

**Rabbi Natan Slifkin**

37/1 Nachal Dolev, Ramat Bet Shemesh 99630, Israel  
Tel: 02-992-0678 ~ Fax: 02-991-4215 ~ Mobile: 054-599-5058  
Website: www.zootorah.com ~ E-mail: zoorabbi@zootorah.com

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The Editor, *The Jewish Observer*

Agudath Israel

To the Editor:

In Rabbi Elias's latest article on Rav Hirsch, "Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and Evolution," he purports to be addressing the letters received by the *Jewish Observer* which were critical of his earlier article on this topic. But I am simply at a loss to understand what this latest article is claiming. Rabbi Elias again repeats his insistence that Rav Hirsch's explanation of *lemino* negates the acceptance of evolution; yet he concedes at the end of the article that Rav Hirsch explicitly wrote that *lemino* can accommodate evolution. Rabbi Elias also stresses that Rav Hirsch's acceptance of evolution was hypothetical, that he was scientifically skeptical of it and that Rabbi Elias is still scientifically skeptical of it. But I certainly never claimed otherwise, and I doubt that anyone else did either. The point, as I stressed in my previous letter, is not whether Rav Hirsch thought that there was a scientifically persuasive case for evolution – as a rabbi, his opinion in that area does not carry weight, and his nineteenth-century scientific objections are of little significance. Instead, the point is that he considered that evolution (in terms of common ancestry<sup>1</sup>) does *not* present a theological problem. Therefore, those who accept evolution (at least in terms of common ancestry) as being true and as being based on considerable evidence<sup>2</sup> – which includes 99.99% of the global community of scientists in the relevant fields, both religious and secular people, and even including Intelligent Design advocates – have it on Rav Hirsch's authority that their beliefs are not theologically problematic.

Sincerely,

Natan Slifkin

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<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Danziger's article confuses the issue by discussing problems with Darwinian mechanisms of evolution. I made it clear in my book that Rav Hirsch is not referring to this in his endorsement of evolution.

<sup>2</sup> In Rabbi Elias' article, he cites a statement from evolutionist Sir Arthur Keith that evolution is unproved and unprovable. While this is widely quoted by creationists, nobody has ever produced a source for this statement, and in light of Sir Keith's writings on the evidence for evolution and against special creation, it would appear to be a fabrication.