

My Elevator Pitch *for* God

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

BOOK CLUB COLLECTION #7

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 #7 was compiled by Bruce Licht

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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.

WHY 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 (*My Elevator Pitch for God*) and read many more wonderful, inspirational, thought provoking essays from additional Thought Leaders from around the world.



RABBI SIMON JACOBSON

**FOUNDER OF THE MEANINGFUL LIFE CENTER,
BEST-SELLING AUTHOR, SAGE**

Rabbi Simon Jacobson is a pioneering speaker and educator, and is a mentor to thousands. He is the author of the best-selling book, *Toward a Meaningful Life*, a William Morrow publication that has sold over 400,000 copies and has been translated into 13 languages.

Rabbi Jacobson heads The Meaningful Life Center, which bridges the secular and the spiritual through a wide variety of live and online programming, presenting the universal teachings of Torah as a blueprint for life to people of all backgrounds. The MLC has over 200,000 subscribers and over 15 million views. He is also the chairman and publisher of The Algemeiner Journal.

Rabbi Jacobson is YouTube's "Rabbi of choice!" He has lectured to diverse audiences on psycho-spiritual issues and applying Jewish thought to contemporary life. His voice is rooted in the timeless teachings of Torah, yet remains profoundly relevant. His keen insight into the human condition allows him to offer his listeners clarity and direction, especially in difficult times.

The God You Don't Believe In

BY SIMON JACOBSON

BEFORE WE TRY to prove or disprove God's existence, let's first define what and who God is. Because without an agreed-upon definition, we might not even be talking about the same entity.

In the wise words of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev in conversation with a self-proclaimed atheist, "*The God you don't believe in, I also don't believe in.*" If we visualize God as sitting on a throne in heaven, with a long white beard, ready to strike us with lightning when we misbehave – I too wouldn't believe in such a God!

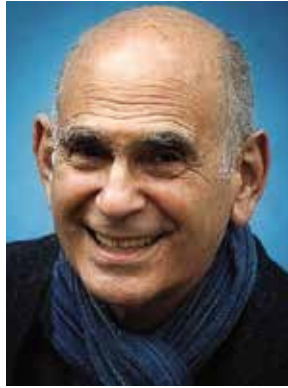
So, what is God? Let's replace the word *God* with the word "*reality*." What is reality? Is it what I can see, touch, taste, hear, and smell with my senses? Is it something empirical? Something that makes sense logically? In part, yes – that's reality, but it goes beyond that. We experience love and heartbreak, we have ideas and beliefs – these are parts of our reality that we can't physically measure and that are not subject to our sensory tools.

We can all agree that there are aspects of reality that we cannot experience with our five senses, so we must accept that there are deeper, immeasurable dimensions. Take subatomic particles or DNA for example – nobody has ever seen them, yet they exist; they define and create our physical reality.

Sir Arthur Eddington's metaphor brings this point home: A fisherman spread his net across the seas and captured all types of fish. After documenting their species, size, color etc., he concluded that there are no fish shorter than a half inch long. His daughter then reminded him of the small goldfish swimming in their aquarium. The fisherman realized that the instrument – the net – that he had used to collect the fish had holes measuring half an inch. Hence, all of the smaller fish had fallen back into the sea. The instrument was limited. Not the fish.

Experiencing and perceiving God requires us to transcend our limited sensory tools and realize that there's a deeper reality in everything, a reality that is not subject to or defined by our limitations. Just as we can't see the widest horizons when standing in a valley, what we see with our physical eyes is only a tiny sliver of reality. When Abraham, the first monotheist, began looking for God, he realized that God couldn't be limited to the animals on earth, or even to the vast heavens above. Abraham came to understand that he was just a little piece of the whole and that it is the whole that defines the piece. God is reality.

Only when we open up ourselves to this reality will God emerge. We simply need to suspend ourselves in order to discover and recognize God.



LEONARD JACOBS

PUBLISHER, CHAMPION OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Leonard Jacobs has long been involved with researching and promoting methods to improve human development. He received a BA in Human Development from the University of Chicago in the late 1960s, then moved to Boston to study and practice macrobiotics, a practical approach to developing higher levels of consciousness and health. Leonard's enthusiasm for communicating the value of developing human potential led him to become the publisher of East West Journal, long the primary print medium for integrating Eastern and Western philosophies and practices. Leonard has continued his work in print and eventually, digital media as the associate publisher of Shambhala Publications for almost 20 years.

He lives in Asheville, North Carolina, with his partner, Becky Cannon. Together they lead the company Becky founded, Green Sprouts, a manufacturer and distributor of healthful and innovative baby products. He is also an active member and service leader of Congregation Beth Israel.

Can the Unnamable Be Named?

BY LEONARD JACOBS

HOW CAN ANYONE actually prove (or disprove) the existence of the Divine? That inquiry resembles a perfect Zen koan or riddle: “What is the sound of one hand clapping?” Experiencing and holding irrational thoughts is a way of dissolving our rational thinking.

To understand and explain the unexplainable. To see the total unity of disparate and seemingly opposite perspectives. Only when we fully embrace the existence of totally unknowable questions, can we have a true understanding (in a non-conceptual way) of the unity of everything. There is no I and thou, me and other. We understand that there is no division between God and humans – the merging of all life, of all animate and inanimate stuff, is the only reality. Nonetheless, the visible is only visible because of the invisible. Dark is only dark in relation to light. Sacred is only sacred in relation to the profane. Everything has material and immaterial existence. Divine and mundane are two complements of one unity.

When we consider the existence of a “god spirit” or “Divine force,” it creates a separation between us and other, between I and Thou, between humans and a transcendence. The brilliant insight of the Lubavitcher Rebbe was that the Messiah will arrive when we all recognize the non-duality of what appears on the surface as separate (me and you, me and the external world) and the integral connection

between humans and the natural world. The arrival of the Messiah means that there will be an understanding among all of us that there is no separation between each of us and everything. For us to realize and experience that reality is the purpose of life. The experience or perception of ourselves as separate from each other and separate from our true nature is an illusion – one that continues to keep us in a dualist mindset, unable to experience true Divinity. We can consider experiencing the connection, immersion, and interrelationship with everything as proof of the existence of the Divine.

I believe in the evolution of life, the development of consciousness, and the evolution of the universe. I believe that all of this is possible through the natural order of the universe. I believe there are aspects of life and evolution that science and the laws of physics cannot explain. Some suggest that there is a God who oversees all aspects of creation and evolution. It is possible to let go of expecting answers about the unknown. We can relax into the not-knowing and letting go. The opportunity for each of us to realize our oneness with all things, to let go of our separateness, and to become one with the other can be a Divine experience. That experience, for me, is not about god or godliness, but about the arrival of the Messiah, also known as Enlightenment.



RABBI AARON ZIMMER

**PHYSICIST, ORDAINED RABBI, COMMODITY TRADER,
UNRAVELER OF THE ENIGMAS OF THE UNIVERSE,
COHOST OF “PHYSICS TO GOD” PODCAST**

After earning a physics degree and receiving rabbinical ordination from his rebbe, Rabbi Yisrael Chait, Aaron Zimmer considered furthering his education through graduate school. However, his intellectual curiosity extended far beyond the realm of physics, encompassing a diverse array of fields, including philosophy, mathematics, and psychology. Capitalizing on his blend of analytical and philosophical skills, Aaron ventured into commodity futures trading. He rooted his strategic approach in the conceptual frameworks of physics and the intricate Brisker Method for Talmudic analysis. After eleven years of success in this field, Aaron decided to retire.

Aaron now channels his intellectual energy into studying various branches of knowledge, including the Talmud and physics, as well as lecturing at Yeshiva Bnei Torah. He lives in Lawrence, New York, with his wife and their five children.

Aaron shares his passion for knowledge through many years of collaboration with rabbi and mathematician, Elie Feder, on the podcast, "Physics to God." They invite listeners on a journey through the intricacies of modern physics, revealing the concept of God. Comprising several thought-provoking miniseries, it presents an argument for God based on the meticulously ordered initial conditions of the universe. A related miniseries lucidly explains the concept of God as an uncaused, simple existence, systematically addressing and refuting common doubts and misconceptions about God.

"Physics to God" pairs depth with accessibility, unraveling the profound enigmas of the universe while making complex physics concepts comprehensible through intuitive analogies, serving both the expert and the layman. For insightful episodes and in-depth exploration, please visit PhysicsToGod.com.

Physics to God: The Ordered Initial Conditions of the Universe

BY AARON ZIMMER

WHAT WOULD IT take to persuade you that the universe was crafted by an intelligent creator? Imagine if I were to present a series of rigorous scientific computations demonstrating that the observed order in the universe strongly suggests the handiwork of an intelligent entity. People have done this based on the principles of entropy and an analysis of the remarkable initial conditions of our universe.

First, we need to explore a physics concept called *entropy*. Any system, from a book to the universe, exists in a particular state with distinct emergent properties. An ordered state arises from a specific arrangement of components, creating an emergent property like the book's meaning. A disordered state, however, occurs from a random arrangement that results in no meaningful emergent property.

Entropy is a measure of this order. High entropy signifies a disordered state; low entropy, an ordered one. According to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, all systems evolve toward higher entropy, or disorder, over time. This means that if a system is in a state of low entropy now, it must have started with even lower entropy.

When examining the universe, we might have expected it to be in a high entropy state, which after all, is its most likely state. If that were the case, we would see a universe filled with high entropy objects (like black holes). But instead, we observe the exact opposite! We see galaxies, stars, planets, life, etc.

The Second Law of Thermodynamics suggests that the low entropy state of the universe today

means that it began in an even more unlikely, lower entropy state. This shifts the focus to the highly ordered, extraordinarily unlikely, state with which our universe began.

Renowned physicist Roger Penrose calculated that the chance of our universe beginning with such low entropy is about 1 in $10^{10^{123}}$, an inconceivably low probability.¹ This is much less likely than finding a needle in a haystack the size of the known universe. If our universe hadn't started with these incredibly unlikely conditions, the subsequent evolution wouldn't have resulted in the complex universe we observe today. Instead, it would have yielded an uninteresting black hole-ridden realm.

This exceedingly improbable scenario directs us to the clear conclusion that the initial conditions of our universe were not a matter of random chance. Rather, they were purposely arranged to allow for the emergence of an ordered and complex universe, something that would be impossible had the universe begun in a high entropy, disordered state.

Just as a perfectly ordered book suggests the presence of an intelligent author, the universe's highly ordered initial conditions suggest the existence of an *intelligent orderer*, as intelligence involves the ability to choose one possibility among many to achieve a specific goal. Therefore, considering the overwhelming odds against a random, low entropy beginning and the elegant order we observe today, it is compelling to conclude that our universe is not the product of chance, but of an intelligent God.



JOSEPH BINGOLD

BRAIN HEALTH START-UP FOUNDER, CEO OF MEDICAL DEVICE TECH COMPANY

Joseph Bingold is an Oregon native who attended MIT, where he triple-majored in Electrical Engineering, Business, and Anthropology (2001). For eight years, he also served as an officer of the U.S. Navy at the headquarters for the Navy Nuclear Propulsion Program, with program management responsibility for electronic control systems for the nuclear power plants on aircraft carriers and submarines. During this time, he earned an MS in Mechanical Engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School, an MA in Religion from the Reformed Theological Seminary, and his professional engineer's license. He graduated as an Arjay Miller Scholar from Stanford's Graduate School of Business (2011).

Joe joined XO Armor as CEO in 2023, bringing a wide range of business experience as a co-founder of a successful brain health startup, Senaptec Inc., and a director of marketing at Tektronix.

Joe serves actively in his church and is chair of the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) board of trustees. Joe is married with two children. The family loves exploring the outdoors, cooking food together, and having adventures with friends.

God Is Known by Absolutes

BY JOE BINGOLD

PRESUPPOSITION: ABSOLUTES ARE A source of truth. An absolute is something that exists in every interpretation of the data we perceive. Existence is an absolute. We exist. Even if we think our lives are actually the projection of a computer program inside a fantastic matrix, something absolutely exists. Change is another unavoidable absolute. Today you live on earth, one day you will not.

Absolutes require a foundation to sustain them, a source from which they came. The sustaining foundation has to have the same characteristics of the absolute or it cannot generate the absolute. For example, if something doesn't exist, it cannot support existence. If something doesn't move, it cannot generate movement, dynamism.

God is what we call this source, and God has the characteristics of all absolutes. This is not necessarily a religious God, it is simply the word for that which generates and sustains absolutes.

Thus far, this description of God is abstract and relatively uninteresting. But there are more absolutes to consider that expand our idea of God. Most see logic as an absolute in the sense that it defines the structure of thought and comprehension. Therefore, God is logical. Our human self-awareness is another absolute. I exist therefore I am. God must also be conscious and self-aware.

Philosophers throughout the ages have reached this same conclusion. Descartes requires God in order to justify mathematical truths. Leibniz needs God as a way to explain the pre-established harmony between our perception and reality. Bergson's God is the God of creative evolution.

Aristotle points to God as the Unmoved Mover to begin all movement. Even Kant relies on God for explanation of the moral life.¹

The more we discover the absolutes of our universe on which even science agrees, the more we learn about and define the attributes of God. Is decision-making an absolute? I believe so. If God were unable to make decisions in a dynamic environment, there would be an even higher absolute controlling God. So, sentience and a dynamic environment implies choice. Choice, or at least the perception of choice, is another absolute. If humans can make decisions, then we can make choices contrary to what God would choose. Such choices introduce pain and evil, which are not absolutes but the consequence of choices.

This journey of reasoning about the existence and interplay of absolutes helps to demonstrate both the reality of God and many aspects of God's character, as far as it goes. This line of reasoning has its limit at the boundary between fact and faith.

Ramification: God embodies the absolutes of our universe. No finite being can alter them. Ignoring these absolutes does not nullify their truth or their importance for you. The more you appreciate the God of absolutes and align your views with God's, the closer you come to an eternally meaningful experience.

Proposition: Contemplate absolutes and discover more about God. Share the truth of God with others, so that we can all appreciate our meekness compared to an infinite being. Such humility will contribute to a more harmonious society.



JEREMY ENGLAND, Ph.D.

**PHYSICIST, ORDAINED RABBI, RHODES SCHOLAR, OPPENHEIM
AWARD WINNER, MODERN DAY CHARLES DARWIN**

Jeremy England is a theoretical physicist who got his start in the Boston area but now lives with his family in Israel. A native of New England, he received his technical training at Harvard (bachelors *summa cum laude* in Biochemical Sciences), Oxford (as a Rhodes scholar), and Stanford (Ph.D. in Physics, on a Hertz fellowship).

He has been a visiting scientist at the Weizmann Institute, a lecturer and research fellow at Princeton, and until 2019 he was an associate professor in the physics department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Now a Principal Research Scientist at Georgia Tech's School of Physics, and Senior Director in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning at GlaxoSmithKline, Jeremy conducts both basic research on the origins of life and applied research in the area of precision medicine.

As a scientist who has also received orthodox rabbinical ordination (from Rav Chaim Brovender), Jeremy is keenly interested in the intersection between ideas from Torah and from science. He is author of a book about both topics, entitled *Every Life Is On Fire*.

The Creator Speaks Through All Creations

BY JEREMY ENGLAND

IF YOU WANT to understand how to know that God is there, the key is to recognize that there are other things that you think you know unquestionably, which are really just assumptions that you have found empirically useful. The whole fabric of your sensory experience (sights, sounds, etc.) can be parsed in different ways,¹ but we usually take it as given that when we see and hear what seems like a person talking to us, this means there's a partner – an independent agent, a being with whom we can communicate – who is trying to send us a message. The reason we stick with this approach to interpreting what we sense is that it seems to work really well. By assuming the “people-shaped” parts of what we sense represent agents with thoughts and emotions like our own, we do a good job of predicting what we are going to see and hear next; indeed, every successful conversation involves making accurate predictions about what we'll sense over the course of the exchange.

In principle, the idea of conversing with the world's Creator works exactly the same way. Just as our fundamental belief in the reality of other people really rests on how successfully we've predicted our own experiences using the modeling assumption of their personality, so too can our belief in God become a testable method for interpreting events of the world and our lives. You can start by asking: Given

what I observe and experience or hear about happenings in the world, what might these data tell me about the will of an all-powerful individual who meticulously chose every detail of these occurrences? Once I understand something about that will, does that help me to know about what will happen in my life and in the world? If so, then I have attained a state of mind that can fairly be called a practical and workable belief that God is there.

The problem, of course, is that the world is too vast and complex, and our knowledge of the world too simple and incomplete, for us to make much progress understanding the will of our Creator just by puzzling over the fragments of information we get from our own experience. This is why the Hebrew Bible was written down. By making numerous, highly specific, and substantive claims about the world's Creator (such as: God is merciful, God freed the Israelites from Pharaoh's enslavement, God loved Abraham), it means to give us a head start on how to know a bit about the God of Israel and what God wants from us. The most deeply-rooted and resilient belief in the God of Israel comes from studying what is taught about God and then trying to see whether these claims about God's personality make the world easier to predict and understand over the course of time. There's no shortcut to this kind of faith: as we walk the path, God teaches us to know and trust God.



“How is it possible for the sphere
to continue to revolve without
having anyone controlling it?
Who is causing it to revolve?
Surely, it does not cause
itself to revolve.”¹

ABRAHAM

FIRST MONOTHEIST (1813-1638 BCE)



ITTY KAY

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S EDUCATOR AND MENTOR

Itty Kay is a passionate educator, beloved teacher, and mentor at Bais Chana Women International, a place of learning and connection for Jewish women – from adolescents to grandmas.

In 2011, Kay discovered Bais Chana and was enchanted with the real-life wisdom and community it offers women from all walks of life. Today she dedicates countless hours teaching there, responding to women's real-life questions and struggles with timeless wisdom from Torah. In addition to poring over classic Torah and Chabad Chassidic texts and listening to lectures from scholars in the field, her wisdom is honed in hours-long exchanges with the strong, thoroughly knowledgeable women in her life, studying and debating each subject from many angles together.

Beyond teaching women and raising her talented young son, Kay dedicates significant time volunteering as a mentor for women in need.

Kay's ultimate goal is to empower and unite women globally. Her dream is that "No woman should feel alone or think the answers to her struggles are across the world or at the bottom of a pill bottle." Her recent creation, The Responsive Heart™ course at Bais Chana, has received rave reviews, mirroring the success of her other courses. Find her classes at baischana.org.

The Thought-Mistake

BY ITTY KAY

IMAGINE YOUR FRIEND “Sarah” is married to a wonderful man. But... he’s constantly studying other women. When confronted he explains: “I’m just keeping an open mind. Is she the best wife for me? Did I make the right choice? Maybe there’s someone better for me out there? How can I be certain she’s my soulmate? I have a brain. Am I supposed to shut it off and stay in this marriage with blind faith?”

Not only will this kind of thinking destroy a marriage, but the deeper tragedy is that in the husband’s loyalty to supposed rationality, he’s neglecting to use his intellect for its currently intended purpose: to get to know his wife.

The best use of intelligence, once married, is to study *each other*. Discover your partner’s virtues, learn their desires, wishes, and strengths. Understand their fears, pains, and insecurities. Study the details, great and small, that make them your unique and wonderful match during this lifetime. Seek to uncover more and get closer every day. If, after years of marriage, you love your spouse as on your wedding day... how terrible! The longer you know each other, the stronger your love should grow. Now that’s using your mind.

In the same vein, dedicating our intelligence to deliberating God’s existence is not the reason we’re here. It’s not that we’re being asked to believe blindly. There’s ample evidence. It’s just that if God *chooses to hide Himself* to give us freedom to choose whether to find Him or ignore Him, then we’re not going to outmaneuver God and present proof that’s incontrovertibly acceptable to all. We’re not

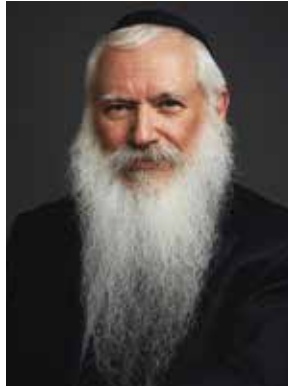
going to rob deniers of their God-given freedom to choose to deny.

For those who seek Him, evidence of God is everywhere. In fact, to reject God, one must shut one’s eyes and willfully ignore the fact that every being, system, and pattern in our magnificently complex universe points to an intentional designer.¹ One must ignore a history rich with God’s direct communication² and millennia of nature-defying miracles. Most painfully, one must suppress one’s inner voice that cries out with the deepest yearning; to live the purpose for which we’ve been created, by a Creator Who yearns infinitely back for our participation and closeness.

When choosing God, the process, for some, necessitates a “dating” stage, i.e., time dedicated to researching whether He’s The One and using your intellect to explore the science and history, and examine the evidence for God’s existence.

But don’t get trapped in the biggest thought-mistake of your life. Don’t remain in the dating mindset forever. What’s our intelligence for?³

As with the example above, the relationship is already in progress; Creator and creation immutably intertwined. Our intellect is for studying *Him*! Dare to get to know Him. Seek to grow intimately familiar with every detail of His wishes and dreams. Open your mind and fall in love with the other half of your soul, your life force, your Creator who’s patiently waiting for you to love back.



RABBI MANIS FRIEDMAN

THE MOST POPULAR RABBI ON YOUTUBE

Rabbi Manis Friedman uses ancient wisdom and modern wit to captivate audiences around the world. He is recognized for his thoughtful approach to almost every major issue that plagues society, from self-awareness to spirituality, mysticism, sexuality, parenting, and marriage. His thousands of students and fans attest to his wisdom and compassion. When he takes the podium, Rabbi Friedman inspires his listeners with a sense of purpose and direction.

Rabbi Friedman has written five books with more on the way, and has been featured on programs such as CNN, PBS, BBC, A&E, and TEDx.

He is YouTube's most popular rabbi, with millions of listeners tuning into his daily content. Please visit itsgoodtoknow.org for access to all that Rabbi Friedman has to offer.

Why Does a Primary Being Matter?

BY MANIS FRIEDMAN

THE QUESTION OF whether we originated from a Primary Being is not as compelling as the quest to understand the nature of that Primary Being. Dry reasoning would lead one to conclude that we couldn't have sprung from nowhere and nothing. But what a thrill it would be if we could hear from that Primary Being, and perhaps gain an insight into what inspired a perfect, at-peace Primary Being suddenly to create.

Thankfully, we have the Torah (sometimes referred to by other religions as the "Old Testament"), which is just that: a direct, lucid communication from the Creator to the created. This "Guidebook" has been often imitated, was never duplicated, and is often underappreciated. Like a graphologist who can learn all about a person from his handwriting, ancient wisdom through the ages has come to know the Creator intimately through the letters the Creator wrote us in the Torah.

Here is what we have learned:

The reason for the popular but mistaken notion that we come from nothing is simply a misunderstanding of the word "nothing." While it is hurtful to the Creator if we dismiss the Creator as nothing, it is completely accurate to say that the Creator is no-thing; no particular, measurable, definable thing. The Creator is no mere thing; the Creator is everything, and includes everything. The Creator is not,

however, comprised of every thing. Having a Creator who is greater than the sum of all things makes creation volitional and purposeful.

In an act of Divine generosity, the Creator created things, which brought about the precious reality we call our life. It is composed of infinite things, including our own selves. And with a pleading that seems downright motherly in its sense of alarm and urgency, the Creator has asked us to reverse engineer the world - one thing at a time - back into everything, by revealing the Creative energy in it. This is also known as "*doing a mitzvah*" (a commandment from God).

In this way, it is a marriage of our forces. The Primary Being compresses infinity and everything-ness into things and the created beings learn to transform physical matter and thing-ness into holiness.

It is this that the Creator envisioned when deciding to create something out of everything. To ask why the Creator finds us important and interesting is just a bit more insensitive and unreasonable than asking a mother why she feels so strongly about her children.

The big question cannot be whether we were created, but rather what we were created for. Then, instead of obsessing idly over the mystery of our existence, we can obsess productively over what good we are doing with it.



RABBI YOSEF MARCUS

**BEST-SELLING AUTHOR, INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED RABBI,
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He lives in San Mateo, CA, with his wife, Esty Marcus, director of the acclaimed Chai Preschool, and their six children. He can be reached at rabbi@chabadnp.com.

On the Google Motto: “Don’t Be Evil”

BY YOSEF MARCUS

IMAGINE DISCOVERING A Florsheim shoebox in the Mojave Desert. You open it and find the following: a can of WD-40, an iPhone 7, and a well-worn copy of Kurt Vonnegut’s *Bluebeard*. You’re told those items evolved on their own, from nothingness, over billions of years of evolution. Yep.

The universe is vastly more complex than an iPhone, so the case for a Creator is not hard to make. But can we demonstrate the existence of a Creator who is interested in this world, in morality, in you and me? In many circles, especially in academia and popular media, belief in such a being is portrayed as old-fashioned and naïve.

So, believing in “God” often means going against the grain.

Yet you’re considering it. Because you’re wondering: If there is no Creator, or if that Creator is too busy or aloof to care, why am I searching for “meaning” and doing “good”?

Sure, it’s embedded in most societies by now to not be evil, and it *feels* good to *do* good. But what makes good, good, and evil, evil? On what basis *should* I follow Google’s former motto “Don’t Be Evil”?

Is there a good reason to act morally and ethically other than to avoid feeling “yucky”? (Moral relativists have been trying to cure us of this aversion for millennia. Doesn’t seem to be working.)

So, consider: Maybe I feel good when I do

good because deep down, I know it’s Good. Maybe some things feel wrong because deep down I know they’re Wrong. Which means that deep down, I believe in an objective morality. Which means that deep down, I believe in a Source, a Being *from whom that morality stems*. Which means... maybe I’m not such an atheist after all?

Jews claim that objective morality – as opposed to whatever your favorite editorial page has decided on any given day – was unveiled 3,335 years ago in the Sinai desert. They say that God came to have a schmoose with an entire people, to tell the world how to live. Now if they concocted the story, why has no other religion come along with a similar tale? It’s not like anybody’s ever been shy about borrowing ideas. Yet *every* other religion claims its origin to be a revelation to one or a few people. The Sinai anomaly makes sense only if it never happened before and was never repeated.

So, what happened at the Sinai schmoose? God revealed that there’s more to life than physical existence. That we are more than our physical bodies – we are souls. That to be truly happy and fulfill the purpose of our existence, we must live a life that reflects the goodness of our Creator. To respect every human life, honor our parents, to be honest, kind, and generous. To stand up to bullies and protect the vulnerable.

So, trust your instinct – God is real. And there’s a piece of the Divine in your own heart.



RABBI JOEL WOLF, M.D.

INTERVENTIONAL RADIOLOGIST, ORDAINED RABBI, TALMUDIC EXPLORER

Joel Wolf is an interventional radiologist and an ordained orthodox rabbi residing in the Greater Philadelphia area. Since his youth he has studied Talmud, psychology, and philosophy with his father, Daniel Wolf, also a physician and an ordained orthodox rabbi. They both studied under and received their rabbinic ordination from Rabbi Yisroel Chait at Yeshiva B'nei Torah in Far Rockaway, NY.

Joel attended the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and completed his radiology residency and interventional radiology fellowship at the hospitals of Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, NY. He continues to explore Talmud, philosophy, and other areas of knowledge during his free time.

My Father's Rational Proof of God

BY JOEL WOLF

A RATIONAL PROOF OF God's existence is premised on the fact that what we can observe (the outcomes of all of the principles of the universe) would have developed quite differently than it did, had there not been an external cause. The only way to reconcile this inconsistency is if there is an existence external to and more primary than the universe. Furthermore, this existence caused the universe to unfold in the ways that we currently observe. In this light, my father, both a Talmudist and a physician, shared with me a proof of God's existence that he thought up when he was a university student.

The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that everything in the universe tends toward disorder, called entropy (often defined as the degree of disorder or randomness in a system). We see this when we release a drop of dye into water. As time goes on, the concentrated drop diffuses through the water and ultimately comes to an equilibrium concentration, which is its most stable state.

If the universe is infinite years old, then that would imply that there is infinite entropy – that the degree of disorder is infinite. If this were true, logically, there would be no observable organization to the universe. However, we can

clearly see that this is not true, as everywhere we look, we see order. For example, the cell is an organized entity made up of proteins that are organized molecules, organs are organized cells, and animals are multi-organ systems that operate in concert. If order were to fail, these organisms would cease to exist.

This organization is not limited to the world of biology. Every aspect of our universe demonstrates order. There are ecological systems, weather systems, and cosmological systems, to name a few, all built on the interaction of multiple sets of principles.

Clearly, infinite disorder – entropy – does not exist. That leaves only two possibilities: Either, we have disproved the Second Law of Thermodynamics and can throw out hundreds of years of scientific inquiry. Or, we must assume that there is an existence outside of the universe that caused it to come to be, and that designed the universe in a way that allowed ordered systems to emerge despite the second law of thermodynamics. It is through this order that we can study the universe and see scientific principles at play. By analyzing the order of the universe, we gain insight, albeit rough and imprecise, into the nature of this external existence. We call that existence God.



DAVID SUISSA

PUBLISHER AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE LA JEWISH JOURNAL

David Suissa is the Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of the Los Angeles Jewish Journal, which the American Jewish Press Association named best Jewish paper in the country two years in a row.

For the past 15 years, David has been writing a weekly column in the Journal that earned him the L.A. Press Club's "Best Columnist" award and the American Jewish Press Association's first prize for Editorial writing.

Before becoming a journalist, David was the founder and CEO of Suissa Miller Advertising, a marketing firm that USA Today named Agency of the Year. He sold the company in 2005 so that he could dedicate himself full-time to the Jewish world.

David was born in Morocco and grew up in Montreal, where he graduated from McGill University in 1978. He now lives with his family in a Jewish neighborhood of Los Angeles that reminds him a little of his old neighborhood in Casablanca.

Going Up with an Atheist

BY DAVID SUISSA

OK, WE'RE IN the elevator. The person I'm talking to does not believe in God, and is adamant that there can never be any proof that God exists.

Wish me luck. I'll need it.

In the art of persuasion, one of the first things you learn is to get a "head nod." No matter how far apart you may be, find something, anything, about which the other party can agree.

So I move in, gently...

"OK," I start, "Let's say for the sake of discussion that I agree with your assumption that no one can ever show you proof that God exists?"

I see a small head nod.

"Now," I continue, "would you agree in return with my own assumption that no one can ever show *me* proof that God does *not* exist?"

Silence. No movement. No head nod. This is a tough cookie.

"I'm just reaching for fairness here," I say. "I give a little, you give a little."

Grudgingly, I see a head nod.

"OK," he says, "I see that no one can ever show you proof that God does *not* exist. But what's your point?"

"My point," I reply, "is that now we have something to talk about. We've gone from being in two different neighborhoods to being in the same home, even if we're not yet in the same room. Now we're close enough to hear each other."

"OK," he says, "but what do you want me to hear?"

"Only one thing," I reply. "If the concept of

'Divine proof' turns you off, listen only to what God means to me, and promise me that you'll incorporate that in your future calculations. Fair enough?"

"Sure, why not?" he says.

I had very little time. I had to find a way to summarize countless volumes of deep thought into a few lucid insights. How is that even possible?

I jumped without a net and hoped for the best.

"God is the oxygen that keeps me breathing every day and brings out the best in me."

"How so?" he asked.

"If I believe God is our Creator," I reply, "I automatically have an opportunity to say 'thank you' for this greatest of gifts we call 'Life.' And I *love* showing gratitude."

"But you said God also brings out the best in you," he says. "How so?"

"I'm at my best when I'm both humble and confident. Knowing that God is all-powerful keeps me humble and not full of myself."

"But how does that keep you confident?" he asks.

"Having faith in God teaches me to have faith in myself," I reply. "I love the very idea of having faith. It reduces my anxiety. It reminds me I'm not alone."

"Do you have any proof for that?" he asks.

"The only proof I have," I reply, "is my happy and meaningful life."

And just as I said "life," the elevator door opened.

"Thank God we're in a very tall skyscraper," he said. "Gave us just enough time."



Closing Remarks



RABBI YAAKOV WOLBE

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

As the Director of Outreach at TORCH (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.

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Closing Remarks

BY YAAKOV WOLBE

DOES 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.

“The heavens recite
the glory of God,
and the sky tells of
the work of His hands.”²

KING DAVID

ISRAEL'S SECOND KING WHO REIGNED FOR 40 YEARS (1040-970 BCE)



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.

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. Chapter 4 - Introduction to Judaism (Unity Program Teacher's Guide, sixth ed.)
2. Psalm 19

AARON ZIMMER

1. Roger Penrose, *The Emperor's New Mind: Concerning Computers, Minds, and the Laws of Physics* (1989), p. 179.

JOE BINGOLD

1. See Part I of *Dogmatic Theology* by Vladimir Lossky, translated by Anthony Gythiel; *Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press*, Yonkers, New York 10707 2017.

JEREMY ENGLAND

1. Do you see a number of animals, or a herd? A collision, or a crime?

ITTY KAY

1. *Proof of the Existence of G-d*, Rabbi Nissan Dovid Dubov, Chabad.org
2. *Logical Proof of the Revelation at Mt. Sinai*, Correspondence by Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, Chabad.org
3. “Know G-d,” Rambam's Mishneh Torah, Yesodei HaTorah, ch. 1, including fn. 1, Chabad.org; “In all your ways, know Him,” Proverbs 3:6; “...this is the whole man and the purpose of his creation, that one may know the glory of G-d and the majestic splendor of His greatness, each according to the limit of his capacity, as is written in *Raaya Mehemna*, *Parashat Bo*: ‘In order that they may know Him,’” Tanya ch. 44; “The land will be filled with the knowledge of G-d like the waters cover the sea bed.” Isaiah 11:9. The first three quotes refer to our task of getting to know God. The final one references the future, when we will achieve this goal.

About The Artist



ANDI ARNOVITZ

WORLD-RENOWNED MULTI-MEDIA CONCEPTUAL ARTIST

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

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

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

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

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

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BRUCE LICHT

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

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

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

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