



Devarim 5769

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## Were there Dinosaurs?

[Talk given in the yeshiva during lunch]

This is not a Torah question at all. What is the difference whether there were dinosaurs or not? The halachic question is whether dinosaurs were kosher or not. There is a discussion in the Gemara regarding a mermaid and whether it is kosher. The conclusion is that it is not kosher. The discussion focuses on why it is not kosher and its impact on other types of fish (see Bechorot 8a with Rashi). The Gemara focuses on reasoning. Whether it existed or not is not the point.

The Torah does not mention dinosaurs. This question is interesting from a scientific perspective but not a Torah perspective. In the book "Netivot Olam" (Netiv Ha-Toraah, netiv 14), the Maharal says that the purpose of science is to describe reality, while the Torah describes what reality should be, i.e. what is good and what is bad. What exists is interesting, but it is not Torah, which discusses halachic questions.

When people ask how old is the world, if we came from apes, what happened in the distance past, I generally answer: I don't know. I wasn't born and I didn't see. But in the case of dinosaurs, I saw the skeleton of the largest dinosaur in Europe – 20 meters, so you can't tell me stories. Some say that the Atheists made dinosaurs from plastic in order to challenge us and claim that they were from long ago. This is nonsense. I saw it. There were dinosaurs. If so, why doesn't the Torah write about it? The Torah does not say that there were dinosaurs and it does not say that there were not. Some say that the large creatures mentioned during Creation (Bereshit 1:21) are the dinosaurs.

How old are the dinosaurs? A few million years old. Why then according to the Torah is the world 5769 years old? This has already been asked and answered: Hashem created worlds and destroyed them before creating our current world

(Bereshit Rabbah 3:7, 9:2 and Kohelet Rabbah 3:11). The worlds were destroyed but certain remnants remained. This is explained by Maran Rav Kook in one of his letters (vol. 1 #91). The author of "Tiferet Yisrael" (a commentary on the Mishnah by Rabbi Yisrael Lipschitz) also explained this at length in "Derush Or Ha-Chaim," found in Mishnayot Nezikin after Massechet Sanhedrin). He said that the mystics claim that Hashem created four worlds before creating our world. Where are these worlds? Scientists say that this idea is made up. The Tiferet Yisrael says: "This is not correct. Our Sages know what they are talking about. And after they started excavations and found bones, we see that our Sages spoke the truth!" Although we do not need proofs that our Sages spoke the truth, it is still nice to hear it. He wrote: "The pondering spirit of man, who desires to discover all of the worlds, probing, excavating and delving like a weasel into the recesses of the earth, and the highest mountains in the world, in the Pyrenees, the Carpathians, the Cardillan Mountains in America, and the Himalayas, has found them to be formed of mighty layers of rock lying on one another as if thrown chaotically... Probing still further, within the depths of the earth, they found four distinct layers of rock, and between the layers fossilized remains of creatures. Those in the lower layers are much larger in size and structure, while those in the higher layers are progressively smaller in size but more refined in structure and form... And they also found in Siberia in 1807, in the northern most part of the world, under the constant incredible ice which is there, a monstrous type of elephant, some three or four times larger than those found today...the bones of which are now housed in a museum in St. Petersburg... We also know of the remains of an enormous creature found deep in the earth near Baltimore, seventeen feet long and eleven feet high... From all this it is clear that everything that the Kabbalists have told us for hundreds of years, that the world had already once existed and was then destroyed, and then it was reestablished four more times, and that each time the world appeared in a more perfect state than before – now in our time it has all become clear in truth and righteousness."

Nonetheless, there is no difference whether there were dinosaurs or not. Maran Ha-Rav Kook said that our subject is not if man came from an animal, our subject is how not to be an animal. The Torah's purpose is to teach us how to have a gentle 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," "Olam Ha-Katan" and "Be-Ahavah U-Be-Eumnah." Here's a sample:

Q: Should we be strict not to buy baby food made with powder which is not Chalav Yisrael or a product of Germany?

A: Do not be strict with the baby but buy what is most healthy for him.

Q: If I am davening the Shemoneh Esrei and I see someone's wallet fall out of his pocket and he is walking away, can I stop in order to return it?

A: In an extenuating circumstance, it is permissible to stop and walk without talking (Mishnah Berurah 104:2).

Q: When do I recite Shehechyanu when buying a new piece of clothing?

A: When you wear it for the first time.

Q: Is it permissible to use "maaser" to buy a backpack for traveling around Israel, since traveling in Israel is a mitzvah?

A: No, "maaser" is for the poor and, in any event, there is no mitzvah that one must travel with a backpack.

Q: I have medicine without kosher supervision. Is it permissible to take it?

A: All medicine which lacks flavor is kosher. If it has flavor, wrap it in a very thin piece of paper and swallow it.

Q: My father curses me and embarrasses me in front of others. Am I obligated to honor him?

A: According to your ability.

Q: Is it permissible to daven Shemoneh Esrei in bare feet or in socks?

A: No, we must stand as we would before a king.

Q: Is it permissible to wear a red string as a "segulah"?

A: It is "Darkei Emori" (the way of the Emorites). Tosefta.

Q: Does a beautiful head scarf draw attention more than a woman's hair?

A: It needs to be a modest scarf like all other clothing.

Q: What is the source for holy water given out by a "Tzadik" (righteous individual)?

A: There is no source.

Q: Is it permissible to visit the "Body Works" exhibition in Haifa?

A: No. Shaming the deceased also applies to non-Jewish corpse.

Q: Why is cheating on a test forbidden?

A: "Genevat Da'at" (deception).

Q: Is smoking against the Torah?

A: Definitely. Rambam, Hilchot De'ot, chap. 4.

Q: Should we initiate a large prayer gathering for Ariel Sharon, since he is a Jew, contributed much to the Nation of Israel and thus we should forgive and detach ourselves from negative feelings (about his expulsion of Jews from Gush Katif and Northern Shomron)? In the end, Hashem did it and he was his agent.

A: In principle – yes. But this does not appear to be for his benefit since if he wakes up, he will be severely mentally challenged.

Q: Must we ask a Rabbi about choosing a name for a baby?

A: No. It is sufficient not to choose the name of a wicked person and not a boy's name for a girl and vice-versa.

## Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

### Humility – Part 2

A student related: Our Rabbi was once invited to a Brit Milah and I came to pick him up in a taxi. When he entered the taxi, someone accidentally closed the door on his fingers. His face flinched for a moment but no sound came out of his mouth. When the young man noticed, he quickly opened the door, apologizing and asking forgiveness. Our Rabbi said to him: "No problem, nothing happened." But blood dripped from his fingers.

When he received his check from work, he did not send a messenger to cash it, but went to the bank himself and stood in line. He generally took a bus and not a taxi. At first, when he was called to the Torah with the title "Rav," he would begin to cry.

A student asked our Rabbi for the source of a Gemara he mentioned in class. He opened the Gemara but did not find it. He closed the Gemara and said that sometimes when a person feels arrogant because he knows something which someone else does not, heaven hints to him that he should repent for this. After he finished explaining, he opened the Gemara and found the source. (Gadol Shimusha of Ha-Rav Avraham Remer, p. 97 #35)

During a class, a young student fainted, and when our Rabbi saw that he was being taken care of, he continued with his class as usual in order that the student not be embarrassed by the attention of those around him.



### **Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law**

#### Facing the Moon during Kiddush Levana

Q: Is one supposed to turn away from the moon during the entire Kiddush Levana (Blessing of the New Moon) and face east (away from the moon) or may one face the moon and turn aside during actual blessing?

A: It is only necessary to turn away during the blessing so that it does not appear as if we are reciting it towards the moon.

*From Rav Aviner's Commentary on Birkat Ha-Mazon,  
entitled Shir Ha-Ma'a lot*

#### Fourth blessing of the Birkat Ha-Mazon – Part 1

"The Blessing of 'Ha-Tov Ve-Ha-Meitiv - Who is good and who does good' was established by the Sages in Yavneh, in memory of the slain Jews of Beitar, as Rav Matna said: The day on which the slain Jews of Beitar were afforded burial, the Sages in Yavneh established the Blessing of 'Who is good and who does good.' 'Who is good' because the bodies did not decay and 'Who does good' because they were

afforded burial" (Berachot 48b). After the Romans crushed the Bar Kochba revolt, the evil emperor Hadrian denied burial to all of the hundreds of thousand slaughtered sacrifices in order to break the Nation's spirit, and to cause a desecration of Hashem's Name. After the passage of years, the decree was rescinded and there was a double miracle: the bodies of the fighters were afforded burial and it was also retroactively clarified that they did not decay. This was on Tu Bishvat - the fifteenth of Shvat (Ta'anit 31a). One who sacrifices his life for the sanctification of Hashem's Name, the soul overpowers the body and holds it in place. The same applies in our days: two righteous individuals, Eliyahu Chakim and Eliyahu Beit-Tzuri, sacrificed their lives in Egypt to kill an evil Englishman named Lord Mavin who caused us much distress. After many years, the Egyptians returned the bodies to us, and it became clear that they remained in perfect form, and someone who had earlier known them, was amazed by the fact that their facial features were preserved (see Sichot Rabbenu 49, pg. 15). But one can question the longer version of this blessing. The accepted shorter version is: "Who is good and who does good." What did our Sages see to establish such great length here: "the Almighty, our Father, our King, our Sovereign, our Creator, our Redeemer, our Maker, our Holy One, Holy One of Yaakov, our Shepherd, the Shepherd of Israel, the King who is good and who does good for all. For every single day He did good..."?

Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, explained that this was in order to mislead the enemy. The Romans looked with an evil eye on this blessing of "Who is good and who does good" which magnified the heroism of Beitar, and they trailed after the Jews in order to ensure that they did not recite it, our Sages therefore hid it amongst a sea of words, in order that the Romans would not sense it. A similar phenomenon exists in relation to the recitation of the Shema which was forbidden to us. We therefore hid the verse "Shema Yisrael - Hear Israel" in the Kedushah of the reader's repetition of the Musaf Shemoneh Esrei on Shabbat.

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