all intellectual inquiry—including this essay itself—and entails four necessary conclusions that reveal a world structured by what theological traditions recognize as divine.

First: freedom of will. The Foundational Assumption analytically requires this belief. Truth-seeking presupposes our ability to choose. This isn't merely how it feels—it's functionally indispensable. Without this freedom, meaningful inquiry collapses.

Second: the world is intelligible. This follows directly from the Foundational Assumption; truth-seeking requires a comprehensible reality. Though skepticism has merit, no one lives as if the universe were chaotic. Our pursuit of truth requires discernible patterns—not for comfort, but because without them, truth-seeking becomes impossible.

Third: moral truths exist objectively. The Foundational Assumption necessitates this—if truth and meaning have value, then values themselves must be real. We inevitably experience certain moral claims as binding, not merely as preferences.

Fourth: human history has purpose. This too follows analytically from the Foundational Assumption. If individual truth-seeking has meaning, it must participate in a larger narrative. Without this, our most profound commitments become fragmented. Absent a moral arc to history, even our noblest struggles remain isolated gestures—heroic, perhaps, but ultimately absurd. Those embedded in certain communities can feel this moral arc viscerally.

Taken together, these four conclusions—coherence in the world, moral truth, human freedom, and purposeful history—constitute what people are truly affirming when they say "God exists," even if they aren't conscious of this meaning. Of course, this philosophical distillation doesn't exhaust what traditions mean by God. For many, this foundation of meaning is personal—revealing itself in history, in commandment, or in covenant.

Those who deny God rely, in practice, on these beliefs, even as they deny the framework that makes them coherent. When they act as if truth matters, moral claims bind, and history has direction, they inhabit the framework they reject.

Conclusions that follow from the Foundational Assumption reveal a universe oriented toward meaning, coherence, and moral depth. Religious traditions differ in how they interpret this reality—each seeking to articulate a relationship with the source of meaning.

No human description can fully capture what traditions have called God. But our commitment to truth points to a reality deeper than we can see: our search for truth is necessarily embedded in a larger moral and spiritual order—one that many have long called divine.