

## READING AND DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

# *God According to God*

by

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1. In the Book of Exodus, God self-describes as being merciful and compassionate (Exod. 34:6,7). How can we accept this description considering the extent of tragedy imbued upon the world, either by natural forces or by the acts of humans? How did *God According to God* change or confirm your beliefs about how God acts in the world?
2. Cain and Abel bring offerings to God. God rejects Cain's and accepts Abel's. Does this sound like a good model for parenting? Have you been taught to view God as a parent? How is this concept helpful or unhelpful for your image of God?
3. Moses argued with God at the burning bush and again following the incident with the golden calf and the spies; Jacob bargained with God as he went into exile,

fleeing his brother's wrath. Abraham argued with God prior to the destruction of Sodom. Arguing with God was clearly a biblically accepted act. Why has this concept disappeared? How do you feel about a God who wants you to argue with Him?

4. How could we be partners with God in perfecting the world?
5. Consider the perfection of the laws of nature for sustaining complex life, the perfection of the planet Earth as a platform for life, and the mysterious origins of the complexity of life. How might this prove, imply, or indicate that there is a higher intelligence active in the world?
6. Exodus 3:14 is judged to be a pivotal description of the biblical God's actions in this world. Yet there is a debate about its interpretation. The Hebrew reads, "I will be that which I will be." How does the meaning of this translation differ in its implications of God's presence from the less accurate reading of "I am that which I am"?
7. A Talmudic legend tells us that an angel teaches the unborn baby all the truths of the world. Then just prior to birth, the angel kisses the baby on the lip just below the baby's nose and all the wisdom is sequestered in the child's subconscious. Can we recognize truth when we encounter it? Is recognizing truth an innate quality of the *neshama*, the soul of humanity?

8. According to the Book of Genesis, Abraham acquired great wealth, his son Isaac maintained that wealth, and Isaac and Rebecca's son, Jacob, also acquired great wealth. Five times the Torah lists the utensils and fixtures that were in the Tabernacle that accompanied the Hebrews during their forty-year trek. The order in which these items are listed changes in each account except for the first two. In all five listings, the Ark of the Covenant is number one. The surprise is that number two has nothing to do with sacrifices or offerings to God. Item number two is always the table upon which twelve loaves of bread were placed each Sabbath. The table and its bread represent the material abundance of the universe. Considering the explicitly stated wealth of the patriarchs and matriarchs and the positioning of the table in the desert Tabernacle, what is the Bible's attitude toward the accumulation of wealth? Within the bounds of the Covenant, does God want our physical pleasure?