

Muslim and Jewish Engagement with Evolution

Rachel S. A. Pear- University of Haifa, Center for Jewish and Democratic Education

Anila Asghar- McGill University, Department of Integrated Studies in Education

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Science and Religious Education in Divided Societies Plenary

About half of Israeli Jews believe in evolution

% of Israeli Jews who say humans and other living things have ...

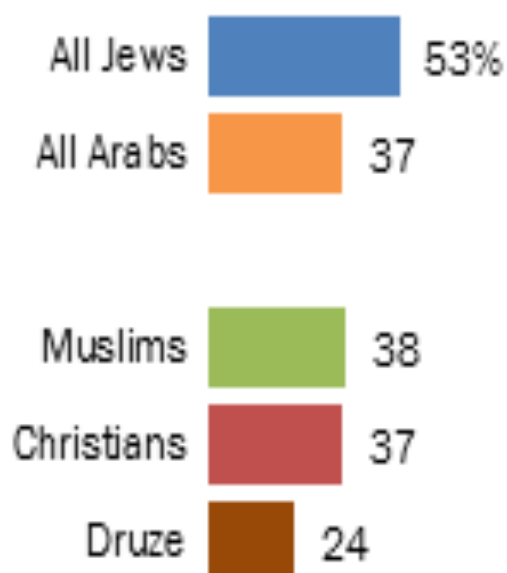
	Evolved over time	Existed in their present form since beginning of time	DK/ ref.
	%	%	%
All Jews	53	43	4=100
Haredi	3	96	2
Dati	11	85	4
Masorti	35	58	7
Hiloni	83	14	3
Men	50	46	4
Women	55	41	4
Ages 18-49	51	45	4
50+	56	40	4
Less than high school	32	63	4
H.S. or more without a college degree	50	46	4
College degree	72	25	3
Jewish education	11	87	2
Secular education	55	41	4
<i>Language spoken at home</i>			
Hebrew	50	46	4
Russian	80	14	6
Yiddish	0	>99	*
Ashkenazi	66	30	4
Sephardi/Mizrahi	39	57	4

Source: Survey conducted October 2014-May 2015. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

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More Jews than Arabs believe in evolution

% in Israel who say humans and other living things have evolved over time among ...



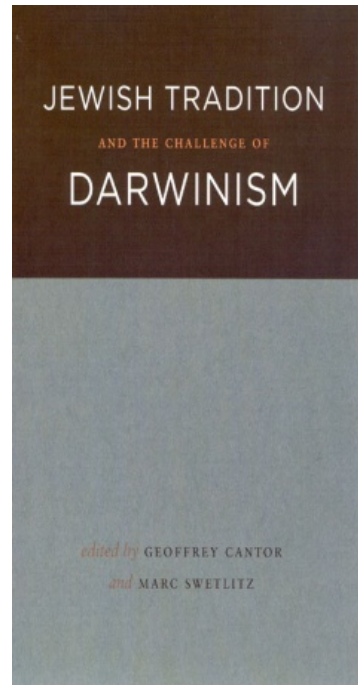
Source: Survey conducted October 2014-May 2015.

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Literature accruing: e.g. Swetlitz and Canotr (2006); Cherry (2001)

Evolution has caused controversy within modern Jewish communities-- for example within the American Reform movement from 1870-1890.

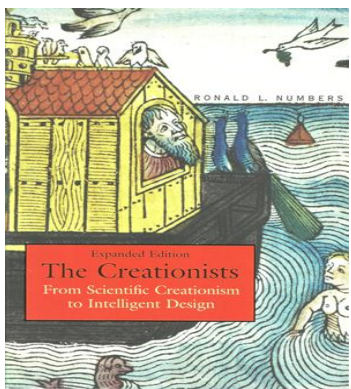
Traditional/Orthodox Jews were often laudatory of Darwinian evolution— In the American context R. Dr. H. P. Mendes (1880) was part of a group that used evolution to argue against Reform Judaism, arguing that the traditionalist camp was more in line with Darwinian gradualism.



History of American Jewish Modern Orthodox Receptions of Evolution- in a



- 1920's -40's: ***potential consensus emerging regarding the acceptance of evolution-*** mainly pulpit Rabbis, conciliatory tone dominates (e.g. R. Pool, R. Goldstein, R. Hayamson, R. Rosenblatt, R. Hertz, R. Soloveitchik).
- 1960's-70's: ***consensus thwarted-*** factors include: (1) rise in opportunities- Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists, (2) immigration of more hardline Orthodox population to U.S. (3) AMO "shift to the right"- resurgence of religious observance, (4) era of identity politics (5) "hardening" of neo-Darwinian synthesis and banishing of teleology (6) outreach initiatives identifying evolution as obstacle (7) shadow of the Holocaust.
- 1980's-2000's: ***ambivalence/confusion-*** individual scientists and rabbis speak out for the need to accept evolution, others perpetuate doubts. Politicization and growing rifts btw liberal and conservative camps.



Drastic Changes in Christian Creationism Numbers (2006)



Interpretations

Day-Age

The Beginning (eons ago)

"Day" 1	"Day" 2	"Day" 3	"Day" 4	"Day" 5
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Matter Created

Life Created

< Fossils Formed >

Gap or Ruin & Restoration

The Beginning (eons ago)

Perhaps Multiple Cataclysms and Creations

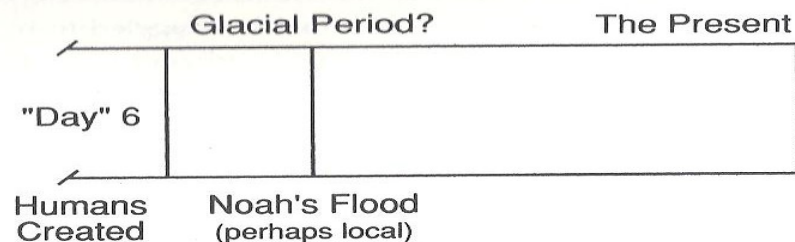
Matter and Life Created

< Fossils Formed >

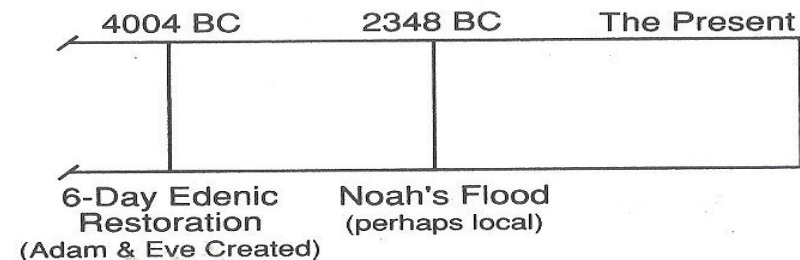
Flood Geology or Creation Science

Perhaps a Lifeless Earth

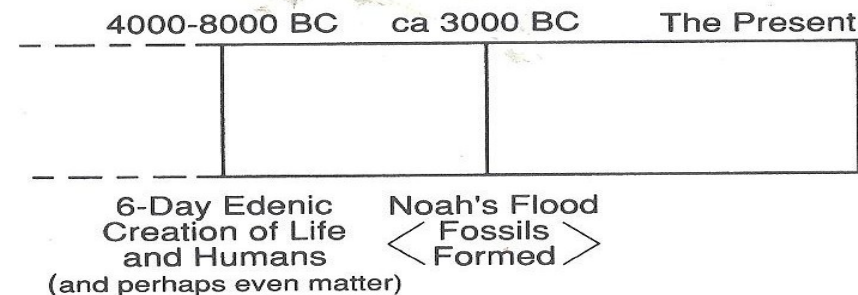
Advocates



JW Dawson
GF Wright
WJ Bryan
WB Riley



CI Scofield
H Rimmer
LA Higley
J Swaggart



EG White
GM Price
HM Morris
JC Whitcomb

Parallels between the trends in Judaism, Christianity and Islam regarding evolution in the 20th century:

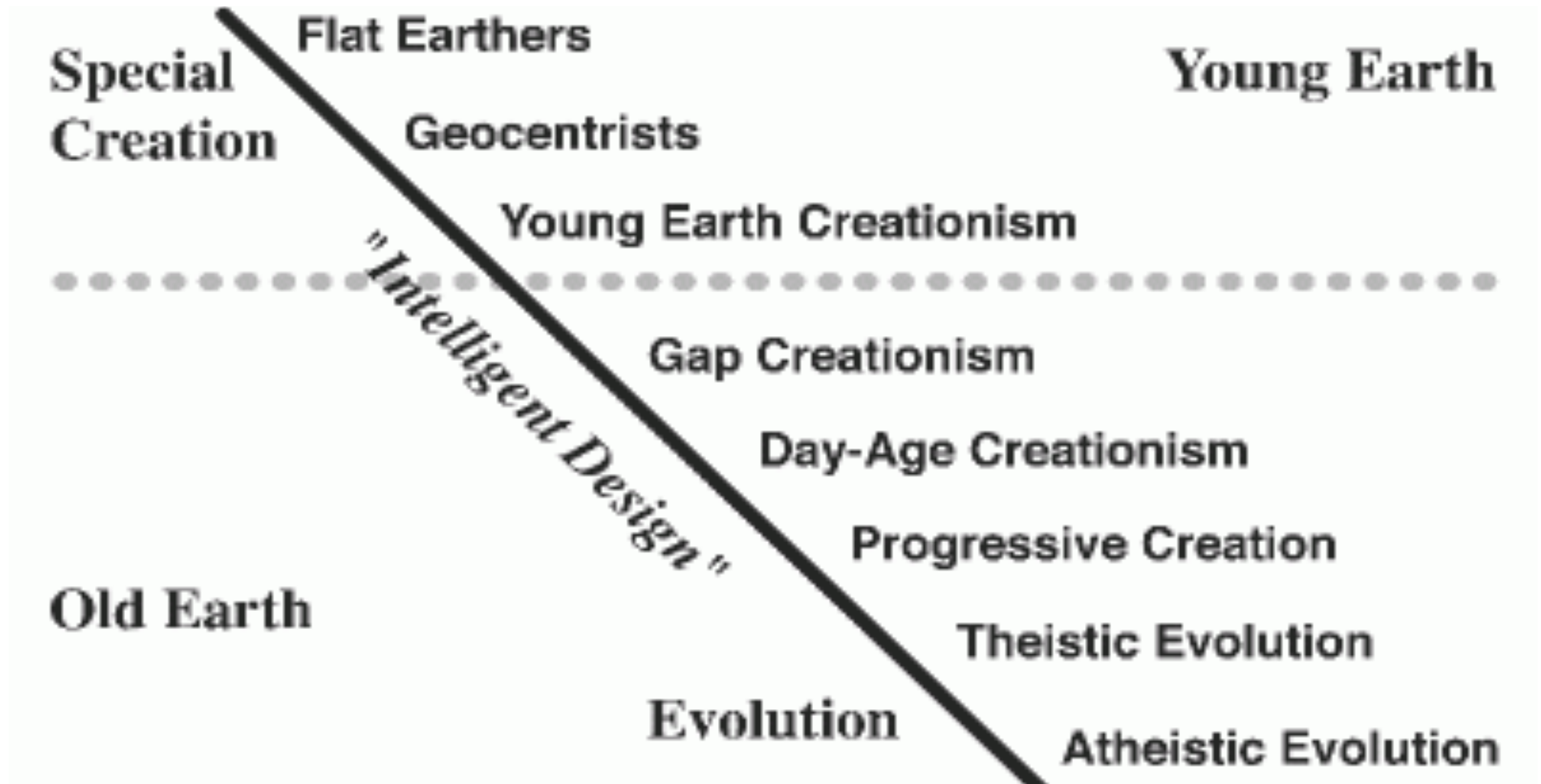
- Shavit, 2014 (2017): “...modernist-apologetic scholars, whose approach emphasizes the compatibility of Islam with empirical sciences, **shifted from reluctantly reconciling the theory of evolution with the Qur'an in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to rejecting Darwin as a fabricator.**”

Different versions of “identity creationism”- Broad but soft anti-evolutionism



- Dajani: “I teach evolution to university students in Jordan. Almost all of them are hostile to the idea at first. Their schoolteachers are likely to have ignored or glossed over it. Still, most students are willing to discuss evolution, and by the end of the course, the majority accept the idea...I wear a hijab, so they know that I am a practising Muslim... I am almost always the first Muslim they have met who says such things...**I point out that the apparent controversy over evolution and Islam arose only in the twentieth century, when Darwin’s ideas became associated with colonialism, imperialism, the West, atheism, materialism and racism...** I have encountered several Muslim scientists who agree with my stance, but do not say so publicly because they fear being labelled as troublemakers. Some religious scholars also agree, but they wish to go about changing opinions gradually, so as not to raise defences and slow progress.”

Scott, National Center for Science Education: "Creation-Evolution Continuum"



Theistic Evolution (TE) vs. Intelligent Design (ID)

1- TE

-----→ natural law

-----→ Divine will

2- ID

-----→ natural law

↑ ↑ ↑

Divine will

(Based on Elliott Sober and others)

2 Projects:

- Seminars in schools on three rabbinic responses to evolution (2013-present, Rabbis Kook, Schneerson and Soloveitchik); on-line continuing education course for teachers (2018-present); cohort of course graduates who develop educational material and experiment with its implementation in their classrooms (2019); a website with resources available (goal for 2020).
- Three year project University of Haifa & Technion (funded by Templeton World Charity Foundation, Oct. 2019-2022) Dialogue in Science and Religious Education: Evolution Instruction in a Diverse Democratic Society using Pedagogy of Difference (among, Jews, Muslims and Christians). Including: Policy analysis (historical study, contemporary practices-interviews and learning materials); philosophical analysis; subject matter analysis (MATE/I-SEA, open-ended questions, Delphi, interviews); testing educational interventions (e.g. Owens et al. 2018).

Evolution education open to religion and religious education open to evolution

- 2014, Ministry of Education announced that it was adding evolution to the required learning material of Junior high school students in 8th and 9th grades.
- 2015, evolution was also moved from being an optional unit in the Biology major for 10th-12th graders, to a part of the required ecology unit in 11th grade.

Pilot project (2016)- Religious Jewish Boys HS-- Large Spectrum

- biology teacher- “Last year I didn’t teach the optional unit on evolution, I guess I just didn't want to get entangled in something complicated. Now its required and there are a growing number of questions on the matriculation exam on the topic.”
- 11th grade biology major- “(evolution) contradicts religion. It shouldn't be taught. It could lead people to leave religion...its not real. I’m going with the way of the bible.”
- Junior High science teacher-“it is impossible for someone who is national religious *dati leumi* to be against evolution.”
- 11th grade biology major- “let’s say I did believe, I think that it could work with evolution. But I do feel like a lot of time religion attempts to fight with science and its not supposed to be like that. Its supposed to be that religion makes concessions (*viturim*) for science.”
- 11th grade biology major- “I think there is a wide range of views in the class- everyone and his path.”
- HS principal- “What does God want from us as opposed to from the monkeys?” “[views on evolution are] decided with preconceived notions of what religion means, like another million issues...does everything in our religious life have to work in order for us to be religious? I don’t think so, and my students know that...”

Muslim Girls' School: Acceptance of non-human evolution and an ancient earth (resistance to human evolution documented in other Muslim communities as well).

“We agree with evolution but not all of it...because there are verses in the Koran and Hadith that we are created as human beings.” (9th grade)

“All the religions say the same thing. The Jews, Christians and Muslims believe that God created humans as they are.” (9th grade)

Micro vs macro, plants and animals vs humans “A beautiful thing—development” vs “false theories— God created humans with minds.”

Science teacher- “it also has to do with the perspective of the teacher, if he has a religious background he will relate science to religion...we don't want the students to have a *balagan* (mess) in their mind.”

Sources of information on religious views on evolution: [youtube/facebook/tv](#)

Graduate of Tel Aviv U (in a different school)-- teaches evolution and then explains that it is not true.

Rabbinic texts model: comes to challenge dichotomization of evolution and religion as necessarily oppositional, aims to offer resources and support to teachers and students before beginning to teach/learn evolution units

- How many voices presenting the material? (identification with position being presented)
- Red lines? (presenting along side a view you strongly disagree with- can something be learned from everyone?)
- Who are the individuals presenting the material? (social capital in community of listeners)
- How comfortable do presenters feel with the material? (not just presenting the views, but answering students questions and recapping takeaways)

Helpful at moving students from an absolutist to a multiplist perspective- resonating with the culture of a “*beit midrash*”, promoting respect for different views. More difficult moving to the evaluative perspective (what are the criteria being used to replace “identification”). Teachers’ feeling that sometimes this positive move has negative implications.

Pedagogy of Difference exercise: dialogue between disciplines

Step 1- Students read a religious text and an account of evolution excerpted from *On the Origin of Species* and describe their own perspective concerning each of the two passages.

Step 2- Students divide into groups and relate to the texts in terms of the following three positions, that knowledge is based on: a) Science-only (the perspective of an atheistic scientist); b) Religion-only (the perspective of a creationist); c) a perspective that accepts both science and religion.

Step 3- Compare the results of steps 1 and 2- the similarities and differences.

Step 4- Students reflect on the following four questions:

- a. Do science and religion answer the same questions? Explain.
- b. What are some of the similarities and differences between scientific and religious ways of knowing?
- c. How does learning about a tradition (i.e., scientific, religious) differ from learning in or from one?
- d. What is the best way for society to move forward, knowing that a spectrum of views is represented within it?

Brainstorming with teachers and scholars from other traditions:

- What texts from your tradition would you think could work well in this exercise?
- Which groups in society do you think it would be helpful for students in your community to relate to in the exercise?
- Would you have concerns in presenting this material to your class? If so what are they?
- How would you do the debrief? What would be most important to you to convey to the students?
- What would be your hopes for presenting this material?
- How has your community chosen to deal with sensitive subjects?
- What other are other ways that you think these topics might be engaged?

Thank you!

- Please share thoughts and suggestions (RachelSAPear@gmail.com)

The Skeleton in My Closet

Natan Slifkin, The Biblical Museum of Natural History, May 2018



סוהסטרים	אופקו	אל על	4.5%	7%	0.4%	0.2%
			נובה	סלקום	יורו/סקל	יורו/סקל

מאמרים

במוזיאון הטבע בירושלים



א-גרויסע
תרנגולת

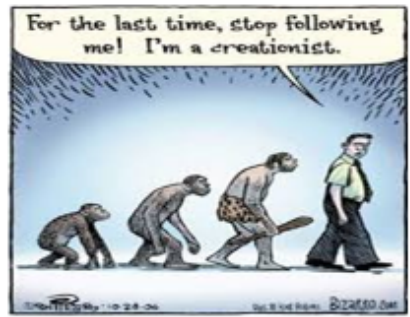
עמוס בידרמן

דן מרגלית

מרץ
HAARETZ

אהרן ברק?

יישם להפרדה בין גברים לנשים
היא זוכה מצד משרדי הממשלה
משפט העליון לשעבר, פרופסור
הקריה האקדמית אונו מעניקה
רדה והקצנה הדתיות. התגובה
נענה שיתוף פעולה, קבלה זו או
פרונית שלה ומאבק עקבי וחסר
ד השוויון הוא נר לרגליה ובה
כבוד וחירות.
ה, הסביר פרופסור ברק את
סטודנטיות למשפטים, בקמפוס
קשה לקבל הסבר זה: אולם
בנס אקדמי אין גם שום מימד
בקושי לשהות באותו אולם
באוניברסיטאות, המשימה



1920s- R's Pool and Jung



R. Joseph Soloveitchik,

The Emergence of Ethical Man

(published 2005, written approx. mid-century)

"...Perhaps more than man-as-divine-person, man-as-animal needs religious faith and commitment to a higher authority. God takes man-animal into his confidence, addresses him and reveals to him his moral will."



The Theme of the Sabbath

R. M. M. Schneerson, letter to AOJS' *Intercom*, 1973

"To put it bluntly, some orthodox Jewish scientists seem ashamed to declare openly their adherence to such basic tenets of the Torah as, for example, that G-d created Adam and Chava...."



George McCready Price, Seventh Day Adventist father of "Flood Geology"



Post-Synthesis Constriction where Darwinism became the equivalent of atheism

- "Man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind." George Simpson Gaylord, *The Meaning of Evolution*, 1949.



- "The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction." Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 2006

Abraham Joshua Heschel

"The Bible emphasizes the absolute difference between man and all other creatures. Plants and animals ... emerged from 'nature' and became an 'organic' part of nature. Man on the other hand is an artifact. The Lord both created and formed him"

(Heschel, "What Is Man?", 1959).



Natan Slifkin's *Rationalist Judaism* blog

December 2009

Writing against "Is Global Warming a Scientific Hoax?" by Yaakov Kornreich-- ***The Evolution Analogy***

Global warming has been promoted as science, but in fact it is no more scientific than evolution, which has also been promoted by the liberal, secular left as a means with which to try to discredit all forms of traditional religious belief.

Natan Slifkin responds:

"People like package deals. When you are a part of a community, it's nice to be able to adopt all of that community's attitudes and values. So if your group of people is anti-abortion and anti-Obama, and they also turn out to dispute climate change..."

