

Jewish Values and the Torah speaking to Nanotechnology

Does the Torah address Nanotechnology?



The fact is, nanoscience and/or nanotechnology is not directly addressed in either the written Torah (scripture) or the oral tradition of Mishnah, Talmud and/or similar writings.

Try as you might, you are going to be very hard pressed to find any classical passages in the written Torah or Talmud.

You probably won't find any references to nanoscience or nanotechnology. Nano was unknown in the biblical and Talmudic times- the time when Judaism was born and Jewish values developed.

Sure, you undoubtedly will be able to find something to construe as nanotech with a good enough imagination. But it will probably not be significant enough to support any claim stating that ancient Jews knew about nano.

Yet, at the same time, the Torah and Talmud speak volumes in reference to nanotechnology.

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If the Torah is eternal, why doesn't it refer directly to Nano?

Because G-d did not write the Torah for the purpose of teaching us science. He created the universe and everything in it to be analyzed by us using our G-d given senses and brains.

Using the words, “ואהבת את ה' א-להיך” – and you shall love Hashem, you G-d, (דברים ו:ה) (Deut 6:5) we are charged to study and analyze the universe (משנה תורה לרמב"ם ב:א יסודי התורה – Mishna Tora, Yesodei Hatora, 2:1 Rambam, Maimonides). To describe the universe in the Torah would be both redundant and ineffective. To best understand G-d's creation, one should study it directly.



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Doesn't the Torah contain everything? Isn't that the point of having a G-d given teaching?

The Torah, the written scripture and the oral tradition, contains enough of G-d's guiding values and directions for a Jew interacting with society while forming world history, to make every conceivable action decision for the constructive growth and development of G-d's world.

In short, G-d wrote two books: One is 'The Book of Science', otherwise known as the universe around us. And the other is called 'The Torah' which guides humankind in its interaction with itself (intra and inter-societal) and the rest of the natural world.

In that sense, the Torah does contain 'everything'. Everything one needs to know to improve nature and the human condition and avoid destroying it.

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How does Torah speak to Nanoscience and Nanotechnology?

Just the same way that the Torah speaks to all other sciences studied by people and technologies engineered by them!

1. Philosophically – What are the Jewish values in applying nanotechnology?
 - a. How do we keep in mind that every person is created in the image of G-d? צלם א-להים
 - b. What must we be mindful of considering our history and our mission to be a kingdom of kohanim, a light to the nations and a G-dly people?
 - c. How do we set boundaries delineating courses of action to be followed or avoided?
 - d. How do we make sure that our environment is maintained and restored as necessary to what it should be?
2. What are the social welfare issues such as economy, public health and defense that need be considered?
3. What are the private and public safety issues that need be addressed?
4. What are the regulatory issues that must have consensus? What needs to be allowed, prohibited and/or regulated?
5. What are the legal and liability issues to be considered. Both at the private and public level?
6. What is our vision of a possible future world 5 to 10 years down the road with expanding use of nanotechnologies. How to we keep up with innovation and maintain what's important to us as Jews? What are our educational goals?