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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

The Torah of Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

Chol Ha-Moed Pesach 5768

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Would you like to ask Rav Aviner a question? E-mail mororly@bezeqint.net and the question will be brought to Ha-Rav and I will e-mail you the answer.

Did Man Evolve from Monkeys? [Q&A from Rav Aviner's radio show]

First of all, no one claims that man came directly from monkeys. Some say that man and monkeys have a shared ancestor, and this shared ancestor split into human beings and monkeys. There is actually a midrash in the Gemara in Sanhedrin (109a) that a part of the generation which built the Tower of Babel was transformed into monkeys. Our Rabbis teach with this midrash that people must be extremely careful, since the opposite can occur: people can turn into wild animals. People have a soul which was created in the image of G-d, but they are capable of turning into wild animals. We do not need to explain what it means for a man to turn into a wild animal, we have seen it on our flesh during our entire Exile, especially during the Holocaust. In the Land of Israel, there are also non-Jewish murderers who look like people on the outside, but are wild animals on the inside. Therefore, people are capable of returning to wild animals through their actions. This is what our Rabbis mean when they say that part of humanity turned into monkeys.

Regarding the essential question of whether Hashem created man directly from the earth or whether Hashem created man in a slow process from the earth in stages, we do not know factually, since we were not there. It is possible to explain the verses of the Torah either way. When the Torah says that Hashem took earth to make man, it is possible to explain that he created man in an instant and it is possible to explain that He created man in a long, long process. After all, we have found skeletons of creatures which are intermediates between man and monkey. We have found them in many places. We have also found drawing on walls in France from thirty thousand years ago. It is possible that these creatures were not like man, but had some intellect and knew how to draw. The simple meaning of the Torah is that Hashem created man directly from the earth, but it is possible to explain the beginning verses of the Book of Bereshit not according to their simple meaning, but as deep secrets.

Maran (our revered teacher) Rav Kook was asked this exact question in one of his letters (vol. 1 #91): They have found geographic layers, and these layers are found all around the earth and they can date the layers. They saw that in each layer there are the same skeletal fossils. This means that there were creatures in certain periods and

then they became extinct and other creatures appeared. These are facts, not theory. Theory claims – and it needs to be proven – that the creatures evolved from one creature to the next. Obviously, a person who is an atheist says that the creatures evolved and a person who believes says that Hashem caused the evolution, just as a person who is an atheist says that a baby develops, and we say that Hashem caused him to develop. Maran Ha-Rav Kook was asked his view of this issue and responded that it is written in a midrash that our Rabbis said that Hashem created worlds and destroyed them before creating our current world (Bereshit Rabbah 3:7, 9:2 and Kohelet Rabbah 3:11). He explains that these finds in nature are the remnants of the destroyed worlds. The worlds were destroyed, but certain remnants remain.

In sum: We are involved with Torah; we are not involved with science. We love science, we respect science and we respect scientists. There is even a blessing upon seeing a great scientist: Blessed is Hashem...who gave of His wisdom to flesh and blood (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 224:7). The Torah, however, is not a science book. Whether man was created directly from the ground or from a long process is not the subject of the Torah. Our subject is how man needs to act. Our subject is not if man came from an animal, our subject is how not to be an animal. Science comes to describe the world. The Torah does not come to describe what is, but what should be. The Torah does not come to describe if we have a shared ancestor with the monkey, but to describe how not to be a wild animal and not to be a monkey, and how to have a pure soul and to be a holy and righteous person.



Text Message Responsa



Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a week. Some appear in the parashah sheets "Ma'ayanei Ha-Yeshu'ah" and "Olam Ha-Katan." Here's a sample:

Q: I lost my friend's siddur which was very precious to him. It was in my pocket and I did not take any money to watch it. Do I have to give him the money for it?

A: If you were negligent, you have to pay him.

Q: Is a non-Jew who cleans the yeshiva required to wear a kippah?

A: There is no need. We have a law of "fear of Heaven," non-Jews do not.

Q: Should I recite "Birchat Ha-Gomel" for our baby who was saved from danger?

A: The basic custom is not to recite "Ha-Gomel" for someone who is not obligated. You should give tzedekah.

Q: Is it permissible to choose a name for a child before one's wife is pregnant?

A: There is no problem.

Q: My wife does not listen to me in something which is for her own good and she acts otherwise. When she gets into a complicated situation in this matter, should I help her or leave her to learn her lesson?

A: You always have to be friends. You are not her teacher, but her friend.

Q: Is it permissible to play instruments on Chol Ha-Moed, even though it is Sefirat Ha-Omer?

A: Yes, Chol Ha-Moed is a time of joy and does not include this limitation.

Q: Is it permissible to have a "chanukat ha-bayit" (dedication of a house) on Chol Ha-Moed?

A: The basic custom of a "chanukat ha-bayit" is that the initial use of the house is a holy one. Therefore, when you move to the house you should immediately recite Tehillim or learn Torah. Regarding a celebration with guests, this is not important. You can have it later.

Q: I work in a clothing store. Is it permissible for me to work on Chol Ha-Moed?

A: It is permissible to work in a clothing store, since it is permissible to buy clothing for the holiday. You can assume that you are selling for this purpose.

Q: I davened minchah without any proper intention, should I daven again?

A: No, we rule that we do not go back and pray again since we cannot be certain that we will have proper intent the second time. We therefore try as hard as possible the first time.

Q: Is it permissible for a man to point out to a woman that she is dressed in an immodest fashion and it is making him uncomfortable?

A: G-d forbid! Pointing it out is itself immodest. He should not be staring at her in the first place and should not come close to her.

Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

Gemara Jews

With all of the importance which our Rabbi placed on learning books of "Emunah – faith," he would emphasize that we are Gemara Jews. Every one of our Rabbi's actions was based on the Gemara. For example, a student, who was aiding our Rabbi in his house, needed to travel to a wedding. He requested permission from our Rabbi in the morning, but he did not receive an answer. In the afternoon, he received a cold response and he did not understand the reason, since our Rabbi usually happily gave him a blessing in similar situations. When it came time to leave, he again turned to our Rabbi and he received a scold and a clear response: "We are not Karaites, we are Jews of the Gemara which says that someone who is sick needs to be guarded" (Berachot 54b). Our Rabbi had a slight cold, but the student did not think it was a problem. Our Rabbi, however, emphasized that if the Gemara said that one who is sick requires to be guarded that is the way we must act. These simple, fundamental practices take precedence over other items such as traveling to a wedding. (Ha-Rav Yosef Bedichi)

Personal notebook

Our Rabbi had a small notebook in which he wrote personal things: innovative Torah ideas, thoughts and dreams. He was particular that the students not read it. At a later period, when he was sick, and various students aided him in his house, he placed the notebook under his pillow. (Ha-Rav Yechezkel Greedwald)

Dreams

Many times our Rabbi woke up in the morning, ritually washed his hands and took books from the bookshelves to clarify about what he had dreamt. (Ha-Rav Yaakov Levanon)

Strength in illness

During his final days, when our Rabbi was extremely ill and suffered greatly, many people visited until late at night. After midnight, when the visitors left, he looked down the hall and said: "No one is here anymore." He then burst out in screams of pain which he had held in since he did not want to frighten anyone.

He refused to take painkillers since they blurs one's thought and he wanted to be clear and connected to Hashem all of the time. Once the doctors, who knew his condition quite well, gave him painkillers in his medicine without his knowledge. Our Rabbi, however, felt it. He placed a student in front of him and spoke words of Torah. When he felt the influence of the painkillers waning, he told the student that he could leave. (Ha-Rav Nachum Rechel in the name of Ha-Rav Binyamin Eisner)

Ascending on high

Slightly before our Rabbi left this world, he began to speak about going to the World to Come and meeting his wife and Maran Ha-Rav Kook. (Ha-Rav Yechezkel Greenwald)

Our Rabbi's last hours

During his last hours (which was on Purim), our Rabbi did not have the strength to speak, yet he always smiled and held the hand of Ha-Rav Ha-Gaon R' Avraham Shapira ztz"l. He finally managed to say: May you have a happy Purim. (Ha-Rav Yaakov Shapira)



Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

New toothbrush for Pesach

Q: Do I need to buy a new toothbrush for Pesach?

A: Yes, this is the custom. While you can clean and clean the toothbrush, the bristles of the toothpaste become worn and bent over time. In any event, you have to get a new toothbrush every once in a while.

Text messaging on Chol Ha-Moed

Q: Is it permissible to send a text message (SMS) on Chol Ha-Moed?

A: It is permissible, since this is not the form of writing which the Torah forbids. Similarly, it is permissible to type on a computer, but one should not print unless it is a case of a potential loss.

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