



RABBI CHAIM BUCSKO

SCHOLAR, PHILOSOPHER, 'THE AVERAGE RABBI'

After graduating from high school in Johns Creek, Georgia, Rabbi Chaim Bucsko attended the University of Pittsburgh, where he began to discover the meaning of his Jewish identity. In December of 2009, he participated in a 10-day Birthright trip. While in Israel, he determined that there was more to be learned in the ancient city of Jerusalem than back at university, and canceled his return ticket.

Ten years of full-time study later, he returned to the United States with a wife and children. Having learned and taught at, among other institutions, Aish HaTorah, Rabbi Bucsko brought back the inspiration to share the ancient wisdom of the Torah with the estranged American Jews.

Today, he operates out of Houston, Texas, with TORCH, one of the leading Torah outreach organizations in the United States. He and his wife, Tzaitel, head the newest Jewish community in Texas, "Torchwood," servicing the local millennials and providing an encouraging atmosphere to grow in Jewish learning and commitment. They have three children.

Get a taste of his off-beat style on his YouTube channel where he goes by the moniker, 'The Average Rabbi' at youtube.com/theaveragerabbi.

For podcasts and other content, please visit torchweb.org.

Learn more about the Torchwood community at torchwoodcommunity.org.

Uncomfortable Faith

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Experience has proven the words of 13th century philosopher Thomas Aquinas, "To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without faith, no explanation is possible." But what validity does faith have, if it isn't founded in reason? Furthermore, how and why should "one without faith" acquire it?

Let us address a problem: If God's existence is real, there should be no fact that is more obviously true. For example, we do not require proof of our own existence because it is obvious. This is what Descartes expressed with, "I think, therefore I am." Do not mistake this for a logical proof, because it amounts to saying, "I know I exist because I know I exist." Rather, we know it is true because we experience it imminently. The same should be true of the infinite source of all things' existence, which we call "God." After all, if God does exist, it would be the most basic and fundamental of all facts, and the simpler a truth is, the more apparent it ought to be. Why, then, is the matter of God so vague and confusing?

We are all familiar with confirmation bias – the tendency to interpret reality along the lines of our preconceived notions. We prefer to believe that we are objective observers of our domain, intellectually brave and honest. In reality, what we perceive to be true almost always conforms to what we are *comfortable* believing. With this in mind, we should be wary of all notions that we patently accept as fact, and suspect ourselves of bias. It seems, then, that truth-seeking requires not only fact-finding and philosophical debate, but, primarily, a courageous search of the soul to find and eliminate the bias of comfort. This is most challenging, because it requires the willingness to change, which we always meet with resistance, conscious or otherwise.

An atheist might claim that belief in God and religion is the easy and convenient path – the soothing "opiate of the masses." (Marx) Consider for a moment that it is uncomfortable and distasteful to accept that there is a God. The ego finds it intolerably abrasive to acknowledge a higher authority, let alone to be bound to a moral code.

In actuality, there is no proof of The Almighty, there is only the willingness to accept that we ourselves are not God. Knowing any truth requires the objectivity to accept it, and that objectivity is only possible with the work of subduing the stubborn ego. If we do this work in earnest, then the most obvious fact will become boldly clear to our minds: God is the Creator of all things.

Faith is not "unfounded belief"; it is acknowledgment of the simplest and most difficult truth. And if faith is blind, it is because the ego is blinding. I cannot prove this to you, but I implore you to breach the fortified walls of your heart and fearlessly face what lies underneath, whatever it might be, and Whomever you might find waiting for you.