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Analysis of the Post-chareidi Phenomenon

Analysis of the opinions and views of the new post-chareidi phenomenon such as R. Slifkin's "rationalist" blog

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Tuesday, July 21, 2015

Whale Evolution and Skepticism

"But has Rabbi Shafran applied his professed "critical thinking" to the alternate understanding of life's development that is taught in his circles? Does he really think that the available physical evidence better supports the notion that **whales** were created independently, with striking internal similarities to terrestrial mammals, and an inability to breathe underwater like fish, and following a whole chain of extinct creatures that were progressively less terrestrial, rather than indicating that they are actually descended from terrestrial mammals?"

[R. Slifkin, July 21, 2015]

What does it take, in an engineering sense, to transform a car into a submarine? Quite a bit. And quite a bit of intelligence.

The same is true of transforming a land based mammal like a cow into a whale. There is very little (if any) hard scientific evidence for whale evolution. At least not through apparently unguided processes such as random mutation and natural selection.

Does R. Slifkin really have actual evidence that that whales evolved from a land animal in a few million years? Other than fanciful drawings with only a few so-called "transitional" fossils?

Featured Post

Dinosaurs, Scientism and Propaganda

R. Slifkin has dinosaurs on his mind again (see Strengthening Emunah: Via Denying Dinosaur Eras, etc . . , July 31, 2106). He writes: Unli...

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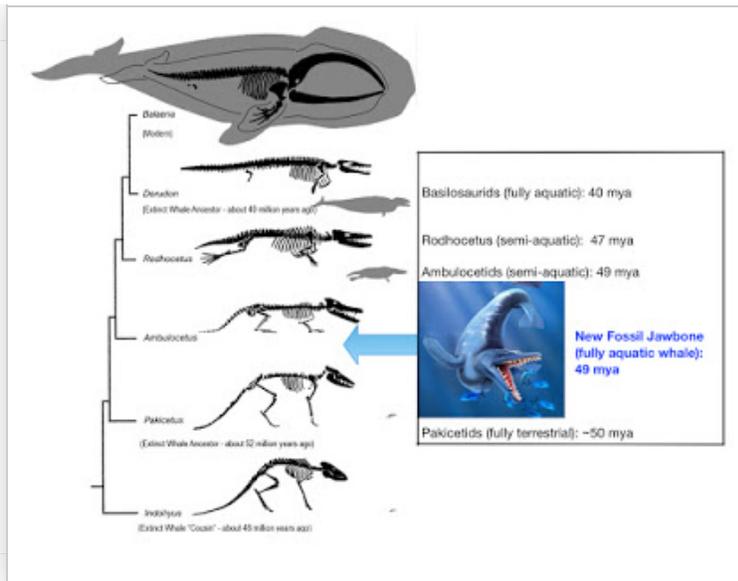
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(see pdf for enlarged view)

In the drawing, on the left, is the supposed sequence of transitional fossils from a fully terrestrial animal (like a cow) at the bottom -- to a fully aquatic whale at the top -- in about 10 million years on the evolutionary time scale.

On the right -- is a recent fossil find showing a fully aquatic whale in just the wrong place in the sequence.

Argentine paleontologist Marcelo Reguero, who led a joint Argentine-Swedish team, said the fossilized archaeocete jawbone found in February dates back 49 million years. In evolutionary terms, that's not far off from the fossils of even older proto-whales from 53 million years ago that have been found in South Asia and other warmer latitudes.

Those earlier proto-whales were amphibians, able to live on land as well as sea. This jawbone, in contrast, belongs to the Basilosauridae group of **fully aquatic** whales, said Reguero, who leads research for the Argentine Antarctic Institute.

"The relevance of this discovery is that it's the oldest known completely aquatic whale found yet," said Reguero, who shared the discovery with Argentine paleontologist Claudia Tambussi and Swedish paleontologists Thomas Mors and Jonas Hagstrom of the

Confronting Dinosaurs

Whale Evolution and Skepticism

- ▶ 2014 (2)
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- ▶ 2011 (79)
- ▶ 2010 (30)

Natural History Museum in Stockholm.

[Oct. 2011, www.nbcnews.com. The handout drawing on the right is released by the Argentine Direccion Nacional del Antartico shows an artist`s rendition of an Antarctic Archaeocetes, after fossils of the creature were found at the La Meseta formation, near the Marambio Base in the Argentine-run area of the Antarctica.]

Until now, the whale series went something like this:

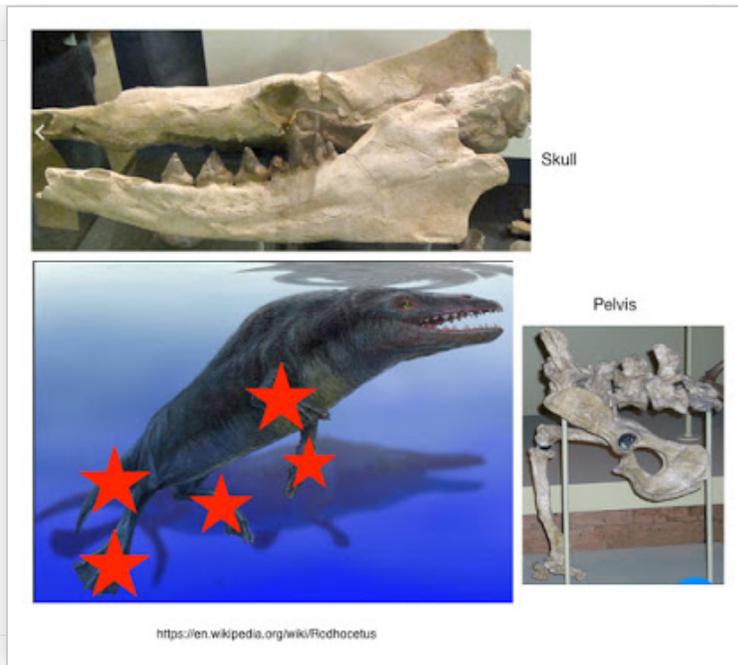
Pakicetids (fully terrestrial): ~50 mya
 Ambulocetids (semi-aquatic): 49 mya
 Remingtonocetids (semi-aquatic): 49 mya
 Rodhocetus (a Protocetid, semi-aquatic): 47 mya
 Basilosaurids (fully aquatic): 40 mya

Now the timeline looks something like this:

Pakicetids (fully terrestrial): ~50 mya
New Fossil Jawbone (fully aquatic whale): 49 mya
 Ambulocetids (semi-aquatic): 49 mya
 Remingtonocetids (semi-aquatic): 49 mya
 Rodhocetus (a Protocetid, semi-aquatic): 47 mya
 Basilosaurids (fully aquatic): 40 mya

The fossil record now might jump from fully terrestrial Pakicetids to fully aquatic whales *in just a couple million years* -- maybe much less than 5 million years [at least according to the shaky dating systems of evolutionists]. In fact, if this find has been correctly identified, then fully aquatic whales might have existed *before* many of their alleged semi-aquatic evolutionary precursors. [1]

Now I think it is pretty amazing that evolutionists can reconstruct a whole whale from a jaw-bone. But they do this kind of thing all the time. Below is a reconstruction of an important "transitional fossil" in R. Slifkin's fossil sequence.



(see pdf for enlarged view)

From a few fossils like a skull and a pelvis, Wikipedia shows a fanciful reconstruction of *Rodhocetus*. *Rodhocetus* is claimed to be a semi-aquatic mammal developing flippers and a whale-like tail. However there is no fossil evidence for these whale-like properties. I have superimposed red stars on the critical parts that are missing from the actual fossil evidence.

As Richard Sternberg and others have argued, there are quite a few changes that have to appear in just a few million years in going from a land mammal to a whale [2]:

- Counter-current heat exchanger for intra-abdominal testes
- Ball vertebra
- Tail flukes and musculature
- Blubber for temperature insulation
- Ability to drink sea water (reorganization of kidney tissues)
- Reverse orientation of fetus in the uterus
- Nurse young underwater (modified mammal)
- Forelimbs transformed into flippers
- Reduction of hind limbs

- Reduction/loss of pelvis and sacral vertebrae
- Reorganization of the musculature for the reproductive organs
- Hydrodynamic properties of the skin
- Special lung surfactants
- Novel muscle systems for the blowhole
- Modification of the teeth
- Modification of the eye for underwater vision
- Emergence of expansion of the mandibular fat pad with complex lipid distribution (the fat pad has acoustic properties)
- Reorganization of skull bone
- Modification of the ear bones
- Decoupling of esophagus and trachea
- Synthesis and metabolism of isovaleric acid (toxic to terrestrial mammals)
- Emergence of blowhole musculature and their neurological control

New genes and proteins would have to be adapted or "invented" along the way. To form even a few proteins is well beyond the probabilistic resources of life on earth or the even the universe, even at billions of years proposed in evolutionary time scales. All the changes would have to be co-ordinated to develop a new body plan.

In fact, evolutionist do not even have a single detailed Darwinian pathway that could account for even one of the significant morphological changes needed to convert this speculation of whale evolution into serious science.

Here is a video of the incorrigible Dr. Berlinski that evolutionist love to hate:

Sample clip "Incorrigible Dr. Berlinski" 2



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8iFnyCjcodY>

[1] http://www.evolutionnews.org/2011/10/discovery_of_oldest_fully_aqua052021.html

[2] http://www.evolutionnews.org/2011/10/discovery_of_oldest_fully_aqua052021.html

Posted by YSO at 11:24 PM



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Labels: [Evolution](#)

10 comments:



Marc July 29, 2015 at 6:42 AM

Hi Reb Simcha, glad you are finally back in town!

I think you and I both know what Slifkin's response must be to this post and to your next one. Science say it is so and therefore it's pointless to argue about it. Of course he does believe in the fine tuning argument for the existence of God and obviously since most scientists are atheists, most will disagree with Slifkin. So how can he believe in the fine tuning argument? Because scientists have had their articles about fine tuning accepted in the peer reviewed literature.

Now, you may say, but there are hundreds of credentialed scientists including noble prize winners who doubt Darwin. The problem is that they with rare exception are not allowed to publish their pro ID or Darwino sceptic views in the mainstream literature.

It can thus be seen, that far from having faith in science per se, Slifkin has faith in the peer review process. He believes that the process is impartial, the journals are apolitical and ultimately whatever is published is what science says and what's not is not. But to believe such a thing about peer review is absurd and a belief akin to accepting on faith the promises of a presidential candidate before the election. It's not exactly rational.

[Reply](#)



Simcha Coffe August 2, 2015 at 5:22 PM

Dear R' Yoel,

Yasher koach on the excellent post. You made several valuable points and if you don't mind I'd like to expand on them in the comment section. If I make any errors, please let me know in the comment section.

To the Reader:

Dr. Ostroff's presentation is clear and requires no further elucidation. However there are two arguments that he makes which I personally would like to expand upon. But before doing so I would like to synopsise Rabbi Slifkin's argument and Dr. Ostroff's counter-argument.

The structure of Rabbi Slifkin's argument goes like this:

- 1) Regarding the existence of whales, there are two possible explanations: (a) They were independently created, or (b) they evolved naturalistically from terrestrial mammals
- 2) The question is, which of the above two scenarios is more reasonable to adopt
- 3) Rabbi Slifkin observes that whales have "striking internal similarities to terrestrial mammals... an inability to breathe underwater like fish, and follow[ing] a whole chain of extinct creatures that were progressively less terrestrial"
- 4) Based on the above-noted observations, Rabbi Slifkin concludes that it is more reasonable to adopt explanation (b), to wit, whales evolved naturalistically from terrestrial mammals.

Continued in the following comment...

[Reply](#)



Simcha Coffe August 2, 2015 at 5:25 PM

Continued from the previous comment...

The following is the basic structure of Dr. Ostroff's counter argument:

Between explanation (a) and (b), explanation (a) is the only viable candidate. Explanation (b) is simply not tenable for the following reasons:

- 1) There is very little (if any) hard scientific evidence for whale evolution.
- 2) A recent discovery by South American paleontologists has demonstrated that even the handful of purported transitional fossils claimed by evolutionists as the sequence of creatures linking the ancestor of the hippo to the modern day whale is internally inconsistent.
- 3) From an engineering standpoint, transforming a terrestrial animal (such as a hippopotamus) into an aquatic one (such as a whale) is no less complicated than transforming a car into a submarine. Transforming a car into a submarine obviously requires intelligent design. No one would argue that the car to submarine transformation occurred via unguided (chance) naturalistic processes and thus, by analogy, the same conclusion should be adopted for whales.
- 4) The sheer number of morphological changes needed for a terrestrial animal to transform into an aquatic one is vast, stretching our credulity to believe in it.

5) Even one single morphological change requires a vast amount of informational input. "New genes and proteins would have to be adapted or "invented" along the way... [But] to form even a few proteins is well beyond the probabilistic resources of life on earth or the even the universe, even at billions of years proposed in evolutionary time scales."

6) Even if we had enough time to create the necessary genetic information, there is still the problem of irreducible complexity. In order for a new body-plan to develop, all the changes along the way have to be coordinated.

7) Technically speaking, explanation (b) does not (or perhaps, should not) qualify as "scientific" because it does not conform to the standards typically imposed by operational science. As Dr. Ostroff writes: "evolutionist do not even have a single detailed Darwinian pathway that could account for even one of the significant morphological changes needed to convert this speculation of whale evolution into serious science."

To my mind, Dr. Ostroff's argument demolishes Rabbi Slifkin's position (although I admit I am biased... :-)) and in fact makes it impossible for any intellectually honest individual to adopt the evolutionary hippo-to-whale scenario.

I would like to expand upon two arguments that Dr. Ostroff makes, #5 and #7. These two arguments are crucial in the sense that they demonstrate (a) the absurdity of evolution, and (b) its unscientific nature. People often get caught up with hype. "Look", they say, "evolution is science! Evolution is based on common sense"! Argument number 5, understood properly, shows that evolution is actually not common sense. And number 7, understood properly, demonstrates that evolutionary theory is, from a scientific perspective, a failed experiment.

I hope to write about these two arguments shortly, *bi'ezras Hashem*. Once again, *yasher koach* to you Dr. Ostroff!

[Reply](#)



Simcha Coffe August 2, 2015 at 5:31 PM

Marc,

Hi Marc, shalom aleichem! Nice to hear from you again.

Just wanted to point out that this post was written by Dr. Ostroff, not me.

Be well,

Simcha

[Reply](#)



Marc August 2, 2015 at 6:59 PM

Oops. But my comment is directed at both of you I suppose. I don't honestly think that folks 'believe' in evolution because of the arguments Slifkin puts forward like homology or the fossil record. Rather they believe it because that's just what 'intellectual' people believe and arguments are just the party line - look if I'm wrong why most of these chevra avoid debates or leave them quickly?

But I hope that you fine fellows will convince those sitting on the fence or those who are fearless enough to really confront the evidence.

It's certainly difficult to maintain a skeptical attitude to evolution when it's so in vogue.

Hatzlacha!

[Reply](#)



Simcha Coffe August 2, 2015 at 10:11 PM

Marc,

I just looked over your comment and I thank you for sharing your thoughts. I'd like to try and set you straight regarding the legitimacy of the peer-review process (PRP). You mention that R. Slifkin has faith in the PRP and this leads him to adopt erroneous views regarding the validity of evolution. But this is not entirely accurate. Actually, the PRP is probably the most important element of the "scientific method". It ensures honesty, promotes objectivity, and lends credibility to the scientific enterprise. Yes, the scientific establishment will not allow certain articles to be published in peer-reviewed journals but whatever is published there possesses, at least to some extent, scientific validity. Anytime a scientist publishes something in a PRJ, the facts upon which he bases his conclusions have to be right! The journal wouldn't publish the article unless the facts were verified. And even if the article managed to slip through, the scientists reviewing the material would catch the error and report it. If something makes it to a highly respected PRJ, the facts as reported can be relied upon. What can be questioned are the premises upon which the article is based and the conclusions the writer draws from the premises+facts. But the facts themselves are unassailable.

R. Slifkin has faith in the scientific establishment. He's mentioned this to me countless of times during the course of our debates. IIRC, he frequently invokes the "global community of scientists" in defense of his position (i.e. the adoption of the evolutionary idea of common ancestry). Not because he's studied the peer-reviewed material. Oh no! I wish he would study it! He would see that his conclusions are based on no facts at all! The reason he believes what he believes is because he is a victim of evolutionary propaganda taught in high-schools and colleges and promoted in low level media outlets like The Guardian. Despite all his talents R. Slifkin has allowed himself to be duped by the *shkarim* of the *umos ha'olam*, plain and simple. He had a *nisayon*. He failed. Too bad. A great loss of talent to the Jewish world of *hashkafa* and *yahadus*. May Hashem open his eyes...

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Replies



Marc August 3, 2015 at 10:33 AM

Reb Simcha, no one would disagree that having one of our most talented young educators turn his pen against us is not just a disaster but a double disaster of losing a talent and gaining a foe.

You don't disagree with me that ID and anti Darwin scientists are denied journal publication for purely political reasons. You do state that despite that, just looking at the articles that are published, an intelligent and hard working reader should be able to see that, 'the conclusions are based on no facts at all!'

Well, this would be an education. Show us, I'd love to see it! Show us an article about geology, fossils, or evolution - where the facts are unassailable, but the conclusions are without ground. I would love to see this. Not sure how you'd do it on line, but I hope you can find away. This would be a major demonstration.

looking forward,

marc

Reply



Simcha Coffe August 5, 2015 at 2:57 AM

The following comment is an expansion on Dr. Ostroff's argument #5 as I've labeled it above. Dr. Ostroff maintains that to form even a few proteins via chance processes exceeds the probabilistic resources of earth and even of the universe. What does he mean? He means as follows.

Step 1. How old is the earth? According to evolutionary science, the earth is about 4.5 billion years old. How old is the universe? About 13.7 billion years old.

Step 2. Let's go with the higher number. And let's break down the years into smaller, more discreet times. In fact, let's break it down into the smallest standard clock time available, one second. How many seconds are there in 13.7 billion years? The answer is: One day has 86,400 seconds x 365.25 is 31,557,600 seconds (for the average solar year) x 13.7 billion average solar years = 432,339,120,000,000,000. That's 432 quintillion, 339 quadrillion, 120 trillion seconds in 13.7 billion years. That number is represented as 432×10 to the 15th power

Step 3. What is a protein? A protein is a giant molecule composed of smaller units called amino acids. These amino acids are the building blocks of life and are arranged in the protein in a very specific sequence. Even the smallest single-celled organism is composed of many proteins. There are some bacteria that possess over 600 proteins. And the human cell actually possesses tens of thousands of different types of proteins! Now, exactly how big is a protein? Well, some proteins are as small as 50 amino acids whereas others possess thousands. So, let's take an average sized protein containing 432 amino acids. But wait; this protein has 12 different types of amino acids. And don't forget; the sequence is crucial. If even one amino acid is out of place, all you have is a giant mass of useless molecular garbage. So, let's crunch the numbers. 432 different amino acids can be arranged in 432×10 to the four hundred and twenty ninth power different types of ways. Only one way works. The others are either useless or harmless.

Step 4. Evolutionists claim that natural selection works upon random mutation of the genes to select the organism fit for survival. But the crucial thing here is the randomness of the mutation. Yes, natural selection will select something that is fit for selection. But first we need to arrive at that stage and the process of arriving at that stage is entirely random. So, random mutation is another way of saying "accident". We've arrived at the desired stage by sheer dumb luck.

Continued in following comment...

[Reply](#)



Simcha Coffe August 5, 2015 at 2:57 AM

Continued from previous comment...

Step 5. How often does the process of “random mutation of the gene” actually occur? Well, not very often, at least not according to recorded science. We have billions of people giving birth to billions of people all the time and we have a small number of births that resulted in random mutations (all harmful to the fetus, by the way). Most babies are born with five fingers, not six. So random mutation is not a frequent occurrence. But let’s say it is. In fact let’s say it happens all the time. In fact, let’s say it happens every single second! And in fact, let’s say it happens every single second in a molecule that is trying to become a functioning protein. It tries and tries, poor thing, and just can’t get there. What are the probabilities that it will finally reach its destination? Well, let’s put it in simple terms. Let’s talk about our average size protein of 432 amino acids. It has 432×10 to the 15th power seconds to get the job done but there are 432×10 to the 429th power possible permutations! So, let’s consider this for a moment. If there were 432×10 to the 16th possible permutations, our little protein would have 1 out of 10 chances of hitting it in the allotted time. Just keep adding zeros as the order (power-to-ten) rises and you begin to see the mathematical impossibility of a single protein forming even in 13.7 billion years!

This, then, is what Dr. Ostroff means by the formation of a single protein exceeding the probabilistic resources of even the entire universe.

To this we can add the fact that a single human cell had thousands of different types of proteins, not to mention countless other vastly complex organelles. And all of these components must cooperate with each other! What are the chances of a single cell arriving? In short, you need an infinity of time even to entertain such a thing. But even infinity wouldn’t help. You can get infinite garbage too. Meteors crashing into each other will never produce a corvette. They will simply produce an infinite set of crashed meteors. To get something that is useful, that possesses specified complexity, you need mind, plain and simple.

[Reply](#)



Marc August 7, 2015 at 4:28 AM

Don't you need to take into consideration the amount of 'stuff' on earth? Even if there is a super low chance of forming a protein in 13.7 billion years, perhaps with trillions and trillions of tonnes of chemicals the odds reduce?

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