


We have no essential argument with an evolutionary approach to the tale of life's origins. But we see evolution itself as the greatest of all religious dramas. The history of our universe is the ongoing account of how Y-H-W-H, source of life, reached forth into the world of form, became manifest in the infinite variety of species, and finally became articulate in the consciousness and language of humanity. No blind process is this, but rather the great striving of the One to be manifest in the garb of the many.

More than one voice within contemporary science seems open to describing the origin and evolution of species, in some sense, as the expression of a singular universal force, or as the growth and development of an underlying single organism. While such a force could be conceived as an external Creator, it is more generally seen as a drive within existence that strives relentlessly, though by no means perfectly, toward greater complexity and consciousness. The evolutionary process would then be conceived in a unitive way as the halting, struggling self-assertion of such a singular force or presence, rather than as the endless war of creatures against one another. Such a vision would explain the ongoing emergence of "higher" and more conscious life-forms as evidence of this struggle's emerging success, instead of as the "survival of the fittest."

We recognize that a new Creation story is emerging in our day, one that begins with the origin of matter and reaches onward through the beginnings of plant, animal, and human life. This tale is still unfolding, to be sure, and we nonscientists understand it imperfectly. But we Jews, as bearers of the old Creation tale that for so long nourished and sustained the West's sense of origins and self-understanding, have a special interest in the emerging new story. We are concerned that its

ultimate message be one of harmony, one that brings creatures to appreciate their oneness, and does not serve to justify endless conflict. We hope it will retain the strengths of our ancient tale, one that gave each creature its dignity as God's handiwork, gave us humans a special sense of stewardly responsibility, and glorified our rest, our sense of being at peace with all of God's Creation.

We are urgently in need of ways to renew our sense of human responsibility for preserving the natural world around us. As we call for less abusive treatment of earth's resources and a more reverent protection of air, soil, and water, for the preservation of species in both plant and animal realms, we need a theological language that will serve as the basis for such a change in human attitude. The age in which we live cries out for a religious language that speaks of the underlying unity of all existence, a unity that is manifest within life's diversity, rather than of the struggle of species against species. This unity is that of Creation, of the sense that all beings emerge from a single source. 

We are also tied to Creation and to our ancient tale in the most basic cycle of our religious lives as Jews. I recite the Friday night *kiddush*, which begins with the words "The sixth day; Heaven and earth were completed, they and all their hosts." As the week draws to a close, I know that the creation cycle has happened in my life once again. With the beginning of Shabbat, I bear witness to God's world, whole and created anew. On Friday evening, I testify that I am present to the ongoing work and rest of Y-H-W-H as Creator. This act is an important, even vital one to me. It affirms more than Judaism for me; it affirms my essential humanity, my sense of belonging in this God-filled world, my creation and constant re-creation in God's image.

CREATION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR FAITH

I thus find myself living in an active and symbolically deeply connected way with a story that says God created the world in seven days. I know that I don't believe that story in the literal sense. Neither do I believe in the seven-day Creation, nor am I particularly attracted to the notion that the seven days should be reinterpreted as seven time periods, as seven stages of evolution, or in any other way that seeks to save the literal truth of the text. No, I do not believe it in any ordinary intellectual sense of that term. I also know with all my being that I find this tale both deeply attractive and irresistibly powerful. It draws me to itself, sustains me through the week, and expresses my existence and its meaning. It has become *my own*, so that I choose to live with it in this regular and ever-reaffirming way.

Thus, the simple act of reciting *kiddush* on Friday night leads me to theological crisis. How do I *affirm* that which I do not *believe*? What is the nature of this affirmation in the face of my disbelief? How do we learn to live at peace with these two realities? Rabbi Nahman tells the tale of a prince, well born and noble of character, whose mind was led astray by the intellectual temptations offered him by his royal tutors. Whenever he exercised his mind, he was skeptical of the ancient wisdom on which he had been raised. But when he set that rational mind aside and allowed his heart to speak, he knew that it was true, perhaps true with a depth that he could

never articulate in words that would convince his own inquiring mind.

Nahman's prince was still a rare creature in his author's early nineteenth-century universe. But by now, nearly all of us have become that prince. Are we, who refuse to choose between modernity and religious language, condemned to live our lives in constant conflict between heart and mind? Or will we be able to give birth to a new tale of Creation, one that sanctifies our rest and our humanity while also satisfying our search for truth and nourishing our scientific imagination? Can such a new tale, told in other words, come to bear the old tale within it? Or can the old tale be retold in such a way that it contains the new? The real task may be that of integrating our two tales, the one inherited from ages past, and the one emerging from our own spiritual understanding of contemporary science. For a century, these accounts of life's origin have been presented in opposition to one another. The time has come to end that opposition, *to see the two tales as versions of the same story, representing two stages in humanity's own evolving self-understanding*. The time has come when we need to raise our cups over the old tale, aware that it contains the new one being born within it, a drawing together of ancient, contemporary, and timeless truth.