



Views of the Sages (continued)

1. Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz of Vilna (18th century Lithuania), Sefer haBrit I 3:2-3

There is among the emptinesses of the nations those who make the stars material. And they are great and mighty in philosophy, saying that all of the stars – those that are fixed, those that move – are actual material worlds, with people and many animals...

And some of them say that the stars which do not illuminate are lands and worlds, and those that illuminate are suns for those worlds... And the nations also say that marks seen on [celestial bodies] via looking implements called *faren glazer*, dark marks and light marks, some of the sphere being black and some being white, are mountains and hills and seas... Without a doubt, He did not create it for nothing, but He created it to be settled (Isaiah 45:18), and there are creatures – but not because of their reasoning, the parable of the great field. And they said: How could so many and such large stars not have a population, while the small earth is settled? To this I would respond that all of them were created only for the benefit of this world...

2. Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz of Vilna (18th century Lithuania), Sefer haBrit I 3:4

Why would He need more worlds? If it is in order to have more people and animals and many creatures, let this world become very large to the point where it could support all of them together! Is anything impossible for Gd, small or great?

3. Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz of Vilna (18th century Lithuania), Sefer haBrit I 3:3-4

What I said is this: Why should the realm of *asiyah* be reduced, not having many worlds like the realm of *yetzirah* and *briah* and *atzilut*, each of which includes infinite worlds, as is known to the Kabbalists, and as is found in the Zohar in many places, and in Uktzin and in Avodah Zarah 3b...

Since there are many different spheres, if they are actually worlds then none of them is the same as any other, without a doubt, and no two of them have the same nature...

4. Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz of Vilna (18th century Lithuania), Sefer haBrit I 3:3-4

To this I would respond that all of them were created only for the benefit of this world, and Gd created all of it for the honour of humanity on earth, as it says, "And the minor luminary to reign at night, and the stars, and Gd placed them in the heavens to illuminate the land"...

As our Sages said (Berachot 32b), "Gd said to her: My daughter! I created twelve *mazalot* in the heavens, and for each *maza*/I created thirty forces...and in each unit I hung 3.65 billion stars parallel to the days of the solar calendar, and all of them I created only for you."...

5. Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz of Vilna (18th century Lithuania), Sefer haBrit I 3:4

There is no doubt that none of them have people in our image and our form and with free will, although they could be beings of intellect and science. For it is already known that one cannot have free choice other than in the human dynamic on this world, not in anything above it and not in anything below it in the natural world. Therefore, there is no space for Torah or service [of Gd] other than in this world, for in a place where there is no free will there is no relevance to Torah or worship...

6. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, *Moreh Or* pg. 50

From all of this, it emerges that there is only one species that has free will and Torah and reward and punishment and is the purpose of all Creation, and this is the human being. Gd gave only one Torah, and it is not in the heavens. Still, there could be many creatures in stars, which are worlds, and even beings of intellect and science, but not free will...

7. Tzvi Freeman, *Is there life on other planets?*, chabad.org

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3012/jewish/Is-There-Life-on-Other-Planets.htm

Shortly after the first moon landing, the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of blessed memory, pointed out that there is support in Torah for the notion that life exists on other planets...

Are these inhabitants intelligent? Intelligence is defined by Torah to mean the capacity to make decisions with free will. Free will is only possible where there is Torah, whereby the Creator offers His creatures more than one possibility and asks that they make the appropriate choice. (Torah includes the laws of Noah, which are given to all human beings.) In other words, just as we are created by the Creator's word, so we are provided free choice by His command to do or not do.

So, if there would be intelligent life elsewhere in the universe, those creatures would have to have Torah. Could they have a different Torah than us? This is not possible, since Torah is truth, and there cannot be two truths.

Could they then have the same Torah as us? This also seems impossible, since the Torah itself describes in detail how the Torah was revealed on this planet, and that account itself has a strong impact on how the Torah is to be fulfilled.

It therefore appears that although it is quite possible there is life on other planets, that life would not be intelligent in a way similar to human life and culture.

8. Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, cited by Rabbi David Holzer in *Thinking Aloud*, pg. 93

It is possible that *Hashem* created other life forms on other planets. It is no problem to *yahadus* (Judaism). The reason man likes to think he is the only created Being in the entire universe is because of his egotistical nature.

Even the concept of *am ha'nivchar* [the "chosen people"] may only be relative to our world, our small section of the universe. The Torah is written from the viewpoint of our sun, moon, and stars. It would not detract from our being the *am ha'nivchar* of this region of space if there were another *am ha'nivchar* in a distant galaxy.

Intelligent Extraterrestrial Bodies?!

9. Rabbi Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of the Fundamentals of Torah 3:9

All of the stars and spheres have spirits and intellect and mind, and they are alive and enduring and they recognize the One who spoke and the world came into existence, each of them according to its size and according to its stature. They praise and glorify their Creator like the *malachim*. And just as they recognize Gd, so they recognize themselves and recognize the *malachim* above them. And the intellect of the stars and spheres is smaller than that of the *malachim* and greater than that of human beings.

10. Warren Boroson, <https://jewishstandard.timesofisrael.com/joke-about-astronauts-on-mars/>

Two astronauts land on Mars. Their mission: to check whether there is oxygen on the planet.

"Give me the box of matches," says one. "Either it burns and there is oxygen, or nothing happens."

He takes the box and is ready to strike a match when, out of the blue, a little green Martian appears, waving all six of his arms and yelling..."No, no, don't!"

The two guys look at each other, worried. Could there be an unknown explosive gas on Mars?

Still, he takes another match...and...

A crowd of hysterical green Martians is coming to them, all waving their arms: "No, no, don't do that!"

One of the astronauts says, "This looks serious. What are they afraid of? Nonetheless we're here for science, to learn if Man can breathe on Mars."

So he strikes a match—which flames up, burns down, and NOTHING HAPPENS!

So he turns to the Martians and asks, "Why did you want to prevent us from striking a match?"

The leader of the Martians answers, "It's Shabbos!"

11. Rabbi Menachem Kasher, *האדם על הירח*, <https://hebrewbooks.org/10217>

12. Rabbi Moses Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 2:5 (Friedlander tr.)

Scripture supports the theory that the spheres are animate and intellectual, i.e., capable of comprehending things: that they are not, as ignorant persons believe, inanimate masses like fire and earth, but are, as the philosophers assert, endowed with life, and serve their Lord, whom they mightily praise and glorify; comp. "The heavens declare the glory of Gd," etc. (Ps. 19:2). It is a great error to think that this is a mere figure of speech: for the verbs "to declare" and "to relate," when joined together, are, in Hebrew, only used of intellectual beings...

As to the opinion of our Sages, I do not see any necessity for expounding or demonstrating it. Consider only the form they gave to the blessing recited on seeing the new moon, the ideas repeatedly occurring in the prayers and the remarks in the Midrash on the following and similar passages:—"And the host of heaven worshippeth thee" (Neh. 9:6); "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of Gd shouted for joy" (Job 38:7).

13. Rabbi Aryeh Loew (Maharal of Prague, 16th century Prague), *Gevurot Hashem*, Introduction #2
Pay no attention to the words of the philosophers, who said that the sun and moon are living intellects, for all of this is empty.

14. Ahron Marcus, *Kesef haSofer* to Genesis 1:3

<https://thelehrhaus.com/scholarship/ahron-marcus-the-leading-hasidic-zionist-scholar-of-ancient-judaism-you-never-heard-of/>

Our master Rav Chaim Vital already revealed in that book (*Shaarei Kedushah* 3:2) that there is a black, invisible fire, which is like a fifth element... And it exists in all of the heavenly bodies and on the earth below, and it combines the elements and joins them and separates them, and this is the *nefesh hadomeim*, but it is not a spiritual entity, but material, a black fire...

15. Rabbi Menachem Kasher, *Man on the Moon*, Chapter 4

The view of Maimonides is that like there is intellect for the *malachim*, which does not mean an intellect like ours that is tied to the five senses, but a spiritual intellect according to their level, so one may say about the *tohu*, the first force created with the Declaration and Will of Gd, which remained forever in matter of different forms, at first in *bohu*, the atom, and then in the elements and bodies...

16. Rabbi Menachem Kasher, *Man on the Moon*, Chapter 4

One may add that the "intellect" of something are the rules by which it operates according to the Will of its Creator, and these are its essential nature, and the "spirit" of something is the force that preserves its form according to the Will of its Creator, the energy stored in it.

Jewish life on other planets?

17. Rabbi Yechiel Lash, *שמירת שבת בהלל*, <https://orot.ac.il/sites/default/files/9-8.pdf>

18. Four views

- Of course Torah remains in force! (Rabbi Menachem Kasher, Rabbi Menasheh Klein)
- Mitzvot connected with particular times are practiced rabbinically (Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Halperin)
- Mitzvot are obligatory so long as your life support comes from Earth (Rabbi Dovid Shloush)
- There is no such thing as a partial Torah (suggestion of Rabbi Ben Zion Firer)