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# DID DINOSAURS DROWN IN THE DELUGE?

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## JEWISH RESPONSES TO THE DISCOVERY OF FOSSILS

### (1) NETZIV BEREISHIT 7:23 (19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY LITHUANIA)

(כג) **וימח את כל היקום** – נמחו הגופות. ודייק הכתוב "אשר על פני האדמה", דוקא אלו שהיו מונחים על פני האדמה, אבל נשתיירו כמה גופות שנפל עליהם עפר הרבה ע"י שטף המים, ונשארו הגופות קיימין. והן הנה עצמות שמוצאין חופרי ארץ ומוצאין עצמות מבריות שלא נמצא עתה בעולם. ומזה שפטו הרבה שהיה לפני בריאה זו עולם אחר ואז היו בריות אחרות. ובאמת יש בב"ר (ט,ב) כמה פעמים על המקרא "והנה טוב מאד" — מלמד שברא הקב"ה עולמות והחריבן ואמר דין הניין לי ודין לא הניין לי...

מ"מ קשה לדעתי לומר כן, שהרי מבואר בשמו"ר (לג) "אלה תולדות השמים והארץ", מה פסל, שהיה בורא עולמות והיה מסתכל בהן ולא היו ערבים עליו ומחזירן לתהו ובהו. וא"כ לא נשתיירו מהם שריד ופליט.

אלא נראה שהעצמות האלה המה מלפני ימי המבול. ואע"ג שנמצאים באקלים שאינם חיים שם, זה נעשה לפי ששינו את דרכם על הארץ לפני המבול והלכו למקום אחר. ומה שמוצאין בריות משונות, הוא ממה שהרכיבו שני מינים שונים ונולדו ע"י זה בריות משונות, כמו הפרד היוצא מהרכבת סוס וגמל. והיתה ההשגחה שישתיירו עצמות אלו כדי שיבא דור אחרון ויכיר סתרי הטבע, וזהו כבודו יתברך, כמו שכתבתי בשירת האזינו (דברים לב,ט) בפסוק "כי אשא אל שמים ידי". אך באותה העת היה הרצון שיהיו נימוחים מן הארץ כדי שלא יהיו נראים כלל וישתדלו להרכיב עוד ולהעמיד בריות כאלו שנית. משום הכי כתיב עוד הפעם "וימחו מן הארץ" שהיתה ההשגחה שלא ימצאו באותו הדור וכמה דורות מאוחרין העצמות המשונות, כדי שלא ישתדלו לחדשן, לכן נמח זכרם מן הארץ.

**And He melted all of the living beings** – their bodies were melted. The verse was precise in saying "that were on the face of the land," because it was specifically those that dwelled on the face of the land [that melted away]. However, some bodies remained, upon which much dirt fell because of the flow of the water, and the bodies remained. These, behold, are the bones which diggers find, as they find bones of creatures that do not presently exist in the world. From this, many have determined that before this world, there was another world with different creatures.

In truth, it says many times in Bereishit Rabbah (9:2), on the verse, "Behold, it was very good": This teaches that HaKadosh Baruch Hu created many worlds and destroyed them, and said 'these are good to me and these are not good to me.'... However, in my opinion it is difficult to say so, as it says in Shemot Rabbah (30:3): "This is the account of the heavens and the earth" – what before this was invalidated? Hashem created worlds, examined them, and did not enjoy them, so He transformed them to *tohu va-vohu*. If so, there would have been no remnant [of these worlds].

Rather, it seems that these bones are from before the Flood. Even though they appear in climates in which they don't live, this happened because they changed their ways upon the earth before the Flood and traveled to other places. That which we find that they are unique creatures, it is because they bred two different species and created unique creatures, like the mule which comes from the horse and camel. It was Divine Providence that these bones would survive to the later generation, such that we might recognize the secrets of nature, which is the Glory of God, as I wrote in my commentary to the song of Ha'azinu. It is just that at that time, it was His Will that they would be melted from the earth so that they wouldn't be seen at all, so the people wouldn't attempt to interbreed and create these creatures again. Therefore, the verse repeats, "they were melted from the land," as it was Divine Providence that the unusual bones would not be found in that generation or in subsequent generations, so that they wouldn't attempt to renew them. Therefore, their memory was erased from the earth.

## (2) R' YISRAEL LIFSCHITZ, DRUSH OR HACHAYIM (SHABBAT CHOL HAMOED PESACH, 1842)

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...As regards the past, Rabbi Avahu states at the beginning of *Bereishis Rabbah* that the words "and it was evening, and it was morning" indicate that there was a series of epochs before then; the Holy One created worlds and destroyed them, approving some and not others. The Kabbalists expanded upon this statement and revealed that this process is repeated seven times, each Sabbatical cycle achieving greater perfection than the last... They also tell us that we are now in the midst of the fourth of these great cycles of perfection...

The questing spirit of man, probing and delving into the recesses of the earth, in the Pyrenees, the Carpathians, the Rocky Mountains in America, and the Himalayas, has found them to be formed of mighty layers of rock lying upon one another in amazing and chaotic formations, explicable only in terms of revolutionary transformations of the earth's surface. Probing still further below the earth's surface, geologists have found four distinct layers of rock, and between the layers fossilized remains of creatures. Those in the lower layers are of monstrous size and structure, while those in the higher layers are progressively smaller in size but incomparably more refined in structure and form.

Furthermore, they found in Siberia in 1807, under the eternal ice of those regions, a monstrous type of elephant, some three or four times larger than those found today...

Similarly, fossilized remains of sea creatures have been found within the recesses of the highest mountains, and one natural scientist, Cuvier, has calculated that of every 78 species found in the earth, 48 are no longer found in our present epoch.

We also know of the remains of an enormous creature found deep in the earth near Baltimore, seventeen feet long, eleven feet high from the forelegs to the shoulder, and nine feet from the hind legs to its back. Bones of this creature have been found in Europe, and in the Harz Mountains. This species has been given the name "mammoth." Another gigantic creature whose fossilized remains have been found is that which is called "iguanodon," which stood fifteen feet high and measured thirty feet in length; from its internal structure, scientists have determined that it was herbivorous. Another creature is that which is called "megalosaurus," which was slightly smaller than the iguanodon, but which was meat-eating.

From all this, we can see that all that the Kabbalists have told us for so many years about the repeated destruction and renewal of the earth has found clear confirmation in our time.

### (3) MALBIM BEREISHIT 7:23 (19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY UKRAINE)

וימחו מן הארץ, שהגם שהרבה נשארו עצמותיהם החזקים כמטילי ברזל ולא נמוחו, בכ"ז נמחו מן הארץ כי ע"י שטף המים הובלו הפגרים לתוך העמקים ורובם נבלעו בעמקי תהום, אשר האדמה פצתה את פיה מעומק תהום רבה וירדו כמה אלפים אמה לעמקי שאול, עד שבצאת נח מן התיבה לא מצא שום רושם מפגרי בע"ח ועצמות הענקים ובע"ח הגדולים שהיו קודם המבול. ועדות ה' נאמנה מחכימת פתי להשיב דבר לחכמי הגעאלאגיא, שחופרים בעמקי האדמה ומוצאים עצמות גדולות מענקים ובע"ח גדולים שנאבדו מן הארץ ואינם עוד מימי המבול ואילך, והם מוכיחים מזה קדמות העולם

כי יחשבו את האדמה שעשויה מינים מינים, שבכל עומק ידוע יש מין אדמה אחרת, ויחשבו לפי איכות האדמה שימצאו העצמות שם, ולפי חשבון כמה היה צריך עד שיוולדו שטחי האדמה שהעולם קדמון מרבוא שנים, ושכבר היו בע"ח מימי קדם קודם לזמן היצירה שלנו. וכ"ז הבל וריק, כי בעת המבול פתחה האדמה את לועה ע"י הרעשים שבאו מעומק שאול ותהום רבה והפכה תחתונים למעלה ועליונים למטה והורידה פגרי הבע"ח עמוק עמוק...

"And they were erased from the land" – that even though the mighty bones of many remained like iron javelins and were not erased, nevertheless they were erased from the [surface of the] land, for the flooding of water transported the carcasses into the depths, and most were swallowed up in the bottoms of the watery depths, such that, when Noach left the Ark, he found no sign of the corpses of the animals, the bones of the giants, and the great living creatures which existed before the flood. "The testimonies of Hashem are trustworthy, they give wisdom to fools" to reply to the scholars of geology who dig in the depths of the earth and find large bones from giants and huge animals that were destroyed from the earth and have not existed since the days of the deluge, and they prove the antiquity of the world from this.

For they think that the earth is made of different materials, such that at each depth, there is a different kind of earth. And they calculate, based on the quality of the earth in which they find the bones, and based on this they determine how long must have passed for these kinds of earth to develop, which is longer than 10,000 years, and that there were creatures that predate our creation. All of this is falsehood and nothingness, for at the time of the Flood, the earth opened it's mouth because of the wicked who came from the watery depths, and the deep rose to the surface while the upper surface descended and brought the corpses of the animals exceedingly deep...

### (4) LUBAVITCHER REBBE, LETTER ON 18 TEVET, 5722 (DECEMBER 25, 1961)

The argument from the discovery of the fossils is by no means conclusive evidence of the great antiquity of the earth, for the following reasons:

(a) In view of the unknown conditions which existed in prehistoric" times, conditions of atmospheric pressures, temperatures, radioactivity, unknown catalyzers, etc., etc. as already mentioned, conditions that is, which could have caused reactions and changes of an entirely different nature and tempo from those known under the present-day orderly processes of nature, one cannot exclude the possibility that dinosaurs existed 5722 years ago, and became fossilized under terrific natural cataclysms in the course of a few years rather than in millions of years; since we have no conceivable measurements or criteria of calculations under those unknown conditions.

(b) Even assuming that the period of time which the Torah allows for the age of the world is definitely too short for fossilization (although I do not see how one can be so categorical), we can still readily accept the possibility that G-d created ready fossils, bones or skeletons (for reasons best known to him), just as he could create ready living organisms, a complete man, and such ready products as oil, coal or diamonds, without any evolutionary process.

As for the question, if it be true as above (b), why did G-d have to create fossils in the first place? The answer is simple: We cannot know the reason why G-d chose this manner of creation in preference to another, and whatever theory of creation is accepted, the question will remain unanswered. The question, Why create a fossil? is no more valid than the question, Why create an atom? Certainly, such a question cannot serve as a sound argument, much less as a logical basis, for the evolutionary theory.

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## HANDLING NEW SCIENTIFIC "DISCOVERIES"

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### (5) MAIMONIDES, GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED 2:25 (12<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY EGYPT)

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We do not reject the Eternity of the Universe because certain passages in Scripture confirm the Creation; for such passages are not more numerous than those in which God is represented as a corporeal being; nor is it impossible or difficult to find for them a suitable interpretation. We might have explained them in the same manner as we did in respect to the Incorporeality of God. We should perhaps have had an easier task in showing that the Scriptural passages referred to are in harmony with the theory of the Eternity of the Universe if we accepted the latter, than we had in explaining the anthropomorphisms in the Bible when we rejected the idea that God is corporeal.

For two reasons, however, we have not done so, and have not accepted the Eternity of the Universe. First, the Incorporeality of God has been demonstrated by proof: those passages in the Bible, which in their literal sense contain statements that can be refuted by proof, must and can be interpreted otherwise. But the Eternity of the Universe has not been proved; a mere argument in favour of a certain theory is not sufficient reason for rejecting the literal meaning of a Biblical text, and explaining it figuratively, when the opposite theory can be supported by an equally good argument.

Secondly, our belief in the Incorporeality of God is not contrary to any of the fundamental principles of our religion: it is not contrary to the words of any prophet. Only ignorant people believe that it is contrary to the teaching of Scripture: but we have shown that this is not the case: on the contrary, Scripture teaches the Incorporeality of God. If we were to accept the Eternity of the Universe as taught by Aristotle, that everything in the Universe is the result of fixed laws, that Nature does not change, and that there is nothing supernatural, we should necessarily be in opposition to the foundation of our religion, we should disbelieve all miracles and signs, and certainly reject all hopes and fears derived from Scripture, unless the miracles are also explained figuratively. The Allegorists amongst the Mohammedans have done this, and have thereby arrived at absurd conclusions. If, however, we accepted the Eternity of the Universe in accordance with the second of the theories which we have expounded above (ch. xxiii.), and assumed, with Plato, that the heavens are likewise transient, we should not be in opposition to the fundamental principles of our religion; this theory would not imply the rejection of miracles, but, on the contrary, would admit them as possible.

The Scriptural text might have been explained accordingly, and many expressions might have been found in the Bible and in other writings that would confirm and support this theory. But there is no necessity for this expedient, so long as the theory has not been proved. As there is no proof sufficient to convince us, this theory need not be taken into consideration, nor the other one; we take the text of the Bible literally, and say that it teaches us a truth which we cannot prove; and the miracles are evidence for the correctness of our view.

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## KEY THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

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### WHY DOES THE TORAH NOT TALK ABOUT DINOSAURS? OR DOES IT?

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#### (6) BEREISHIT 1:21

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(כא) וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת הַתַּיִמִּים הַגְּדֹלִים וְאֵת כָּל נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה הַרֹמֶשֶׁת אֲשֶׁר שָׂרְצוּ הַיַּמִּים לְמִינֵהֶם וְאֵת כָּל עוֹף כָּנָף לְמִינֵהוּ וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹקִים כִּי טוֹב.

(21) God created the great sea creatures, every living creature that creeps which the waters swarmed forth, of all kinds, and every winged bird of every kind. God saw that it was good.

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### IS EVOLUTION AN ACCEPTABLE JEWISH BELIEF? HOW OLD IS THE UNIVERSE?

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#### (7) RAV SHIMSHON RAPHAEL HIRSCH

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Judaism is not frightened even by the hundreds of thousands and millions of years which the geological theory of the earth's development bandies about so freely... Our Rabbis, the Sages of Judaism, discuss (*Midrash Rabbah* 9; Talmud *Chagigah* 16a) the possibility that earlier worlds were brought into existence and subsequently destroyed by the Creator before He made our own earth in its present form and order.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, "The Educational Value of Judaism,"  
in *Collected Writings*, vol. VII, p. 265

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### WHY DID HASHEM NEED TO CREATE DINOSAURS?

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