

# KOL MEVASSER

## The Age of the Universe

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel

*Rabbi Angel, emeritus rabbi of Shearith Israel in Manhattan who founded jewishideas.org, will join Kahal Joseph for an inspiring Shabbaton weekend, October 23rd to 25th.*

The Torah begins with a majestic description of God's creation of the universe. The powerful language is remarkable for its poetic beauty, evocative imagery, and profound spirituality. When we read these paragraphs thoughtfully, we feel that we are in the presence of God at the very moment of creation.

The language of the creation story is religious/poetic, not scientific. The Torah, in its infinite wisdom, wants us to sense the wonder and grandeur of God's creation. It does not present a cold scientific treatise, but a lofty, emotionally compelling account.

Regrettably, the notion has arisen in some religious circles that the creation story in Genesis is to be taken literally--that God created the world in six 24-hour days.

Proponents of this view have then made calculations based on biblical narratives and have concluded that the universe is 5769 years old plus almost six days. They have declared this to be a non-negotiable religious "truth". One right-wing Orthodox Jewish group requires that

would-be converts answer a question on "the Torah view on the age of the universe". One elderly "sage" in Israel was quoted as invalidating religious rites performed by Orthodox rabbis who believe the universe is older than 5769 years. A number of rabbis and teachers insist that dinosaurs never existed, since scientists claim that dinosaurs lived millions of years ago--an evident impossibility if the universe is only 5769 years old.

The "fundamentalist" view is not only scientifically incorrect, but is intellectually flawed on its own terms. Since the sun was not created until the fourth day, how could there have been sunset and sunrise on the first three days? What could the Torah have meant by the words "evening" and "morning" in a universe that had no sun, moon or stars? Moreover, why do "fundamentalists" feel compelled to defend a position which is clearly at odds with the unequivocal findings of scientific research? Maimonides taught, quite correctly, that the Torah and Nature (governed by scientifically verifiable laws) were created by the same Author--and cannot be in basic conflict with each other.

Scientists have dated the universe at approximately 15 billion years. They have discovered and dated dinosaur fossils going back many millions of years. If these are indeed established facts (and they are), then why would "fundamentalists" demand that religionists deny

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## KJ Schedule Parashat Beresheet

**Ereb Shabbat / Friday, October 9th**  
Shaharit / Morning Prayer... 6:25 am  
**Minha**.....**5:45 pm**  
Candle Lighting ..... 6:09 pm  
Arbit / Kabbalat Shabbat..... 6:15 pm

### Yom Shabbat / Shabbat Day Saturday, October 10th

Shaharit / Morning Prayer... 8:30 am  
Keri'at HaTorah..... 10:15 am  
Musaf ..... 11:30 am  
Minhah ..... 5:45 pm  
Women's Tehillim..... 5:45 pm  
Se'udah Shelisheet..... 6:15 pm  
Arbit..... 7:00 pm  
Habdallah ..... 7:11 pm

### Weekdays

*Sunday, October 11th*

Shaharit..... 7:30 am  
Talmud Torah..... 10:00 am

*Monday, October 12th*

Shaharit ..... 6:25 am

### Rosh Hodesh Heshvan

*Tues, Oct 13th & Wed, Oct 14th*

Shaharit / Morning Prayer .. 6:15 am

### Weekdays

*Thursday, Oct. 15th & Friday, Oct 16th*  
Shaharit ..... 6:25 am

**Ereb Shabbat / Friday, October 16th**

Shaharit / Morning Prayer... 6:25 am  
**Minha**.....**5:45 pm**  
Candle Lighting ..... 6:00 pm  
Arbit / Kabbalat Shabbat..... 6:15 pm

**Congratulations**  
Shai Elghanian  
on your Bar Mitzvah

Mazal Tov  
Sherry & Sam Elghanian  
brother, Aaron  
and grandparents  
Shirin Elghanian  
& Shlomo Mizrahi

## Shabbat Kiddush

is sponsored  
in honor of  
Shai's Bar Mitzvah  
by  
Sherry & Sam  
Elghanian

## Discovery and Recovery

Preserving Iraqi Jewish Heritage

*An Exhibit from the Iraqi Jewish Archives  
on view at the Nixon Presidential Library & Museum  
in Loma Linda until November 15, 2015*



The exhibit details the dramatic recovery of historic materials relating to the Jewish community in Iraq from a flooded basement in Saddam Hussein's intelligence headquarters, and the National Archives' ongoing work to support U.S. Government efforts to preserve these artifacts. In English and Arabic, the 2,000 square foot exhibit features 23 recovered original items and "behind the scenes" video of the fascinating yet painstaking preservation.

*Sunday, October 11, 2014 —KJ Tour of the Exhibit.*

*Wednesday, October 18, 2015, 5:00 to 7:00 pm*

**"Origins of a Contemporary Crisis: Secret Middle Eastern Diplomacy in World War One"**  
A talk with Dr. James Gelvin, UCLA Professor of Middle Eastern History

*This exhibition was created by the National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC,  
with generous support from the U.S. Department of State.*

## In Memoriam

We remember these yearzeit anniversaries October 10 to 17, 2015. It is customary to light a memorial candle, donate tzedaka, & attend Shabbat services.

**27 Tishri / Shabbat, October 10th**  
Abraham Kattan *Avraham ben Eliyahu*

**28 Tishri / Sunday, October 11th**  
Georgina Amron *Girji Hoogi bat Farha*

**29 Tishri / Monday, October 12th**  
Elias Aslan

David Isaac *David ben Eliyahu Itzhak*  
Jack Jonah *Yaakov ben Yitzhak*

**30 Tishri / Tuesday, October 13th**  
Irving Henry Pack *Yitzhak ben Moshef*

**1 Heshvan / Wednesday, October 14th**  
Nissan Gad *Nissan ben Avraham*  
Joseph Aaron Judah *Yoseph ben Aharon*

**2 Heshvan / Thursday, October 15th**  
Ovadia Drori *Ovadia ben Avraham*  
Khalil Naghdi *Matatyahou ben Eliyahu*  
*David ben Yaacov Shalom*

**3 Heshvan / Friday, October 16th**  
Yaacov Levy *Yaacov ben Shaul*  
Sassoon Jacob Joseph Solomon *Sassoon*  
*Yaacov Yosef Shlomo*

**4 Heshvan / Shabbat, October 17th**  
Sam Bekhor *Shmuel ben Yaacob*  
Hilda Gillis *Haviva bat Gillis*  
Grace Saltoon *Garziee bat Masouda*

## Refuah Shlemah

Abe Abraham • Moselle Amron • Sylvia Cohen  
• Mordechai Cohen • Esther Duke • Tilda Levy  
Sassoon Ezra • Miriam bat Yetta  
Maurice Ovadia • Habiba bat Mazli

**Shabbat Shalom U'Mevorach**  
*Wishing you a peaceful & joyful Shabbat*



## A Conversation Between

### AMBASSADOR JOHN BOLTON

Former U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, and  
Under-Secretary of State for arms control and international security

&

### BRIGADIER GENERAL ISRAEL (RELIK) SHAFIR

Legendary Israeli flying ace who participated in the mission  
to destroy Iraq's nuclear reactor in 1981

## The Future of the Strategic Alliance

### America, Israel, and The Middle East in Turmoil

Moderator  
**SIMCHA SALACH**

*Executive Director, Israel Air Force Center Foundation*

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2015**

Beth Jacob Congregation  
9030 W. Olympic Blvd., Beverly Hills

Dessert Reception – 7:00 p.m.  
Program – 7:30 p.m.  
Tickets: \$36.00

Special VIP Dinner with our distinguished speakers – 6:00 p.m.

Tickets: \$126  
*Dietary Laws Observed*

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Register online at: [www.iafc-foundation.org](http://www.iafc-foundation.org)

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clear scientific evidence--especially when there is no theological reason to do so? Why should religious people be asked to become unthinking, unscientific, unreasonable beings?

The "days" in the creation story surely do not refer to 24 hour periods. Rather, they might better be understood as periods of time of undetermined length. They might each have been billions of years long. The universe was created in stages, with each stage involving an evening (erev=a period of mixture) and a morning (boker=a period of clarity, when the mixed state of things solidified into identifiable things). The Torah does not indicate how long these "days" were, and it makes no attempt to frame the story in scientific terms. Since these first six "days" might have been billions of years long, there was ample time for dinosaurs to live and become extinct before the creation of Adam in the "afternoon" of the sixth "day". Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan cited classic rabbinic texts asserting that the world is far older than the 5769 years implied by our current dating system. The Sefer ha-Temunah, attributed to the Tanna Rabbi Nuhunya ben ha-Kanah, suggests that there were other worlds before Adam was created. The Talmud (Hagigah 13b) records the view that there were 974 generations before Adam.

Most interesting is the view of Rabbi Yitzhak of Akko, a student and colleague of Ramban, and one of the foremost kabbalists of his time. Rabbi Kaplan made calculations based on Rabbi Yitzhak's writings, indicating that Rabbi Yitzhak thought the universe was 15.3 billion years old! This is incredibly close to the "big bang" theory posited by modern day scientists. (please see my article, "Reflections on Torah Education and Mis-Education")

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# KJ Shabbaton

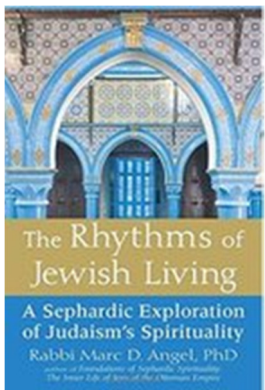
## with Rabbi Marc D. Angel

at Kahal Joseph from October 23 to 25, 2015

Rabbi Marc D. Angel (born July 1945) is rabbi emeritus of Congregation Shearith Israel, the historic Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in New York City. Born into Seattle's Sephardic community, his ancestors are Sephardim from Turkey and Rhodes and he grew up in a Ladino-speaking home.

He received his B.A., M.S., Ph.D., Th.D. honoris causa and rabbinical ordination from Yeshiva University, and also has an M.A. in English Literature from the City College of New York. He is a recipient of the Bernard Revel Award in Religion and Religious Education. He was the president of the Rabbinical Council of America, and a member of the editorial board of its journal, *Tradition*.

In 2007, he established the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals ([jewishideas.org](http://jewishideas.org)) which fosters an intellectually vibrant, compassionate and inclusive Orthodox Judaism. He directs the Institute, and edits its journal, *Conversations*, which appears three times per year. In 2007, he and Rabbi Avi Weiss co-founded the International Rabbinic Fellowship, an association of modern Orthodox rabbis. He is also the author of numerous books, including the most recent, *The Rhythms of Jewish Living*.



*"Jewish spirituality is organically linked to the natural rhythms of the universe. To a great extent, Jewish religious traditions serve to bring Jews into a sensitive relationship with the natural world. Many commandments and customs lead in this direction, drawing out the love and reverence that emerge from the contemplation of God's creations."*  
—from Chapter 1, "The Rhythms of Nature"

Judaism has provided the spiritual framework for millions of people for thousands of years. Yet its basic beliefs and observances often are disconnected from their original intent in our modern day. With his engaging overview of the sacred times, places and ideas of Judaism, Rabbi Marc D. Angel gently reclaims the natural, balanced and insightful teachings of Sephardic Judaism that can and should imbue modern Jewish spirituality. He draws on many classic sources, illuminating the influence of the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry and the great mystics of sixteenth-century Safed on the Sephardic tradition. The result is an approach to Judaism that is deep, rich and diverse.

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Rabbi Yitzhak of Akko and the other sages who posited a universe far older than 5769 years had no theological problem suggesting these views. These opinions were not seen as heretical in any way. It was not felt by these sages, nor by the many others who read their views without raising objections, that it was a vital principle of Judaism to believe the universe is only a few thousand years old.

The creation story that opens the Torah should inspire us to come closer to God, to appreciate His grandeur and unfathomable wisdom. It should excite our minds to want to learn more about God's ways as manifested in the laws of nature. It should help foster a spirit of scientific inquiry, intellectual curiosity, and a profound love and reverence for God.

*Shabbat Shalom*

### **We want you to be a member!**

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