



RABBI JOEY FELSEN

EDUCATOR, FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE JEWISH STUDY NETWORK, FOUNDING BOARD PRESIDENT OF MEIRA ACADEMY

Rabbi Joey Felsen, Founder and Executive Director of the Jewish Study Network (JSN), hails from Toronto, Canada. A skilled educator, Rabbi Felsen teaches classes at the Jewish Community Centers in Palo Alto and Los Gatos, as well as a host of other venues. He is the founding Board President of Meira Academy and a recipient of the prestigious Grinspoon-Steinhardt National Award for Excellence in Jewish Education.

Matter, Space And Time

RABBI JOEY FELSEN

Creation is something that we often have a hard time reconciling with our modern scientific minds. Rabbi David Fohrman has distilled the creation of our world into three basic elements. Within the Old Testament's story of Creation in Genesis, there were different points in which core elements of "infrastructure" were created so that we, as human beings, could exist in our world. The creation of this essential infrastructure is hinted to in Genesis as "separation."

What are those core elements? In Genesis, on Day 1, the Old Testament says that there was light, and God separated between the light and the darkness. God called the light "Day," and the darkness "Night."¹ What is being created in this separation is what we call "matter," which is a term used in general chemistry and classic physics as all objects made up of atoms and subatomic particles that have volume and take up space. Nowadays, there are a lot of conversations about "light matter" and "dark matter." This separation is actually the creation of what we would call "useable matter," meaning matter that allows things to exist.

On Day 2, it says that God created the heavenly "firmament" (which simply means the expanse or space immediately above us), and separated the waters which were above and beneath it.² What is being created here is what we call "habitable space." Before this separation, the Old Testament describes an entire world of water over the whole surface. Obviously, humans can't live in water. In order to have space in which we could live, there had to be a separation in which some waters became the "Lower Waters" (what we identify as H₂O), and some waters became the "Upper Waters" (what we identify as the clouds). This created space in-between the upper and lower waters became the space in which we are able to exist.

On day 4, it says that God made the luminaries in the expanse of heaven to shine upon the earth, to separate between the light and the darkness;³ between day and night. Their purpose was to serve as signs to designate days, years and the times of festivals. The Old Testament says God made the two great luminaries; the greater luminary, the sun, to dominate the day and the lesser luminary, the moon, to dominate the night; and the stars. What is being created here is what we would call "relatable time." The luminaries are there to allow us to keep track of time. If you distill those three separations, you end up with the core elements of Matter, Space, and Time which are all major components of infrastructure that are dependent on each other and absolutely necessary for the existence of humankind within the universe.

Footnotes:

1. Genesis / Parashas Bereishis / Chapter 1 / Verses 3-5
2. Genesis / Parashas Bereishis / Chapter 1 / Verses 6-8
3. Genesis / Parashas Bereishis / Chapter 1 / Verses 14-18