

Lessons from the classroom – In the Jewish population, younger respondents to the survey showed less acceptance than older respondents, but would you clarify the overall participants in the survey?

This video was recorded at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History on April 30, 2017

Jamie Jensen: 00:28 So all I can tell you is that we use the Qualtrics surveying program. They have respondents that have signed up to be survey respondents across the nation. It's just like SurveyMonkey or any of the other ones. The only requirement to be able to fall into that category was that they affiliated with the Jewish religion. Beyond that, I'm not super familiar with Judaism; I'm not Jewish. It would be a good question for, actually, some people in the audience, I think, could maybe answer them.

Rabbi Elliot Dorff: 00:59 I think when the older population, that generation of Jews, was very much made to become American, and becoming American means accepting what America offers, including science as being one of these objective facts that you'd have to come to know, right? I don't know why the younger generation, frankly, doesn't do it, because within the Jewish tradition, this is not a problem. And it's not a problem because back already, even in biblical times but certainly by rabbinic times, we have this notion of midrash, that is, of interpreting text in multiple ways. The rabbis already say that there's are 70 faces to the Torah. That means that any verse in the Bible can be right in 70 different ways, right? (01:49) When Philo was a first century Jewish thinker in Alexandria, interpreted the first verse in the first chapter of Genesis, and according to Plato's Timaeus, because that was the science of the time. A thousand years later Maimonides is interpreting the first chapter of Genesis according to Aristotle's Metaphysics, because that was the science of the time, all right? Darwin comes along and, all of a sudden, the first chapter of Genesis is Darwin. (02:18) The Jewish tradition is malleable that way, in terms of including science, and has always included science in its understanding of the universe, in

part, because God created the world as well as giving us the Bible. And so these kinds of things need to be understood in concert. Now why the younger generation doesn't get that, I don't know.

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