

Sat 6 Oct 2007
Dr Maurice M. Mizrahi
Congregation Adat Reyim
Lunch and Learn on Bereshit

Creationism or Evolution? Judaism.

-New cycle: *Bereshit bara Elokim et ha-shamayim ve-et haaretz* -- In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

-*Vayomer Elokim* - And God said ... [Maxwell's equations] ... and there was light!

-Israeli Song: *Shisha yamim bara olam* - In 6 days He created the world

Science (Big Bang) supports Genesis

- Until 1965 scientists supported the steady state, eternal world, with no beginning and no end

Creation in 6 days?

Scientists say 14 billion years - evidence of fossils, stars far away.

Resolution:

- Science (relativity): Time passes faster when you move (time dilation)
 - It was 6 days for someone traveling close to the speed of light relative to the earth (the speed of light minus a billion-trillion-trillionth the speed of light)
 - Which is how fast one must travel to make 14 billion years' worth of evolution pass as 6 days
 - God was traveling fast because He had other worlds to create, much as a farmer throws seeds and keeps moving
- Judaism (Midrash and Zohar): Before creating our world God created many worlds and destroyed them, because He did not like them
 - The sum of the lives of all these worlds could well be the 14 billion years scientists tell us the universe has existed.

R. Tanhuma said: [Ecclesiastes said]: "[God] has made every thing beautiful in its time (Eccl. 3:11). [This means that] the world was created when it was due, and the world was not fit to be created earlier. R. Abbahu said: Hence we learn that the Holy One, blessed be He, went on creating worlds and destroying them until He created [heaven and earth], and then He said: 'These please Me; those did not please Me.'

[PROOF] R. Phinehas said: 'The proof of R. Abbahu's statement is: "And God saw everything that He has made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31).' [I.e., God saw ALL that He has made -- all the worlds, good and bad - and behold, only THIS world "was very good".] [Midrash - Genesis Rabbah 9:2]

[ANOTHER PROOF] R. Abbahu said: Wherever it is written "ve-eleh" ("and these"), it adds to what was previously said, but wherever it is written 'eleh' ('these'), it disqualifies what was previously said. For example? Genesis 2:4: "These (eleh) are the generations of the heaven and the earth when they were created." What was disqualified there? God created [other] heavens and earths, but when He looked at them they were not pleasing in His sight, so He changed them back into waste and void; but when He looked at this heaven and earth, it pleased Him, and He exclaimed, 'These shall have generations.' [Midrash - Exodus Rabbah 30:3.]

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind. [Isaiah 65:17.]

God is called "Adon ha-olamim" in siddur: Lord of the worlds

- This world and the next, but also the destroyed worlds

How do we know we are not in a world that will be destroyed?

- We thought we were up to 2-3 years ago (Big Bang and Big Crunch cycles)
- Evidence now shows universe is accelerating its expansion
 - So no big crunch predicted

Why did God destroy these worlds?

Zohar (Bereshit, Section 1, Page 24b):

[God destroyed these worlds because they would not follow the Torah. He asked, and no one would. (In our world, only Israel did.) The Torah is necessary to sustain the world:

Al shlosha devarim haolam omed: al hattorah, ve-al ha-avodah, ve-al gemilut hassadim

The world rests on three things: On Torah, on worship, and on good deeds

Be-reshit means 'with reshit', 'with the beginning' (i.e. with Torah) God created the world

- Bereshit also contains brit - covenant

So without Torah, world can't sustain itself. That's built into fabric of universe.]

"The Torah is the salvation of the world...It is in this way that [we must understand that] God created worlds and destroyed them: those who do not keep the precepts of the Law [destroy themselves of their own account]; not that God destroys His own works, as some fancy. For why indeed should He destroy His sons?"

Zohar Hadash, and Or ha-Hayim 1:12, say 1000 worlds were created through the first letter, aleph. That is why Torah begins with the second letter, bet. Source:

You may have the thousand, O Solomon (Song of Songs 8:12)

Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev insisted that these worlds still exist, somewhere:

Everything God created exists forever, and never ceases to be.

Creationists' arguments

It is not science that moves them, and it is not displeasure at descending from apes. Their real problem is: The world cannot be run by survival of the fittest, by the law of the jungle, by might makes right. What about compassion, mercy, love? We spend time and money lifting up the fallen, helping the poor and the weak - we don't want to abandon them. Can that really be going against what God intended?

- Zohar: God intended to create the world purely with justice [cold equations, master plan unfolding] (Elokim = justice) but it could not endure, so He created it with chesed (lovingkindness)
- Zohar: Earlier worlds were destroyed because the severe judgment in them was not mitigated by kindness. Tempering judgment with kindness is the foundation of the Sefirah Rachamim (Mercy), which equates with Emeth (Truth)
- Tikkun ha-Olam (the repair of the world) is the pursuit of a balance between Kindness and Judgment. Cordovero (prominent mystical commentator): This balance must be weighted slightly towards kindness.

Jewish conclusion

Survival of the fittest is correct, but only part of the story. The rest is love, kindness, and mercy.