



Revealing the inner beauty of the Torah in a way that touches and inspires the Jewish soul

THE GENETIC CODE OF REALITY

B.S.D.

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Torah and the world parallel each other exactly. Torah is the spiritual core, the world is its physical expression... The nature of the parallel between Torah and physical reality is that Torah is the cause and the world is the result. It is not enough to understand that there is a correspondence between every detail of the physical universe and the Torah; it is essential to realize that each detail of the world exists because the Torah says so. In fact, every fine nuance of each detail exists exactly as it does in the world only because the Torah itself contains each of those details within details.

The analogy most commonly used to portray this relationship is that of a blueprint: the Torah is the blueprint of the world. Just as an architect first draws up plans and the builder then follows those plans when building the physical structure, God first brought the Torah into being and then created the world using the Torah as its plan, [as it says:] "He looked into the Torah and created the world."

But there is another depth here: the Torah is not simply a plan in the sense of an architect's drawings; it is a plan in the sense of genes which themselves actually carry out the construction of the organism which results from the code carried in those genes. Certainly, the genetic code corresponds to the physical features which the organism possesses, but it would be a serious mistake to imagine that this correspondence is descriptive, that the genes somehow reflect in a coded form the physical reality; the genes do not describe, they do not reflect. They are the reason that the body looks as it does, they are the instructions and the mechanism which construct the physical. In fact, the body is a reflection of the genes!

...But there is more. The Torah is not simply a record of the Creation and a history of the world; the 'Nefesh HaChaim' explains that the Creation is ongoing, the Universe is constantly being brought into being by the Creator each instant just as at the first instant. God's word is continuously spoken, and it is continuously condensing into the matter and events of the world. And since the Torah is God's word, the Torah is the medium of Creation always. Not a history, not a description, but a cosmic mechanism bringing reality into being the genes of the world.

This idea is particularly difficult to grasp in the modern era. Western thought is firmly based in the finite, physical dimensions; the yardstick of reality is the laboratory, and that which is not tangible or measurable by experiment is not taken seriously. The entire world of spirituality is relegated to the domain of personal experience and personal belief. The classical Western mind does not engage transcendence. At center stage in this grasp of the world is the fact of physical existence; spiritual wisdom is seen, at best, as commentary.

The result of this worldview when applied to Torah is the notion that Torah describes, analyses, comments. One often hears admiring statements about Torah flowing from this perspective - how deep the Torah is, how penetratingly it perceives the almost imperceptible shades of all aspects of the world. But in reality this is nonsense and one who speaks thus speaks against Torah.

To make this point clearer, let us consider a typical example. One often hears it said that the idea behind the laws of kashrus (permitted and forbidden foods) is health - certain foods are not kosher because they are unhealthy. The Torah, in its great wisdom, prohibits such foods in order to safeguard the health of those who heed its commands. Some types of meat are prone to tapeworm infestation; shellfish inhabit parts of the seabed which are contaminated with hepatitis virus and other pathogens, and so on.



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Of course there is truth in this approach - Torah living is healthy; a major benefit of the Torah-observant way of life is in fact the physical and mental well-being which is an integral element of Torah observance. But a moment's thought will show the fundamental error of this point of view: such a person understands the physical world to be primary, the world is the way it is as a primary fact - some foods are unhealthy, some are not; that is simply the way things are. And now, after the fact, the Torah deals with that reality: eat this food, do not eat that. The Torah is secondary to a finite world, and of course it too must be finite. The absolutely inevitable next step is: of course, the Torah must be subject to change! Previously unkosher foods which are no longer unhealthy due to modern inventions or improvements can now be eaten. After all, the entire basis for the prohibition was a health consideration.

But the spiritual secret is quite the opposite. Certain foods are forbidden; the reason is entirely spiritual, whether we grasp some of that spiritual depth or not. The primary element is the spiritual, the transcendent. In fact, it could be that the physical attributes of the forbidden food are as they are because the spiritual essence is impure: the shellfish inhabits its contaminated habitat and may be physically unhealthy because it is unkosher!

This is the grasp which a Jew should have. An effort must be made to break the patterns of Western thought which bind the world within finite boundaries if one wishes to become spiritually conscious. Transcendent wisdom must be primary.