



seebeyond

CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN

See Beyond

Copyright © 2013 by Adventist Media Network.

See Beyond is part of the Beyond the Search® documentary project created by Adventist Media Network in Australia.

The author assumes full responsibility for the accuracy of all facts and quotations as cited in this book.

Bible quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New King James Version.

Copyright © 1994, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Proudly published and printed in Australia by



Warburton, Victoria

Edited by Nathan Brown and Talitha Simmons

Designed by Loopeck Lim and Kym Jackson

Cover photograph by urbancow/istockphoto.com

Cover design by Loopeck Lim

Typeset in in Unifers 11/15

ISBN 978 1 921292 81 1 (print edition)

978 1 921292 82 8 (ebook edition)

To order additional copies of this book or for more information, visit www.beyond.info

Contents

[why](#)

[what's your story?](#)

[the great controversy](#)

[another day in paradise](#)

[truth happens](#)

[where have all the](#)

[heroes gone?](#)

[rescue](#)

[proof of guilt](#)

[signs and laws](#)

[the invincible day](#)

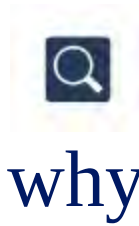
[forgery](#)

[the dead zone](#)

[hell's bell](#)

[when the party ends](#)

[beyond commitment](#)



Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi told of an incident in the concentration camp. A guard was abusing a prisoner and Levi approached to ask why he was doing that. Enraged, the guard knocked Levi to the ground and screamed, “Hier ist kiene warum!”

Translated, this means, “There is no ‘why’ here!”

How often have we struggled with the same thing? There are no “whys” to the questions that need answers—to the things that happen either to us or our loved ones. What about the millions of others—in print, on TV or online—at whose wretched fates we shake our heads, then return to whatever we were doing? The unfairness of their fate chokes us into silence, and their non-answers remain stuck in our throats. All we can do is gasp at the horror of their situations.

Thousands of years ago, the historian Herodotus told of the Getae people and their interesting yet depressingly rational custom. After a birth, the family would sit around the child and mourn “at the thought of all the suffering the infant must endure now that it has entered the world.” In their laments for the newborn, they went through “the whole catalogue of human sorrows” that the person would face. In contrast, their funerals were filled with “merriment and rejoicing,” because the deceased has escaped all the woes of life.

As strange as it sounds, there is a certain, almost-irrefutable logic in this Getae custom. Maybe that’s why babies cry at birth—something unspoken, something hidden, warns them about what will be. Famine, natural disasters, war, pollution, poverty, disease and crime are just part of the “catalogue of human sorrows.”

“History,” wrote Irishman James Joyce, “is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.” But what do we face when we wake from history? Do we face the present, which is no great shakes, or the future, which will

likely be worse than what preceded it?

Look at the world today: natural disasters, one after another, with increasing frequency; man-made environmental hazards (which are only getting worse); and a globalised economy where the tiniest convulsion in one area can cause hardship and financial chaos everywhere else. Whether we like it or not—and we mostly don't—these things are completely out of our control and affect each one of us. Daily news headlines, scientific reports and economic forecasts reverberate with the questions, “What’s going on?” “Who is in control?” and “Where’s it all headed?”

In his novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Czech author Milan Kundera struggled with the seeming meaninglessness of our suffering. Here and then gone forever, human life “is like a shadow, without weight, dead in advance, and whether it was horrible, beautiful or sublime, its horror, sublimity and beauty mean nothing. We need to take no more note of it than of a war between two African kingdoms in the 14th century, a war that altered nothing in the destiny of the world, even if a hundred thousand blacks perished in excruciating torment.”

The real struggles come to us now, with ourselves, our own personal stories and tragedies—not with 14th-century African wars. Again, we can do nothing but choke on the non-answers.

An atheist writer told the story of his infant’s death from a brain tumour. “My baby! My baby! My baby!” he wailed as the child died in the hospital before their eyes. As the infant received intensive care, one of the doctors kept telling him and his wife “to hang in there.” To which he would respond, “There is no other place to hang.”

But if there are no “whys” in this life, what’s the purpose of “hanging in there”—here or anywhere? Similar thoughts no doubt inspired the famous words of Frenchman Albert Camus, who wrote: “There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy.”

Though extreme—and Camus no doubt meant it that way—the question is valid. Is life worth living to begin with, filled with apparent sorrow,

suffering, and emptiness of purpose and meaning?

Most of us would answer “Yes.” Even if we’re not sure of our argument, we are sure that there must be some logical reason.

There are hard issues to think about—we all struggle with them. But are there no good answers out there? Are unanswerable questions about who we are, why we are, what is the purpose of our lives, what does death mean and what is our ultimate fate all we have to look forward to?

The answer depends on the truth about reality, the existence of the world and our place in it. Though coming in various forms, there are two overarching views that dominate human understanding of the big questions regarding existence as a whole and our seemingly insignificant places in it. So common in the secular world today, the first view was succinctly expressed by physicist Steven Weinberg. In an oft-quoted sentence from his book *The First Three Minutes*, he wrote: “The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless.” When this statement caused a furor, he restated it, saying that he didn’t mean that science taught the universe was pointless but simply that “the universe itself suggests no point.” Perhaps the classic response to Weinberg, one that catches the essence of this secular world view, was by Harvard astronomer Margaret Geller, who said, “Why should it [the universe] have a point? What point? It’s just a physical system, what point is there? I’ve always been puzzled by that statement.”

Of course, if the universe is “just a physical system,” then each one of us, individually, is also “just a physical system.” If the big, enduring universe is pointless and meaningless, what does that say about the tiny fleeting specks known as humanity? It says that there is no “why” here: that we are the chance creations of a chance universe. It would mean that nothing planned us, nothing saw us coming and nothing bestows meaning on us. Trying to find purpose amid a purposeless universe is logically impossible—it just isn’t there.

Though arguing that the universe itself is pointless, Weinberg countered that we can, nevertheless, “invent a point for our lives, including trying to understand the universe.”

But why study the pointless—what’s to understand? How is that supposed to give us purpose? Trying to “invent a point for our lives” by seeking to understand a pointless universe is another futile endeavour that makes life seem so meaningless to begin with.

The New Yorker magazine published an article that began with the author talking about an atheist friend. This “philosopher” told him that she sometimes wakes in the middle of the night, stressing over a series of big questions: “How can it be that this world is the result of an accidental big bang? How could there be no design, no metaphysical purpose? Can it be that every life—beginning with my own, my husband’s, my child’s—is cosmically irrelevant?”

If her atheist view of the universe is correct, then yes—it can be. By taking her premises to their logical conclusions, she was confronted with the fact that her life—and all human life—was “cosmically irrelevant.” The atheistic evolutionary model offers no other answers to our questions.

And, yet, how she framed the questions revealed her discomfort and dissatisfaction with this answer. She expressed what many feel—that something’s radically inadequate with the idea that our lives are purposeless, pointless and meaningless. Yet what else could our lives be in a universe that, itself, is purposeless, pointless and meaningless?

Something, both in our hearts and in our heads, says this just can’t be right. The atheistic evolutionary model, in which we are all cosmic accidents, doesn’t seem to fit the reality we face every day. It does not fit the world we live in, or the dreams and aspirations we hold for ourselves. It isn’t just wishful thinking—it’s a logical conclusion to draw from the act of simply being human and living lives filled with purpose from their conception onward.

This leads directly to the second of the two overarching views of reality: the idea of God, especially as presented in the Judeo-Christian scriptures. The Bible gives us a radically different perspective on the things we confront in this world—good and evil, justice and injustice.

And more than anything else, the biblical view offers us a hope for something beyond today. It offers hope beyond what is purely material,

beyond this world, and beyond despair, fear and helplessness. Perhaps that's why one of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's characters, in his novel *The Possessed*, said, "Man has done nothing but invent God so as to go on living, and not kill himself."

However, this book argues not that man invented God but that God "invented" or created humankind for a reason. The sense of purpose we have for our lives isn't a delusion—it's a direct result of who and what we are. We are beings created by a loving God who gives our lives dignity, purpose and meaning beyond what's found in science alone.

According to science's view, understanding the laws of physics means we understand all there is to know about ourselves. In the words of physicist Stephen Hawking, we will even know "the mind of God." Then again, others are not convinced that such a view has the answers we seek and need.

"When and if we have found and understood the completely irreducible laws of physics," wrote physicist Frank Wilczek, "we certainly shall not thereby know the mind of God (Hawking to the contrary). We will not even get much help in understanding the mind of slugs, which is about the current frontier of neuroscience."

The biblical world view takes us where the atheistic view can't. This is because the biblical world view is broader than the atheistic one. Of course, the biblical view encompasses the physical world and the laws in it, just as the atheistic view does. But it also takes us beyond these laws—beyond what they can teach us, and beyond what today's science tells us or could ever tell us. To some degree, it truly takes us into the mind of God. It shows us that God loves us, cares for us and has our best interests at heart. In a world overrun with evil, God's love is true—no matter how hard this great and comforting truth is to understand.

Both perspectives—the atheistic and the biblical—offer explanations for why our world is so filled with pain, suffering, evil, violence, climate change, globalism and natural disasters. In the first view, these things are merely part of what it means to live in a world created by accident. If this is the case, the universe has no intentions or purpose for us—it is a

universe that doesn't care about us or our hopes, dreams and goals. Such a universe offers us nothing but the prospect of eternal annihilation in a cold, dead cosmos—a rather inglorious end for beings that, according to the evolutionary model, are advancing.

In the Christian world view, we are in the midst of a literal cosmic conflict between good and evil. What we see in our world—the pain, suffering and violence—are the results of humans having turned away from God and the moral order He originally created.

But as we have mentioned, the greatest difference—the difference that makes all the difference—is that the biblical world view offers us hope. It gives us the promise of something beyond today and beyond what this world could ever offer.

The scientific world says that we began by chance and our end will also be by chance. If humankind doesn't nuke itself or destroy the planet with pollution, the sun will eventually blow up. Either that or the universe will crash in on itself, and we and every memory of us are destined for eternal oblivion.

The Bible perspective presents a vastly different ending. The credits scrolling down at the end of the story aren't "Cosmic Heat Death," the "Big Crunch" or "Nuclear Winter." Instead, they speak of hope, restoration and re-creation.

Each one of us has a story to tell but our stories can only be told in the context of the bigger picture. This bigger picture greatly determines the meaning of all that unfolds within it, including our stories. One view sets our lives in the background of a godless, purposeless creation, which philosopher Thomas Nagel said presents us with "no reason to believe that anything matters." If nothing matters, our lives and all the suffering, turmoil and trials that come with them do not matter. If this is the case, why should things like global warming, economic chaos, natural disasters, crime and exploitation bother us at all? In the scheme of such a cosmos, our personal stories don't matter either.

In stark contrast, the biblical view teaches that our lives unfold against the background of a universe created by a loving God. He has infused it with a

End of product sample

This product is available at:

AdventistBookCentre.com.au



Australia