



## **RABBI RAPHAEL SHORE**

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

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

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

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

# **I Love Being Alive**

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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.<sup>1</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

**Footnotes:**

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)