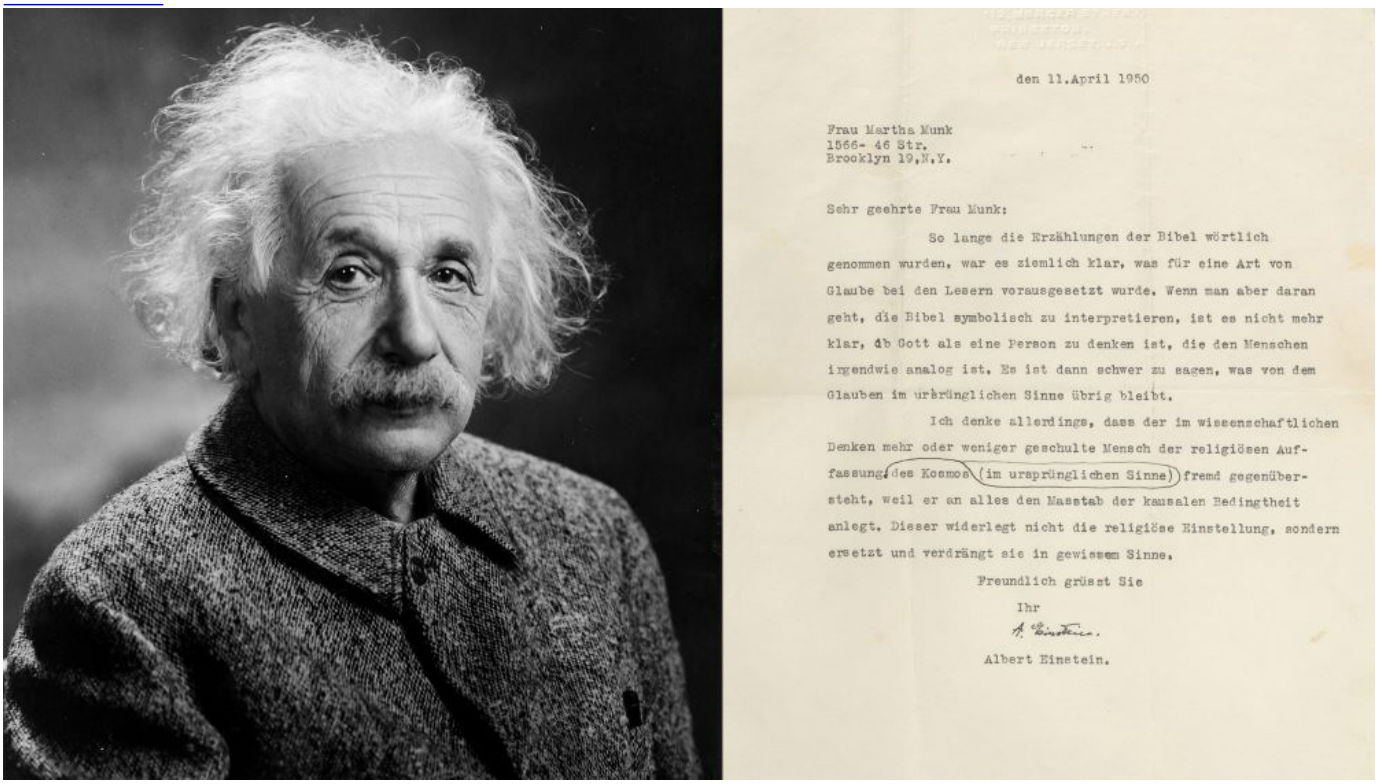


den 11.April 1950

Frau Martha Munk
1566- 46 Str.
Brooklyn 19,N.Y.

Sehr geehrte Frau Munk:

So lange die Erzählungen der Bibel wörtlich genommen wurden, war es ziemlich klar, was für eine Art von Glaube bei den Lesern vorausgesetzt wurde. Wenn man aber daran geht, die Bibel symbolisch zu interpretieren, ist es nicht mehr klar, ob Gott als eine Person zu denken ist, die den Menschen irgendwie analog ist. Es ist dann schwer zu sagen, was von dem Glauben im urbrünglichen Sinne übrig bleibt.

Ich denke allerdings, dass der im wissenschaftlichen Denken mehr oder weniger geschulte Mensch der religiösen Auffassung des Kosmos (im ursprünglichen Sinne) fremd gegenübersteht, weil er an alles den Massstab der kausalen Bedingtheit anlegt. Dieser widerlegt nicht die religiöse Einstellung, sondern ersetzt und verdrängt sie in gewissem Sinne.

Freundlich grüsst Sie

Ihr

A. Einstein.

Albert Einstein.

Albert Einstein, in 1947, with a letter he wrote in 1950. (Einstein photo courtesy of Creative Commons; letter courtesy of Raab Collection)

Richa Karmarkar

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July 20, 2023

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For the first time, a letter written by Albert Einstein on the creation of the universe is for sale publicly at the Raab Collection in Ardmore, Pennsylvania.

The letter, written on April 11, 1950, to a group of Jewish students in America, is valued at $125,000. In it, Einstein opines that a scientist cannot believe in the Torah's creation story of Genesis, arguing science "replaces and supersedes" such religious concepts.

"The feeling that I get when I see something like this, which is so personally and so scientifically evocative of the great 20th century debate, from the pen of Albert Einstein, is just pure excitement," said Nathan Raab, president of the Raab Collection and author of "The Hunt for History."

According to the Raab Collection website, although other letters exist describing Einstein's views on God and Judaism, the famous physicist was rarely asked about his personal religious beliefs from someone of such a prominent religious position, especially by a family who would have been familiar to him.

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Einstein wrote the letter in response to one sent by Martha Munk, the wife of well-known German Rabbi Michael L. Munk, who was one of the leading voices in the Orthodox Jewish world at the time. The Munks fled persecution in their home country a few years after Einstein, who himself left in 1933 and became an American citizen in 1940.

In Martha Munk's correspondence in late March of 1950, she wrote: "On behalf of the students of a series of lectures on religion, I would like to ask you whether you think that it is possible for a modern scientist to reconcile the idea of the creation of the world by God, a higher power, with his scientific knowledge."

Einstein responded with haste, writing that he believed that the literal interpretation of the Bible sees God as the creator of the universe. But he went on to state that he did not accept the creation story, not because it is disproved but because there is instead a scientific explanation.

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"The person who is more or less trained in scientific thinking is alien to the religious creation (in the original sense) of the cosmos, because he applies the standard of causal conditionality to everything," wrote Einstein in the letter. "If you are however to interpret the Bible symbolically (metaphorically), it is not clear anymore whether God is in fact to be thought of as a person."

The letter was acquired from heirs of the recipient, according to a statement from the Raab Collection.

A 1954 letter from Einstein addressed to philosopher Eric Gutkind detailing the physicist's reflections on God, the Bible and Judaism, often referred to as the "God Letter," was auctioned off in 2018 for almost $3 million at Christie's Auction House in New York.

"In a sense, I see the letters as complementing each other," said Raab. "Once people learn we have this, I anticipate great interest."

The Raab Collection was started by Nathan's father, Steven Raab, in the late 1980s and is now one of the nation's premier dealers of historical documents.

"I think it's really helpful to think of these great thinkers confronting these great issues and put it into context in what we believe," said Raab. "You can appreciate the effort to better understand and the scholarly effort, and at the same time not agree."

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