

Torah and Science

Is there a contradiction?

Based on a Letter of the Rebbe (Dec. 1961)

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/435111/jewish/the-age-of-the-universe.htm



Akilas and his uncle

Midrash Shmot Raba, 30:12



- One time, Aquila said to the emperor Hadrian: 'I wish to convert and to become a Jew.' He said to him: 'That nation you wish [to join]? How much have I demeaned it, how much of its [people] have I killed! You wish to intermingle with the lowliest of nations. What did you see in them that you wish to convert?' He said to him: 'The least among them knows how the Holy One blessed be He created the world, what was created on the first day and what was created on the second day. **How long it has been since the world was created** and upon what does the world stand. And, their Torah is truth.' He said to him: 'Go study their Torah, but do not circumcise yourself.' Aquila said to him: 'Even the wisest man in your kingdom or a one-hundred-year-old elder is unable to study their Torah if he is not circumcised,' as it is written: "He declares His words to Jacob, His statutes and ordinances to Israel. He did not do so with any other nation" (Psalms 147:19–20). But with whom? With the children of Israel.

Some definitions...



- **Science**

- the systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation, experimentation, and the testing of theories against the evidence obtained.

- **Theory**

- a supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain something, especially one based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained.

How do we know?



- **At best, science can only speak in terms of theories inferred from certain known facts and applied in the realm of the unknown. Here science has two general methods of inference;**
- **(a) The method of interpolation (as distinguished from extrapolation), whereby, knowing the reaction under two extremes, we attempt to infer what the reaction might be at any point between the two.**
- **(b) The method of extrapolation, whereby inferences are made beyond a known range, on the basis of certain variables within the known range. For example, suppose we know the variables of a certain element within a temperature range of 0 to 100, and on the basis of this we estimate what the reaction might be at 101, 200, or 2000.**

Problems with scientific method



- (a) These theories have been advanced on the basis of observable data during a relatively short period of time, of only a number of decades, and at any rate not more than a couple of centuries.
- (b) On the basis of such a relatively small range of known (though by no means perfectly) data, scientists venture to build theories by the weak method of extrapolation, and from the consequent to the antecedent, extending to many thousands (according to them, to millions and billions) of years!
- (c) In advancing such theories, they blithely disregard factors universally admitted by all scientists, namely, that in the initial period of the birth of the universe, conditions of temperature, atmospheric pressure, radioactivity, and a host of other cataclystic factors, were totally different from those existing in the present state of the universe.
- (d) The consensus of scientific opinion is that there must have been many radioactive elements in the initial stage which now no longer exist, or exist only in minimal quantities; some of them - elements that cataclystic potency of which is known even in minimal doses.
- (e) The formation of the world, if we are to accept these theories, began with a process of colligation (of binding together) of single atoms or the components of the atom and their conglomeration and consolidation, involving totally unknown processes and variables.

Fossils...

See Talmud Chullin 60a



- (a) In view of the unknown conditions which existed in prehistoric times, conditions of atmospheric pressures, temperatures, radioactivity, unknown catalyzers, etc., etc. as already mentioned, conditions that is, which could have caused reactions and changes of an entirely different nature and tempo from those known under the present-day orderly processes of nature, one cannot exclude the possibility that dinosaurs existed 5722 years ago, and became fossilized under terrific natural cataclysms in the course of a few years rather than in millions of years; since we have no conceivable measurements or criteria of calculations under those unknown conditions.
- (b) Even assuming that the period of time which the Torah allows for the age of the world is definitely too short for fossilization (although I do not see how one can be so categorical), we can still readily accept the possibility that G-d created ready fossils, bones or skeletons (for reasons best known to him), just as he could create ready living organisms, a complete man, and such ready products as oil, coal or diamonds, without any evolutionary process.
- As for the question, if it be true as above (b), why did G-d have to create fossils in the first place? The answer is simple: We cannot know the reason why G-d chose this manner of creation in preference to another, and whatever theory of creation is accepted, the question will remain unanswered. The question, Why create a fossil? is no more valid than the question, Why create an atom? Certainly, such a question cannot serve as a sound argument, much less as a logical basis, for the evolutionary theory.

What are the implications?



- **To base life in Science**

- The **denial** of transcendence, the desperate attempt to understand life on the **horizontal** plane of its manifestations.

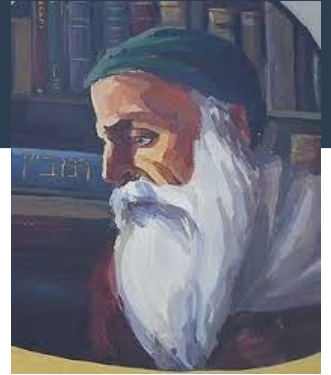
- **To base life on Religion**

- The **concern** with transcendence and the **vertical** dimension.

- **The supposed merger, therefore, of these opposed doctrines constitutes one of the most bizarre happenings in these already confused and confusing times.**

- Prof. Wolfgang Ithiel (Cosmos, Bios, Theos , pg. 115, ed. Margenau and Varghese, Open Court, Chicago, 1992)

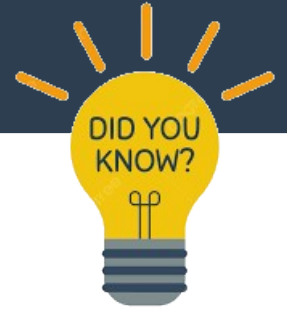
The belief in Creation



- **One may object that it was indeed very necessary to begin the Torah with the chapter of In the beginning G-d created for this is the root of faith, and he who does not believe in this and thinks the world was eternal denies the essential principle of the [Judaic] religion and has no Torah at all.**
 - Ramban (Commentary to Genesis 1:1)
- **Giving of Torah**
 - Event witnessed by millions
 - Passed down from father to child...
 - Introduction to Sefer HaChinuch

Akilas and his uncle

Likutey Sichot, vol. 10, p. 185



- **The nations don't know**

- They only have proposed ideas that (sometimes) contradict each other

- **Judaism has a clear knowledge**

- Even when you find arguments, it's only regarding two or three years, which is insignificant compared to the lack of knowledge by the nations

What offers Judaism (and Chassidut)?



- **Judaism is based on acceptance of higher truths. First action, then intellect.**
 - the true Jewish approach: performance first (hand), with sincerity and wholeheartedness, followed by intellectual comprehension (head); i.e. *na'aseh* first, then *v'nishma*. May this spirit permeate your intellect and arouse your emotive powers and find expression in every aspect of the daily life, for the essential thing is the deed.

Shabbat as expression of belief in Creation

Commentary of Kli Yakar, Shmot 20:9

- Even those who are not on the Sabbath should at least remember. Because all nations must remember the Sabbath in order to establish in their hearts a belief in the renewal of the world, which will give G-G-d's faithful testimony about the Existence of the Lord. Because it is part of the seven commandments of Bnei Noach not to serve idolatry.
- And even though they can't accept upon themselves the commandment of not to work, they can receive upon them the commandment of remembrance, in which they too must have the renewal of the world before their eyes as a reminder.

Practically speaking



- **You can't**

- Refrain from work (as Jewish law required, 39 works of Shabbat etc.)
- Perform Jewish religious rituals (candle lighting, Kidush, etc.)
- Assign religious meaning to as a Commandment to rest on that day

- **You can**

- Acknowledge the day as special because G-d created in six days etc.
- Physical relaxation
- Eat a nicer meal after sunset on Friday and/or during the day on Saturday (which can include lighting candles on the table during either of those times to beautify the meal)
- Learn more/better
- Pray more/better
- Turn off cell phones and TV...

Torah and Science: is there a contradiction?



- **Perspective 1 – Yes, they contradict**

- Torah works on a **vertical** line connecting men to God allowing him to transcend his own limitations.
- Science works on a **horizontal** line which is connected to man's knowledge and prevents him from transcending.

- **Perspective 2 – No, two worlds**

- Torah and Science deal with two **different worlds** that don't contradict. Torah deals with **spirituality** and science deals with **materiality**.
- Two different things don't necessarily contradict.

- **Chassidut - Complement**

- Chassidut offers tools to imbue the **physical** world with **divine** conscience, showing that all was created by one and the same G-d, for the same godly purpose. Hayom Yom Kislev, 7th.