

# Author says science, Torah converging

## Portland scientist finds no inherent conflict

**THE HEAVENLY TIME MACHINE: ESSAYS ON SCIENCE AND TORAH**, by Morris Engelson, Joint Management Strategy, Portland, 2001, paperback, 270 pages, \$23.

**BY DEBORAH SELDNER**  
The Jewish Review

“Ultimately science and Torah should agree with each other,” asserts Portland scientist and author Morris Engelson in his book of essays “The Heavenly Time Machine.”

“Look at history and see how science and Torah have been slowly getting into closer agreement as time moves on,” writes Engelson. “This is not because Torah has changed, but rather because science has changed. ... I express faith in the scientific method and the future of science, which I believe will eventually come into full agreement with Torah.”

In the forward to his book Engelson says, “It is the purpose of my essays to argue that science and Torah need not be enemies.”

Engelson has written an intriguing book sure to interest anyone who ever wondered how what they learned in high school science can be reconciled with what they learned in Sunday school. Whether you wonder about one apparent conflict between science and religion or wonder how the two world views can co-exist at all, Engelson provides some thought-provoking insights.

Since the book is written as a series of essays on varied topics ranging from evolution to quantum mechanics, you can pick and choose which you want to read.

In an interview with the Jewish Review, Engelson said that creating independent essays was one of his struggles in writing the book.

“I intended these to be essays in the sense that I wanted each chapter to be self-sufficient,” said Engelson. “I tried to explain enough in each essay so it could stand alone. At the same time,

I didn’t want to repeat things so often that the reader grew frustrated with the repetition. The essays are independent yet connected.”

The book includes chapters on modes of interaction between science and Torah, probability, miracles and nature, evolution, the universe, time, the age of the universe, the nature of quantum mechanics, man in science and Torah, matter and structure in the universe and “In the beginning was everything.” Many of the chapters have catchy titles. For instance the chapter on probability is called, “What answer would you like?”

In his discussion of modes of interaction between science and Torah, he compares the seemingly common language between the two to the classic Abbot and Costello comedy routine “Who’s on first?” He shows how the same word can have totally different meanings to different people resulting in total lack of communication.

Engelson said that the seeds of the book were planted when as a boy he asked a rabbi why everything didn’t fly off the world if the sun stood still in the sky (meaning the earth had stopped turning) as described in the book of Joshua. The rabbi brushed him off and told him to go away and not ask such questions.

Haunted by that experience, Engelson jumped into research mode when his own son asked how the age of the universe is given as less than 6,000 years according to Torah, and billions of years according to science.

“Because of what happened to me, I wanted to be sensitive,” he said. “I didn’t want to just tell him to go away. I felt there had to be an answer.”

So about 20 years ago, Engelson began a serious search to reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable. He discovered that the seeming contradiction is actually easy to reconcile “once we understand that the first six days of creation are not counted in the age of

### Is the Bible Truth or Fiction? A Scientist’s Perspective

**What:** A talk by Morris Engelson, author of “The Heavenly Time Machine: Essays on Science and Torah.” Engelson, a Portland-based consultant, was a chief engineer at Tektronix, Inc., and adjunct professor at Oregon State University.

**When and where:** Thursday, Nov. 15, 7 p.m.; Cong. Kesser Israel, 136 SW Meade St.

**Additional details:** After his presentation, Engelson will lead a discussion and question and answer session.

**For more information:** Call 503-222-1239.

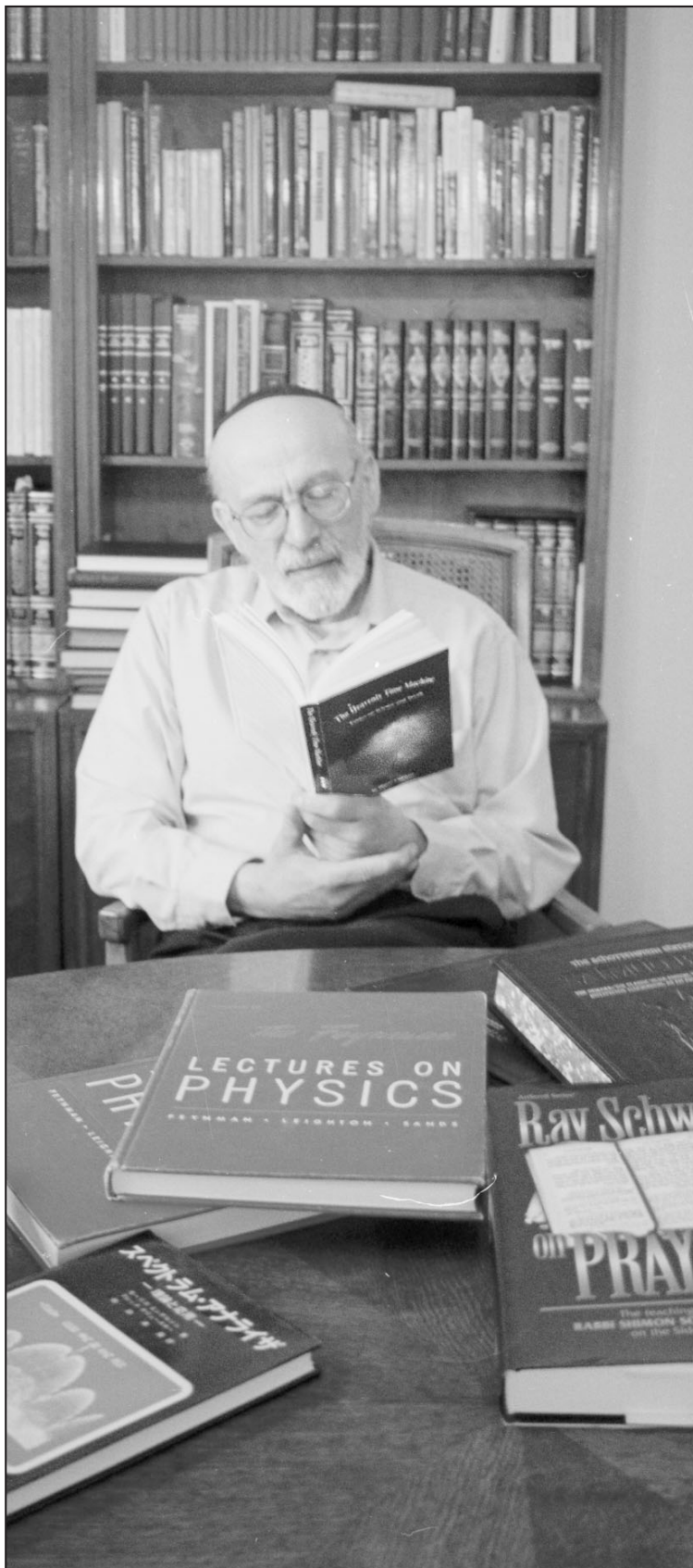
**Cost:** \$5.

the universe. The Torah starts the count from the beginning of mankind and not from the beginning of space and time.”

Engelson notes that early Torah sages wrote commentary claiming an age of between 14 and 16 billion years, despite the fact that science in that era did not point to an age of millions, let alone billions, of years. Therefore, those claims must have been based on “a deeper meaning of Torah.”

In his book, Engelson covers several explanations that reconcile the contradiction. He explores three versions of the time dilation effect in an expanding universe, the tradition based on Psalms 90:4 that a heavenly day represents 1,000 earthly years, and other rabbinic explanations of how the first six days are really billions of years.

“The Heavenly Time Machine” is a comforting, as well as informative, book for anyone who ever felt they had to choose between science and religion.



DEBORAH SELDNER/The Jewish Review

**MORRIS ENGELSON'S** book “The Heavenly Time Machine” is a synthesis of science and religion, just like his library at home. Engelson said he avoided making original points in his book because, “it’s very dangerous for someone of my level of Torah study to make original points.” Calling his juxtaposition of points original, he added, “My contribution is a synthesis of others contributions.”