

Summary

This work examines HaRaAYaH Kook's teachings on the Theory of Evolution. The naturalist and geologist Charles Darwin suggested natural selection as the mechanism that drives the evolution of living species. The success of his book, *On the Origin of Species*, and the very fact that he found a mechanism to explain the theory of evolution, led to the publicity and acceptance of the theory of evolution in the scientific world and among the general public. HaRaAYaH Kook, the Chief Rabbi of Erez Yisrael and one of the most important thinkers in 20th century Judaism, presented a complex and systematic position regarding the theory of evolution. This work focuses on the orderly examination of this very method of HaRaAYaH, and the way in which he understood and gave his interpretation to the theory of evolution. Contrary to the popular opinion, there is no contradiction between the theory of evolution and that of religious faith in general, rather between the theory of evolution and specific principal arguments of the Anglican religion in its Natural Theology version, namely the argument of the **immutability of species** and the **argument from design**, which is an attempt to prove the existence of the Creator through nature. Judaism in general and HaRaAYaH's teachings in particular, did not maintain these two principal arguments. Thus they were able to accept the theory of evolution.

HaRaAYaH, who did not purport to be a man of science, did not claim that the theory of evolution is correct as a scientific theory. Rather, from a philosophical-kabbalistic point of view, He claimed that the theory of evolution was a theory whose philosophical view, a view of development, corresponds to the notion of development appearing in the teachings of the Kabbalah and especially in the writings of Rabbi Moshe Haim Luzzato (RaMCHaL).

The biological evolution theory was given by Darwin a certain interpretation that perceives the world as materialistic and random. As such, it allows the removal of the Creator and any other metaphysical entity from the world picture, and from life in general. Darwin's biological evolution theory and the Darwinist philosophical teaching are perceived in the public's eye as one. HaRaAYaH distinguished between the biological evolution theory and the philosophical-materialistic interpretation given it by Darwin. He accepted the biological evolution theory in general, since the idea of development corresponds to the worldview of Kabbalah teachings. In contrast, Darwin's philosophical interpretation was completely rejected by HaRaAYaH. He integrated the theory of evolution into a kabbalistic-evolutionist worldview originating in the RaMCHaL's teaching. This conception of RaMCHaL and HaRaAYaH perceives reality with all its layers as one general being that gradually evolves both materially and spiritually. The evolution of the biological species too is nothing but an expression of an evolution movement in which reality returns to its original spiritual condition, which is the potential condition that has not yet materialized in the world. In this teaching, evolution is one of the Creator's instruments for creating and developing the world.

HaRaAYaH presented a spiritual view of reality. According to his teachings our world is not a material world that contains spiritual manifestations, but a spiritual world within which a material world was created. This is a panentheistic view, whereby everything exists within divinity. Reality floats within a divinity that lends to it its life and direction. Biological evolution functions within a divine world; it does not contradict divinity, but rather expresses it.

Seemingly, the random and mechanistic rules of natural selection stand in contradiction to God's activity, and in general, the stringent laws of nature stand in contradiction to God's free reign. However, HaRaAYaH does not actually see a contradiction between the fixed laws of nature and God's activity. He thinks that the world was created by the free will of God, but that within this world fixed mechanisms and laws of nature with defined functions were also created. HaRaAYaH is not concerned by the randomness and mechanism of nature's systems, because the natural mechanisms and laws also do not exist outside of God, but within God, and their action expresses the divine will. The natural mechanisms and laws are not the significant factor because they do not determine direction, but only execute it. They are a result and not a constitutive factor. Divinity includes all of the mechanisms that set reality in motion, and which do not lead but are led. Thus, according to HaRaAYaH's conception, there is no random evolution, but rather a guided evolution, which is one of the ways in which God acts in reality.

This teaching stands in contradiction to materialism, which considers matter as the essence of everything. According to HaRaAYaH's conception, the material world exists within the spiritual world, aspires to return to the original condition, to the origin of reality, which aspiration provides the evolutionary motion. According to his view, evolution cannot be limited to the material dimension; the summit of evolution is to his understanding therefore the arrival of man in the world of spirit, which is also the summit of life in general.

HaRaAYaH's panentheism expresses the radical difference between the materialistic Darwinist philosophy and HaRaAYaH's teachings. Materialism considers matter as the essence of everything, whereas HaRaAYaH considers the divinity as the essence

of everything. Darwin's great achievement was in finding a natural mechanism explaining the creation of various species in nature, with no need of a spiritual-metaphysical explanation. For HaRaAYaH in contrast, evolution with all of its mechanism is one of the ways in which God acts in reality. The belief whereby the entire universe was created randomly, was rejected by HaRaAYaH as an unreasonable claim. Materialism's answer to the question of the meaning of human existence is that human existence has no meaning or purpose. HaRaAYaH, in contrast, gives the Kabbalistic answer: the entire world is spiritual; each one of man's actions has a spiritual meaning. Through his actions, man can continue the evolution of the world and become the Creator's partner in the act of creation. According to Materialism, man's natural aspiration to meaning and personal realization, the quest for perfection and the attempt to reach spiritual competence are no more than an invention or a distorted human perception. For HaRaAYaH, all these, express man's uniqueness.

When HaRaAYaH accepted the theory of evolution, he did not grasp it by means of Darwin's materialistic interpretation, on which he disagreed. HaRaAYaH accepted the theory of evolution as it is understood by his philosophical-religious interpretation! HaRaAYaH was pleased with the theory of evolution because it exposed a basic understanding of reality: the world is in constant development. The acceptance of the theory of evolution in HaRaAYaH's interpretation not only does not contradict religious belief, but rather leads to the understanding that it is divine immanence in the material world, which animates and moves it. This is a notion of a living divinity that is active here, in our world.

All of the separate individual singularities in reality belong to one single unity. It is the spiritual dimension that unifies the separate singularities. The concept of unity

lends a global meaning to evolution. The evolution of each individual promotes the integral unity and thereby also all individuals, including the species and individuals who already died and are no more, and realizes the development potential of the overall unity. The struggle for existence is conceived as an internal struggle between the components of the global unity that evolves and perfects itself through these struggles.

The struggle for existence is not the factor indicating the appropriate morals. Man is required to overcome the laws of the struggle for existence and conduct his life according to other moral parameters. Both the divine imperative and his spiritual and ethical capacity require that he realize his human freedom and his humanity: not to be tempted by the animal instincts in the struggle for existence, but rather live the divine morals.

HaRaAYaH's spiritual-Kabbalistic conception of the theory of evolution clarifies that the claim that HaRaAYaH accepted materialist Darwinism is false. He accepted the scientific theory and rejected its common materialistic interpretation. In other words, HaRaAYaH accepted Darwin's biology but rejected his philosophy.

HaRaAYaH's novelty is not his attitude to the biological theory of evolution, but in its integration within the framework of Kabbalistic thinking. This novelty liberates the theory of evolution from dependency on the materialistic explanation, and proposes a broad evolutionary worldview, which applies both in the material and in the spiritual dimensions. According to HaRaAaYa's teaching perceiving evolution as part of a divine process upgrades MAN to a higher level of faith; a level of meeting with an infinite, ever creating, dynamic divinity. This conception restores moral meaning to man and his actions and provides him with a horizon of idealistic aspirations, which a

materialistic evolutionist theory cannot provide, since materialism denies the very existence of such a horizon.