



Meru Foundation eTORUS Newsletter

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Spring Update – May 2009

East Coast: Levanah and Stan Tenen
West Coast: Bill Haber

Featuring: Introduction to *God According to God*
a new book by Gerald Schroeder, Ph.D.



Spring Update

While Stan and Levanah continue their work on the manuscript for *The Alphabet that Changed the World* (see eTORUS #44), Meru President and media specialist Bill Haber has created a new website as a home for our expanding library of online video: www.meruwest.org

In addition to video excerpts from Meru's DVD lectures, Bill is posting new material: for a sample, go to www.meruwest.org and select "The Meru DVD Series: Preview Video", featured on that page. Keep checking www.meruwest.org for new uploads, and post your comments on the Meru blog: www.meruwest.blogspot.com.

You can also add your public comments on Meru's shorter video clips by viewing them directly on YouTube at www.youtube.com/user/filmguy2121

We are grateful to Meru's supporters and friends for enabling us to continue our work. Please help us grow, by sharing information on Meru Foundation with others. Post our video clips to blogs and e-lists, and point to our print-ready Introductory packet at

www.meruonline.info/common/MeruIntroPacket.a.20oct08.pdf

While our video clips provide a taste of Meru research and findings, they're not the complete story. We offer a special price of \$199.95 (plus shipping) for ordering both our five-DVD lecture series and our printed compendium, *The Alphabet in Genesis*. Other combination offers are available: go to www.meetingtent.com and click on "Specials" to view them all. And if you simply want to make a contribution to Meru Foundation (or add a contribution to your order), you may do so via credit card at www.meetingtent.com, or through PayPal via the "Donate" button at the top of Meru's home page, www.meru.org.

Our featured book this month, *God According to God* by Dr. Gerald Schroeder, is the latest addition to Meru's recommended reading list, at www.meru.org/readlist.html. Meru is a member of the Amazon Associates program, and if you order any book on our reading list by clicking on its icon, we receive a small percentage of the sales price. So, if you'd like to order *God According to God*, please do so through Meru's reading list! Thank you.

God According to God: Introducing a new book by Gerald Schroeder, Ph.D.

This month's feature article is physicist Gerald Schroeder's Introduction to his new book, *God According to God*. Dr. Schroeder has degrees from MIT in Chemical Engineering, Earth Sciences, and Physics, but is perhaps best known for his first popular book, *Genesis and the Big Bang* (New York, NY: Bantam, 1990).

All Dr. Schroeder's books focus on the relationship – sometimes contrasting, sometimes complementary – between science and faith, as ways to explain the natural observable world. His perspective is unique, rooted equally in both the hard sciences and in Jewish learning, and as such he can offer insights one doesn't find elsewhere. Dr. Schroeder is a member of Meru's online *Sharon Colloquium* study group; when, at his suggestion, we read the Introduction to



God According to God, we immediately asked to share it with the eTORUS audience. (Our thanks to Dr. Schroeder for his permission to do so.)

God According to God (New York, NY: Harper One, 2009) is due to be released on May 26, 2009. For more information on this and other books by Gerald Schroeder, see his website at www.geraldschroeder.com.

—Levanah Tenen, ed.

GOD ACCORDING TO GOD:

A physicist proves we have been wrong about God all along

Author's Introduction by Gerald Schroeder, Ph.D.

Today marks the Hebrew month of Elul, the biblical month that precedes the biblical New Year, the holiday of Rosh HaShanah (literally, “the head of the year”). By pleasant coincidence, this year the Muslim month of Ramadan coincides with Elul. Both Elul and Ramadan have special prayers, and that makes this morning’s music especially pleasant. Hebrew from a town crier and the blowing of a ram’s horn, the shofar, call for Jews to rise and thank God for the magnificent munificence of the day. This mixes with the Arabic from the muezzin asking Muslims to do the same. And then not to be left out of this Divine melody, the bells of the many Jerusalem churches literally chime in, blending perfectly with the voices in Hebrew and Arabic.

Each of our three local cultures yearns to address the one God, Creator of the universe. We may use different languages, but the sense of an underlying Unity remains. This spiritual Oneness, though expressed differently in the three religions, mirrors, as a near replica in the metaphysical realm, the physical unity upon which rest all aspects of the material world. Much of the four decades of my career as an M.I.T.-trained scientist and, in parallel, the three decades of my study of the Bible has been devoted to probing this physical and spiritual unity. At times the two realms blend, and yet at times they seemed totally and hopelessly at odds.

The deeper truth I discovered is that, when we get beyond a superficial understanding of the tangible, material world, we find that the physical and the metaphysical make up a single reality, one world viewed from two vastly different perspectives. It is this that I teach in my classes on science and the Bible.

Albert Einstein discovered that matter is actually pure congealed or condensed energy, energy in the form of solid matter. Everything from our bodies to boulders on a mountain is made of the energy of the big-bang creation. The scientific discoveries of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have gone a step farther in closing ranks with the creation, finding that matter and the energy from which matter formed are made of something totally ethereal. In physics we call it information or, more extreme, mind. In the words of the knighted mathematician James Jeans, the world looks more like a great thought than a great machine.

Biblical theology agrees totally, telling us, as we will learn, that God used a substrate of wisdom with which to build the world. This Divine wisdom or mind is present in every iota of the world’s being. It explains how the energy of the creation, essentially superpowerful light beams, could become alive and sentient, able to feel love and joy and wonder. Divine wisdom was and is present, guiding and forming the way.

The secular world of course takes a different stance. If we can get past the question of what created the universe from nothing (was it God?), we then let the laws of nature take the credit for producing, in some as yet unknown way, the magnificence of life from the big-bang burst of pure, exquisitely hot energy. All



this by random chance. It takes a stretch of the imagination, but that is all that is available to a secular explanation of our cosmic genesis.

Though in my books and with my students I present our genesis from a very different view, that of a creating God that is present and active, I too face a dilemma, and my questioning students do not let me ignore the problem. There is something very basic missing in the simplistic view of the God of the Bible operating and controlling the workings of the world. Most obviously, if God is in control, why isn't the world perfect? Not just from our humanly limited view of perfection, but even in a biblical accounting there are multiple examples by which we learn that the world has its faults. Most blatantly, God brought the biblical Flood at the time of Noah to revamp a misdirected world. Couldn't God have foreseen this potential for disaster and nipped it in the bud before it blossomed into a worldwide debacle? Are we dealing with an absentee God, a God that only once in a while pays attention to the world It created to see if things are going according to some Divine schedule? A superficial reading of the Bible might give that impression. A detailed study of God as described in the Bible, however, presents a very different picture. For example, as the Israelites are about to enter Canaan, God promises to fight for their victory, but then tells any individuals who have a new home or are recently engaged to marry to return home, lest they die in battle. God promises to fight alongside the Israelites to help gain victory for the army, but there is no guarantee of survival given to any particular individual. In another incident, God promises to send hornets ahead of the Israelite army to drive out the enemy snipers, but not to drive the enemy out too quickly lest the beasts of the field multiply. God could also have controlled the beasts just as God controlled the hornets, but refused to do so.

The biblical message is that God is there to help, but steps back, in biblical language hides His face, and insists that we to do our part in the job. God has chosen us to be partners. With the Divine hiding of face, God's presence becomes masked, at times even unpredictable and certainly not always controlling events. This is a dynamic Force, not some static entity able to be pigeonholed into how we think a God should act within Its creation.

The overwhelming goodness of the world is so extreme that every sorrow stands out as an unnecessary tragedy. In simplistic terms, God could and should stop every form of undeserved trouble. But that is not the God of the Bible, as the book of Job so blatantly reveals. The God of the Bible, by the very act of creating the universe, has relinquished a portion of control. With this act, God imbued and empowered humankind with the task of getting a partly perfect world to become fully perfect. This is a tremendous vote of confidence by God in our ability, notwithstanding the fact that God has let us know that we are a stiff-necked and rebellious people. It is as if God has said, "This is what I have to work with, so let's make do with what we've got."

The problem so many people, believers as well as skeptics, have with God really isn't with God. It's with the stunted perception of the biblical Creator of our magnificent universe that we imbibe in our youthful years. As children we yearn for a larger-than-life figure who can guide and protect us. Our parents fulfill part of that mission. But the parent-like image of an infinite, error-free God is even more assuring to our young minds. So we grow up retaining this childhood notion of an all-powerful, ever present, ever involved, never erring Creator. Unfortunately, that image fails utterly when as adults we discover that the facts of life are often brutally at odds with this popular, though misguided, piece of wisdom. It's no wonder that atheists chortle at the naivete of the idea of such a God.

We are about to correct that misperception, and in doing so we'll develop an understanding of the Divine as made manifest in our world. What is the God of the Bible? What can I expect from Him-or Her-or It? What can I demand? Does God want me to make demands? Why did the God of the Bible tell Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, his and Sarah's only child? Does God want us to argue when we confront what appears to be Divine injustice, or are we merely to accept the slap and turn the other cheek? When I feel the surge of



emotion at the beauty of star-studded sky or the joy of a baby's smile, is that a part of the same transcendent God that created a less than perfect world? And if there really is a God, why so often is God's presence so fully hidden that even in the Bible people wonder, "Is there a God among us?"

An obvious and predictable God would be so much easier to understand. I'm a scientist, and also a student of the Hebrew Bible. The scientific method looks for relationships among seemingly diverse pieces of information, be they held in nature or written in a book. Finding the common ground that binds these sources of knowledge often reveals facts not immediately obvious when considered separately. By combining the information the Bible brings about the nature of God with the discoveries of modern science, I am determined to make sense of why the world runs the way it does, spiritually as well as physically. In this sense I move beyond the scientific interplay between the Torah (the Hebrew term for the Five Books of Moses) and teva (the Hebrew word for nature) described in my first three books. This is a search that became for me both academically rational as a scientist, and emotionally spiritual, also as a scientist. The claim in Psalms that "the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament proclaims His works (Psalms 19:2), is not a mere metaphor. The study of nature even with all its intellectual rigor, is filled with spiritual wonder. By abandoning preconceived notions of the Author of creation and replacing them with the Bible's description and nature's display of God, we will learn about God according to God. The surprise is that many of the episodes in the Bible mirror with alarming fidelity life as we experience it.

--©2009 Gerald Schroeder, Ph.D.
Jerusalem, Israel

For additional information on this and other books by Dr. Schroeder, visit his website at www.geraldschroeder.com.



Thank you for reading this issue of the Meru Foundation eTORUS Newsletter.

Past issues are available online at www.meru.org/Newsletter/journalindex.html.

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To contact us,
please email, write, or call:

Meru Foundation
PO Box 503
Sharon, MA 02067 USA
+1-781-784-3462
meru1@well.com
www.meru.org



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