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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 -- Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design:
 The View of the Rabbinical Council of America

December 22nd 2005
 21 Kislev 5766

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 (Kohleth 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.

Policies Headlines

- Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design
- Testimony of RCA at Senate Judiciary Committee
- RCA Condemns Destruction of Holy Sites in Gaza
- Hurricane Katrina and the Mystery of God's Ways
- RCA Commends Bush Nominee, Judge John Roberts

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.

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