

Current Jewish Questions

Evolution

<p>1. B. Hagigah 13b-14a It is taught: R. Simeon the Pious said: These are the nine hundred and seventy four generations who pressed themselves forward to be created before the world was created, but were not created: the Holy One, blessed be He, arose and planted them in every generation, and it is they who are the insolent of each generation</p>	<p>1. תלמוד בבלי חגיגה יג:ב- יד:א אמר רבי שמעון החסיד : אלו תשע מאות ושבעים וארבע דורות שקומטו להיבראות קודם שנברא העולם ולא נבראו, עמד הקדוש ברוך הוא ושתלן בכל דור ודור, והן הן עזי פנים שבדור.</p>
<p>2. Rambam Intro to Chelek The first fundamental principle is the existence of the Creator – i.e. the existence of a Being who is perfect in all manners of perfection. He is the cause of the existence of all other beings, and from Him they derive their continued existence. If one imagined that His existence would cease, all other existence would be nullified and would no longer continue to be. Conversely, however, if all other existence ceased, He would continue to exist and would not be lacking, for He is not dependent on any being other hand Himself. Everything in existence other than Him, [even] the entities whose existence is on the plane of intellect – e.g. the angels and the forms of the orbits – and surely, the lower [forms of existence] depend on Him for their being. This is the first fundamental principle, and it is alluded to in the commandment, "I am God, your Lord."</p>	<p>2. פירוש המשנה לרמב"ם מסכת סנהדרין פרק י היסוד הראשון מציאות הבורא ישתבח. והוא, שיש שם מצוי בשלמות אופני המציאות, והוא עלת מציאות כל הנמצאים, ובו קיום מציאותם, וממנו נמשך להם הקיום. ואלו נתאר סלוק מציאותו כי אז בטלה מציאות כל נמצא ולא ישארו קיימים במציאות, ואלו נתאר סלוק כל הנמצאים זולתו, כי אז לא תבטל מציאותו יתעלה, ולא תחסר, כי הוא יתעלה בלתי זקוק במציאותו לזולתו, וכל מה שזולתו מן השכלים כלומר המלאכים וגרמי הגלגלים ומה שלמטה מהן הכל זקוק במציאותו אליו. וזה יסוד הראשון הוא אשר מורה עליו דבור אנכי ה' וכו'.</p>
<p>3. Rambam Teshuva 3:7 Five individuals are described as Minim: a) one who says there is no God nor ruler of the world; b) one who accepts the concept of a ruler, but maintains that there are two or more; c) one who accepts that there is one Master [of the world], but maintains that He has a body or form; d) one who maintains that He was not the sole First Being and Creator of all existence; e) one who serves a star, constellation, or other entity so that it will serve as an intermediary between him and the eternal Lord. Each of these five individuals is a Min.</p>	<p>3. רמב"ם תשובה ג הלכה ז חמשה הן הנקראים מינים : האומר שאין שם אלוה ואין לעולם מנהיג, והאומר שיש שם מנהיג אבל הן שנים או יותר, והאומר שיש שם רבון אחד אבל שהוא גוף ובעל תמונה, וכן האומר שאינו לבדו הראשון וצור לכל, וכן העובד כוכב או מזל וזולתו כדי להיות מליץ בינו ובין רבון העולמים כל אחד מחמשה אלו הוא מין.</p>
<p>4. Rambam Guide to the Perplexed 2:29 I have said that a thing does not change its nature in such a way that the change is permanent merely in order to be cautious with regard to the miracles. For although the rod was turned into a serpent, the water into blood, and the pure and noble hand became white without a natural cause that</p>	<p>4. מורה הנבוכים חלק ב פרק כט אמנם אמרתי שלא ישתנה דבר מטבעו וימשך על השנוי ההוא, להשמר מן הנפלאות, כי אף על פי שנהפך המטה לנחש ונהפכו המים לדם והיד הטהורה הנכבדת לבנה, מבילתי סבה טבעית מחייבת אותם</p>

<p>necessitated this, these and similar things were not permanent and did not become another nature. But as they, may their memory be blessed, say: The world goes its customary way (B. Avoda Zara 54b). This is my opinion, and this is what ought to be believed. The sages, may their memory be blessed, have made a very strange statement about miracles, the text of which you will find in Bereishit Rabba and in Midrash Kohelet. <u>This notion in their holding the view that miracles too are something, that is, in a certain respect, nature.</u> They say that when God created that which exists and stamped upon it the existing natures, He put into these natures that all the miracles that occurred would be produced in them at the time when they occurred.</p>	<p>העניינים ההם והדומה להם, לא ימשכו ולא שבו טבע אחר, אבל כמ"ש ז"ל עולם כמנהגו הולך, זהו דעתי והוא שצריך שיאמן, אף על פי שהחכמים ז"ל כבר אמרו בנפלאות דברים זרים מאד, תמצאם בבראשית רבה ובמדרש קהלת, והענין ההוא הוא שהם רואים הנפלאות הם ממה שבטבע גם כן על צד אחד, וזה שהם אמרו כי כשברא הש"י זה המציאות והטביעו על אלו הטבעים, שם בטבעים ההם שיתחדש בהם כל מה שיתחדש מהנפלאות בעת חדושה</p>
<p>5. Job 38:1-11 1 Then the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm. He said: 2 "Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge? 3 Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. 4 "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. 5 Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? 6 On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone— 7 while the morning stars sang together and all the angels[a] shouted for joy? 8 "Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, 9 when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, 10 when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, 11 when I said, "This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt?"</p>	<p>5. איוב לח, א-יא (א) ויַעַן יְהוָה אֶת אִיּוֹב מִנְהַסְעֵרָה מִן הַסְעָרָה וַיֹּאמֶר: (ב) מִי זֶה מַחְשִׁיב עֵצָה בְּמַלְיָו בְּלִי דַעַת: (ג) אֲזַר נָא כְגֹבֵר חֲלָצִיד וְאֲשָׂאֲלֶךָ וְהוֹדִיעֵנִי: (ד) אֵיפֹה הָיִיתָ בְּנִסְדֵי אֲרָץ הַגֹּד אִם יַדְעַתָּ בִּינָה: (ה) מִי שָׁם מְמַדִּיָּה כִּי תִדְעֵ אוּ מִי נָטָה עֲלֶיךָ קוּ: (ו) עַל מָה אֲדַנְיָה הִטְבְּעוּ אוּ מִי יָרָה אֶבֶן פְּנֵתָה: (ז) בְּרוּן יַחַד כּוֹכְבֵי בִקְרָ וַיִּרְעוּ כָּל בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים: (ח) וַיִּסָּד בְּדִלְתַיִם יָם בְּגִיחוֹ מֵרְחֹם יָצָא: (ט) בְּשׁוּמֵי עֵינָו לָבְשׁוּ וְעֲרַפֵּל חֲתַלְתּוּ: (י) וְאֲשַׁבֵּר עָלָיו חֲקֵי וְאֲשִׁים בְּרִיחַ וּדְלָתַיִם:</p>

6. RCA Statement: Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design

<http://www.rabbis.org/news/article.cfm?id=100635>

In response to the public debate over Intelligent Design and Scientific theory, the RCA has issued the following statement clarifying its view on this matter as it relates to Torah Judaism, and the biblical account of creation.

Dec 27, 2005 -- In light of the ongoing public controversy about Evolution, Creationism and Intelligent Design, the RCA notes that significant Jewish authorities have maintained that evolutionary theory, properly understood, is not incompatible with belief in a Divine Creator, nor with the first 2 chapters of Genesis.

There are authentic, respected voices in the Jewish community that take a literalist position with regard to these issues; at the same time, Judaism has a history of diverse approaches to the understanding of the biblical account of creation. As Rabbi Joseph Hertz wrote, "While the fact of creation has to this day remained the first of the articles of the Jewish creed, there is no uniform and binding belief as to the manner of creation, i.e. as to the process whereby the universe came into existence. The manner of the Divine creative activity is presented in varying forms and under

differing metaphors by Prophet, Psalmist and Sage; by the Rabbis in Talmudic times, as well as by our medieval Jewish thinkers." Some refer to the Midrash (Koheleth Rabbah 3:13) which speaks of God "developing and destroying many worlds" before our current epoch. Others explain that the word "yom" in Biblical Hebrew, usually translated as "day," can also refer to an undefined period of time, as in Isaiah 11:10-11. Maimonides stated that "what the Torah writes about the Account of Creation is not all to be taken literally, as believed by the masses" (Guide to the Perplexed II:29), and recent Rabbinic leaders who have discussed the topic of creation, such as Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, saw no difficulty in explaining Genesis as a theological text rather than a scientific account.

Judaism affirms the idea that God is the Creator of the Universe and the Being responsible for the presence of human beings in this world.

Nonetheless, there have long been different schools of thought within Judaism regarding the extent of divine intervention in natural processes. One respected view was expressed by Maimonides who wrote that "we should endeavor to integrate the Torah with rational thought, affirming that events take place in accordance with the natural order wherever possible." (Letter to the Jews of Yemen) All schools concur that God is the ultimate cause and that humanity was an intended end result of Creation.

For us, these fundamental beliefs do not rest on the purported weaknesses of Evolutionary Theory, and cannot be undermined by the elimination of gaps in scientific knowledge.

Judaism has always preferred to see science and Torah as two aspects of the "Mind of God" (to borrow Stephen Hawking's phrase) that are ultimately unitary in the reality given to us by the Creator. As the Zohar says (Genesis 134a): "istakel be-'oraita u-vara 'alma," God looked into the Torah and used it as His blueprint for creating the Universe.

For articles and sources on this subject, see Aryeh Carmel and Cyril Domb eds., "Challenge: Torah Views on Science and its Problems," Feldheim, N. Y. 1976; and Rabbi J. H. Hertz, The Pentateuch and Haftorahs (Soncino Press 1960), Additional Notes to Genesis.