

"God is not Great" – על היציגים – אַתְאִיזָם
 לע מה שתשיב לאפיקורוס
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Christopher Hitchens, God Is Not Great

There are four irreducible objections to religious faith:

- (1) that it wholly misrepresents the origins of man and the cosmos,
- (2) that because of this original error it manages to combine the maximum of servility [abject submissiveness, התרפסות] with the maximum of solipsism [self is all that exists, אנוכיות],
- (3) that it is both the result and the cause of dangerous sexual repression [דיכוי מינית],
- (4) and that it is ultimately grounded on wish-thinking.

~ On the Origins of the Cosmos ~

Universe described according to ONE of three possible models:

- **Static:** never changing
- **Closed:** "Balloon" constantly expanding and contracting
- **Open:** "Balloon" exploding (aka "Big Bang")

Dr. Robert Jastrow (Director, NASA Goddard Space Center), on the "Big Bang"

"This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but the theologians. They have always accepted the word of the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason the story ends like a bad dream, he has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; he pulls himself over the final rock where he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries"

Stephen Hawking – confirms Jastrow's experiments

Many people do not like the idea that time has a beginning probably because it smacks of divine intervention, but present evidence suggests that the universe will probably expand forever."

תלמוד בבלי מסכת סנהדרין דף צז עמוד א

... תניא כותיה דרב קטינא: כשם שהשביעית משמטת שנה אחת לשבע שנים, כך העולם משמט אלף שנים לשבעת אלפים שנה, שנאמר ונשגב ה' לבדו ביום ההוא, רש"י משמט - ונעשה חרב.

~ On the Origins of Man ~

Dr. Harold Morowitz (Yale, Physicist) – chance of one bacterium (2000 enzymes) evolving on Earth is 1 in $10^{100,000,000,000}$ and for a human (25,000 enzymes) is 1 in $10^{1,250,000,000,000}$

Sir Fred Hoyle (1915-2001, English Astronomer, mathematician)

[It is more likely that] a tornado sweeping through a junkyard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the materials therein.

Sir Francis Crick (Nobel Prize for DNA)

An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going.

Michael Denton (Molecular Biologist), "Evolution a Theory in Crisis"

Nothing illustrates clearly just how intractable a problem the origin of life has become than the fact that world authorities can seriously toy with the idea of panspermia.

Stephen Hawking, A Brief History of Time, p122

The whole of history of science has been the gradual realization that events do not happen in an arbitrary manner, but that they reflect a certain underlying order.

~ On Servility and Solipsism / התרפסות ואנוכיות ~

Hitchens: "Religion denigrates our morality ... as if without religion we wouldn't know right from wrong ... [by saying this] our self-respect is impugned in the most deep way." דת משמיצה את המוסריות שלנו ... כאילו ללא דת לא היינו מבחינים בין טוב ורע. ... (באמירה זו) הכבוד העצמי שלנו נפגע באופן הכי עמוקה שיש.

Berkovitz, God, Man And History, p16-20 ~ relationship / יחס אישי ~

Everything in the Bible is communication between God and man; everything is relationship. [The relationship is established through revelation, primarily that at Sinai, but also through the prophets throughout the generations] ... p18 The most wonderful aspect of revelation, then, is not its content, but its possibility: Not the word of God, but the encounter itself. ... Before anything else, it is not an idea conveyed, but a relationship formed. ... p20 ... the very fact of the encounter reveals to man one of the most significant aspects of his nature – that he is worthy on the encounter.

Berkovitz, God, Man And History, p89-90 ~ confidence, dignity / אימון וכבוד ~

The essence of the law is the same as that of the encounter itself: It is an expression of God's continued concern with man. That God commands man is proof that he considers man. The law represents the highest affirmation of man, as well as his crowning dignity. By giving man the law, his Maker declares: I do care how he lives and what he does with his life. ... p90 The law is a measure of confidence in man.... I order you because I know you can do it.

Berkovitz, p92-94 ~ reason v revelation / תבונה לעמות התגלות (גילוי רצון) ~

Was [God's law] valid because it conformed to reason or because God willed it? ... [but really a law not subject to test of reason is worthless; however justification in reason makes not revelation superfluous]. p104 Their dilemma was due to the confusion between logical validity and ethical obligation.

טעות העולם המערבי שנרשמה מהיוונים הייתה שתבונה גם מגדיר גם מחייב וגם מניע פעולות

Berkovitz, God, Man And History, p102 ~ reason defines, obligates, compels ~

The misunderstanding of the function of reason has been the tragic mistake which the Western world inherited from the Greeks. ... Once it could be shown that an ethical principle was reasonable, the need to prove that it was also obligatory was hardly appreciated. It was taken for granted that reasonable was also obligatory. Similarly, it was assumed that once reasonableness of the good was understood, reason itself would cause man to act ethically. Reason was believed to have authority, as well as the power to compel.

hypothesis: reason -> obligation -> acts חבונה -> חיוב -> פעולה

Berkovitz, p103 ~ desire and will obligate / רצון ובחירה מחייבם (ולא תבונה) ~

But reason as such may neither command nor induce action. Reason is the faculty of understanding ... Reason may tell the difference between right and wrong, perhaps even between good and evil. It cannot, however, provide the obligation for doing good and eschewing evil. The source of all obligation is a will, and the motivation of a will is a desire....Reason may describe what is; it cannot prescribe what ought to be.

desire -> will -> obligation רצון -> בחירה -> חיוב

Berkovitz, p104 ~ obligation through revelation / חיוב ע"י התגלות (גילוי דעת) ~

A man may recognize something to be good. If he desires it, determining his own course of action by his desire-motivated will, he becomes his own lawgiver. Or society may be the source of the law; desiring certain common objectives, it may safeguard them by legislation. The essence of justice may be described in terms of reason; its obligation must be forever based on will. This, however is tantamount to saying that all law derives its authority from some form of "revelation." The lawgiver must make his will known to establish the law.

Berkovitz, p106 ~ subjective v objective / סובייקטיבי לעומת אובייקטיבי ~

... a law instituted by a will of relative authority admits of compromise for the sake of expediency; the law of absolute authority will not be overruled by such considerations. All secular ethics lack the quality of absolute obligation. They are as changeable as the desires and the wills that institute them; the law of God alone is as eternal as his will. Secular ethics, derived as it must be from a relative will, is subjective; God alone is the source of objectivity for all value and all law.

קידושין לא. אמר רבי חנינא: גדול מצווה ועושה ממי שאינו מצווה ועושה.

Berkovitz, God, Man And History, p106 ~ conduct ~

It is not enough, of course, to be able to point to the source of the obligation of ethical principles. As already indicated, the task is to induce man to implement the demands of morality in human conduct.

Source (e.g., reason, divine) -> obligation (i.e., revealed law) -> conduct

חוקים ומשפטים – חוקים לאמן – הרי כאן הבנה עמוקה של המילה "אמונה"

Berkovitz, God, Man & History, p110-6 ~ ritual law: ethical training ~

... It is to the problem of ethical practice, of how to induce man to live in accordance with an ethical code which he acknowledges intellectually or by faith, that the seemingly irrelevant elements in the system of Jewish law provide the solution. ...p116 ... [The "ritual laws" train man toward ethical conduct.] The aim is to teach purely subjective emotions, needs, and desires a new "awareness," one which is foreign to the organic component of the human personality. It is the *awareness of the other* ... The purpose of the inhibitive rules is to practice saying "no" to self-centered demands; whereas the fulfillment of the positive commands is the exercise of saying "yes" in consideration of an order different from ones own. By such training, one breaks down the exclusiveness of man's organic selfishness.

– לעומת משפטים שיש להם מקור בתבונה, מקור החוקים הוא אך ורק בהקב"ה –
כך מתפתח היסוד בין אדם למקום

Berkovitz, God, Man And History, p119-122 ~ ritual law to enable relationship ~

But the "ritual laws" are not merely the handmaid of ethics. Their meaning is far from exhausted... p120 ... the basic religious experience is one of relationship between God and man. ... p121 The training by the indirect method conditions the human organism for non-egocentric action; the origin of the law in the divine will, however, turns the non-egocentric conditioning into theocentric behavior. The "awareness" established is not directed merely toward some outside order, but toward a divine one.... p122 By obeying the command of God, the human organism itself becomes related to God; by doing the will of God, it is enabled to enter a relationship with the divine.

"Outrage Reason"

Berkovitz, God, Man And History, p21 ~ Atheism is not reasonable ~

Kant has shown convincingly that the existence or nonexistence of God cannot be determined by speculative reasoning. If human reason is not allowed to deliver the proof for the existence of a Supreme Being – because such a proof would require reason's "transcendental" usage – neither can it provide, on the same grounds, the proof for God's nonexistence. The nonexistence of anything is not experiential and is not, therefore, provable without a "transcendental" use of reason.

... Atheism is to be looked upon not as a reasoned philosophy, but rather as a purely subjective mood.

Berkovitz, God, Man And History, p20-28 ~ the Biblical encounter is reasonable ~

p20 ... we can affirm that the biblical encounter does not represent a logical impossibility, for there is nothing in either the term God or the term man that would contradict the concept of the encounter.

p27 [B]iblical religion, based as it is on man's encounter with God, could be established only by the testimony of the witness. The trustworthiness of the testimony depends, of course, on the nature of the witness.

p28 Without the encounter, the prophetic claim is confounded and the prophet becomes a charlatan or a deluded dreamer. But to assume either of these possibilities of Isaiah or Jeremiah or Hosea or Micah ... would be absurd. If these men were misleading their people knowingly, there is no honesty on earth. ... if they were themselves deluded, then we have to conclude that the condition of man in general must be one of essential delusion...

“Everything goes exactly as expected”

Prof. N. Berdyaev, The Meaning of History, p.86-87

I remember how the materialist interpretation of history, when I attempted in my youth to verify it by applying it to the destinies of the people, broke down in the case of the Jews, where destiny seemed absolutely inexplicable from the materialistic standpoint. And indeed, according to the materialistic and positivistic criterion, this people ought long ago to have perished. Its survival is a mysterious and wonderful phenomenon demonstrating that the life of this people is governed by a special predetermination... The survival of the Jews, their resistance to destruction, their endurance under absolutely peculiar conditions and fateful role played by them in history; all these point to the particular and mysterious foundations of their destiny.

Mark Twain, The Complete Works of Mark Twain, p.286.

If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of stardust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of; but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people . . . His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also away out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in this world, in all the ages; and he has done it with his hands tied behind him. . . The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dreamstuff and passed away, the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?

Berkovitz, God, Man And History, p31

“You are my witnesses, says the Eternal...” Indeed, Israel itself is the witness. The existence, the history, and the survival of the Jewish people are themselves the most imposing witness to the Jewish encounter with God.

Kaplan, The Infinite Light, p12 - King Fredric the Great once asked his Lutheran pastor to provide him with visible proof of God's existence. The pastor answered . . . : "The Jews".

~ Sexual Repression and Wish Thinking ~

Hitchens: Very importantly, the divorce between the sexual life and fear, and the sexual life and disease, and the sexual life and tyranny, can now at last be attempted, on the sole condition that we banish all religions from the discourse. And all this and more is, for the first time in our history, within the reach if not the grasp of everyone.

זוהר (ויקרא טו): למדנו : כאשר נתגבר היצר הרע באדם אינו מתגבר אלא בעריות.

ספר מורה הנבוכים חלק ג פרק מט ... שישה אדם הדברים כלם [ז"א שילך בשביל הזהב], לא ירבה במשגל כאשר אמרנו, ולא יבטל ג"כ לגמרי, אבל צוה ואמר פרו ורבו, כן הכלי הזה יחלש במילה ולא יעקר בחתוך, אבל יונח הענין הטבעי על טבעו וישמר מן התוספת,
ספר מורה הנבוכים חלק ג פרק לג מכלל כוונת התורה השלמה גם כן להרחיק התאות ולבוז בהם ולמעטם בכל יכולת, שלא יכוין מהם אלא ההכרחי, וכבר ידעת שרוב תאות ההמון ושלותם אמנם הוא בהרבות במאכל, ובמשתה, ובמשגל, ... בהמשך אחר התאווה לבד כמו שיעשו הסכלים, יבטלו התשוקות העיוניות ויפסד הגוף ויאבד האדם קודם זמנו הטבעי
ספר מורה הנבוכים חלק ג פרק מט ... אך זה הפעל כלומר המילה לא יעשהו אדם בו או בבניו רק מתוך אמונה אמיתית

Voltaire:

*In the opinion that there is a God,
there are difficulties;
but in the contrary opinion there are
absurdities.*