

# *My* Elevator Pitch *for* God

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

BOOK CLUB COLLECTION #2

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 #2 was compiled by Bruce Licht

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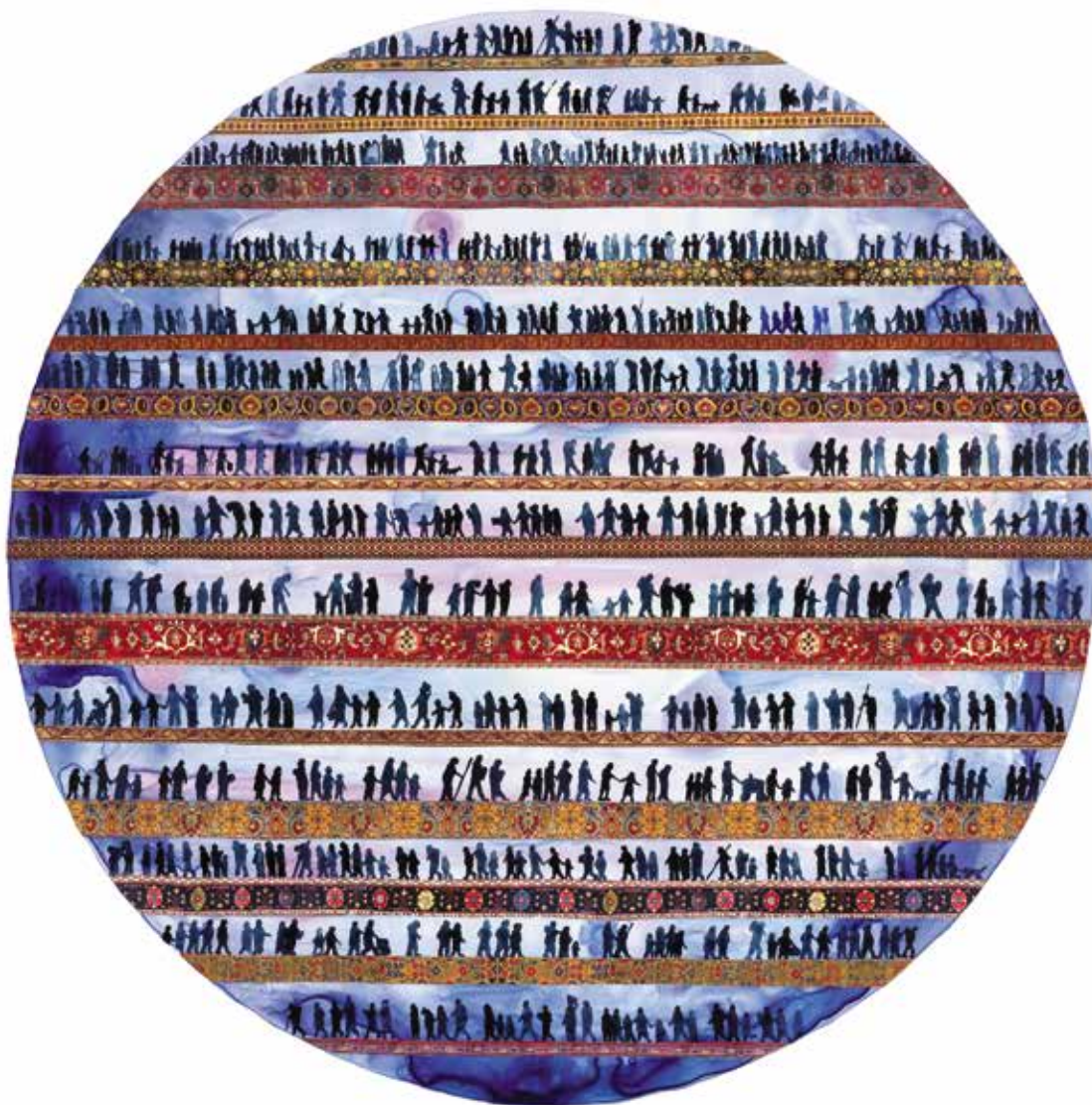
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ARTWORK BY ANDI ARNOVITZ

# 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.





## DENNIS PRAGER

**NATIONAL RADIO SHOW HOST, SYNDICATED COLUMNIST,  
ORCHESTRAL CONDUCTOR**

Tens of millions of people around the world have watched Dennis Prager's videos, and millions more listen to his national radio show. He has written ten bestselling books, and lectured internationally, including in Russian in Russia and in Hebrew in Israel. In 2011, he co-founded Prager University (PragerU), which has received over five billion views, in more than a hundred countries.

The third volume of *The Rational Bible*, his five-volume commentary on the first five books of the Bible, was published in the fall of 2022. *The Rational Bible* is the best-selling Bible commentary in America today.

An orchestral conductor by avocation, he most recently conducted a Haydn symphony with the Santa Monica Symphony Orchestra at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

Dennis Prager was a lecturer in Russian and Jewish history at Brooklyn College; a Fellow at the Columbia University School of International Affairs, where he did his graduate work at the Russian and Middle East Institutes; and a Media Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

He has engaged in interfaith dialogue with Catholics at the Vatican, Muslims in the Persian Gulf, Hindus in India, and Protestants at Christian seminaries throughout America. For ten years, he conducted a weekly interfaith dialogue on radio with representatives of virtually every religion in the world.

For 20 years, he has been writing a syndicated weekly column (Creators Syndicate). His writings have also appeared in the Wall Street Journal, Commentary, the Jewish Journal, and the Los Angeles Times. The American Jewish Press Association awarded Prager its First Prize for Excellence in Commentary for his Jewish writings.

# No Proof — Just Overwhelming Evidence

BY DENNIS PRAGER

THERE IS NO proof that God exists. But this means nothing. None of the most important things in life can be proven to exist. We cannot prove that good, evil, beauty, love, the conscience, or even the mind exists. Why? Because only the existence of the physical can be proven. Therefore, the existence of God, who by definition is not physical, cannot be proven.

What we have is overwhelming evidence that God exists, just as we have overwhelming evidence that love, good, evil, beauty, and thought exist. The analogy is precise. How do we know that love exists? We know by the way it is manifested. When we see a parent love a child, we know love exists. And when we read about the torture of innocent people, we know that evil exists. So, too, we know that an intelligible world means an Intelligence exists. Given that nothing creates itself, the idea that everything came about by itself is impossible.

When I read about the almost infinite and irreducible complexity of the brain or the eye or, for that matter, of a mere unicellular creature, I have no doubt that a Creator was involved. And just as the idea that the world came about by itself is absurd, so, too, is the idea that life came from non-life or that consciousness came from non-consciousness.

In short, belief in a Creator is the most rational conclusion one can draw from existence. The one rational argument that atheists offer is the existence of unjust suffering: If a good God exists, why is there unjust suffering? There is no perfect

answer to this question, but there are at least two compelling responses, one focusing on human-caused suffering and one on that stemming from nature. The unjust suffering that humans cause — what we call “evil” — is largely the result of human free will. Presumably, the Creator could have created human-like beings who could do no evil. But that would render life as we know it meaningless, as those beings would be robots, not human beings.

With regard to the problem of the suffering that nature causes — disease, earthquakes, etc. — I offer the compelling response that an American rabbi, Milton Steinberg, articulated: The believer has to account for the existence of one thing — unjust suffering; the atheist has to account for the existence of everything else.

Finally, there is one other reason why I am convinced that there is a God: the consequences of atheism. When people stop believing in God, they don't believe in nothing, they believe in anything. This truism is attributed to the English writer, G.K. Chesterton. It isn't religious people, for example, who believe that men give birth; it is secular people who believe this inversion of reality. And the idea originated in the most secular institution in the Western world — the university. Consider too, that it was godless regimes and ideologies that committed nearly every genocide of the twentieth century. The order of the natural world argues for God's existence, and so does the moral and intellectual disorder of the godless world.



## **RABBI AVRAHAM STOLIK**

### **THE JEWISH INDIANA JONES**

Rabbi Avraham Stolik is a well-known figure in the field of biblical archaeology, particularly focusing on Jerusalem. His expertise and unique perspective, combining extensive knowledge of Jewish history with archaeological discoveries, have earned him a reputation as a notable biblical archaeology scholar.

With a background in Judaic studies and a strong passion for archaeology, he founded the Jerusalem Uncovered Institute, through which he has been delivering captivating lectures on biblical archaeology for nearly two decades. Audiences hearing these “Jerusalem Uncovered” presentations compare him to the fictional archaeologist, Indiana Jones.

For more information about Rabbi Avraham Stolik and his work, as well as to inquire about booking a presentation, please visit the website, [JerusalemUncovered.com](http://JerusalemUncovered.com).



# Can Archeology Prove the Bible's Truth?

BY AVRAHAM STOLIK

THE MOST FAMOUS and celebrated things are the most contested. Accordingly, the Bible has produced a determined crop of disparagers.

“Perhaps the whole Bible narrative is a myth?” “There is no archeological evidence to support the stories of the Bible.” They might grudgingly concede that King David and King Solomon existed, but they were mere “hill country chieftains.” Jerusalem was a “poor small tribal village.” King David’s glorious victories? Oh, those were fabricated political propaganda stories to bolster the claim of a glorious past.

In 1993, these Biblical minimalists<sup>1</sup> got horrible news, the discovery<sup>2</sup> of the Tel Dan ‘stele,’ a monument slab with an Aramean inscription. It commemorated a military victory over a king of the House of David. It is the first and earliest mention of King David’s name outside of the Bible in the land of Israel – and it even referenced the *House of David*, also known as the “Davidic dynasty.”

In addition, there have been significant discoveries involving a king of the Davidic dynasty, King Hezekiah, who ruled approximately 250 years after King David. For example, archaeologists found a massive 1,750-foot tunnel under the City of David. Why is this tunnel important? Aside from establishing the city of David as the original core of Jerusalem, the tunnel was constructed as part of King Hezekiah’s defense strategies against the King of Assyria, a story that the Bible describes in detail. The Siloam Inscription<sup>3</sup> memorializes the exciting encounter of the two teams of tunnel-diggers who began digging from opposite ends.

Most importantly, it matched a clear Biblical narrative that is hard to dispute.

*“When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come, intent on making war against Jerusalem, he consulted with his officers... about stopping the flow of the springs outside the city... for otherwise... the King of Assyria would come and find water in abundance...”<sup>4</sup>*

The Assyrian king did not succeed in taking Jerusalem. King Hezekiah’s water works project, which took an estimated four years to complete, was a major engineering feat, considered the greatest in pre-classical history. And you can walk through it today.

People have found innumerable artifacts in Israeli soil. However exciting these might be, skeptical scholars usually find a reason to cast doubt on them. But even the most determined naysayers don’t contest King Hezekiah’s reign.

In 2010, more evidence was discovered. A seal impression (*bulla*) bearing King Hezekiah’s name was found in an archaeological excavation in an ancient refuse dump adjacent to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This is the only personal seal to date belonging to a Judean/Israelite King that we have. It has the advantage of being complete, with none of the missing fragments that can leave artifacts open to dispute. No one can contest a clear signature!<sup>5</sup>

Those of us for whom the Bible is the basis of our faith do not lead our lives based on archaeological evidence. Some say that there’s no physical proof of God. But I see the many souvenirs that God has left us.



## SETH DILLON

### CEO “THE BABYLON BEE,” SATIRIST, VENTURE CAPITALIST

Seth Dillon is an entrepreneur, venture investor, speaker, and humorist. He is currently the CEO of “The Babylon Bee,” a news satire site that has overtaken “The Onion” in traffic and engagement. Taking the tone of a traditional news media publication, “The Bee” satirizes real-world events and public figures.

Dillon’s experience with censorship and deplatforming has placed him on the front lines of the battle for free speech in the public square. He now speaks on college campuses and at conferences across the country about the effectiveness of humor, the moral imperative of mockery, and the dangers of censorship.

A graduate of Palm Beach Atlantic University, Dillon lives with his wife and two sons in Juno Beach, Florida.

# A Summary of the Argument for God from Reason

BY SETH DILLON

THERE ARE TWO primary competing metaphysical worldviews: naturalism and supernaturalism. The former is typically atheistic; the latter, some form of theism.

The naturalist believes that there is nothing beyond the natural world and that nature is a self-contained, closed system. It follows that whatever happens within the system can be fully explained without having to look beyond it for answers. The contents of the universe — from the largest galaxies to the smallest particles — mechanistically obey the laws of physics and chemistry. Every event is necessarily linked to prior events in a great causal chain that stretches all the way back to the beginning of the universe. There can be no exceptions. If naturalism is true, mindless, mechanistic causes are behind every event in history.

Against this backdrop, it becomes apparent that naturalism faces an insurmountable problem. If all events — including mental events — are ultimately the result of underlying physical, mechanistic causes, this calls into question the validity of rational thought. After all, beliefs are rational only if they are formed for good reasons. That is, they must be rooted in logical insight, not the laws of physics or chemistry. If our beliefs are produced by physical causes (e.g., neurochemical changes in the brain) then logical insight is simply irrelevant; it has no meaningful role to play in their formation.

If you were to ask a naturalist why he believes naturalism is true, he would, if he were honest,

have to say, “Because a series of interconnected physical causes and effects that stretches back to the beginning of the universe eventually resulted in the current state of physical affairs — and in this current state of physical affairs, my brain chemistry is such that I find myself affirming naturalism as true.” For any belief that forms in a human mind, this is the only explanation naturalism allows. By leaving logical grounds and rational insight out of the picture — or at the very least reducing them to the point of irrelevance — naturalism discredits every belief, including the belief that naturalism is true.

The supernaturalist (i.e., theist) avoids this difficulty because he is not committed to viewing acts of reasoning as purely natural events. His explanatory resources are not limited to impersonal forces and mindless mechanisms. He is therefore able and willing to say that acts of reasoning are unique in the sense that they are independent from the interlocked, cause-and-effect system we call “nature.” They involve and, indeed, require a special kind of causation that naturalism cannot allow.

If reason cannot arise from a non-reasoning, mindless, mechanistic source, it must come, instead, from outside it — from a transcendent rational source. The best explanation is that our minds bring reason into nature because they were created by an eternal rational being: God.

Reason is fundamental. We cannot give it up just because it doesn't fit within a naturalistic framework. We must give up naturalism instead.



## **JACK MCCAULEY**

### **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE EXPERT, PROFESSOR AT UC BERKELEY, ENGINEER OF GUITAR HERO**

Jack McCauley is an Innovator in Residence at Jacobs Institute for Design Innovation at UC Berkeley, a Professor at UC Berkeley, a co-Founder of Oculus, and an American engineer, hardware designer, inventor, video game developer, and philanthropist.

Jack is best known for designing the guitars and drums for the Guitar Hero video game series, and as a co-founder and former chief engineer at Oculus VR. At Oculus, Jack designed and built the Oculus DK1 and DK2 virtual reality headsets. Facebook acquired Oculus for \$2 billion. McCauley holds U.S. patents for inventions in software, audio effects, virtual reality, motion control, computer peripherals, and video game hardware and controllers.

Jack was awarded a full scholarship to attend University of California, Berkeley, where he earned a BSc., EECS in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science in 1986. Jack has authored numerous research papers in the fields of artificial intelligence (AI) and mathematical modeling of AI-based systems, and is currently pursuing new projects at his private R&D facility and hardware incubator in Pleasanton, California.

# Virtual Versus True Reality

BY JACK MCCAULEY

SOME HAVE HYPOTHESIZED that our earthly existence is part of an ultra-sophisticated computer gaming program, and God is just a major gamer spending time manipulating our world for God's own entertainment. Is God playing the game out of curiosity or is there something God wants us to learn?

If it's all game, then we are nothing more than 0s and 1s; the result of an incredibly advanced AI algorithm that is continually being updated. And it's not like we're all trying to "break out" of this game of eating, sleeping, spending, collecting, building, traveling, etc. On the contrary, it seems like everyone today just wants to augment their realities further with more temporary, reality-adjusting experiences and material goods. Sex, drugs, jewelry, cars, houses, and on and on. "Give me, give me, give me, more, more, more!" We're nothing more than "non-player characters" trying to see the most, acquire the most, and of course post the most on social media.

In a world where our imaginations have allowed us to create so many different versions of reality, where we can immerse ourselves for hours (if not lifetimes) in places and stories that we ourselves have created, it's easy to lose sight of the question — what, in our daily lived experience, is real?

We think that what we perceive is real, but is it? The "how" of "how it all works," is hidden. What if we were to break out of the game; what

would we find? What if we were to choose to seek out what God has for us beyond the game — the created world in front of us that so readily absorbs all our attention? Open up any pair of Virtual Reality Oculus Headsets, and you will see a space that is jam-packed with wires, circuits, etc. What would happen if you randomly cut any wire? One thing is for sure, something (if not everything) would quit working properly. Everything in that headset is necessary; nothing is superfluous. I believe our world isn't any different. Everything in nature is wonderfully engineered for life.

When we don't make the effort to find out what's real, we prioritize the world of the flesh over the world of the soul. It's no wonder that we continuously make poor choices, ignore our responsibilities, harm each other and ourselves, and squander our time here on Earth. I've never doubted that what created this world was a loving, all-knowing intelligence that surpasses anything we can understand. The evidence is everywhere. As a child filled with wonder and curiosity, I was amazed at how well-designed everything was — from the way an insect's tiny wings and legs coordinated to allow it to travel effortlessly across a field to the way the rotation of the seasons kept all of life in balance. Complexity at every level. This is not a game. The illusions that we layer on top of the world God created can't replace reality — not for long, anyway.





## DR. FRANK TUREK

### FORMER U.S. NAVAL AVIATOR, SOCIAL COMMENTATOR ON ATHEISM AND BELIEF

Dr. Frank Turek is a dynamic speaker and an award-winning author or coauthor of five books: *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*; *Hollywood Heroes: How Your Favorite Movies Reveal God*; *Stealing from God: Why Atheists Need God to Make Their Case*; *Correct, Not Politically Correct*; and *Legislating Morality*. As the President of CrossExamined.org, Frank presents powerful and entertaining evidence of Christianity at churches, high schools, and secular college campuses that are often initially hostile to his message. He has also debated prominent atheists including Christopher Hitchens and Michael Shermer, founding publisher of “Skeptic” magazine.

Frank hosts an hour-long TV program each week, “Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist,” which DirecTV channel 378 (NRBTV) broadcasts on Wednesday nights. His radio program and podcast, “I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with Frank Turek,” airs on 182 stations every Saturday morning at 10 a.m. eastern and is always available on the free CrossExamined App.

Frank is a featured guest in the media as a leading apologetics expert and cultural commentator. He has appeared on hundreds of radio programs and many top TV networks, including Fox News, ABC, and CBS.

A former aviator in the U.S. Navy, Frank has a master’s degree from George Washington University and a doctorate from Southern Evangelical Seminary. He and his wife, Stephanie, are blessed with three grown sons and two grandsons (so far).

# We Know God By His Effects

BY FRANK TUREK

**H**OW DO WE know God exists? By God's effects — we reason from effect back to cause. Here are three of God's most important effects:

1. The Universe: Even atheists today admit that the universe is an effect. In other words, it had a beginning — space, time, and matter literally came into existence out of nothing. As the late Stephen Hawking put it, *"Almost everyone now believes that the universe, and time itself had a beginning at the Big Bang."*

The only question is, what could have caused space, time, and matter to have come into existence out of nothing? Atheists can cite no viable cause. Instead, it seems that the cause must transcend space, time, and matter. That is, the cause appears to be spaceless, timeless, and immaterial, powerful enough to have created the universe out of nothing, personal enough to have chosen to create, and intelligent enough to have been able to make a choice. We're getting close to God.

2. The Fine-Tuning of the Universe: We've discovered in recent decades that our universe is precisely fine-tuned. If any one of a number of attributes were slightly different about our universe, either the universe wouldn't exist at all or it couldn't support life. For example, if the gravitational force were different by 1 part in  $10^{40}$  compared to the strong nuclear force, we wouldn't exist. That's 1 part in 1 with 40 zeroes following it!

To grasp that level of precision, imagine

stacking dimes across the entire North American continent to the moon (that's over 238,000 miles). Do the same on a billion more North American continents. Mark one dime red, mix all those huge piles of dimes together, blindfold a friend, and ask him to pick one dime. The chance that he would pick that one red dime is 1 in  $10^{40}$ . And that's only one of about a dozen super-precise numbers related to the laws of nature. If any one of them were different, we wouldn't exist. The cause of these effects must be extremely intelligent and precise.

3. The Moral Law: We have an effect inside of us that causes us to believe that we have certain moral obligations and moral rights. As the Declaration of Independence explains, these rights are "self-evident" and come from our "Creator."

Without our Creator, there would be no objective moral law or standard beyond ourselves. Therefore, we couldn't justify why the Nazis were wrong and the allies were right. Unless God exists, the criminality of the Holocaust is just a matter of human opinion. But since we know it was wrong regardless of anyone's point of view, there must be a moral law giver that we are obligated to obey. That moral law is an effect that comes from God.

Adding up the attributes of the cause behind these three effects, we have a spaceless, timeless, immaterial, powerful, personal, intelligent, and moral Creator. Sure seems like God to me! And we don't need any kind of scripture to know this. We just follow the effects back to their cause.



“All I have seen teaches  
me to trust the Creator  
for all I have not seen.”<sup>1</sup>

**RALPH WALDO EMERSON**

AMERICAN ESSAYIST AND PHILOSOPHER (1803-1882)



## SIVAN RAHAV MEIR

### ISRAEL'S MOST BELOVED JOURNALIST, AUTHOR OF "THE DAILY THOUGHT"

Sivan Rahav Meir is married to Yedidia and a mother of five. She lives in Jerusalem. A journalist in the Israeli media since she was six, Sivan has interviewed thousands of people on television, radio, and in print. Globes named her Israel's most beloved journalist, Forbes listed her as one of the most influential women in Israel, and The Jerusalem Post ranked her among the fifty most influential Jewish people in the world.

Sivan lectures in Israel and abroad on topics such as Judaism, Zionism, and new media. She also writes the "The Daily Thought," a brief commentary on current events that is circulated in Jerusalem and translated into 17 languages for global distribution. This volunteer-run project provides spiritual uplift for Jews and non-Jews all over the world.

Subscribe at [sivanrahavmeir.com/the-daily-thought](http://sivanrahavmeir.com/the-daily-thought)



# Just Look Around

BY SIVAN RAHAV MEIR

I AM WRITING THESE lines from Jerusalem. I need no scientific or philosophical proof of God's existence. All I have to do is go to the window and look outside.

Millennia ago, Abraham and Sarah – among the most influential figures in human history – trekked thousands of kilometers to this land where I live. Here they raised the first Jewish family and heard God's words: Your descendants will depart for a long exile in Egypt, but they will return. So it was: Their grandson, Jacob, went with his children to Egypt, where their offspring endured centuries of hard labor.

The Jews' liberation from Egypt and journey to Israel became one of human history's most influential stories. The word "exodus" has come to define a mass departure, especially of emigrants. Moses's demand to Pharaoh, "Let my people go," inspired millions of Jews behind the Iron Curtain during Communism and the struggle of African-Americans for freedom in the United States.

The Israelites' 40-year-long desert trek also became a symbol for us all. As God promised, they arrived in Israel, lived their lives, and built the Temple, which gave light to the entire world. But then they were exiled – twice.

They kept faith for thousands of years. Everywhere they lived, they prayed facing Jerusalem. At weddings, they swore: "If I forget you, O Jerusalem." Every Shabbat, they read the ancient verses that promised return. The world mocked this tiny group and predicted its

disappearance. But despite pogroms, the Crusades, the Inquisition, and the Holocaust, the connection held firm.

Well, it happened. We're here. Outside my window, I see the Jewish state thriving, just as the prophets promised millennia ago: "Old men and women will sit outdoors in Jerusalem... and boys and girls will play in its streets." Yesterday's verses have become today's headlines. Boys and girls play outside, children and adults study Torah in safety, technological developments benefit the whole planet, and we are signing peace agreements with our neighbors (although we still have enemies who refuse to acknowledge this).

Millennia after we received the mitzvah of Shabbat, I see the noisy Mahane Yehuda market shut down every Friday afternoon. Once, we did not light fires on Shabbat; now we don't turn on our smartphones. But the feeling of freedom and sanctity on the day of rest is still the same.

Millennia after God commanded us to observe Passover and Yom Kippur, we do so as eagerly as if we had received these mitzvot just yesterday, and we feel their holiness all over the country.

This is just the beginning. Fulfilling the prophecies of redemption will require much work, on the national and the personal level, but we draw inspiration from how far we have come and what we have built here.

If we believed in God for millennia in times of darkness, we will certainly believe in God in a generation where the light has begun to shine.



## **RONNY VANCE**

### **FORMER PRESIDENT OF GEFFEN MUSIC, PRESENT-DAY SEEKER**

Ronny Vance, former president of Geffen Music and Interscope Music, has over 40 years of experience in the music industry. The writers he has signed have had cumulative sales of over 200 million records. Built on his uncanny knack for spotting songwriting talent and superstar artists in all music genres, each of his endeavors has enjoyed unprecedented success.

Over the course of his career, Vance has been responsible for the signings of songwriters Tupac, New Edition, Stephen Sondheim, Brenda Russell, Bruce Hornsby, and Gwen Stefani of No Doubt, and for the placement of such notable songs as “Maniac,” “New Attitude,” and Eric Clapton’s two-time 1998 Grammy winning song, “Change The World.”

Vance is the President of the high tech music search innovator MyPart, located in Tel Aviv. Its current customers include MPL, Paul McCartney’s music publishing company, and Hipgnosis Songs.

Vance is currently working on a music project that embodies original material and classics that, as he says, gives glory to The One Above.

Vance would like to thank his friend, Moshe Schluss, who gave him the idea for the title of his essay.

# Intimate with the Infinite<sup>1</sup>

BY RONNY VANCE

FORTY YEARS AGO, we would go to a Brooklyn apartment where a rabbi<sup>2</sup> had a small gathering. In his classes, he used every trick in his arsenal to describe the idea of a soul and an inner world, without using the word “God.” He used energy, vibrations, spiritual force – anything but God – because as he said, *“that word has often been a major turn off to a number of the new people coming around.”* People whom many today might refer to as *“the woke crowd.”*

One day he told a story about someone who was not only secular but maybe even a bit anti-religion. This guy heard that the Lubavitcher Rebbe was a holy man and that every Sunday he would give a crisp dollar bill to anyone who waited to see him. The line was so long that the Rebbe had only seconds to talk to each person. When it was this guy’s turn, the Rebbe said to him, *“it would be good if you would put on tefillin.”*<sup>3</sup> The guy responded, *“I only came here because I heard you were a holy man, but I am not one of your followers and I don’t believe in God.”* The Rebbe looked at him in a way that only he could and said, *“the God you don’t believe in I also don’t believe in.”*

Hearing that story was a game changer for me. What exactly was he saying? At the time, it seemed like a riddle, but that one statement planted a seed and began what became a multi-decade journey of intense study and

self-reflection as I tried to understand what he meant.

Here is what has become blatantly clear: That my opinions about anything to do with God were bereft of any real background or knowledge. That everything I believed at that time was based upon a *“giant nothing-burger.”*

As a veteran of the pop music business in America, I have an opinion about movies, music, theater, books, tv, and sports, as I’ve put a lifetime of energy into these arenas. But what did I know about God beyond my short stint at religious school or momentary pauses to listen to Televangelists while channel-surfing? I didn’t know what I didn’t know. Only now, after more than twenty years in a religiously observant community, am I beginning to understand just how much I still don’t know. Not coming from an academic background, I didn’t realize what hard work it is to acquire all this ancient knowledge. Although the wisdom is in fact endless, I somehow find myself in a perfect environment and I am piecing more and more together each day.

There is an old expression that *“when someone graduates from college, that is when the learning really begins.”* In my personal journey, the graduation speech came with a simple statement. If that opportunity comes for you, make sure you’re listening.



## **RABBI RAPHAEL SHORE**

### **AWARD-WINNING FILM PRODUCER, FOUNDER OF THE CLARION PROJECT**

Raphael Shore is a rabbi, educator, and award-winning film producer. He is passionate about the power of film to educate and inspire. Raphael's films serve as pillars of OpenDor Media's educational curriculum and reach a broad audience via broadcast, streaming, and film festivals.

Shore produced *Sustainable Nation*, about Israeli advances in water technology, and the 2017 documentary, *When the Smoke Clears*, about wounded Israeli war veterans. He also produced the 2016 mini-documentary about an Israeli-Ethiopian soldier, *Mekonen: The Journey of an African Jew*, and its 2015 predecessor, *Beneath the Helmet: From High School to the Home Front* (rated one of Netflix's top five military movies), a coming-of-age film about five Israeli soldiers.

Shore is also the founder of the Clarion Project, a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating the public about the threats of extremism and providing a platform for moderate Muslim voices, and is on the Board of Jewish News Syndicate (JNS), a media outlet providing high-quality, fact-based reporting and analysis on critical issues facing the Jewish people and the State of Israel.

# I Love Being Alive

BY RAPHAEL SHORE

**M**OST PEOPLE FIGHT tooth and nail to live longer when death crouches at their door, but it's sometimes hard to cherish every beautiful day on the journey. While "here," I try to treasure the deep pleasures of love, meaning, being good, and making a positive difference.

Why do I feel, and know, that life has meaning? Why am I driven to be good? Why do I need and give love? Animals do not. Animals are driven by instinct only; they have no understanding or need for meaning, true love, or morality.

The animal kingdom's natural law is that might is right and only the fittest survive, which means there's nothing deplorable in the mundane activity of one beast savagely ripping another to pieces for lunch. We all recognize that it would be barbaric for humans to behave in this way.<sup>1</sup>

To be human is to rise above such animal instincts and behaviors to be more. Yes, we have bodies and animal instincts, but we are not mere animals. Animals don't choose. We do. We are choosing, self-aware, conscious animals with a deep need for meaning and being good.

This is because we have a soul. We're body-soul hybrid beings. And if we have a soul, then this world is not purely material; it has a spiritual aspect. There's no possible explanation for our soul's existence other than that it was deliberately created: Random evolution – chance – can only try to explain the material world, not anything beyond the physical.

Materialism cannot explain how our world began. Even if it could, chance evolution cannot tell us how life, even in its simplest form, began. The probability of the universe's conditions being just right for that is mathematically impossible. Chance cannot explain how a simple organism like a cell came to exist, 'went digital' with an awesomely sophisticated DNA code, and then evolved into complex human life. Sir Fred Hoyle, the astronomer who coined the term "Big Bang," offered his famous "junkyard tornado" analogy, that the possibility that chemical (random) evolution could have produced the first cell from lifelessness is comparable to "the chance that a tornado sweeping through a junkyard could assemble a Boeing 747."

So how do we explain our universe, life, human complexity, our drive for meaning, purpose, morality, and love? Human nature will always develop nonscientific and sometimes nonsensical answers to this puzzle, because the only answer that makes sense comes with obligations that can be difficult to bear.

If we're not animals, we're human, and that means we're responsible. And that's scary as hell. How else to explain our life? Only our soul, and an intelligent designer – let's call that designer God – explains the wonder. Life is a beautiful gift – even with, and especially because of, the responsibility. I'm deeply thankful that God has informed me of the awesome gift.<sup>2</sup>





## **BRUNO WOLTZENLOGEL PALEO, Ph.D.**

### **LOGICIAN, PROOF THEORIST, VERIFIER OF GÖDEL'S PROOF OF GOD**

In 2012 and 2013, during a difficult period, Bruno's mother encouraged him to attend a church in his home town in Brazil. To show his gratitude for the priest's support, he decided to give him a gift. And what could be a better gift to a priest from a logician, and particularly a proof theorist like Bruno, than an ontological proof of God's existence?

However, he quickly discovered that the proof he sought did not meet contemporary standards of rigor, precision, and quality in computational logic. Even Kurt Gödel's decades-old manuscript was full of gaps. What was supposed to be a weekend-long personal project became a multi-year research program that he conducted first as a researcher at the Vienna University of Technology and later at the Australian National University.

In the project, Bruno collaborated with Christoph Benzmüller, from the Free University of Berlin, an expert in automated reasoning for higher-order logic, and Annika Kanckos, a philosopher at the University of Helsinki. They filled the gaps in the proof, formalized it in a modern, natural deduction calculus, and analyzed it, using a variety of modern computational logic tools. In a major success story for artificial intelligence, their computers uncovered a surprising mistake in Gödel's manuscript, which caused his theory to be inconsistent. Fortunately, they quickly determined that most of the other modern variants of Gödel's proof had already fixed the mistake.

Bruno's work on ontological proofs would never have started without his mother's encouragement. She also taught him the life lesson always to finish what you start. It took him five years to complete the work that he began in 2013, after which he switched his focus to research areas unrelated to ontological proofs. But, coincidentally, as he sat next to his mother in the hospital where she would pass away just a few days later, he received the invitation to contribute to this book. For all that and so much more, Bruno dedicates all of his work on ontological proofs to the memory of his mother, Claudia Zambello Woltzenlogel Paleo, whose faith was beyond proof.

# Ontological Proofs<sup>1</sup>

BY BRUNO WOLTZENLOGEL PALEO

ATTEMPTS TO PROVE the existence of God by means of purely logical arguments are an old tradition in philosophy, theology, mathematics, and logic, dating back at least to 1078 CE, when St. Anselm of Canterbury proposed his famous ontological argument. Ontology is the branch of philosophy that is concerned with the concepts of being and existence. Thus, ontological arguments<sup>2</sup> for God's existence are arguments that derive the conclusion that God exists from premises about the definition of being God.

The formulation that the famous logician Kurt Gödel (1906-1978) proposed<sup>3</sup> is a modern culmination of this tradition, addressing various shortcomings of earlier ontological arguments. For instance, Kant's famous objection (that existence is not a property) does not apply to Gödel's formulation, since Gödel properly uses an existential quantifier to express God's existence.

Gödel worked on the argument for decades and shared a two-page manuscript with Dana Scott in 1970. There Gödel defined God as a being who possesses all positive *properties*.<sup>4</sup> "Positiveness" of a property is a primitive notion in Gödel's theory. It is the only concept left undefined; however, its meaning is not arbitrary, but constrained by five *axioms*.<sup>5</sup> They are:

- A1) Either a property or its negation is positive, but not both.
- A2) A property necessarily implied by a positive property is positive.

- A3) The conjunction of any number of positive properties is positive.
- A4) Positive properties are necessarily positive.
- A5) Necessary exemplification of an individual's essences is a positive property. (He defines an essence of an individual as a property that it possesses and that necessarily implies any property possessed by it.)

From axioms A1 and A2, we derive the first *theorem*,<sup>6</sup> stating that for any positive property, it is possible that there is a being who has this property. From A3 and the definition of God, it follows that the property of being God is itself a positive property. Hence, as a *corollary*<sup>7</sup> of the first theorem, it is possible that God exists.

The second part of the proof consists of proving a *lemma*<sup>8</sup> that shows that if God's existence is possible, then it is necessary. Gödel achieves this by first showing, through A4, that the property of being God-like is an essence of any God, and then by using A5 together with a few *modal logic*<sup>9</sup> principles.

Finally, by using the lemma and the corollary of the first theorem, we conclude that the existence of a God-like being is necessary.

This proof has been formally verified to be logically correct. This means that, if you believe in the stated axioms and accept the logical rules of deductive reasoning, you must believe in the conclusion as well.



## SARAH DUKES

### WOMAN OF VALOR, MOTHER OF SIX, COMPOSER

Sarah captured hearts worldwide with her heart-wrenching social media posts in which she documented her husband Rabbi Yehuda (Yudi) Dukes' courageous journey through Covid-19 in 2020 and his untimely passing in 2021 at age of 39. Leibman Productions made the Dukes' heroic story into an award-winning documentary entitled, "Chazak – The Story of Yudi Dukes."

Sarah Dukes is a Chabad Chassidic mother of six, a licensed mental health counselor in private practice, and an award-winning composer and songwriter. Sarah's stirring collection of original music is featured on dozens of global radio stations, on international airlines' in-flight entertainment systems, and on TV's number one daytime drama, "The Young and the Restless."

Sarah continues to inspire and empower others to face pain and challenges head-on with faith and dignity through social media @sarahdukesmusic.

Sarah's music is available to stream and download on all platforms and on her website, [www.sarahdukesmusic.com](http://www.sarahdukesmusic.com), where sheet music can also be purchased.

# Meeting the Infinite

BY SARAH DUKES

SOCIETY ENCOURAGES US to believe in God. To *trust* in God. But trust is something that typically needs to be earned. How can we be expected to make ourselves completely vulnerable to a higher power or Divine energy if we can't even be sure it exists?

Absolute knowledge that there is a master plan provides comfort in the chaos and security in the midst of instability. Belief brings an element of inner peace and acceptance. Having faith that we are exactly where we need to be at any given moment and trusting that we will, one day, see the revealed good behind the darkness, gives the sense of purpose and meaning in our lives that we desperately yearn for.

So begins our search for proof of a Godly presence. We search for answers. We search for truth.

And we should continue searching. Yet, at some point, there might need to be a leap into faith. Because no matter how great one's mind is and how much knowledge he or she has, God's existence transcends human comprehension. God is beyond reason and understanding. It is therefore impossible to prove this Divine entity with our finite capacity. Faith starts where knowledge stops.

Instead of focusing on proving God's existence, we would be better served by focusing on *recognizing* God's existence.

How do we, as finite beings, access recognition of an Infinite Presence? How can we understand what God is? By looking within.

By familiarizing ourselves with the core of our essence. By being aware of the Infinite energy that enlivens each and every one of us.

We so often identify with our internal and external layers of self. But we are more than our intellect, emotions, and actions. We are more than our fears, insecurities, relationships, and accomplishments.

When we move beyond these qualities that divide and individualize us, when all is stripped away, we are left with a Divine spark. An essence that is pure, untouchable, and unbreakable. We encounter the core of our existence – our soul.

This is where we find our innate worth, which is beyond that which we think, say, do, or feel. This is where we are unconditionally and infinitely valued. Where we are safe.

By tapping into this eternal Godly force, we can achieve the impossible, create something from nothing, create something from everything, and have unlimited potential in our limited world. This is where the finite and Infinite meet.

This is where we find God.

Recognizing God in our lives requires a delicate balance between humility and an awareness of our own significance. Possessing the wisdom to acknowledge that God is greater than our understanding is a gateway to engaging with the Divine energy and the infinite capabilities within ourselves. Perhaps believing in our quintessential selves is, ultimately, believing in 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.



“My concern is not  
whether God is on our side;  
my greatest concern is  
to be on God’s side, for  
God is always right.”<sup>2</sup>

**ABRAHAM LINCOLN**

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (1809-1865)



## 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. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Natural Abundance: Ralph Waldo Emerson's Guide to Prosperity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011), p. 107.
2. Abraham Lincoln, in a conversation with Francis B. Carpenter.

## AVRAHAM STOLIK

1. A school of thought claiming that the Bible cannot be considered reliable evidence for what happened in ancient Israel.
2. Near the Lebanese border.
3. The inscription on the Siloam conduit, the earliest long ancient Hebrew inscription found in Jerusalem, commemorates the digging of the waterway – an event in the history of Jerusalem that the Bible mentions more than once. It is on display in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum.
4. 2 Chronicles 32:2-4.
5. There is much excitement about the recent discovery of a monumental structure, believed to be King David's palace. Its location matches the geographical specifics that 2 Samuel describes and scholars have dated it to King David's period, the 10th century BCE. Nevertheless, challengers continue to attempt to chip away at the findings' credibility, using the rubrics of 'science' to point out that no proof bearing King David's name has been found at the site.

## RONNY VANCE

1. Courtesy of Moshe Schluss
2. Rabbi Simon Jacobson
3. Phylacteries (a pair of black leather boxes containing specific Hebrew parchment scrolls) that men wear. The Torah commands Jewish men to bind tefillin onto their head and upper arm every weekday morning. (Deuteronomy 6:8)

## RAPHAEL SHORE

1. The ideology of this worldview for people has a name - Nazism. It is evil.
2. Ethics of the Fathers, 3:14. Rabbi Akiva said: "Beloved is man for he was created in the image [of God]. Especially beloved is he for it was made known to him that he had been created in the image [of God], as it is said: "for in the image of God He made man." (Genesis 9:6)

## BRUNO WOLTZENLOGEL PALEO

1. A **proof** is a sequence of logical statements, which are either axioms or theorems.
2. cf. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy's* entry on Ontological Arguments: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ontological-arguments/>
3. For the Full Proof in Natural Deduction Calculus, see the images and derivations in this paper: <https://gitlab.com/aossie/ComputationalPhilosophy/-/blob/master/Papers/2016/StudiaLogica-NaturalDeduction/GodProof-ND.pdf>
4. Higher-order logics are logics where it is possible to express statements not only about objects (e.g. "there are objects that are yellow" or "all objects that are triangles have internal angles with a sum of 180 degrees"), but also about properties (e.g. "for every property, if the property is positive then God has it").
5. An **axiom** is a logical statement that is assumed to be true.
6. A **theorem** is a logical statement that is derived from other previous logical statements in the proof according to the rules

of logic.

7. A **corollary** is a theorem that is trivially derived from another theorem in the proof.
8. A **lemma** is a theorem that is a significant step in a proof of another major theorem.
9. Modal logics are logics where the logical statements can have modal operators such as “it is possible that...” and “it is necessary that...” Modal logics typically have a *possible worlds semantics* where, for instance, we interpret “it is possible that...” as “there is a world where...” and “it is necessary that...” as “in all worlds...”

# 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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