

## Contra Rabbi Slifkin

---

By: Jonathan Ostroff

---

The owner of the bookstore took one look at the book I was purchasing and said, “Rabbi Slifkin has made quite the splash in our city.”

He then asked, “What do you say about the dinosaurs?” – referring to Rabbi Slifkin’s *Challenge of Creation* (2006), which has a stunning photo of a dinosaur skeleton on the front cover of the book.

“Well,” I said, “my question is, were dinosaurs created on day five, or day six?”

“You believe they existed?”

“Sure,” I said. “They may have been created with the mammals on day six, or perhaps with birds and fish on day five.” I explained that according to the Malbim, most species of birds and fish reproduce by laying eggs – the characteristic feature of day-five creatures – and dinosaurs lay eggs.

“Oh, you mean the ‘great creatures’ (*tanninim hagedolim*) of day five are dinosaurs?”

“Well, perhaps. Most commentaries understand that expression to refer to huge sea creatures, but *Chazal* indicate that it may refer to massive sea and land creatures as in the book of Job.”

I did not mention to my interlocutor some other surprising things about dinosaurs.

How old are dinosaurs? Everybody “knows” the answer to this question. As Rabbi Slifkin writes: “A live Tyrannosaurus Rex might be scary, but 65-million-year-old fossils need not be. The entire discussion concerning the age of the universe need not frighten the religious person. After all, God wrote the book of nature, so whatever it tells us about its origins must surely be His words.”

O.K. The universe can be as old as God wants. But what Rabbi Slifkin does not reveal to his readers is that under the right conditions, an animal the size of a dinosaur can become a fossil in a mere three weeks!

He also does not tell his readers that when Mary Schweitzer, of Montana State University’s Museum of the Rockies, was examining a thin section of Tyrannosaurus Rex bone under her light microscope, she noticed a series of peculiar structures. Round and tiny and nucleated, they were threaded through the bone like red blood cells in blood vessels. But blood cells in a dinosaur bone should have disappeared eons ago.

“I got goose bumps,” recalls Schweitzer. “It was exactly like looking at a slice of modern bone. But, of course, I couldn’t believe it. I said to the lab technician: ‘The bones, after all, are 65 million years old. How could blood cells survive that long?’ ”

A “good *kashya*,” but it drives Schweitzer crazy when creationists suggest that this may be evidence for a recent creation. This is because she believes that geologists have established that the Hell Creek Formation, where the dinosaur bones were found, is 68 million years old, and that therefore so are the bones buried in it.

But the discovery of soft elastic tissue and the appearance of fresh blood cells in dinosaurs is something else altogether, for such unusual preservation relies on “yet undetermined geochemical and environmental factors.”

As for all those dating methods, what about “anomalous” uranium-lead radiometric measurements showing that Jurassic and Triassic formations in the Colorado Plateau are several thousands of years old – rather short of the 60 to 200-million year age required by the evolutionary time scale? You will not see the many little (and not so little) anomalies mentioned, let alone discussed, in any of Rabbi Slifkin’s books.

Rabbi Slifkin and I have been debating such issues for many years. Rabbi Slifkin, who is undoubtedly well intentioned, considers the scientific evidence for naturalistic evolution to be incontrovertible fact. His belief is that Torah must be reconciled to the scientific consensus no matter what, and he has consistently refused to discuss the validity of the scientific evidence.

There is a reason that Rabbi Slifkin’s book, mentioned earlier, has no approbation from any *rosh yeshiva* or *posek*. It concerns a central issue that logically precedes any conflict about gaps in the fossil record or dinosaur bones. This issue is *not* about the duration of time during the six-day creation week, or whether it is permissible to allegorize a verse in the Torah, or *Chazal*’s knowledge of science. These are interesting topics, but they do not address the central issue in question, which frames a fundamental dispute about diametrically opposing worldviews.

While Rabbi Slifkin’s work does not carry the approbation of noted Torah authorities, it does carry an enthusiastic approbation from Darwinist Michael Ruse, who believes that “we humans are modified monkeys, not the favored Creation of a Benevolent God.”

Ruse, like Rabbi Slifkin, believes in Darwin’s “blind watchmaker” thesis – the thesis that the marvels of life (the human brain, for example) originate via naturalistic mechanisms such as accidental random mutation and natural selection.

Rabbi Slifkin believes that currently operating natural processes (albeit guided by God) produced vestigial organs having little or no utility and “poorly designed” organs such as the panda’s thumb. When he wrote about the panda’s thumb in 2006, Rabbi Slifkin was unaware of an in-depth study of the matter by Japanese scientists. The scientists described the panda’s thumb as an engineering marvel, calling it an “extraordinary manipulation system.”

The Torah, in contrast to Rabbi Slifkin’s chance naturalistic approach, describes a purposeful meta-natural creation process that is entirely removed from the currently operating laws of nature. It is Rabbi Slifkin’s insistence on evolutionary naturalism that is fundamentally at odds with core principles of Torah, and this is the central issue that Rabbi Slifkin has consistently failed to address in our discussions.

Charles Darwin wrote: “If I were convinced that I required such [miraculous] additions to the theory of natural selection, I would reject it as rubbish ... I would give nothing for the theory of natural selection, if it requires miraculous additions at any one stage of descent.”

Richard Dawkins writes (in *The Blind Watchmaker*) that in Darwin’s view the whole point of the theory of evolution by natural selection was that it provided a non-miraculous account of the existence of complex adaptations.

For Darwin, any evolution that required God’s help was not evolution at all. Rabbi Slifkin in essence concedes to the atheists that if anyone could have witnessed the origin of the cosmos and of life itself, he would not have detected any role played by God – thus allowing leading intellectuals to teach our unwitting students that “Darwin made it possible to be a fulfilled atheist” (in the words of Richard Dawkins).

Can the meta-natural account of creation in the Torah be reconciled with Darwin's blind watchmaker thesis? When one puts it like that, the answer is clearly no. After all, Darwin said we may never appeal to miracles. But the concept of a miraculous meta-natural Creation Week permeates the first few chapters of the Torah and has always been understood to be at the heart of all the fundamental beliefs of Torah, and of our very awareness of the Creator.

Indeed, Rabbi Slifkin freely admits that his Darwinian interpretation flies in the face of every classical Talmudic and Rishonic source discussing the topic.

When we make *Kiddush* on *Shabbos* we recite the words of the fourth commandment stating that God rested (*vayonach*) on the seventh day. *Chazal* say that this means that creation came to halt on that day. The Rambam, in *Moreh Nevuchim*, explains this as follows: "On each day of the six day creation week, novel entities were formed outside of the system of nature currently in operation and, on the seventh day (*Shabbos*), the state of the world became lasting and established just as it is at present."

The Maharal writes (*Be'er Hagolah*): "Know that He, Himself, may His name be blessed, in all His Glory (*b'chvodo u'veatzmo*) caused all of reality to materialize into existence during the six days of creation. He did not cause it through the agency of nature, as opposed to the period which ensues after the six days of creation, in which Hashem, may His name be blessed, governs his creation via the intermediary of nature."

This is the concept of Creation we have as our *mesorah*. And this means, as Rav Shlomo Miller *shlita* explains, that Hashem is not just the Guide (*manhig*) of the universe but also its Creator (*boreh*).

The very laws of nature, the imperatives that govern the cosmos, space, time, mass, energy, and life were only able to come into existence via God exercising his role as the Creator over the entire six-day creation period of *asarah ma'maros*, ten declarations.

*Shabbos* teaches that the natural processes we see at work today were not the ones responsible for bringing the world and its inhabitants into existence. Our cessation of work on *Shabbos* testifies to the fact that God *meta-naturally* created his universe in six days and *ceased this process* on the seventh day.

As *Chazal* say, Hashem said to His world "*dai*" – stop! – at which point the laws of nature became fixed and stable. Those who attempt to explain creation as an ongoing natural process empty our cessation from work on *Shabbos* of all meaning. They cannot help but stumble in the fundamentals of Torah. They thereby undermine the very essence of *Shabbos* which is fundamental to our awareness of the Creator (see Rashi to *Chulin* 5a, as quoted by Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach in *Mevakshei Torah*).

It is the *post-creation* stable order that scientists legitimately study today. Contra Rabbi Slifkin, the pseudo-scientific naturalistic account of origins is at loggerheads with the principle God presented to us in the Torah – the principle of a purposeful meta-natural creation by a transcendent Creator.

There is no way to reconcile or eliminate this conflict in worldview. Nor is it a question for concern because, on this issue, evolutionary naturalists have overstepped the legitimate bounds of science. We refer the reader to [toriah.com/wiki](http://toriah.com/wiki) for further details.

*Jonathan Ostroff is an associate professor in the Department of Computer Science & Engineering at York University, Toronto.*

## **Excerpts of a letter by Rabbi Aharon Feldman Shlit"a, Rosh HaYeshiva Ner Yisroel:**

Probably the public issue most damaging to the honor of Torah and to its leaders in recent memory is what is known as the Slifkin affair. Rabbi Nosson Slifkin, a talented young man still in his twenties, wrote three books in the past several years in which he attempted to justify certain conflicts between the findings of modern science and parts of the Torah and the Talmud. ... Nevertheless, in September of last year [2004] a public letter banning the books was issued by some of the leading Torah authorities in Israel, and then shortly afterwards a similar ban, signed by many prominent American Roshey Yeshiva, was issued in the United States. The books were banned because they were deemed to contain ideas antithetical to Torah ...

The ban was met with resistance by Slifkin who vigorously defended himself on his Internet site on several grounds. ...

Slifkin's campaign was eminently successful. In short time, most people were convinced that the ban had no basis or reason, and that Slifkin had been unwarrantedly victimized. His campaign made the signatories appear easily swayed and naive. Easily swayed, because they had relied on the "extremists" and had not sufficiently checked the accuracy of their claims. Naïve, because the tumult over the ban catapulted the books into best-sellerdom. The books had been previously virtually unknown but after the ban began selling by the thousands even at inflated prices – which meant that the ban accomplished nothing."

Blogspots, Internet sites (mostly anonymous) where anyone with access to a computer can express his spontaneous, unchecked and unedited opinion with impunity, became filled with tasteless, derogatory attacks on these authorities, at times to the accompaniment of vulgar caricatures.

As a result, many thoughtful, observant Jews were beset by a crisis of confidence in the judgment of the signatories. This was an extremely vital crisis since these authorities constitute some of the greatest Torah leaders of our generation, authorities upon whom all of the Jewish people rely for their most serious decisions. More important, it threatened to make any of their future signatures on public announcements questionable. The irony of it all is that the books, which had originally been written to defend the honor of Torah, became one of the most potent vehicles in our times for weakening the authority of Torah. ...

### **Approbations to the original books by R. Slifkin (many were retracted).**

**The Science of Torah** (Targum-Feldheim 2001), with 4 approbations (*haskamas*) .

- Rabbi Aryeh Carmell, z"l.
- Rav Shalom Kamenetsky, shlita, signed a letter (October 2004) retracting the approbation. Another letter dated Sept 13<sup>th</sup> 2004 clarified that his letter was not an approbation.
- Rabbi Aaron Lopiansky, signed a letter (October 2004) retracting the approbation.
- Rabbi Mordechai Kornfeld.

**Mysterious Creatures** (Targum-Feldheim 2003) , with 2 approbations .

- Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky, shlita, on Cheshvan 5766 signed a letter criticizing the books.
- Rabbi Chaim Malinowitz.

**The Camel, the Hare & the Hyrax** (Targum-Feldheim, 2004) with 3 approbations

- Rav Yisroel Belsky, shlita.
- Rabbi Chaim Malinowitz.
- Rabbi Mordecai Kornfeld.

Rabbi Slifkin's later book, *The Created Cosmos* (2006), has no approbation by a Torah authority.

## Rabbi Avraham Chaim Carmel on the Slifkin Controversy (published at DovidGottlieb.com)

Rabbi Carmell is commenting on the following passage by Rabbi Nathan Slifkin:

**Date:** Mon, 27 Oct 2003 11:29:05 +0200

**From:** Zoo Torah <@zootorah.com>

**Subject:** RE: Basics for Philosophical discussions

....

Actually, if someone feels that one needs to have a sufficiently qualified authority upon which to rely for the allegorization of the Mabul, then I can provide one. It's a more authoritative source than the Rishonim. More authoritative even than Chazal. It's the Metzriyus. Hashem's "diary of history," the physical world, states that there was no global Flood. I think that Hashem is a reliable source (unless, of course, He was deliberately deceiving us...). There is only one metziyus. On the other hand, there are different ways of understanding the Torah....]

Dear Nosson היי, נוסן,

As you realized on your last visit, my father, *shlita*, is unfortunately no longer in a position to discuss the issue of your books. I would like to share with you some ideas I have discussed with him in the past.

I have tried to imagine what would have been Rabbi Dessler's position with regard to the ban against your books. The following three points come to mind:

- 1) Rabbi Dessler advocated a healthy skepticism, to the point of contempt, towards the "conclusions" of scientism, in particular where these challenged the beliefs of a Torah Jew. See the epilogue to Artscroll's biography of Rav Dessler (p. 365), "Against the worship of Science".

He would not have taken kindly to your attitude that anything reported in "The New Scientist" as fact is to be accepted as such.

- 2) Rabbi Dessler, following in the footsteps of the Maharal, taught us to have the greatest reverence for *Chazal* and the tremendous *siyatta diShmaya* and divine insight that permeates all their teachings.

I think that his advice to anyone tackling issues of science and Torah would have been to use their knowledge to discover, or come up with, alternative theories that the bias of scientism may have rejected, but may give more credence to *Chazal*.

- 3) As you may have by now discovered, the main opposition of the *Gedolim* is to your attempt to "re-educate" or reformulate the thinking of the chareidi community. As one person put it: "your worst crime" was to put *haskamos* on the books.

Rabbi Dessler was uncharacteristically outspoken in his criticism of such attempts (see letters vol. 3).

- 4) Finally, regardless whether I am correct in my assessment of Rabbi Dessler's attitude to the above, one thing is definite. After the fact, Rabbi Dessler would have accepted the decision of those *Rabbanim*, Roshei Yeshiva and Mashgichim in whose hands Hashem has entrusted the directions of our generation. When Hashem showed Adam and Moshe, "*dor dor vedorshav... manhigav*" these are the names on that list. We can get no closer to Hashem's *ratzon* than by listening to our *Gedolim* who have spent their entire lives in ascertaining the *emes* of Torah. Even if, as a result of all the non-Torah ideas that we have read, their opinion seems to us to be incorrect, Hashem wants us to follow them. Their *siyatta diShmaya* in knowing what is good for *Klal Yisrael* is unimaginably greater than ours.

Wishing you all the best,

Avraham Chaim Carmell

P.S. I saw a statement on your website to the effect that "G-d told you that the *mabul* never happened." I would like to draw your attention to the Radak who writes that a *navi sheker* may truly believe that he had a Divine revelation about the falsehood he prophesizes about. He is nevertheless *chayav missa*, because as a believing Jew, he is required to realize that he has allowed himself to be misled by his imaginations (or as a *horaas sha'a*, since he is a danger to *Klal Yisrael*.)

נגד שלשה חיבורים שנכתבו באנגלית על ידי מר נתן סליפקין (NOSSON SLIFKIN)

הנה בא לפני הגאון הצדיק רבי ישראל אלי' וינטרויב שליט"א והביע את כאבו הגדול על המכשול הגדול בספרים שחיבר נתן סליפקין ונכתבו באנגלית, שהם מלאים דברי כפירה ומינות, זיוף דברי חז"ל וחילול ביסודי האמונה ר"ל.

מאחר שהנ"ל למד בעבר בישיבות הק', ומתריך עצמו שכותב בצורה זו כדי לקרב רחוקים, (ויש לו הסכמות מגדולי תורה שאמנם חזרו כבר מהסכמות), ולכן יש סכנה שדבריו יתקבלו וישפיעו לרעה.

על כן הנני בזה שצריך להרחיק ספרים אלו, ואסור להחזיקם או להפיצם כדין ספרי מינות, וגם אין ליתן למחברם להתעסק עם קירוב רחוקים, כדי שלא יבוא ח"ו להכשיל במינות וכפירה. ולא שייך בזה שום תירוצים והסברים להצדיק את עצמו ואת כתביו.

והשי"ת יחוס עלינו ויערה רוח טהרה שתימלא הארץ דעה את ד'.  
החותם מתוך כאב לב, ובתקוה שהמפיץ דברי הכפירה והמינות ישרוף כל כתביו  
ויפרסם ברבים שהוא חוזר מכל זה.

ה' דעשי"ת תשס"ה

הגני מצטרף להג"ל  
יוסף שלו (אלישיב)

שמואל אביגדור פייוועלזאן  
ראש ישיבת בית מדרש לתורה

אלי דב וכטפוגל  
ראש ישיבת סאוט פולסברג

אריה מלכיאל קוטלר  
באממ"ד הגר"ש זצוק"ל  
ראש ישיבת בית מדרש גבוה

רפאל הלוי שארר  
ראש ישיבה במאנסי

מתת'י חיים סלומון  
מנהל רוחני בכימדר גבוה

י.ד.ד.ד.  
יהודה עדס  
ראש ישיבת קול יעקב

# THE OPINION OF THE GEDOLAI HADOR SHLITA

## AGAINST THE BOOKS OF NOSSON SLIFKIN

"The Science of Torah" - "Mysterious Creatures" - "The Camel The Hare and The Hyrax"

The Gaon and Tzadik Harav Yisrael Elyahu Weintraub has come to me and expressed deep pain over the fact that the books written by Nossan Slifkin present a great stumbling block to the reader. They are full of heresy, twist and misrepresent the words of our sages and ridicule the foundations of our emunah. Heaven forbid!

The author who once studied in holy yeshivas justifies his approach by maintaining that he wrote the book in that fashion in order to bring wayward Jews closer to G-d. [He also has letters of approbation from Torah sages that have since retracted.] The publication and distribution of these books present a spiritual danger and I fear that people will be adversely influenced by them. I therefore declare that these books should be distanced and it is **forbidden to read, own or distribute them as the Halacha applies to all "books of heresy"**. The author should also not be permitted to engage in outreach so that he should not transgress the cardinal sin of spreading words of heresy. There can be no room for justification whatsoever for spreading these books.

May G-d have mercy on us and pour forth a spirit of purity so that the world becomes full with the knowledge of G-d.

Signed with a pained heart and with the hope that the author who has spread this heresy will **burn all of his works and publicly retract all that he has written.**

Fifth Day of Aseres Yemei Tshuva 5765

**Michel Yehuda Lefkowitz**

**Yoseif Sholom Eliashiv**

**A. L. Shteinman**

**Chaim Pinchas  
Scheinberg**

**Shmuel Auerbach**

**Shmuel Avigdor Falvelson**  
Rosh Yeshiva Bais Medrash L'Torah

**Eliyahu Simcha Schustal**  
Rosh Yeshiva Bais Binyamin

**Yisroel Perkowski**  
Rosh Yeshiva Bais Hatalmud

**Eliyahu Dov Wachtfogel**  
Rosh Yeshiva South Fallsburg

**Shmuel Birnbaum**  
Rosh Yeshiva Mirrer Yeshiva

**Chaim Stein**  
Rosh Yeshiva Telshe

**Aryeh Malkiel Kotler**  
Rosh Yeshiva Beth Medrash Govoha

**Meir Herschkowitz**  
Rosh Yeshiva Bais Binyamin

**Yoseif Rosenblum**  
Rosh Yeshiva Shaarei Yotzer

**Raphael Schorr**  
Rosh Yeshiva Monsey

**Yitzchok Scheiner**  
Rosh Yeshiva Kaminetz Jerusalem

I also concur with the warning and protest of the Gedolai Yisroel mentioned above. I add that the proofs they bring to their warped opinions from the words of the Mekubolim are in the category of distorting Torah and not in accordance with true Kabbalah. They are falsifying the words of Hashem to fit with their invalid theories.

**Yaakov Hillel**  
Rosh Yeshiva Ahavat Shalom

**Matisyahu Solomon**  
Menzel Rochai Beth Medrash Govoha

**Don Zev Segal**

**Moshe Shapiro**

**Yehuda Ades**  
Rosh Yeshiva Kol Yaakov

**Avraham Chaim Levin**  
Rosh Yeshiva Telshe Chicago

**Dovid Feinstein**  
Rosh Yeshiva Tifereth  
Yerushalayim

### English speaking Rabbis who have called R. Slifkin's approach heretical

- Rav Yisroel Elya Weintraub shlita, American born, is the first name that appears in the original *giluy daas*, and he wrote his own letter in Elul 5764.
- Rav Yitzchak Scheiner shlita, wrote his own letter in Elul 5764.
- Rav Chaim Pinchas Sheinberg shlita.
- Rav Aryeh Malkiel Kotler shlita.
- Rav Matisyahu Salomon shlita.
- Rav Chaim Stein shlita.
- Rav Dovid Feinstein shlita.
- Rav Yaakov Hillel shlita, Rav Elya Ber Wachtfogel shlita, Rav Moshe Shternbuch shlita, Rav Aharon Feldman shlita and many others (see below).



Rabbi Aaron M. Schechter

אהרן משה שכטר

כ"ד אדר א' תשס"ו

It was brought to my attention that the fact that my name was not signed on a protest to the Slifkin books, recently published, regarding science and Torah, was being used to infer my acceptance of those books and their spirit.

I am obligated to make the opposite abundantly clear. The books are in opposition to our Torah (דברי תורה). The impudent and audacious spirit of throwing off the yoke (כבדונו) of the (בית דין) and our sages (חכמים) who are its bearers (מחנכים), denies any excuse for the mistakes therein. A seeker of truth should distance himself from them, as the דין requires.

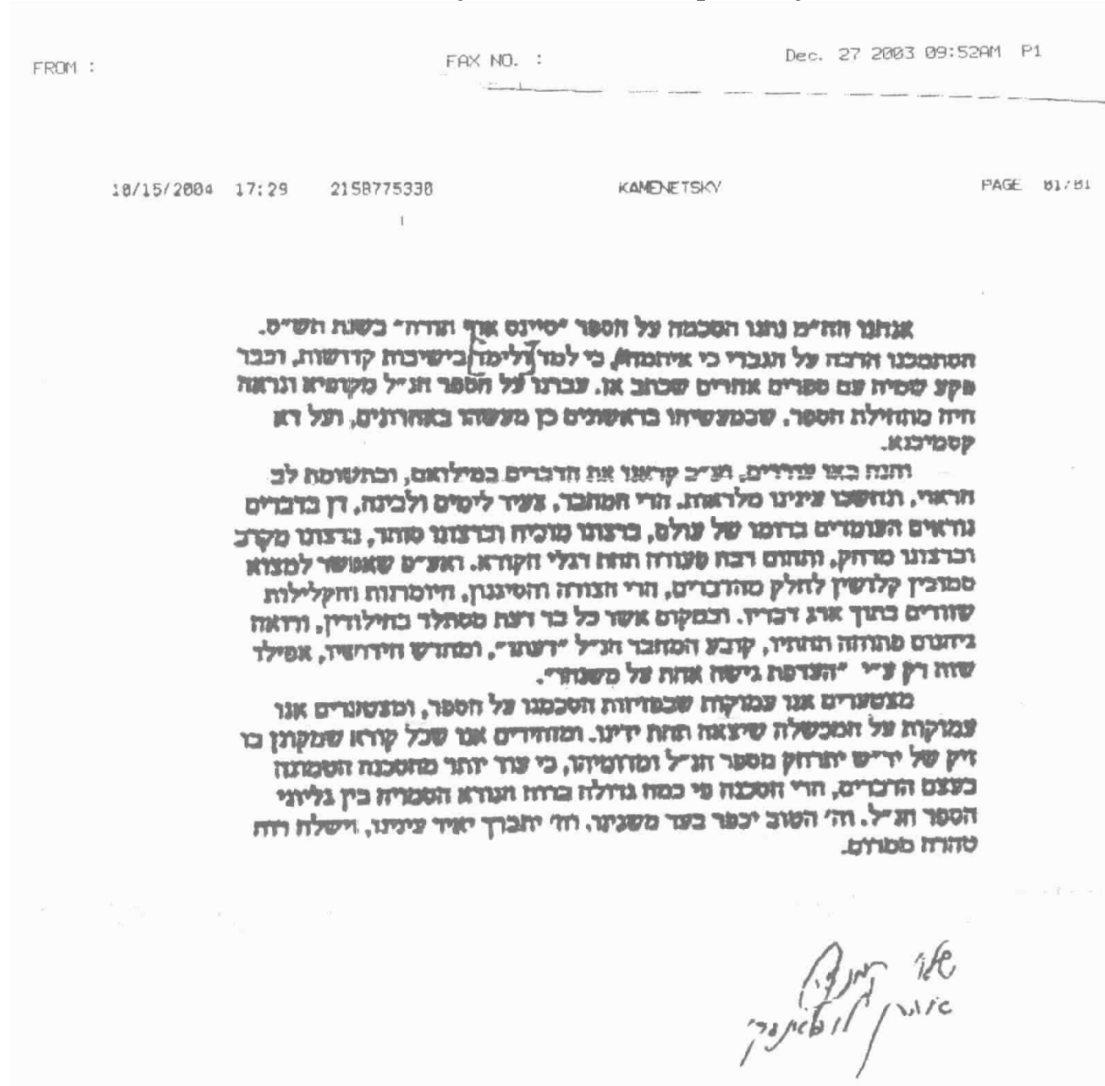
The Torah charges us to realize that our life's mission is to "cleave to him" (דבוקה ביה). רש"י teach us that to cleave to sages and their students (תלמידי חכמים) is the way to achieve that.

The pursuit of the attachment to (דבוקה ביה), investing a maximum of one's intellectual and spiritual powers to grow in the knowledge of their words and the appreciation, thereof, profoundly, is the path of

אמנם הצדקים דה' אלו דברים חיים בולטים הלאה

אשר ה' ילך עמו  
למען יתן חסדו





אנחנו הח"מ נתנו הסכמה על הספר "סייאס אוף תורה" בשנת תש"ס.  
הסתמכנו הרבה על גרבי כי איתמחי, כי למד ולימד בישיבות קדושות, וכבר  
פקע שמיה עם ספרים אחרים שכתב אז. עברנו על הספר הנ"ל מקופיא ונראה  
היה מתחילת הספר, שכמשיהו בראשונה כך מעשהו באחרונים, ועל דא  
קסמיכנא.

והנה באו עוררים, וע"כ קראנו את הדברים במילואם, ובתשומת לב  
הראוי, ונחשנו עינינו מלראות. הרי המחבר צעיר לימים ולבינה, דן בדברים  
נוראים העומדים ברומם של עולם, ברצונו מוכיח וברצונו סותר, ברצונו מקרב  
וברצונו מרחק, ותהום רבה פעורה תחת רגלי הקורא. ואע"פ שאפשר למצוא  
סמוכין קלושין לחלק מהדברים, הרי הצורה והסיגנון, היומרות והקלילות  
שזורים בתוך ארג דבריו. ובמקום אשר כל בר דעת מסתלד בחילודין, ורואה גיהנום  
פתוחה תחתיו, קובע המחבר הנ"ל "דעתו", ומחדש חידושו, אפילו שזה רק  
ע"י "העדפת גישה אחת על משנהו".

מצטערים אנו עמוקות שבפזיזות הסכמנו על הספר, ומצטערים אנו  
עמוקות על המכשלה שיצאה תחת ידינו. ומזהירים אנו שכל קורא שמקונן בו  
זיק של יר"ש יתרחק מספר הנ"ל ומדומיהו, כי עוד יותר מהסכנה הטמונה  
בעצם הדברים, הרי הסכנה פי כמה גדולה ברוח הנורא הסמויה בין גליוני  
הספר הנ"ל. וה' הטוב יכפר בעד משגינו. וה' יתברך יאיר עינינו, וישלח רוח  
טהרה ממרום.

See  
[http://fkmaniac.blogspot.com/2006\\_11\\_01\\_archive.html](http://fkmaniac.blogspot.com/2006_11_01_archive.html) for the details of  
the above letter by Rav Shalom  
Kamenetsky shlita and Rav Rav Aaron  
Lopiansky shlita.

## Letter by Rabbi Shalom Kamenetsky Shlit"a prior to the Ban

**From:** owner-avodah@aishdas.org

**Sent:** September 13, 2004 5:39 PM

**To:** Avodah - High Level Torah Discussion Group

**Subject:** Age of the Universe (Haskamos to the Science of Torah by RNS)

Rabbi Nossen Slifkin wrote on Avodah (13:9):

>I do not accept that Ralbag only has validity if backed up by Chazal,  
>and Ralbag apparently didn't think so either. Rav Nadel's position is  
>that Rambam (and, by the same token, Ralbag) give us a license to  
>allegorize when there is necessary cause, such as overwhelming  
>scientific evidence. My specific allegory in my sefer has askamos from  
>Rav Aryeh Carmell, Rav Sholom Kamenetzky, and Rav Mordechai Kornfeld, shlita.

I asked Rabbi Sholom Kamenetsky Shlita whether his letter [of approbation] in the sefer [*Torah and Science* by Rabbi Slifkin] could be taken as expressing agreement with Rabbi Slifkin's approach.

Rabbi Kamenetsky has given me permission to forward his response to Avodah. It is addressed to me by my Hebrew name ("Yoel" [Ostroff]).

*September 13, 2004*

*Dear R' Yoel,*

Thank you for the note. My name does appear in his book and a careful reading of the *haskomo* will show that I gave no *haskomo* on the content. What impressed me about the book is its science. The uninitiated unlettered Jew often finds that the responses he gets when he questions the seeming incompatibility between science and Torah (l'havdil) are lacking.

The science in the book is impressive, but I do not agree with the positions he takes in the Torah. True, he has "unconventional" sources that would lend some credibility to the theories he proposes, but I see these as "suggestions" (based on somewhat spurious understandings of unconventional sources) that are to allow the uninitiated to feel that he can begin learning Torah, and see for himself that the issues are irrelevant. More than anything else, RNS should be lauded for trying his best to defend the Torah against a group of apikorsim that are bent on mocking Torah and disseminating science as the "proof" that Torah is false, Rachmono litzlan. But to say that these theories have credibility as Torah positions was not my intent in my letter of approbation. I agree with Rabbi Bechofer and there is no such thing as scientific evidence which is "incontrovertible".

*Respectfully,*

*Sholom Kamenetsky*

RABBI YAAKOV PERLOW  
1569 - 47TH STREET  
BROOKLYN N.Y. 11219

יעקב פרלוב  
קהל עדת יעקב נאוואמינסק  
ישיבת נאוואמינסק - קול יהודא  
ברוקלין, נ.י.

בס"ד כ"ה אייר, תש"ז

This is to state unequivocally that the absence of my name on the list of rabbanim who publicly condemned the works of Moshe Slifkin in no way indicates any agreement with, or acceptance of, the ideas expressed in his books. The publication of these books has caused serious damage to the sacred mesorah — and emanah — that Torah ideology has distilled for us throughout history. The sanctity of this mesorah must be forever preserved. Slifkin's works — particularly some of <sup>shocking</sup> ~~the~~ statements that I've seen — do terrible offense to our hallowed tradition, and they distort and undermine the Torah's clear truths.

2/7/77

# בית אולפנא רוממה

שע"י עמותת "שב שמעתתא" ע"ד 580098846

ראש הכולל הרב משה שפירא שליט"א

רח' תורת חסד 1, ירושלים 94464

בס"ד

ירושלים עשי"ת ס"ד

קראו לפני כמה קטעים בתרגום מלולי מספריו של סליפקין והדברים מזעזעים כל לב החרד לדבר ה' דברי כפירה גמורה באמיתה של תורה, והכחשת מגיד', והדבר נורא כי כלפי חוץ נראים הדברים כאילו חלילה התירו פרושים את הדבר ונתנו מקום להתיר לדברים אלו לבא בקהל חלילה, בודאי שדבר זה נעשה בשגגה גמורה אבל מקום שיש חלול ה' הוא וספרים אלו ספרי מינים הם, וכמש"כ רבינו מהר"ל על ספר מאור עינים שיצא בדורו עיין בדבריו בבאר הששי בס' באר הגולה, [וספריו של הנ"ל דומים הם בכפירתם לס' מ"ע] "ארור יהיה היום אשר בו נגלו ונראים דברים אלו. איש אשר לא ידע להבין דברי חכמים, אף דבר אחד מדבריהם הקטנים וכו' איך לא ירא לדבר בחכמים וידבר עליהם כאלו הם אנשים בדורו חביריו וכו' ויותר מזה כי נתנו דבריו וכו' אשר הם ראויים להשרף כמו ספרי מינים והם יותר גרועים מהם ונתנו בדפוס כאילו היו מספרי קודש" "אך על זה תלונתנו כי לא נמצא איש מוחה להנתן דברים כמו אלו בדפוס" ועיי"ש עוד דברים רבים היוצאים מלב מורתח ונאמרים באש קודש עד סוף דבריו ז"ל "והוא יתברך יציל זרע שארית ישראל, שלא ימצא בנו עוד פרץ נותן כבוד והוד לזרים." חלילה להכניס ספרים אלו לבתי שלמי אמוני ישראל וחלילה לבני תורה להסתכל בהם, מוקצה הם ובשבת אף לטלטלם אסור. ברור הדבר כי בשגגה ובהעלם דבר גמור ובטעות לא עברו הדברים בקורת ראוי' והוסכם להדפיסם, אנא ואנא יואילו נא לבדוק את הדבר ויראו את הנראה בעליל כי שגגת הוראה דע"ז היא זו.

בברכת גמח"ט לכל המסייעים להעמיד הדת על תילה



# כולל אברכים טאראנטא

515 Coldstream Ave.  
Toronto, ON M6B 2K7  
416 - 789-1853  
Fax: 785-8243

KOLLEL AVREICHIM OF TORONTO

נס"ד

## שלמה אליהו מילר רה"כ ואב"ד כולל טאראנטא

הנה הספרים של סליפקין כבר הוחרמו ע"י גדולי ישראל ומתחלה כשראיתי אותם אמרתי ריח מינות נודף מהם, אולם אח"כ ראיתי מש"כ אודות ששת ימי בראשית והם דברי מינות וכפירה, מלבד שהם דברי בורות ולא הבין כלל שכל חקי הטבע שאנו רואים עכשיו נקבעו בגמור ששת הימים כשעשה הקב"ה שביתה של יום השבת ואמר לעולמו די, אבל מהות הזמן וחקי הטבע בששת ימי בראשית אין להם שום דוגמא למה שאנו רואים עכשיו. וכבר אמרו רז"ל שנים עלו למטה וירדו ד'. שלידת קין והבל היתה תיכף אחר ההריון ביום הששי של ששת ימי בראשית. ודבריו בזה הם כפירה בעיקר יסודות התורה. ובאמת הלך בדרכי המלעיגים על חז"ל כידוע שהמשכילים לעגו על דרשות חז"ל והיו חכמים בעיניהם שרק הם המשכילים יודעים דקדוק לשון הקדש, עד שבא המלבי"ם וצוק"ל וחבר בנין נפלא על תורת כהנים להסביר דברי חז"ל על פי עומק לשון הקדש והראה נפלאות מתורת השם ויסודות דקדוק לה"ק שידעו חז"ל. וכן הוא כהיום בקושיות מן המדע על מה שאמרו רז"ל ובמקום שאנו מחויבים להאדירם, הוא בא להשפילם ואם יש קושיא שאינו יודע תירוץ, צריך להודות שלא זכיתי להבין דבריהם וכמו שעשו גדולי ישראל בכל הדורות כשהי' להם קושיא על הגמרא כי לא דבר רק הוא מכס, אם רק הוא מכס שאינכם מבינים, ואם נגשים אל התורה וחכמי התורה ביראת הכבוד ובענוה אז נלך לבטח ולא נכשל בעקרי הדת כמו שעשה סליפקין וידוע דברי הרמב"ם סוף הלכות מעילה שלא תהא מחשבת אדם בד"ת כמחשבתו בשאר דברי חול ע"ש בכל דבריו הנעימים.

והנה המפרשים כתבו על שאלת הרשע מה העבודה הזאת וכו' אשר בעל הגדה כתב שאומרים לו בעבור זה וכו' לי ולא לו ובתורה כתובה מענה אחרת ואמרתם זבח פסח. ופרשו המפרשים שכשומעים דברי מנות אין להתוכח עמהם, אבל לעצמנו אומרים דברי חזוק. ואמרתם לעצמנו ולא לו זבח פסח וכו' אשר פסח וכו'.

ומש"ה אני כותב איזה דברים לחזק לבות אלו ששמעו דברי כפירה שתורה"ק אינה אמיתית לפי ידיעת חכמי הטבע ואדרבה הפך בה והפך בה דכולה בה.

הנה חכמי הטבע עד לפני ד' מאות שנה לא ידעו שכוכבי לכת אין להם אור עצמם אלא אור חוזר מאור השמש עד שבא החכם Galileo והראה שכוכב נוגה Venus אין לו אור עצמי אלא אור חוזר. אולם לדעתי הדבר מוכח מדברי חז"ל שקראו שמו נוגה. ומלת נוגה שונה ממלת אור כמו שביאר המלבי"ם חבוק פ"ג פסוק ד' ונוגה כאור תהיה כתב המלבי"ם נוגה הוא דבר שאין לו אור מצד עצמו רק מוציא האור מדבר אחר כמו הירח וכוכבים [כוכבי לכת] שאין להם אור רק מקבלים ומגיהים אור השמש הזורח עליהם, ולפי"ז מוכח ממה שקבעו חז"ל שם נוגה על הכוכב Venus מוכח שאין לכוכב זו אור עצמו. אי"כ דבר זה שלא ידעו חכמי הטבע עד קרוב לשני אלפים אחר כך, כבר נודע לחז"ל.

אודות מהות של אור מתחלה סברו חכמי הטבע שהאור גרגרים Corpuscular Theory of Light עד שאחרי כן הוכיחו שהאור גלים Wave Theory of Light עד שלפני מאה שנה הוכיחו עוד הפעם על אמתת גרגרים photons וגם גלים והאריכו בזה חכמי הטבע Quantum Theory שפעמים נראה כגלים ופעמים נראה כגרגרים. והנה מלת אור כבר כתב ביד הלוי מאב"ד דווירצבורג שהמלה נגזרת ממלת ירה ומורה על יריית גרגרים של אור אולם יש מלה שניה על אור, נהרה ע' איוב פ"ג פסוק ד' ואל תופע עליו נהרה. ולדעתי בנוי ממלת נהר והוא כמו גלים. אי"כ ב' מלות של אור מראים על שתי הבחינות של אור.

גם יש לציין דברי הגר"א באדרת אליהו ומובא נמי מפיו בספר גביעי גביע הכסף שחושך אינו העדר האור אלא בריאה כדכתיב יוצר אור ובורא חשך, והחשך הוא החומר שעליו פועלת יצירת האור, ובזה טועים חכמי הטבע וכמ"ש הגר"א וע"פ דברים אלו אולי יש למצוא פתרון הבעיות ב Quantum Theory ולהבין המציאות של Non-local Reality שמוכח מתחב"ת Bell's Theorem אבל כל זה עדיין לא בא לידי ברור והנה יצאתי חוץ מגדרי לכתוב דברים שאינם צריכים לבני תורה המאמינים בדברי תורה"ק ובדברי חז"ל. אבל האמת צריכים לידע ולהודיע שאין לנו שום הערכה בגדלות חז"ל ובאמתת דבריהם.

וע"ז בעה"ח היום כ"ז מרחשון תשס"ו לפ"ק פה טאראנטא

The following is a letter written by Horav Shlomo Miller *Shlita*, the *Rosh Kollel* and *Av Beis Din* of the *Kollel Avreichim* of Toronto. The letter was written in *lashon hakodesh*; accordingly, its colloquial form has been maintained wherever possible in an attempt to preserve its original flavor. Please note: In order for this letter to appear in the Yated, much of the explanatory footnotes had to be eliminated. For the original version of this letter with expanded notations, please visit [www.torah.org](http://www.torah.org) (for internet version) / please contact the Yated @ ? (for newspaper version)

### A Protest against the Opinions of Slifkin

As is well-known, the books authored by Slifkin have already been banned by the *gedoley yisrael*. When I initially came in contact with his writings, I sensed an aura of heresy emanating from them. Indeed, upon further investigation I discovered that his opinions on the six days of creation are definitely heretical. Furthermore, they are boorish in content; he fails to comprehend that all of the laws of physics which prevail today were first established at the end of the six days of creation when *Hashem* terminated the creative process as represented by the day of *Shabbos* when “He said to His world, enough”.<sup>1</sup>

In reality, the laws of physics which existed during the six days of creation have no parallel to those which we perceive today. Our sages have already stated “two arose on the bed and four descended” meaning that the birth of *Kayin* and *Hevel* happened immediately after their conception on the sixth day of creation.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Slifkin’s opinions in these matters are absolute heresy.<sup>3</sup>

The truth is that he has followed the ways of those who scoff at the sages, like the *maskilim* who ridiculed the exegeses (*drashos*) of our sages while considering themselves all-knowing, assuming that only they were able to understand the precise meaning of words in *lashon hakodesh*. Until the *Malbim ztvk”l* appeared and composed an incredible work on *Toras Cohanim* to clarify the words of our sages based on the deepest, most fundamental imperatives of *lashon hakodesh* thereby demonstrating the wonders of *Hashem’s* Torah and the profound grasp of biblical grammar which our sages possessed.

So too in our time, Slifkin advances questions against our sages from current theories and in place of honoring the words of our sages, he denigrates their opinions. If he encounters a question for which he possesses no answer, it would behoove him to say “I have not merited to understand the words of the sages” just as all of our great scholars have done through the ages whenever they encountered a question on a subject in Talmud; “for it is not a thing that is lacking from you”<sup>4</sup> and our sages comment, “for if it is lacking, it is from you”<sup>5</sup> who lack the ability to comprehend. If we approach the Torah and its sages with awe and humility, then we will traverse confidently and not stumble in the fundamentals of our religion as Slifkin has done; the *Rambam’s*

---

<sup>1</sup> This saying is based on the Talmud in *Chagiga 12a*

<sup>2</sup> *Sanhedrin 38b*

<sup>3</sup> In other words, Creation is not a process that finds expression in current laws of physics and thus cannot be defined by it. During the *sheyshes yimey bereishis*, the laws of physics were entirely different from those that exist today. This is self-evident from the Torah and can be gleaned from *Chazal*. Furthermore, this has been the collective *mesorah* of all Jews throughout the ages and in fact was uncontested even by gentiles. When a Jew makes *kiddush* Friday night, he is specifically proclaiming the truth of this idea and rejecting that of Slifkin’s approach. Since *Chazal* have portrayed the *sheshes yimey bereishis* in terms of accelerated processes that have no parallel in our experience, there is no room to interpret *maaseh bereishis* in terms of what may look to us like millions of years of biological development. Anyone doing so is undermining the Torah and *Chazal* and is therefore espousing *kefira*. Cf. *Rambam Hilchos Tshuva 3:8*.

<sup>4</sup> *Dvarim 32:47*.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Rashi* ad loc.

words at the end of the laws of *me'ilah*<sup>6</sup> are well known: "one's thought processes in Torah should not be the same as his thoughts in mundane matters", see there the remainder of his pleasant words.

### Words of Encouragement and Support for those who were influenced by Heresy

The *Haggadah* delineates the question of the *rasha*: "of what purpose is this work to you?"<sup>7</sup> [He says "to you" thereby excluding himself. By excluding himself from the community of believers, he denies fundamentals. Therefore blunt his teeth and tell him:] "It is because of this that *Hashem* did for *me* when I went out of Egypt"<sup>8</sup>, and the author of the *Haggadah* comments "for *me*, but not for *him* – had he been there, he would not have been redeemed". The commentaries note that the answer given in the Torah is "and you shall say it is a Passover offering to *Hashem*"<sup>9</sup> which differs from the answer in the *Haggadah*. The commentaries explain that when one hears words of heresy, one should not contend with them, however to ourselves, we should respond with words of encouragement, "and you shall say"<sup>10</sup>, but "not to him"<sup>11</sup>, "it is a Passover offering etc."<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, I have decided to expound upon some matters in order to strengthen the hearts of those who have been exposed to heretical doctrines<sup>13</sup> which claim that our holy Torah is contradicted by the knowledge of scientists; on the contrary, "delve into it, and delve into it, for all is encompassed within it".<sup>14</sup>

Until 400 years ago scientists were not aware that the light which appears to radiate from planets is not inherent light but rather light reflected from the sun. Then Galileo appeared and demonstrated that the light emanating from the "shining" planet Venus is merely reflected light. However, to my mind, this observation can already be gleaned from our sages who referred to this planet by the term "*nogah*".<sup>15</sup> The word "*nogah*" (shining) differs from the word "*or*" (light) as the *Malbim* has explained in his commentary on the verse in *Chavakuk* 3:4, "and *nogah* will be similar to *or*". The *Malbim* writes that *nogah* is a term that denotes an object that does not possess inherent light but rather emits a reflected light just as the moon<sup>16</sup> receives the light of the sun and subsequently reflects its rays. Thus, the fact that our sages have assigned the term "*nogah*" to the planet Venus demonstrates that they understood that this planet did not possess inherent light.<sup>17</sup> If so, we see that knowledge discovered by scientists 400 years ago was already known to our sages over 2000 years ago.

Regarding the essence of light, scientists first thought that light was composed of particles i.e. the Corpuscular Theory of Light. Later, they showed that light was emitted in waves i.e. the Wave Theory of Light. A hundred

---

<sup>6</sup> *Hilchos Me'ilah* 8:8.

<sup>7</sup> *Shmos* 12:26.

<sup>8</sup> *Shmos* 13:8.

<sup>9</sup> *Shmos* 12:27.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>11</sup> The *baal haHaggada*'s comment.

<sup>12</sup> *Shmos* 12:27.

<sup>13</sup> There are obviously some differences in *Weltanschauung* between certain groups in Orthodox Jewry. Rabbi Miller is aware of this. He is also aware that unfortunately there are certain elements that will spare no effort in maligning Orthodox leadership in an attempt to undermine their words. Just as the teachings of the *Haggadah* are meant for us but are not directed towards the wicked due to their unwillingness to acknowledge them, so too, the comments in the letter are directed only towards people who are open-minded and are willing to listen as opposed to those who choose to maintain pre-conceived notions. The latter group invariably fall prey to spurious depictions of Orthodox dogma effectively eliminating their partiality and thus their ability to countenance the pronouncements made by *gedoley yisrael*.

<sup>14</sup> *Avos* 5:22.

<sup>15</sup> *Shabbos* 156.

<sup>16</sup> Or other planets such as Venus.

<sup>17</sup> See the commentary of the *Gra* in *Aderes Eliyahu* on the verse in *Chavakuk* 3:4 who interprets the *pasuk* in the same manner. *Malbim* himself brings several proofs from all over *Tanach* to demonstrate the grammatical accuracy of this point.



years ago, scientists demonstrated that light does possess particle like qualities<sup>18</sup> and subsequently scientists proposed the Quantum Theory that sometimes light appears as waves and sometimes as particles<sup>19</sup>. Now behold, the *Yad Halevi*<sup>20</sup>, written by the *av beis din* of Wurtzberg, has written that the word “*or*” has its roots in the word “*yaroh*” (to fling) and denotes the flinging of light particles. There is another word which denotes light “*niharah*”, see *Iyov* 3:3: “*v'al tofah alav niharah*”. To my mind, this word has its roots in the word “*nahar*” (river) which signifies the concept of waves. If so, these two grammatical representations of the word “*or*” represent the two differing forms of the phenomenon of light respectively.

The *Gra's* words in *Aderes Eliyahu*<sup>21</sup> are also noteworthy and are brought down in his name in the book *Giviey Gvia Hakesef*<sup>22</sup> as follows; darkness is not an absence of light but rather a creation unto itself as it states “who forms light and creates darkness”<sup>23</sup> Darkness is the substance<sup>24</sup> upon which light operates<sup>25</sup>. In this area the scientists err<sup>26</sup>, not taking into account what the *Gra* has written [with respect to *choshech*]. Based on these theories, it might be possible to resolve the conundrums that plague Quantum Theory and to comprehend the existence of Non-Local Reality which is evident from Bell's Theorem<sup>27</sup>. However, these theories have still not been fully clarified as yet. I have stepped outside my normal boundaries to expound upon things that are essentially unnecessary for Torah Jews who believe in the Torah and in its sages. But the truth is that in today's climate, it is necessary to make known that we have no concept whatsoever of the greatness of our sages or the veracity of their words.

[Translator's note: The footnotes found in this paper are entirely those of the translator. Consequently, any errors found therein are to be imputed solely to the translator, not to the author of this letter]

---

<sup>18</sup> In 1905, Albert Einstein provided a remarkable explanation of the photoelectric effect, a hitherto troubling experiment which the wave theory of light seemed incapable of explaining. He did so by postulating photons, quanta of light energy with particulate qualities.

<sup>19</sup> This is referred to as the Wave-particle duality. The modern, theoretical resolution to of the wave-particle paradox is described by the theoretical framework of quantum mechanics.

<sup>20</sup> *Shailos v'Tshuvos Yad Halevi* written by R' Yitzchok Dovid haLevi Bamberger b. 1808.

<sup>21</sup> *Breishis* s.v. *Bara*.

<sup>22</sup> Written by one of the *talmidei haGra* and published by Rav Binyomin Rivlin. Reprinted in *Shklov* circa 1803 by *Yosef Mordechai ben Menachem* Rabinowitz and again in Warsaw by *Yaakov* Unterhandler circa 1897, and in America in 1983. pg. 7

<sup>23</sup> *Yeshaya* 45:7 In addition, there are other *pesukim* which indicate that *choshech* is a positive creation such as “*ey zeh haderch yishkon or v'choshech ey zeh mikomo*” (*Iyov* 38:19) or “*yada mah bachashocha unihora imey sharya*” (*Daniel* 2:22). For a kabbalistic view of these two *pesukim*, please see the opening *maamar* of *Maseches Atzilus - Ya'areshyah ben Yoseph Pasach* and the *perush Ginzey Miromim* by R' Yitzchok I. Chaver, a talmid of R' Menachem Mendel of Shklov who was one of the premier *talmidim* of the *Gra*.

<sup>24</sup> Rabbi Miller states, “*v'hachoshech hu hachomer she'alav poeles yitziras ha'or*”. Apparently he understands the creation “*choshech*” as the underlying substratum of all reality and thus light is, in some unknown way, an effect on the substratum of *choshech*.

<sup>25</sup> Although the *Gra* seems to say that *or* is also a *beriah* as it no doubt seems to be, *Yeshaya* still refers to it as *yetzira* in comparison to *choshech*.

<sup>26</sup> The following is a quote from *The Emperor's New Mind* (Roger Penrose, Oxford University Press, 1990 page 385) in a section titled Quantum Magic and Quantum Mystery: I have made no bones of the fact that I believe that the resolution of the puzzles of quantum theory must lie in our finding an improved theory. Though this is perhaps not the conventional view, it is not an altogether unconventional one. (Many of quantum theory's originators were also of such a mind. I have referred to Einstein's views, Schrodinger (1935), de Broglie (1956), and Dirac (1939) also regarded the theory as provisional.) But even if one believes that the theory is somehow to be modified, the constraints on how one might do this are enormous. Perhaps some kind of 'hidden variable' viewpoint will eventually turn out to be acceptable. But the non-locality that is exhibited by the EPR type experiments severely challenges any 'realistic' description of the world that can comfortably occur within an ordinary space-time - a space-time of the particular type that has been given to us to accord with the principles of relativity - so I believe that a much more **radical change** is needed [emphasis not in the original].

<sup>27</sup> John S. Bell (June 28, 1928 – October 1, 1990) was a physicist who became well known as the originator of Bell's Theorem, regarded by some in the quantum physics community as one of the most important theorems of the 20th century.