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Elevator Pitches for God



by Ron Kardos and Bruce Licht April 7, 2024 16 min read



Five personal perspectives on why believe in God.

If you ask 1,000 people why they believe in God, you are likely to get 1,000 different answers. The recently published book, [Elevator Pitches for God](#), presents 70 of them. Ron Kardos and Bruce Licht spread their net far and wide, reaching out to thought leaders – including scientists, mathematicians, political leaders, journalists, corporate executives, artists, radio hosts, and professors – whose positions, perspectives, and backgrounds inform their belief, and whose responses speak to our hearts and minds. Their essays

touch on beauty, nature, music, physics, biology, chemistry, technology, archeology, and much more, making this a must-read for everyone, believers or not.

Here are five short essays, each one no longer than 500 words. [Click here](#) to order this unique, fun and thought-provoking book.

Defying History's Logic

✕

Aish



by Ken Spiro

The first prime minister of Israel, David Ben Gurion once quipped, “In Israel, in order to be a realist, you must believe in miracles.” Ben Gurion was far from being religious, but he knew his Jewish history. As the first leader of a Jewish state in two thousand years and with his profound understanding of both the Bible and four thousand years of Jewish history, he saw something that is hiding in plain sight: The survival and flourishing of the Jews violates all the laws of reason. From the beginning to the present, it is full of contradictory, seemingly impossible, and even miraculous events. There should be no Jewish people and no Jewish state. They are objectively inexplicable without a belief in a higher power involved in guiding human affairs.

Twice in ancient history Jews were exiled from their homeland and were scattered to foreign lands. They suffered slavery, dispersion, forced conversion, execution, ethnic cleansing, and antisemitism – the most persistent, irrational, and violent hatred in history. This should have finished them off long ago. Not only did they survive, they outlasted all the oppressors, enemies, and empires that tried to destroy them: the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Crusaders, Spanish, Ottomans, Nazis, and the Soviet Union.

If their survival weren't miraculous enough, the impact of Jews and Jewish ideas in such a hostile environment is even more inexplicable. Outstanding Jewish personalities such as Einstein and Freud have transformed the world. The 0.2% of the population that is Jewish has won 22% of all the Nobel Prizes since 1901!

For 2,000 years, from the birth of Abraham to the birth of Christianity, the Hebrews were the only people who believed in one God and one absolute standard of morality. Against all odds and millennia of hostility, ethical monotheism transformed the world spiritually, morally, and politically. The Jews' dauntless idea of one God became the foundation for Christianity, Islam, and modern liberal democracy.

In 1948, three years after one-third of world Jewry had been murdered in the Holocaust, this miniscule remnant returned and re-established a state in its ancestral homeland. This was unprecedented. Born in a desert wasteland, with no natural resources, Israel was surrounded by hostile nations who attacked it the moment it was born. For more than 75 years, it has been trapped in an endless cycle of war, terrorism, and existential threats. Yet it has prospered to become the home of half the Jews in the world. Israel, the modern nation, is the most supernatural "cherry" on the "miraculous cake" of Jewish history.

Perhaps Alexander Hamilton said it best:

“Progress of the Jews... from their earliest history to the present time has been and is entirely out of the ordinary course of human affairs. Is it not then a fair conclusion that the cause also is an extraordinary one – in other words, that it is the effect of some great providential plan?”



Rabbi Ken Spiro is a Senior Lecturer for Aish HaTorah, Jerusalem. He is also a licensed tour guide from the Israel Ministry of Tourism. He is the author of WorldPerfect – The Jewish Impact on Civilization (HCI books), Crash Course in Jewish History (Targum Press), and Destiny – Why a Tiny Nation Plays Such a Huge Role in History (Geffen Publishing House).

We Know God By His Effects

by Frank Turek

How 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.



*Dr. Frank Turek is a former US Naval Aviator and 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*.*

The Holocaust and Faith

by Yossi Klein Halevi

However counter-intuitive, my faith in God began with the Holocaust.

I grew up in Borough Park, a Brooklyn neighborhood of Holocaust survivors who were rebuilding, in microcosm, the destroyed world of European Orthodoxy. Their motive wasn't so much faith as loyalty to the Jewish people, to their martyred parents, and to future generations. Yet in reconstructing a world of faith, they were ensuring that God remained part of the Jewish story.

After the war, my father, a survivor from Hungary, abandoned Jewish observance for a time. "God didn't deserve our prayers," he exclaimed. Older, I realized that his rebellion was in fact a peculiarly Jewish affirmation of faith. My father wasn't doubting God's existence; his refusal to pray was an act of protest. Precisely because God was all-powerful, God could have prevented the Holocaust.

My galvanizing moment of faith happened sometime around my bar mitzvah, when I first saw the now-famous photograph of a Jew, wearing prayer shawl and tefillin, surrounded by laughing SS men who are presumably about to shoot him. I understood that photograph as a theological disputation between two opposing worldviews: The German soldiers were insisting on an empty universe, without moral accountability, while the Jew was affirming an intentionally created world. I trusted the Jew as the more dependable witness on the nature of reality.

The very persistence of faith was its own vindication. The Nazis had taken up the pagan taunt against the Jews: Where is your invisible God? The answer of the survivors among whom I grew up was: Here God is, in our stubborn loyalty.

Most of all, the religious survivors believed in the existence and endurance of the soul. Their families and friends had been taken from them only temporarily; the reach of evil was limited to this world. Growing up, I wasn't clear about what we meant by "God," but I knew that my existence wasn't limited to a body.

The Holocaust simultaneously kept me grounded in this world – as a Jew, I needed to be constantly alert to threat, preoccupied with survival – while reminding me of its inherent absurdity. The Holocaust was an event so strange, so irrational, that it upended my faith in reason and taught me to mistrust the world as experienced by the senses alone. I suspected – intuitively knew – that there must be more.

Both the nihilist and the mystic share the same starting point: This world of suffering and death is absurd. But where the nihilist surrenders to the madness, the mystic seeks an alternative reality. Studying the mystical teachings of Judaism as well as of other religions, confirmed by insights from physics about the deceptive solidity of the physical world, I was led to contemplative meditation.

The spiritual path insists that faith alone is no substitute for experience. Meditation offered me a glimpse into an expanded reality, a fluid world of energy and light, in which what replaces fragmented consciousness is the experience of oneness that we call God. Beyond that point is silence.



Yossi Klein Halevi is an award-winning author, senior fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem op-ed writer for leading media outlets, and co-director of the Muslim Leadership Initiative

I Love Being Alive

by Raphael Shore

Most 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.¹

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.

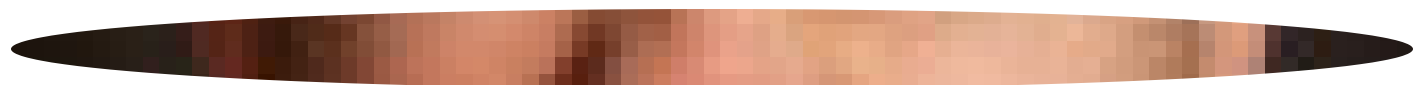
This is because we have a soul. We're body-soul hybrid beings. And if we have a soul, then this world is not purely material; it has a spiritual aspect. There's no possible explanation for our soul's existence other than that it was deliberately created: Random evolution – chance – can only try to explain 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 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.²



Rabbi Raphael Shore is a rabbi, educator, and award-winning film producer. He is also the founder of Clarion Project, a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating the public about the threats of extremism and providing a platform for moderate Muslim voices to educate and inspire.

God As Reality

by Barak Lurie

I was once an avowed atheist. I had determined that God was a tool to manipulate the masses. Devious men wrote the Bible for their own self-aggrandizement. I knew all the terrible history, too: Christianity in particular had been guilty of the Crusades, the Inquisition, priest molestations, and more.

Oh, the horror...

So I dismissed God. Anyone who believed in God was a fool, clutching for soothing answers in an uncaring and brutal universe.

They lived in fear. I didn't.

But questions nagged at me. I knew I had free will and consciousness. How and why do we have such things? What are the chances the Big Bang would result in the universe we now have? What are the chances that earth could form as it did with all the perfections of its ozone layer, its rotation locked in by our moon to create seasons, a perfect distance from the sun and a perfect placement in the Milky Way galaxy? What were the chances that life would form at all, let alone life that could reproduce, evolve into many animals, and culminate in a self-aware human capable of speech and abstract thought?

And if survival and necessity explained everything, then how could one explain our love of music, art, beauty, humor, and storytelling? What of our need for purpose, creation, and happiness? None of these is necessary for our survival.

I had to conclude one thing: However the universe and life started, randomness couldn't explain it. This was the hardest moment in my journey to God. I realized that as an atheist, I hadn't so much not believed in God, as that I hadn't *wanted* to believe in God. Without God, there was no obligation to the past or to the future, only to what I fancied doing in the present. I wanted to believe that my life was finite and would vanish like a flame on a candle. Life was limited to the time between the sunrise of my birth and the sunset of my death.

Why? Because it was easier.

Dismissing a Creator allowed me to live in a world where I could booze it up, sex it up, and do whatever I damn well pleased — steal, lie, and even murder.

But with God in my life, I would be accountable. There was life before my sunrise, and I saw that there would be life beyond my sunset. What I do matters, not just in this life but

beyond. I have obligations to the past and to the future, and to Civilization. It was not just a simple decision of whether to believe or not, It was an epiphany that rocked everything about my sense of life and the universe. It forced me to change who I was. Yes, it was a burden, but it was meaningful and glorious, too.

My atheist's bias had clouded my head, preventing me from entertaining real science, actual logic, and simple observation. The atheist blinds himself to what's right in front of him, starting with his own free will and consciousness.

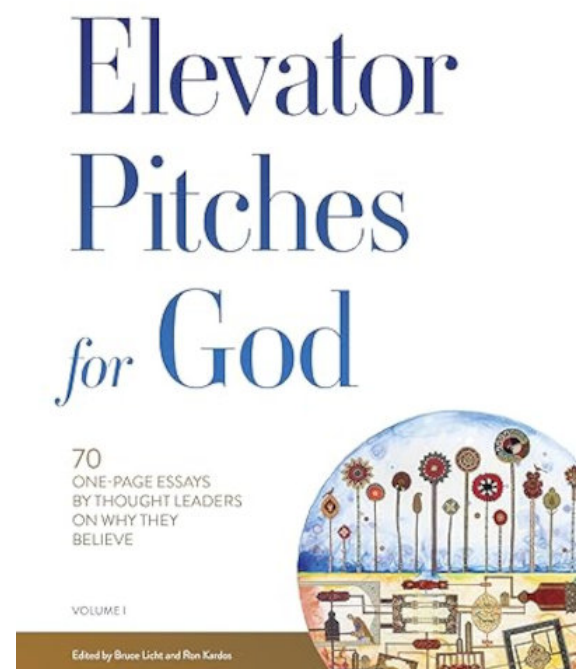
But it's easier.

Barak Lurie is a managing partner of the firm Lurie & Kramer in Los Angeles, California. He obtained his BA with honors at Stanford University in 1985, and his JD and MBA at the UCLA School of Law and Anderson School of Business in 1989. He was the host of The Barak Lurie Show, a #1 Sunday morning radio program in Los Angeles. Barak also hosts the weekly "Barak Lurie Podcast" and bestselling author of Atheism Kills and Rise of the Sex Machines.

[Click here to order your copy of Elevator Pitches for God.](#)

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](#))

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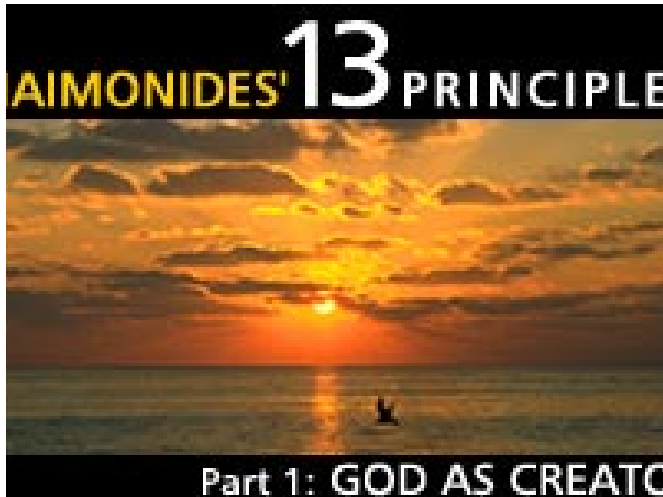
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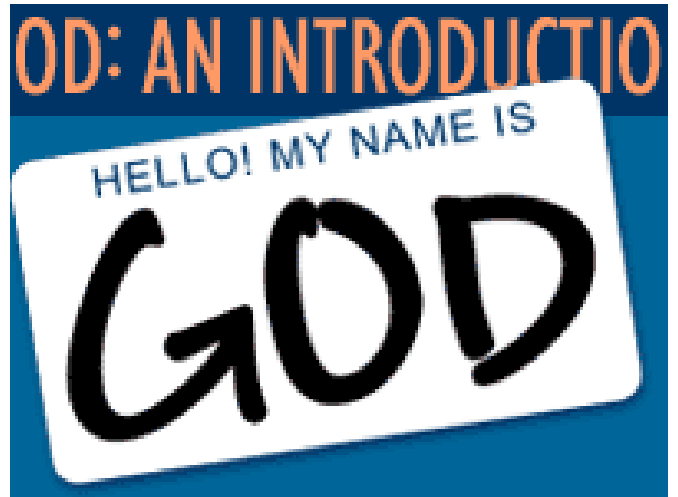


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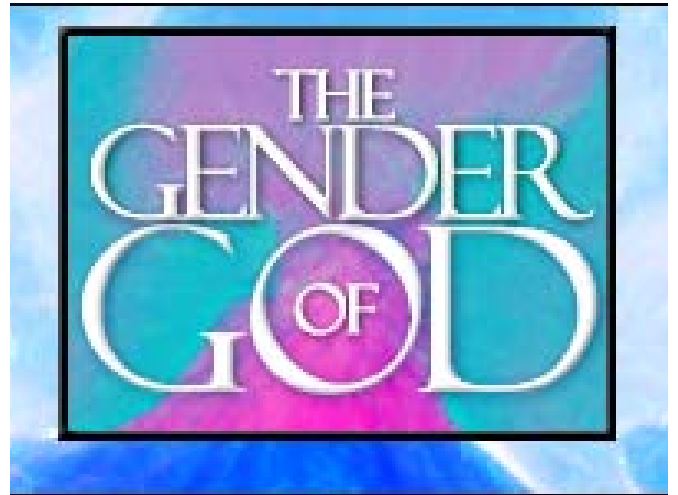
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**Mark** ⌚ 1 year ago

Evolution is G-d's intelligent design.

+ 0 — ➔ Reply

**Carol** ⌚ 1 year ago

Many thanks for this thoughtful group of articles. I especially like that of Yossi Klein HaLevi; appreciate learning about the educational efforts being made by Rabbi Shore; thought Lurie's article was also good, and am glad to have read it and the two articles by Spiro and Turek. Thank you.

+ 0 — ➔ Reply

**ADS** ⌚ 1 year ago

Each of these pitches contains an assertion without evidence. I could point to each but I'll simply mention this one: "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."

Prove it, please!

I would've thought that assertions like this would disappear after seeing how much a simple organism like Covid-19 could change during a 4-year observation period. Just think what could happen in 4 billion years. We've found the fossil records with which to chart the progress.

+ -4 — ➔ Reply

**Max H** ⌚ 1 year ago

Good article - but wish you had stuck to Jewish sources. Dr. Turek clearly states where his faith lies in his book promos.

+ 0 — ➔ Reply

**Mark** ⌚ 1 year ago

➔ Reply to [Max H](#)

His comment, '...we don't need any kind need scripture to know this' is most disagreeable.

+ 0 - ↪ Reply



jimbo6 ⌚ 1 year ago

Thank you Aish for posting this article. It was very enjoyable to read the reasons why different people believe in God.

+ 2 - ↪ Reply

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