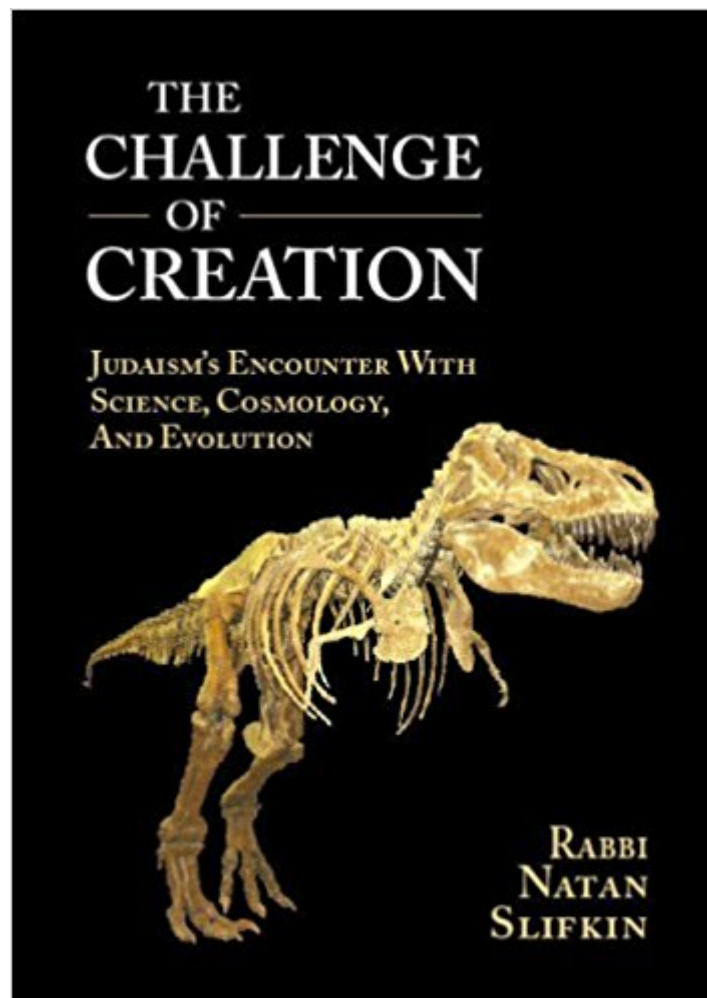




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The Challenge Of Creation: Judaism's Encounter With Science, Cosmology, And Evolution



Synopsis

SCIENCE Do scientific explanations of phenomena remove the need for a Designer?

COSMOLOGY How can the scientific account of the development of the universe be reconciled with Genesis? **EVOLUTION** Can Judaism accept the idea that animals and man evolved from lower forms of life via natural selection? The Challenge of Creation is a completely revised and vastly expanded edition of The Science Of Torah. That work was widely hailed as the best book of its kind for its honesty and thoroughness of approach. The Challenge of Creation builds upon its approach, covering more issues and in greater depth. Carefully, methodically, and eschewing sensationalistic or dogmatic claims in favor of reasoned analysis, it shows how some of the greatest Jewish thinkers explained Judaism and Genesis in a way that complements modern science rather than conflicts with it. The Challenge of Creation is an invaluable resource for anyone grappling with conflicts between science and religion. It is a profound work that is sure to become a classic. With a foreword by Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, executive vice president, The Orthodox Union.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Clear, cogent, and philosophically convincing, Rabbi Slifkin's The Challenge of Creation is an intellectual kiddush Hashem. -- Professor Yehuda Gellman, Department of Philosophy, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Rabbi Slifkin shows us that modern science is in the end a wonderful hymn to what God has wrought. -- Professor Michael Ruse, Department of Philosophy, Florida State University
Seekers will find in this work a model of honest confrontation with serious challenges.

--Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, Foreword to The Challenge of Creation

Rabbi Natan Slifkin is widely renowned for his pioneering work in researching, teaching and writing about the relationship between Judaism and the natural world. A native of England, Rabbi Slifkin now lives in Israel and is a popular lecturer worldwide.

Brilliant analysis of the various ways to reconcile Torah with Creation/evolution and the weaknesses of each proposed solution. A must read for the inquisitive mind irrespective of whether you will agree with his conclusion.

Excellent book. well researched with honest answers. Rabbi Slifkin has done a great service for those who want answers within the framework of Jewish thought. I will use this book with my students as we attempt to reconcile Torah and science.

Slifkin's meticulous writing and well researched facts builds to a comprehensive and powerful message that presents a crystal clear picture of science complementing and showcasing the age-old philosophical convictions of a single God who is continuously involved in our lives and nature. If your search for divine providence leads you only to fluffy, non-factual answers, leaving you less than satisfied, then I suggest this book when it comes to belief in God and his role in the world. This is not a light read. Be prepared to read it from cover to cover...slowly. I find it refreshing to say that this book, which is so grounded in science, is ultimately inspirational for my Jewish thought and practice.

Again will be my summer reading when it gets hot. I love this Rabbi and his love of Science and how he explains things with Torah first...not we fit Torah into science...

I think this book is excellent, specially for Christian and Jewish believers who are dealing with college classes that teach the Theory of Evolution as the naturalistic explanation for the origins of the universe. Notwithstanding, the book presents a basis in Rabbinical literature to believe that the Creation story must be regarded as allegory, and not natural history. Rabbi N. Slifkin also provides good philosophical ground to doubt the traditional arguments in favor of Creationism, although he still believes God created the world. In other words, he presents God as the Creator, and the evolution as the way God developed the immense quantity of living species all over the world. Since

evolution itself is a process not negated by the creationist concept, evolution can be regarded as a natural process through which God operates the world and creatures. Some of the arguments seem to far in speculation, but it raises logical questions about the traditional understanding of our origins. I think that every Creationist or Evolutionist must read this book, since it refutes many presuppositions from both theories.

Rav Slifkin has proven himself a very courageous fighter for the truth and this book is the latest in a series he has written in order to bring light to those who are troubled by the supposed differences between "religion" and science. He says clearly at the beginning of the book that those who don't have any problem in this area would probably be better off not reading it, but in today's world, where new ideas are constantly challenging accepted beliefs, I can't believe there really are many people who are not at least aware of the controversies involved. Unlike what some people think, traditional Jews have been forced repeatedly throughout history to confront ideas that challenge what is believed to be "authentic" Judaism and great scholars like Saadya Gaon, RAMBAM and others have risen to this challenge. This is because Judaism, which teaches its followers to use their brains, makes it inevitable that many observant Jews will begin to ask questions, and not limit their intellectual inquiry to the traditional Jewish sources. Although my educational background is in Geophysics and not in the realm of biology and the animal kingdom, the book made the subject Judaism's attitude towards biological evolution understandable. R. Slifkin points out that many religious Jews, particularly those with scientific educations, attempt to reconcile problems like the age of the universe with Jewish tradition by saying that the world was created 5768 years ago LOOKING like it was billions of years old. I find this difficult to swallow. One need not look at the biological or paleontological record to see this, even an untrained observer can look at the surface of the Moon and see a very clear evolutionary pattern of development with alternating periods of cratering and large-scale lava flows being prominent. Why should such long-time-scale evolution appear to take place if it really didn't? Our reason tells us that this evolutionary development took place. This can not be simply be a trick being played on the observer. R. Slifkin points out that prior to Darwin's theory of evolution coming out, there was a similar crisis in the "Torah and Science" realm when Copernicus' theory placing the Sun at the center of the Solar System became well-known. Most traditionalist Jewish thinkers rejected it at the time, however, it eventually became accepted. Slifkin asks why traditionalists were able to eventually accomodate themselves to this theory, but biological evolution seems to be a much harder idea to swallow. It seems that having Man supposedly evolve out of some "lower species" is somehow more abhorrent than having him

created spontaneously out of a lump of minerals, although I don't see why this should be. Regarding the controversy over "Intelligent Design" which Slifkin rejects, I must say I don't have a good enough grounding in the subject to really take a position, however, I instinctively believe Slifkin is right in saying that if you limit G-d's "intervention" in the world to the places where there are currently gaps in our knowledge, we may find that he will be progressively "squeezed out" as science progresses. I am aware that many people say "today's popular scientific theory will be thrown in the junk-heap tomorrow", but it is ridiculous to say that science doesn't advance. We know more today than we did hundreds or thousands of years ago. We can fly in the air and even reach the Moon and planets. Advances have been made in medicine and technology. This is a fact. Rav Slifkin is to be commended on writing a clear book elucidating these difficult points and for his courage in standing up to personal attacks on himself.

What I like about "The Challenge" is that Rabbi Slifkin confronts the seemingly tough Jewish theological questions like evolution, age of the universe, and primitive man head-on. What I LOVE about the book is that he gives a lot of different answers to these issues, some old and some new, but rejects all of them until formulating his own unique response. Too often rabbinic responses to such issues tend to either hide from the issue or embrace any possible explanation. Rabbi Slifkin here does neither. He presents and then rejects a whole litany of reconciliations, then presents his own, one which is based on the general thoughts of classical rabbinic giants like Maimonides. If you want a comprehensive, intellectually honest (and stimulating) Jewish understanding of why evolution and the big bang are Kosher, read this book! You won't regret it!!!

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