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For the past 15 years, David has been writing a weekly column in the Journal that earned him the L.A. Press Club's "Best Columnist" award and the American Jewish Press Association's first prize for Editorial writing.

Before becoming a journalist, David was the founder and CEO of Suissa Miller Advertising, a marketing firm that USA Today named Agency of the Year. He sold the company in 2005 so that he could dedicate himself full-time to the Jewish world.

David was born in Morocco and grew up in Montreal, where he graduated from McGill University in 1978. He now lives with his family in a Jewish neighborhood of Los Angeles that reminds him a little of his old neighborhood in Casablanca.

Going Up With an Atheist

DAVID SUISSA

OK, we're in the elevator. The person I'm talking to does not believe in God, and is adamant that there can never be any proof that God exists.

Wish me luck. I'll need it.

In the art of persuasion, one of the first things you learn is to get a "head nod." No matter how far apart you may be, find something, anything, about which the other party can agree.

So I move in, gently...

"OK," I start, "Let's say for the sake of discussion that I agree with your assumption that no one can ever show you proof that God exists?"

I see a small head nod.

"Now," I continue, "would you agree in return with my own assumption that no one can ever show *me* proof that God does *not* exist?"

Silence. No movement. No head nod. This is a tough cookie.

"I'm just reaching for fairness here," I say. "I give a little, you give a little."

Grudgingly, I see a head nod.

"OK," he says, "I see that no one can ever show you proof that God does *not* exist. But what's your point?"

"My point," I reply, "is that now we have something to talk about. We've gone from being in two different neighborhoods to being in the same home, even if we're not yet in the same room. Now we're close enough to hear each other."

"OK," he says, "but what do you want me to hear?"

"Only one thing," I reply. "If the concept of 'Divine proof' turns you off, listen only to what God means to me, and promise me that you'll incorporate that in your future calculations. Fair enough?"

"Sure, why not?" he says.

I had very little time. I had to find a way to summarize countless volumes of deep thought into a few lucid insights. How is that even possible?

I jumped without a net and hoped for the best.

"God is the oxygen that keeps me breathing every day and brings out the best in me."

"How so?" he asked.

"If I believe God is our Creator," I reply, "I automatically have an opportunity to say 'thank you' for this greatest of gifts we call 'Life.' And I *love* showing gratitude."

"But you said God also brings out the best in you," he says. "How so?"

"I'm at my best when I'm both humble and confident. Knowing that God is all-powerful keeps me humble and not full of myself."

"But how does that keep you confident?" he asks.

"Having faith in God teaches me to have faith in myself," I reply. "I love the very idea of having faith. It reduces my anxiety. It reminds me I'm not alone."

"Do you have any proof for that?" he asks.

"The only proof I have," I reply, "is my happy and meaningful life."

And just as I said "life," the elevator door opened.

"Thank God we're in a very tall skyscraper," he said. "Gave us just enough time."