



PETER HIMMELMAN

ROCK AND ROLL PERFORMER, SONGWRITER, FILM COMPOSER, VISUAL ARTIST AND AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

Peter Himmelman is a Grammy and Emmy nominated rock and roll performer, songwriter, film composer, visual artist and award-winning author. He has been profiled in Time Magazine, Rolling Stone, The Wall Street Journal, Tablet, and NPR. Founded in 2011, his company Big Muse, has worked with organizations such as The Wharton School, McDonald's, Gap Inc., Boeing, Coca-Cola, and The United States Army War College to help leaders and their teams experience a more unfettered relationship with their innate creativity.

Peter's new book is entitled, *Suspended By No String: A Songwriter's Reflections On Faith Aliveness and Wonder* (Regalo Press).

The Same God You Don't Believe In, I Don't Believe In

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I often wonder why spirituality, which is itself an irrational and decidedly mystical idea, has gained more traction with so-called rational people than has God? I've heard grown men and women beseeching the "universe" for help with business decisions, weight loss, and romantic relationships, as if the universe possesses a power that God lacks — as if praying to the universe is logical but praying to God is not.

I'll admit, I'm hesitant about writing, or even reading, anything that attempts to "sell God." As if God needed me as a pitchman. And yet, I frequently talk about God with friends and family members for whom the term "God" is politicized, and of late, on the verge of dangerous. Through their negative experiences with "organized" religion, they have concluded that belief in God is little more than a crutch or a childish fantasy. I have to admit, there's a certain reasonableness to those opinions. I once held them myself, and rather vehemently.

In my childhood home, God didn't come up much, if at all. Ironically, no discussion of God took place at my synagogue or the after-school Hebrew school my friends and I attended. In that theologically void space, I was left only with what I'd gleaned about God from TV and the unfathomable prayerbook that I was forced to pretend I was reading on High Holy Days. The limited, anthropomorphized image of God that formed in my mind, wasn't real; it couldn't possibly be real. And so, I did what any bright child would do, I rejected that sort of god. There's an age-old Chassidic joke that addresses this far better than I can: A rabbi is walking to synagogue to pray on Yom Kippur, the most important holiday in Judaism, a day on which the use of fire is prohibited. On his way, he sees one of his congregants smoking a pipe. The rabbi asks, "Are you aware that smoking is prohibited today?" The congregant says, "Yes, I'm aware of the prohibition, but I don't believe in God." To which the rabbi calmly answers, "I understand completely. The same God you don't believe in, I also don't believe in."

Of course, because both God and spirituality transcend the physical, neither can ever be proved or disproved. But there is one thing I am certain of: The preponderance of the evidence that I've accumulated over my lifetime has convinced me that it is simply more plausible to conclude that God exists.

I'm looking out my window right now. The leaves of the maple trees are turning a dark crimson; the hawks are swooping down into the field to catch a fat rabbit or a squirrel; the clouds are gray and heavy in the stillness of a foreboding sky. I ask myself, how could this possibly be happening through what Einstein called "a roll of the dice"? Perhaps it's because I've been a creator for most of my life that I find it so difficult to perceive of a universe without God.