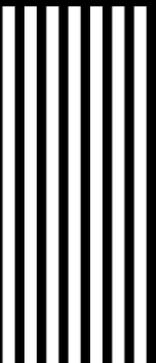




# AN ACT OF GOD

BY DAVID JAVERBAUM



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AN ACT OF GOD  
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AN ACT OF GOD was originally produced on Broadway at Studio 54 by Jeffrey Finn, the Shubert Organization, Carl Moellenberg, Arielle Tepper Madover, Stacey Mindich, Bob Boyett, FG Productions, John Frost, Corinne Hayoun, Jamie Kaye-Phillips, Scott Landis, Larry Magid, Stephanie P. McClelland, David Mirvish, and Daryl Roth. It was directed by Joe Mantello, the scenic design was by Scott Pask, the costume design was by David Zinn, the lighting design was by Hugh Vanstone, the sound design was by Fitz Patton, the projection design was by Peter Migrini, and the production stage manager was Arthur Gaffin. The cast was as follows:

GOD ..... Jim Parsons  
MICHAEL ..... Christopher Fitzgerald  
GABRIEL ..... Tim Kazurinsky

# **CHARACTERS**

GOD

MICHAEL

GABRIEL

# AN ACT OF GOD

P.A. ANNOUNCER. (*Voiceover.*) In the beginning ... we ask that you please turn off your cell phones and unwrap your candy. We also remind you that the use of recording devices and the taking of photographs is strictly prohibited. Thank you, and now bask in His divine presence. (*The sublime music of Bach's St. Matthew Passion begins. The voice of God, sounding like what one would imagine the voice of God sounds like, comes on the P.A.*)

GOD. (*Voiceover.*) I am the Lord thy God, King of the Universe, Creator of space and time. Though I reside in all forms, My essence is formless, for I transcend all dualities, including that of form and formlessness — (*The P.A. system has begun to screech with feedback. A little "boom" indicates a speaker may have broken.*) Oh, come on! We teched this! (*Sighing.*) Screw it, just bring on [last name of actor playing God]. (*Actor, inhabited by God, appears. The lights come up. Actor speaks as God:*) To repeat: I am the Lord thy God, King of the Universe, Creator of space and time. Though I reside in all forms, My essence is formless, for I transcend all dualities, including that of form and formlessness. Yet tonight I have chosen to appear in form — specifically that of [brief, vain description and name of actor\*]. For lo, I have endowed him with a winning, likeable personality, and know of a certainty that your apprehension of My depthless profundities will be aided by his offbeat charm. What can I say? In the Egyptian desert I appeared as a burning bush. Onstage in [location of theater], I'm [an anti-climactic description of actor\*\*]. Nice guy, by the way. He has no idea he's here.

I am accompanied by My two archangels. My wingmen. My Genesisants, if thou shalt. (*Gabriel and Michael, two angels with wings, appear. Gabriel bows, removes his Gutenberg Bible from a case like a prized guitar, and takes his place at a lectern.*)

\* In the original Broadway production, the line was "Yet tonight I have chosen to appear in form — specifically that of beloved television star Jim Parsons."

\*\* I.e., "some tall guy with a bald spot."

At the lectern, on Bible, is Gabriel. That is a Gutenberg, and well mayst thou wonder at its glory, for look at the workmanship on that thing. She's a beaut. Custom-made in 1455, back when literacy really *meant* something.

Gabriel doesn't just do Bible, by the way. He's the angel who dictated the words of the Quran to Muhammad. That of course was the beginning of Islam, and at the request of the producers, that is the *last* you'll be hearing about Islam tonight.

And over here is Michael. Of all My heavenly associates he's the greatest advocate for humanity. He will be setting forth on a pilgrimage through the expensive part of the audience, probing the recesses of your minds to ask Me, on your behalf, any questions that arise regarding the nature of existence, that I may deign to answer them and enlighten thee. I believe we already have one. (*Michael enters the audience, where he will remain for much of the show, and approaches an audience member with a microphone.*)

MICHAEL. Yes, Lord. This man/woman is ... What's your name, sir/ma'am? (*The audience member gives his or her name.*) This is [name] from [name of nearby suburb], and he/she is wondering which came first, the chicken or the egg.

GOD. Neither, [name of audience member]. The rooster came first. (*He gestures; an angelic rimshot is heard.*) So: Why have I come? (*A giant marble model of the Ten Commandments miraculously appears.*)

These ... are the Ten Commandments. The laws I handed down to Moses to give to My Chosen People on Mount Sinai. Not this particular model, of course. This is a marble replica from a courthouse lawn in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It was placed in storage after being declared unconstitutional. But now it's here. Take that, Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals!

When I wrote the Ten Commandments, I felt very proud. I'd put infinite thought and several days' work into it. I know some of you "humanists" — awful word — may quibble and nitpick. "You left out rape, child abuse, slavery, blah blah blah." But you can't deny that it found a readership. So much so it's become the foundational moral code of Western civilization. So much so, in fact, that over the centuries I have grown weary of it. Yea: I have grown weary of the Ten Commandments in exactly the same way that Don McLean has grown weary of "American Pie."

I never meant for it to define Me, to be the one work of Mine everyone quotes and debates and interprets. I wrote a lot of other laws.

I'm not some one-list wonder. In Leviticus alone there are hundreds of dicta about tattoos and animal cross-breeding and mixing fabrics in clothing ... really good stuff that these days only the hardcore fans know about.

No: After all this time it's still only the Ten Commandments that are considered the apotheosis of Mosaic law. Well, as Don McLean might say, "Today, the Mosaic dies."

Tonight I shall give thee a new Ten Commandments, one that will forever end that uncertainty regarding what it is I desire from humanity that has caused so much bitterness and hatred among you over the millennia, all of which I found very flattering. Thanks again. Means a lot.

This time there will be no Moses, no intermediary. This time I've decided to give My commandments directly to the people, the people of [city or region where theater is located].\* Tonight, you will receive My law. Thou shalt receive My law and hear My reasons, so that when I am done, thou shalt know of a certainty that these new Commandments, as delivered by God Himself, here in [name of theater] by [verbatim brief, vain description and name of actor used before], are the true Word of the Lord.

Let's play the Feud! Number One: (*The First Commandment is revealed.*)

GABRIEL. "I am the Lord thy God, King of the Universe. You shalt have no other gods before Me."

GOD. That one's a holdover, but it still applies. I am *still* the Lord thy God, King of the Universe, and thou shalt *still* have no other gods before Me, because there were no other gods before Me. There was nothing and no one before Me. Tell 'em, Gabe.

GABRIEL. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

GOD. Oh, that takes Me back. Back to that first day, the day when, in a sense, it really all began. But I don't expect any of you to understand how long ago that day was. For between then and now lay immeasurable oceans of time whose meagrest inlets are too vast in scope for human understanding.

It was October 23, 4,004 B.C.

Before then I'd been ethereally hovering in zero-dimensional space

\* Here the actor may insert a humorous line alluding to God's relationship or history with the particular city or region. As an example, in San Francisco the line was, "It's been a while. The last time I was in San Francisco was on a business trip in 1906."

as pure incorporeal spirit contemplating My own divinity. Then, after infinity or so years of that, I grew bored.

MICHAEL. (*In audience, mic on someone.*) Lord Almighty, sorry to interrupt, but on that topic, we have — your name please? (*The audience member says his/her name.*) [Name] here from [local area known for having a large gay population] —

GOD. Obviously.

MICHAEL. S/he was wondering in the back of his/her cerebral cortex why there is something rather than nothing.

GOD. Well, [name], I just said. I was bored. I was God but I wasn't really *godding*. I wasn't creating or destroying or judging anybody, which was something I'd always wanted to try. And so I thought, "Let Me take a brief break from eternity, and devote the better part of a week to creating a universe, and just kind of see what happens." Does that answer your question, [name]? (*Michael prompts the audience member to say yes.*)

Good. Try to pay attention, [name]. That seat cost way too much money for you to let your mind wander.

And so I began.

GABRIEL. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

GOD. That took about five hours. It would have taken less, but there was darkness over the face of everything, so I was working mainly by feel. Then I realized:

GABRIEL. "And God said, 'Let there be light.'"

GOD. One of those lightbulb moments. Day Two:

GABRIEL. "And God said, 'Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters.'"

GOD. Yea: On Day Two, I put a firmament in the midst of the waters. That was it. Slow day, Day Two. I probably underscheduled. Ah, but Day Three!

GABRIEL. "And God said, 'Let the dry land appear, and let the earth bring forth grass and seed.'"

GOD. I loved making the dry land. *Loved* it. Forming the continents, sculpting the mountains, carving the canyons, stippling the archipelagos, and shaping Florida into what even then I pretty much knew was going to be a penis.

The plants, though, that was slow going. I knew it had to be done for the benefit of the overall food chain but it was very tedious work. Trees especially. Trees are stupid.

Day Four:

GABRIEL. “And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night.’”

GOD. I deliberately sized and placed the sun and moon to cause eclipses to appear, thus creating awe and panic, My two all-time favorite human emotions. Then I made the stars. I got a little carried away. In hindsight, I probably made 70 thousand million million million more of them than strictly necessary. What can I say? They’re pretty.

Day Five. Mirthful story:

GABRIEL. “And God said — ”

GOD. (*Interrupting him.*) I got this, Gabe. I created the fish and the birds, but up until the last minute I was going to put the fish in the sky and the birds in the sea! I’d conceived feathers as a means of aquatic propulsion, whereas scales were designed with aerodynamic lift in mind. Then when it came time to let the waters teem with life, on a hunch, I went the other way. Well, you know the rest: The birds’ feathers were perfect for flying, and the fish took to the water so naturally that to this day, the very *idea* of a fish out of water is comical. We have a question.

MICHAEL. Yes, Lord. We have ... (*Michael gets the audience member to say her name.*) [Name] from [local town]. That’s her husband —

GOD. Not for long. Go on.

MICHAEL. And Your fish-and-bird anecdote has her wondering, “Lord, do You not have a plan for the universe that has been preordained from the beginning of time?”

GOD. Yes, [name], I do. But at the same time I’m not afraid to riff. Go with the flow. I always say overseeing the universe is like jazz music. It’s all about the realities you *don’t* create. (*Seeing the woman doesn’t get the reference, God makes a derisive “that went over her head” gesture.*)

Finally, Day Six:

GABRIEL. “And God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth every living creature after his kind.’”

GOD. Crazy day. Mammals, amphibians, reptiles, insects. 400,000 different species of beetle. I just couldn’t get them right! They were all good, but they weren’t perfect. Then finally I made *Leptinotarsa decemlineata*, the Colorado potato beetle, and I thought, “Now *that’s* a beetle!” and I moved on.

So, to repeat: “I am the Lord thy God, King of the Universe; thou shalt have no other gods before Me.” The First Commandment. Now, the Sec —

# AN ACT OF GOD

by David Javerbaum

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The One with the first and last word on everything has finally arrived to set the record straight. After many millennia, and in just 90 minutes, God (assisted by His devoted angels) answers some of the deepest questions that have plagued mankind since Creation.

*“Delivering a new and improved set of Commandments, as transcribed by the man we might call the Moses de nos jours, David Javerbaum, God is really killing it up there. How funny is the guy? He’s Jon Stewart funny, plus Stephen Colbert funny. (Mr. Javerbaum has written for both.) ... Verily I could quote every other line from Mr. Javerbaum’s annotation of the Scriptures and gather a chuckle, so deliriously funny is he as a sort of amateur theologian and stand-up comedy genius rolled into one.”*

—**The New York Times**

*“Javerbaum’s radical rewrite of the Ten Commandments — the evening is structured around God’s introduction of revised laws — is clever and even refreshingly positive, insisting on the separation of church and state and encouraging us to believe in ourselves, not some elderly white guy in the sky.”*

—**Time Out (New York)**

*“The jokes keep landing — nearly one per sentence — and ... they are always smart. But Javerbaum [is] too theatrically savvy to leave it at that. Another note, slowly introduced among the zingers and rim shots, eventually becomes dominant, and this one, while still funny, is darker and potentially more theologically challenging than mere spoofs of Bible stories.”*

—**New York Magazine**

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