



## **MARK SCHIFF**

### **WRITER, COMEDIAN, AND, ACCORDING TO MY WIFE, "KNOW IT ALL"**

Mark Schiff is a stand-up comedian who has headlined at comedy clubs nationwide, including all the major casinos in Las Vegas and Atlantic City, and toured worldwide with Jerry Seinfeld for fifteen years. Mark has specials on HBO and Showtime, has appeared on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* and *Late Night with David Letterman*, is featured in Seinfeld's Netflix special *Jerry Before Seinfeld* and *Live from the Laugh Factory with Dom Irrera*, and has been the featured act at the Montreal Just for Laughs Comedy Festival. He coedited *I Killed: True Stories of the Road from America's Top Comics* with Ritch Shydner. His new book is *Why Not?: Lessons on Comedy, Courage, and Chutzpah*. He also co-wrote the play *Married People*, with Steve Shaffer, which played to sold-out audiences in Los Angeles in 2019, and *The Comic*, which ran in Los Angeles for ten months as well as at the Aspen Comedy Festival, a regular contributor to LA's *Jewish Journal*, and the host of the podcast *You Don't Know Schiff*. Mark lives in Los Angeles with his first wife, his fifth dog, and photos of his three sons who have all long moved out.

# I'm A Believer

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I was born a believer and I have yet to question or vacillate. God recognized the need to instill in me that He exists; otherwise, I might never have searched for Him.

Like Friedrich Nietzsche, I questioned whether I existed but I never questioned God. The only time I came close to wavering was when my wife screamed at me. I prayed so hard for her to stop, but I guess God felt I deserved it.

I believe in a personal God. What I mean is that God knew me in the womb, my first day outside the womb, and now at the age of seventy-one. Many years ago, when I told someone that God and I were friends, he stared at me like I was a nutcase. But I believe it. And I believe God cares about me. If I ever had any doubts, they were cleared up when I read "*Man Is Not Alone*" by Abraham Joshua Heschel. Heschel wrote that he can't pray to a rock or a tree because they don't understand his emotions. Like Heschel, my God knows what I am going through. In this lonely world, it's good to have a God that understands me.

But God also knew that because I am a weak and frightened person, I needed some proof. So, over the course of my life, He tossed me a few situations that to me were irrefutable. Here are two such incidents.

I was sober for about 30 days when my friend who lived in Las Vegas called and asked if I would be coming to Las Vegas and helping him get sober. He said he was vomiting blood every day because of his drinking. I said I was sorry, I felt bad, but there was just no way I could make it with my work and obligations. Seemingly out of nowhere (but I know it was from somewhere), my agent called and asked if I could leave in the morning for Las Vegas and open for Diana Ross at Caesars Palace because her opener got sick. I went to Las Vegas, made a few bucks and helped my friend get started on the road to recovery. To me, that's a wow.

When I was growing up in New York, I loved going to Yankee Stadium with my father. Years later, when he was dying from cancer, I asked God to keep my dad alive long enough so we could be together to watch one more game. The Almighty came through. I will always cherish the memory of lying next to my father watching the Yankees in the World Series. He died not long after that. Somehow God figured out how we could watch one more game together.

Did God answer my prayers? Absolutely. To me, there couldn't be more convincing proof.