



BRUCE SILVERMAN

MEDICAL SCHOOL ANATOMY INSTRUCTOR

I was born in New Jersey, went to a Hebrew day school (though my family was not religious) and attended the public high school where, to my parent's dismay, I graduated in the lower third of my class. I then went to a local college and earned a BS degree in biology, before I went on to endure a series of unrewarding jobs in the science tech fields.

I was living with a group of Spiritual Seekers, each studying a different Eastern spiritual path and offering workshops to the community. I came across a book by John C. Lilly called, "*The Center of the Cyclone*," which explores the question of consciousness and the inner world of the mind, refracted through the author's experience in the 1960's using the drug LSD and, particularly, flotation tanks and isolation. John Lilly was doing a workshop at the Esalen Institute (a retreat center in Big Sur California) around a project of his on sensory deprivation and dolphin communication. After attending, I returned to New Jersey, quit my job and headed back to California, to hopefully volunteer and work with his group at Marine World Africa USA. When I arrived, they didn't have room for me.

Here is where I began realizing a fundamental of my life. A concept called, "Hashgacha Pratis" which translates to "Divine Providence." The idea that God watches over me and my life. Somehow, a series of unexplainable events placed me on a different dolphin communications project at Marine World and for eight years, I worked with three dolphins that soon became five when the two females gave birth. I made friends with many trainers and their animals, was in the right place at the right time to meet my wife and we later had two children. It was a dream come true.

It was then that I met David Zeller, an Orthodox Rabbi who was teaching meditation and the deeper mystical meanings behind Judaism. Learning with him over the next twenty years returned me to my Jewish identity. I understood what had been missing in my spiritual journey.

After the dolphin project wound down, a friend mentioned that an Orthodox Jewish Osteopathic Medical school was opening in Vallejo. After an additional series of unexplainable, bizarre events, I was hired to manage the Anatomy Lab and have been there for twenty-four years. I never imagined a job could be better than the one I had at Marine World, but teaching anatomy to healthcare students, the basis of their career, is a humbling gift. Divine Intervention became very real for the kid with no exceptional abilities.

Formed In Wisdom

BRUCE SILVERMAN

In 1999, I was hired to manage the anatomy lab at Touro University College of Osteopathic Medicine. Part of my responsibilities was the care of twenty nine cadavers. I remember the anatomy professors at the medical school explaining that “the cadaver was no longer a person; the person was gone and what was left behind was just a shell.”¹ Every week, we would take them apart, see how they were put together and study them in excruciatingly minute detail. Over the course of decades, I learned a lot about anatomy that I am now a medical school instructor.

Early on, while working with a group of medical students studying the heart and circulatory system, I recalled a prayer I learned in Hebrew school called, “Asher Yatzar.”²

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has formed man in wisdom, and created within him numerous orifices and cavities. It is revealed and known, before the Throne of Your Glory that if but one of them were to be blocked or one of them were to be opened, it would be impossible to exist even for a short while. Blessed are You, Lord, who heals all flesh and performs wonders.

It suddenly struck me how profound and accurate this prayer is. The human body is constructed of miles of tubes, numerous cavities, thousands of valves, exceedingly intricate organs and multiple complex systems. The opportunity for something to go wrong is boundless, yet most of the time it doesn't, and even when it does, it often repairs itself without us ever noticing.

Another similar realization came to me while teaching students about reproduction. Understanding the anatomy of how a sperm cell is made and what it goes through to find the egg is mind staggering. I often say to medical students, “*Look how incredibly complex this is? How is it even possible for women to get pregnant?*” - *But women do!*³ The number of things that can go wrong during a pregnancy is unfathomable, yet most babies are born complete and healthy. Reproduction begins with two cells, a miniscule sperm and a tiny egg, and we get this amazingly complex human body with skin, bones, muscles, organs, arteries and veins. Really?

An even more astounding revelation came to me many years later, while I was looking at separate body parts on a table. It is humbling to realize that with all we have done and all we have learned, we would not know where to even start to try to put this broken shell back together again - let alone breathe life into it.

And this is just what our eyes can see! Now, contemplate what is happening on the next level.⁴ Kabbalah (Jewish mystical teachings) speaks of “Worlds within Worlds within Worlds.”⁵ We have only been given a small peek into the mysteries, wonders and miracles of our creation and existence. What makes all of this possible? If this is not a case for God, I don't know what is!

Footnotes:

1. The professors also strongly stressed that the students should always keep in mind that the cadaver was at one point a living person with a spirit. They selflessly gave their body for the betterment of medical science, and although the cadaver was just a shell at this point, they should be treated with the utmost dignity and respect by the students.
2. Originally found in the Talmud - Berachot 60b – Asher Yatzar was one of the many blessings written and collected by the Sages of the Great Assembly around the period of 410-310 BCE. The blessing is recited after going to the bathroom. It expresses gratitude for your good physical health as well as awe of God's creation of the human body.
3. Sperm cells are manufactured in the testis and stored in the epididymis. During ejaculation they pass through a tube called the ductus deferens as they head to the seminal vesicles and prostate gland. These glands add fluid and it is this fluid, now called semen that is deposited in the vaginal canal. The sperm then have to find a tiny opening in the cervix, swim through the uterus, up the correct fallopian tube (usually only one ovary ovulates each month) and find the egg in a specific location within this tube, in order for fertilization to happen. The fertilized egg then has to continue travelling down the fallopian tube and implant in the uterus to begin the process of becoming human.
4. We know there are forces operating on the human body that we can't see, acting with exact precision and direction. What causes the electrical impulse that causes the heart to beat? How do all our organs do so many different functions yet all work in harmony?
5. Zohar: Written by 2nd century sage, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the Zohar is the classic text of the Kabbalah.