Racheli Taubes 6/2022

\*Any text in BLUE is intended as a guide for the teacher\*

This lesson plan is originally created as a conclusion to a science unit on evolution. Throughout the biology unit students will have questions about how the scientific facts and theories relate to Jewish text and faith. This lesson plan consists of sources addressing the topic of "Faith and Doubt" to validate the students' questions and offer some explanations.

1. אני מאמין א

אני מאמין באמונה שלמה, שהבורא יתברך שמו הוא בורא ומנהיג לכל הברואים, והוא לבדו עשה ועושה ויעשה לכל המעשים.

What is one of the fundamental Jewish beliefs?

Why does the Torah begin with the story of the creation of the world?

2. We had the sky, up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look up at them, and discuss about whether they was made, or only just happened.

~Huckleberry Finn, By: Mark Twain

When looking at the world and wondering about the world, what questions of faith do you have?

#### 3. Bereishit Rabbah 39:1

Avraham looks at the world and realizes that the order within the world that he sees is a sign of intelligent planning.

אמר רבי יצחק משל לאחד שהיה עובר ממקום למקום, וראה בירה אחת דולקת אמר תאמר שהבירה זו בלא מנהיג, הציץ עליו בעל הבירה, אמר לו אני הוא בעל הבירה, כך לפי שהיה אבינו אברהם אומר תאמר שהעולם הזה בלא מנהיג, הציץ עליו הקב"ה ואמר לו אני הוא בעל העולם.

It is like a man who was traveling from place to place when he saw a mansion all lit up. He wondered, "Is it conceivable that the mansion is without a caretaker?" Thereupon, the owner of the mansion appeared to him and said, "I am the owner of this mansion and its caretaker." Similarly, because Avraham our father wondered, "Is it conceivable that the world be without a caretaker?" Therefore, the Holy One, Blessed be He, appeared to him and said, "I am the Master of the universe and its Caretaker."

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What gap(s) about Avraham Avinu's background does this Midrash fill in?
How can studying the world lead to faith in G-d?

# 4. Max Anteby, The Jewish Theory of Everything, Ch. 1 G-d is in the eye of the beholder.

On April 12, 1961, a young Russian cosmonaut stepped in front of the cameras, as he was about to board his spacecraft, Vostok I, for what was going to be man's first voyage into outer space. Yuri Gagarin announced, "Now I go to meet nature face to face in an unprecedented encounter." For the next several hours, Gagarin encountered nature in a way that no man had done before, far beyond the reaches of the clouds, to a place bordering on the infinite. He had an awesome responsibility to chronicle for mankind what existed outside the Earth's realm and man's control. Upon his return to Earth he remarked, "Now I know that G-d does not exist, because I was there and I didn't see him." Less than one year later, John H. Glenn entered his spacecraft, Freedom 7, in America's attempt to beat the Russians in the race to space. He brought a Bible along with him. As he peered through the small window of his capsule, he looked out on the enormity of the universe and on the delicate fragility of our own Earth. He felt the presence of the "Hand of Almighty G-d" as he recited from the first chapter of Genesis. Two men, with identical experiences, unprejudiced by anything that had gone before them. One saw G-d, the other denied His existence.

## 5. Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, bein sheshet l'asor, p. 291

Proofs do not make us believe in G-d.

אפשר להוכיח כי 2+2+2 בצורה מוכרח...ראיה כזאת על מציאות הבורא – אין לנו. כל אלפי הראיות משאירות בידי האדם את הבחירה להאמין או לא להאמין. אמונה נבנית בלב It is possible to prove that 2+2=4 in an absolute way, but there is no such proof as to the existence of G-d. All the thousands of proofs still leave within man's hands the free will to believe or not to believe. Belief is built internally [i.e. by the individual's deliberate choice].

Can you prove G-d's existence? Does that even matter?			

## 6. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, Crisis and Covenant p. 258

For Judaism, the search for religious certainty through science or metaphysics is not merely fallacious but ultimately pagan. To suppose that G-d is scientifically provable is to identify G-d with what is observable, and this for Judaism is idolatry.

According to	Rabbi Sacks,	can you	prove G-d'	's existence?
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Compare this statement to source #5. Would Rabbi Sacks agree with Rabbi Wolbe's statement, and vice versa? How are sources #5 and #6 different?

## 7. Otzar Midrashim, Temurah 7

Everything has a creator; the world is no different.

ומעשה שבא מין ואמר לר' עקיבא העוה"ז מי בראו א"ל הקב"ה, א"ל הראיני דבר ברור, א"ל למחר תבא אלי, למחר בא אצלו א"ל מה אתה לובש, א"ל בגד, א"ל מי עשאו, א"ל האורג, א"ל איני מאמינך הראיני דבר ברור, א"ל ומה אראה לך ואין אתה יודע שהאורג עשאו, א"ל ואתה אינך יודע שהקב"ה ברא את עולמו, נפטר אותו המין, אמרו לו תלמידיו מה הדבר ברור, א"ל בניי כשם שהבית מודיע על הבנאי והבגד מודיע על האורג והדלת על הנגר, כך העולם מודיע על הקב"ה שהוא בראו

A heretic once asked Rabbi Akiva, "Who created the world?" Rabbi Akiva answered, "The Holy One, Blessed be He." The heretic said, "Show me clear proof" ... Rabbi Akiva asked, "Who wove your shirt?" The heretic replied, "A weaver, of course!" Rabbi Akiva said, "I don't believe you. Prove it to me." The heretic answered, "What's there to prove? Don't you know that it was a weaver?" "And don't you know that G-d made His world?" The heretic left and Rabbi Akiva then said to his students, "Just as a building testifies to the existence of the builder, and a garment testifies to the existence of the weaver ... so too the world testifies to the existence of the Creator.

How is this Midrash similar to source #2?

According to this Midrash how can one prove G-d's existence? Does this answer resonate with you? Why or why not?

# 8. Bireishit Chapter 1

א בָּרֵאשִׁית, <mark>בַּרָא</mark> אֱלֹהִים, אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְאֵת הָאָרֵץ. ב וְהָאָרֵץ, הָיִתָה תֹהוּ וֲבֹהוּ, וְחֹשֵׁךְ, עַל-פָּנֵי תָהוֹם; וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים, מְרַחֶפֶת עַל-פָּנֵי הַמָּיִם. ג וַיּאֹמֶר אֱלֹהִים, יָהִי אוֹר; וַיָהִי-אוֹר. ד וַיַּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת-הָאוֹר, כִּי-טוֹב; <mark>וַיִּבְדֵּל</mark> אֱלֹהִים, בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁרְ. ה וַיָּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לָאוֹר יוֹם, וְלַחֹשֶׁרְ קָרָא לְיָלָה; וַיִּהִי-עָרָב וַיִּהִי-בֹקֵר, יוֹם ָאֶחָד. {פּ} ו וַיּאֹמֶר אֱלֹהִים, יָהִי רָקִיעַ בָּתוֹךְ הַמָּיִם, וִיהִי מַבְדִּיל, בֵּין מַיִם לָמַיִם. ז <mark>וַיַּעַש</mark>ׁ אֱלֹהִים, אֶת-הָרָקִיעַ, ָ<mark>וַיַּבְדֵּל</mark> בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מִתַּחַת לָרָקִיעָ, וּבֵין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מֶעַל לָרָקִיעָ; וַיִּהִי-כֵּן. ח וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לָרָקִיעָ, שָׁמַיִם; ָוַיָהִי-עֵרֶב וַיָּהִי-בֹּקֵר, יוֹם שֶׁנָי. {פּ} ט וַיּאֹמֶר אֱלֹהִים, <mark>יָקווּ</mark> הַמַּיִם מְתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם אֱל-מָקוֹם אֶחָד, וְתֶרָאֵה, הַבַּשָּׁה; וַיִּהִי-כָּן. י וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לָיָבָּשָּׁה אֶרֵץ, וּלְמִקְוָה הַמַּיִם קרא יַמִּים; וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים, כִּי-טוֹב. יא וַיּאֹמַר ָאַל-ֹהִים, <mark>תַּדִשָּׁא</mark> הָאָרֵץ דֵּשָׁא עֲשֶׂב מַזְרִיעַ זָרַע, עֵץ פָּרִי עֹשֶׂה פָּרִי לְמִינוֹ, אֲשֶׁר זַרְעוֹ-בוֹ עַל-הָאָרֵץ; וַיִּהִי-כֶּן. יב ו<mark>תוצא</mark> הָאַרץ דּשׁא עשֹב מַזרִיע זַרַע, למִינָהוּ, ועץ עשׁה-פּרי אַשׁר זַרעוֹ-בוּ, למִינָהוּ; וַיַּרא אַלֹהִים, כִּי-טוֹב. יג וַיָּהִי-עֶרֶב וַיָּהִי-בֹקֶר, יוֹם שָׁלִישִּׁי. {פּ} יד וַיּאֹמֶר אֱלֹהִים, יָהִי מְאֹרֹת בָּרְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם, לְהַבְדִּיל, בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלִּילָה; והַיוּ לאֹתֹת וּלמוֹעדִים, וּלוָמִים ושִׁנִים. טו והַיוּ למאורת בַּרקִיע הַשַּׁמִים, להַאיר על-הַאַרץ; וַיְהִי-ָכן. טז <mark>וַיַּעַש</mark>ׁ אַלֹהִים, אָת-שָׁנֵי הַמּאֹרת הַגִּדֹלִים: אָת-הַמָּאוֹר הַגָּדל, למִמשׁלֵת הַיּוֹם, ואַת-הַמָּאוֹר הַקּטֹן לממשלת הַלִּילָה, ואָת הַכּוֹכָבִים. יז <mark>וִיתּו</mark> אֹתָם אלהִים, בּרקיע הַשַּׁמִים, להַאִיר, על-הַאָרץ. יח ולמשׁל, בַּיוֹם וּבַלַיָּלָה, וּלְהַבְּדִּיל, בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ; וַיַּרָא אֱ-לֹהִים, כִּי-טוֹב. יט וַיָּהִי-עֵרֶב וַיָּהִי-בֹקֵר, יוֹם רְבִיעִי. {פּ} כ וַיּאֹמֶר אֱ-לֹהִים--<mark>יִשְׁרְצוּ</mark> הַמַּיִם, שֶׁרֵץ נֵפֶשׁ חַיָּה; וְעוֹף יִעוֹפֵף עַל-הָאָרֵץ, עַל-פָּנֵי רְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם. כא <mark>וַיִּבְרָא</mark> אלהִים, את-הַתַּנִינִם הַגּדלִים; ואַת כָּל-נִפשׁ הַחַיָּה הַרמשת אשר שרצו הַמַּיִם למינַהם, ואַת כַּל-עוֹף כַּנָף ָלְמִינֶהוּ, וַיַּרָא אֱלֹהִים, כִּי-טוֹב. כב וַיִּבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים, לֵאמֹר: פָּרוּ וּרְבוּ, וּמְלָאוּ אֶת-הַמַּיִם בַּיַּמִים, וְהָעוֹף, ַיָרֶב בָּאָרֵץ. כג וַיִהִי-עֶרֶב וַיִהִי-בֹקֶר, יוֹם חַמִּישִׁי. {פּ} כד וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים, <mark>תּוֹצֵא</mark> הָאָרֵץ נֵפֶשׁ חַיַּה לְמִינָהּ, בְּהֶמֶה ַוַרָמָשׁ וְחַיָּתוֹ-אָרֵץ, לְמִינָהּ; וַיְהִי-כָּן. כה <mark>וַיַּעשׁ</mark> אַלֹהְים אָת-חַיַּת הָאָרֵץ לְמִינָהּ, וְאַת-הַבְּהַמָּה לְמִינָהּ, וְאָת כָּל-ֶרֶמֶשׁ הָאָדָמָה, לְמִינֶהוּ; וַיַּרָא אֱלֹהִים, כִּי-טוֹב. כו וַיּאֹמֶר אֱלֹהִים, <mark>נַעֲשֶׂה</mark> אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ; וַיְרִדּוּ בְדָגַת ָהַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם, וּבַבְּהָמֶה וּבְכֶל-הָאָרֵץ, וּבְכֶל-הָרֶמֵשׂ, הַרֹּמֵשׂ עַל-הַאָרֵץ. כז <mark>וַיִּבְרָא</mark> אֱלֹהִים אֵת-הָאָדֶם בַּצַלְמוֹ, בָּצֵלֶם אֵלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ: זָכֶר וּנָקָבָה, בָּרָא אֹתַם. כח וַיָּבַרָּךְ אֹתַם, אֱלֹהִים, וַיִּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פָּרוּ וּרבוּ וּמלאוּ את-הַאַרץ, וֹכִבשׁהַ; וּרדוּ בִּדגַת הַיַּם, וּבעוֹף הַשַּׁמִים, וּבכל-חַיַּה, הַרמשֹת עַל-הַאַרץ. כט וַיּאמר אלהִים, הַנָּה נַתַתִּי לָכָם את-כַּל-עשֹב זֹרָע זְרַע אָשׁר עַל-פַּנִי כַל-הַאַרץ, ואת-כַּל-הַעץ אשׁר-בּוֹ פרי-עץ, זֹרַע זַרַע: לָכם יָהִיה, לאַכלָה. ל וּלֹכֶל-חַיַּת הָאָרץ וּלֹכֶל-עוֹף הַשָּׁמִים וּלֹכֹל רוֹמֵשׁ עַל-הַאָּרץ, אשר-בּוֹ נפשׁ חַיָּה, ָאַת-כָּל-יֵרֶק עֲשֶׂב, לְאָכָלָה; וַיָהִי-כֶּן. לא וַיַּרָא אֱל-הִים אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה, וְהִנַּה-טוֹב מִאֹד; וַיָהִי-עֶרֶב וַיִּהִי-בֹקַר, יוֹם הַשָּׁשִׁי.

What verbs are used in Bireishit Perek 1?

When was everything in the world created? What is the order of creation?

How can G-d be part of the evolutionary process?

#### 9. Ramban Bireishit 1:1

אבל הוציא מן האפס הגמור המוחלט יסוד דק מאד, אין בו ממש, אבל הוא כוח ממציא, מוכן לקבל הצורה ולצאת מן הכוח אל הפועל. והוא החומר הראשון, נקרא ליוונים "היולי". ואחר ההיולי לא ברא דבר, אבל יצר ועשה, כי ממנו המציא הכל והלביש הצורות ותיקן אותן. ודע, כי השמים וכל אשר בהם – חומר אחד, והארץ וכל אשר בה – חומר אחד. והקב"ה ברא אלו שניהם מאין, ושניהם לבדם נבראים, והכל נעשים מהם. והחומר הזה, שקראו היולי, נקרא בלשון הקדש "תֹּהוּ", והמלה נגזרה מלשונם (קידושין מ ב): "בתוהא על הראשונות". מפני שאם בא אדם לגזור בו שֶם, תוהא ונמלך לקוראו בשם אחר, כי לא לבש צורה שיתפש בה השם כלל. והצורה הנלבשת לחומר הזה נקראת בלשון הקדש "בֹּהוּ", והמלה מורכבת, כלומר "בּוֹ הוּא".

Instead He brought forth from total and absolute nothing a very thin substance devoid of corporeality but having a power of potency, fit to assume form and to proceed from potentiality into reality. This was the primary matter created by G-d; it is called by the Greeks *hyly* (matter). After the *hyly*, He did not create anything, but He formed and made things with it, and from this *hyly* He brought everything into existence and clothed the forms and put them into a finished condition.

Know that the heavens and all that is in them consist of one substance, and the earth and everything that is in it consist of one substance. The Holy One, blessed be He, created these two substances from nothing; Such is also the theory of Rambam: "All things on earth have one common substance; the heavens and the things in them have one substance different from the first" (Moreh Nebuchim II, 26). they alone were created, and everything else was constructed from them.

This substance, which the Greeks called *hyly*, is called in the sacred language *tohu*, the word being derived from the expression of the Sages: *Kiddushin 40b.* "betohei (when the wicked bethinks himself) of his doings in the past." If a person wants to decide a name for it [this primordial matter], he may bethink himself, change his mind and call it by another name since it has taken on no form to which the name should be attached. The form which this substance finally takes on is called in the sacred language *bohu*, which is a composite word made up of the two words *bo hu* (in it there is [substance]).

Summarize the Ramban's explanation on the creation of the world.

How does this relate to geologic evolution and the heterotroph hypothesis that was discussed in class? (the scientific study of the earth's changes; theory about how living organisms originated from 4 gasses)

## 10. Rabbeinu Bachya Bireishit 1:1

אבל העיקר הוא שהיא מלה בפני עצמה איננה סמוכה והיא כאלו אמר בראשונה והעד על זה טעם המלה, וענין הפרשה כי השמים והארץ עם תולדותיהם נבראו ביום הראשון מאין גמור ומאפיסה מוחלטת וכן מעיד לשון ברא שהוא לשון הוצאת יש מאין, וזהו דעת ר' נחמיה שביום ראשון נברא כל העולם, שכן אמרו במדרש רבי יהודה ורבי נחמיה 1) רבי יהודה אומר בששה ימים נברא כל העולם שכן כתיב במעשה של כל יום ויום ויהי כן, 2) רבי נחמיה אומר ביום א' נברא כל העולם שכן כתוב תוצא הארץ דבר שהוא פקוד ומוכן בידה מבראשית, משל למה הדבר דומה לאדם שזרע שש שעורים בבת אחת זה יצא ביום ראשון וזה בשני וזה בשלישי וכן כולם, וברור דעת רבי נחמיה במשל הזה כי החומר שממנו היה הכל נברא ביום ראשון ואחר כן נבראו כל הנבראים בששה ימים מחלקי החומר כל אחד ואחד ביומו ,וזהו שכתוב )תהלים לג) "כִּי הוא אָמַר וַיָּהִי", באר כי הכל היה באמירה ובהויה אחת ואחר כן צוה דבר יום ביומו והעמיד הדברים והוציאם לפועל:

The paragraph tells us that heaven and earth with all their derivatives were created on the first day, all of them without there having preceded them any physical matter at all. This fact is attested to by the word ברא which describes the creation of "something out of nothing." This, at any rate, is the opinion of Rabbi Nechemyah who is quoted to this effect in Midrash Tanchuma at the beginning of our portion. On the other hand, Rabbi Yehudah, who disagrees with him, claims that the universe was created during six days. He bases himself on the repeated directives of the Torah that something new should emerge and the Torah's reporting that indeed it did, using the words ויהי כן to inform us that G-d's instructions had been carried out. Rabbi Nechemyah claims that the proof that the whole universe was created already on the first day are the words (1,24) תוצא "let the earth bring forth." The wording "bring forth" indicates that G-d referred to matters which had already been in existence ready to emerge but had not yet seen the light of day until commanded to do so by G-d. The matter can be compared to a farmer who sows six grains of corn at the same time only to find that they take root at different times instead of all sprouting forth simultaneously. The six days of creation described by the Torah report the sequence in which G-d's creative activity became manifest.

# How was the world created?

- שיטת רבי נחמיה *:*
- שיטת רבי יהודה:

What is a parable to explain R' Yehuda's opinion?

## Age of the Universe

# 11. Bireishit Rabbah 3:7

#### מדרש רבה בראשית פרשה ג פסקה ז

אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוּדָה בַּר סִימוֹן, יְהִי עֶרֶב אֵין כְּתִיב כָּאן, אֶלֶא וַיְהִי עֶרֶב, מִכָּאן שֶׁהָיָה סֵדֶר זְמַנִּים לְדֶם לְכַן. אָמַר רַבִּי אַבָּהוּ מְלַמֵּד שֶׁהָיָה בּוֹרֵא עוֹלְמוֹת וּמַחֲרִיכָן, עַד שֶׁבָּרָא אֶת אֵלוּי, אָמַר דֵּין הַנְּיָן לִי, יַתְהוֹן לָא הַנְיָן לִי. אָמַר רַבִּי פִּנְחָס טַעְמֵיהּ דְּרַבִּי אַבָּהוּ (בראשית א, לא): וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשֶׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד, דֵּין הַנְיִין לִי יַתְהוֹן לָא הַנְיִין לִי.

Rabbi Judah bar Simon said: it does not say, 'Let there be evening,' but 'And it was evening.' Hence we derive that there was a time-system prior to this. Rabbi Abbahu said: This teaches us that G-d created worlds and destroyed them, saying, 'This one pleases me; those did not please me.' Rabbi Pinhas said, Rabbi Abbahu derives this from the verse, 'And G-d saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good,' as if to say, 'This one pleases me, those others did not please me.'

What words are this Midrash based on?

When did Hashem finally say "והנה טוב מאד"=it is very good?

What is the purpose of the previous created worlds?

Evolution changes happen over very long periods of time (thousands and millions of years.) What perspective does this Midrash offer on the concept of time?

How does this Midrash relate to the concept of fossils?

# 12. Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, Michtav Me-Elitahu vol. IV p. 113

Since creation does not take place in time we must ask why the Torah describes it as taking six days. The answer is that the Torah wishes to teach us a lesson in *relative values*. Everything has value only in relation to its spiritual content. Vast physical masses and vast expanses of space and time are of little significance if their spiritual content is small. The whole physical universe exists as an environment for the spiritual life of the human being; this is its spiritual content. When interpreting non-temporal creation in temporal terms the Torah deliberately contracts the time-scale compared with that which presents itself to the scientist, in order to convey to us the relative insignificance of the material creation compared with the spiritual stature of man.

According to Rabbi Dessler, what is THE purpose of the world?
Generally, what does the Torah teach us? Specifically, what does the story of creation in the Torah teach us?
What is the difference between science and religion?

# 13. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, Faith in the Future, p.73

Creation testifies not merely to G-d's power but also, as it were, to His belief in mankind. At the heart of religion is not just the faith we have in G-d. No less significant is the faith G-d has in us."

According to Rabbi Sacks, what does the story of creation in the Torah teach us?

What is meant by G-d's faith in humankind?

In conclusion....there is a place for doubt and uncertainty.

14. Sir Francis Crick, Life Itself, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1981, p. 88

It would take a "miracle" for life to evolve on Earth.

An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going.

Crick was a famous scientist that we learned about. Does this quote surprise you? Why or why not?

## 15. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, To Heal a Fractured World pp.197-9

Faith does not mean certainty. It means the courage to live with uncertainty. It does not mean having the answers, it means having the courage to ask the questions and not let go of G-d, as he does not let go of us. It means realizing that G-d creates divine justice but only we, acting in accord with his word, can create human justice — and our very

existence means that this is what G-d wants us to do. For one who sets a hard challenge does not do so to punish, but because he believes in the one to whom he sets the challenge. At the heart of his call to responsibility — and this is the meaning of Job — is G-d's unshakable faith in humankind.

10 C d o drienalasio falli il fidinalidira.
Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
How can you find comfort and satisfaction in not knowing all the answers?