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THE BIBLE

Why Earth Exists

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

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Evidence of the Jews in Egypt

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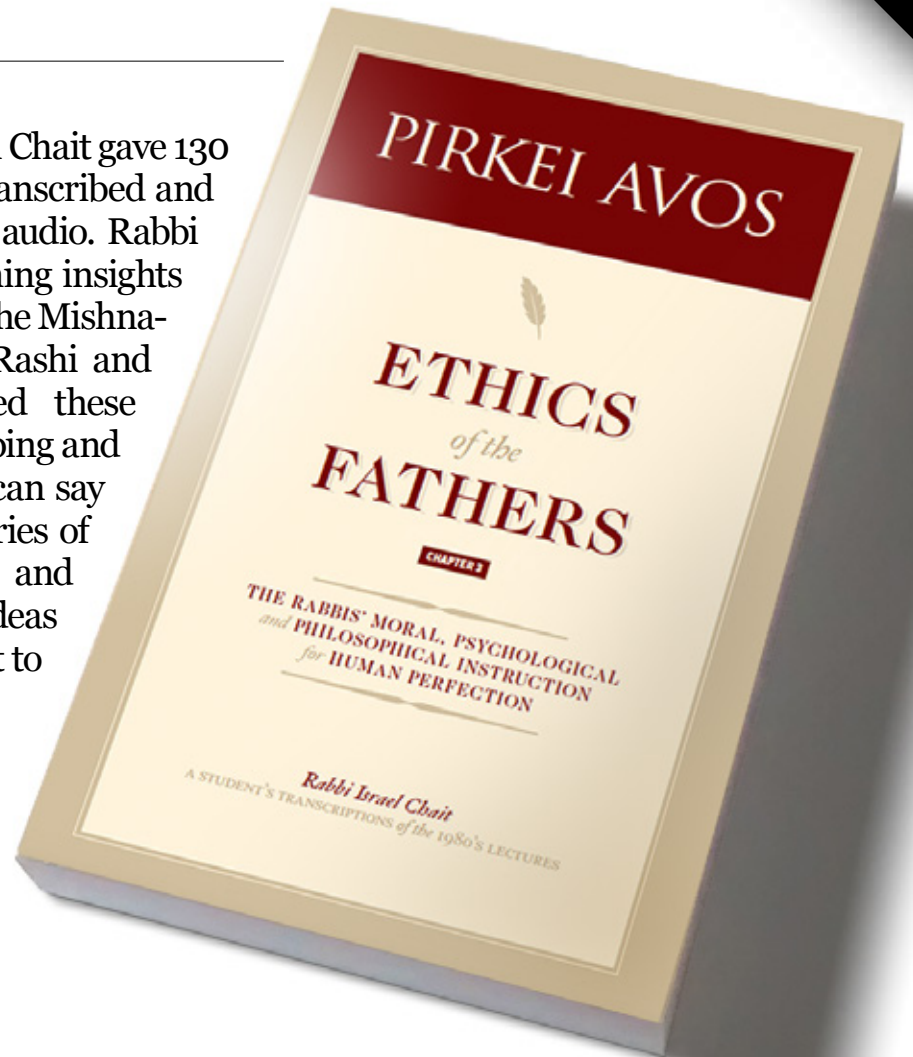
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CHAPTERS 1-4 NOW AVAILABLE



Jan. 25

3 Jews in Egypt?

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Archaeology and reason validate the Bible's accounts.

4 Why Earth Exists

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Many Bible sources point to an astonishing truth.

6 Inner Adversaries

RABBI REUVEN MANN

Gentile faith cultures have poisoned Jewish thinking.

9 Papyrus: Jews Were in Egypt

TSIVYA FOX

Archaeological finds validate the Jews' stay in Egypt, and much more.

LETTERS

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM



Evidence of the Jews in Egypt?

Reader: I have been doing some research and discussion on the resurrection. Part of this discussion requires me to compare Jesus' resurrection with the events of the Exodus, the 10 plagues, parting of the Reed Sea, giving of the Law at Sinai, the 40 year sojourn in the wilderness. I do agree that this is a spectacular event, until I further researched and found that the Exodus incident cannot be attested outside of the Jewish Scripture, community and tradition. Refer excerpt from Wikipedia ("The Exodus") below:

"After a century of research by archeologists and Egyptologists, the consensus of modern scholars is that the Bible does not give an accurate account of the origins of Israel. There is no indication that the Israelites ever lived in Ancient Egypt, and the Sinai Peninsula shows almost no sign of any occupation for the entire 2nd millennium BCE (even Kadesh-Barnea, where the Israelites are said to have spent 38 years, was uninhabited prior to the establishment of the Israelite monarchy). In contrast to the absence of evidence for the Egyptian captivity and wilderness wanderings, there are ample signs of Israel's evolution within Canaan from native Canaanite roots. While a few scholars discuss the plausibility of the Exodus story, archaeological investigation has been abandoned as "a fruitless pursuit."

I would like to hear your views on this. If there are any articles by secular scholars that supports the historicity of the event, it will be most welcome. Thank you, Sharon

(CONT. ON PAGE 8)

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BIBLE

Why Earth Exists

Many Sources Provide the Answer

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

Witnessing 10 devastating plagues over a year, and then the destruction of the Egyptian army in the Reed Sea, what impression of God might the Jews have? The Jews then arrive at Marah, named for its bitter (mar) undrinkable waters, and God miraculously sweetens the waters, saying, “All the disease that I placed on Egypt I will not place on you, for I am God your healer” (Exod. 15:26). Thus, God reverses His negative reputation generated by the plagues (Rashi Exod. 17:5 says similarly). His healing of the waters—a positive act—intends on neutralizing the negative image of His wrath against Egypt. This was necessary, if the Jews were to appreciate that God in fact wishes good for mankind; punishment is not His preference, “For I do not desire the death of the wicked, but in his repentance and in his life” (Ezek. 33:11).

The Torah also says, “There [in Marah] He gave a statute and a judgement, and there He tested them” (Exod. 15:25). Why did laws accompany God’s improvement of the waters?

The Jews then alight upon Eilim: a destination with 12 water pools and 70 date palms. It is clear: God had planned Israel’s good fate from long ago (these resources weren’t suddenly created at that moment: Ibn Ezra, Exod. 15:27). 12 water pools parallel the 12 tribes; 70 date palms parallel the 70 elders

(Ibid., Rashi). Not only does God manipulate nature by remedying man’s problems (sweetening bitter water) but His very formation of the Earth—12 water pools and 70 date palms—was designed to favor those who follow Him.

Pirkei Avos 5:6

Ten things were created on the eve of the [first] Shabbat at twilight. And these are they: The mouth of the earth [that swallowed Korach in Numbers 16:32]; and the mouth of the well [that accompanied the Israelites in the wilderness in Numbers 21:17]; and the mouth of the donkey [that spoke to Bilaam in Numbers 22:28–30]; and the rainbow [that served as a covenant after the flood in Genesis 9:13]; and the manna [that God provided the Israelites in the wilderness in Exodus 16:4–21]; and the staff [of Moshe]; and the shamir (the worm that helped build the Temple without metal tools); and the letters; and the writing; and the tablets [all of the latter three, of the Ten Commandments]. And some say, also the mazikim, and the burial place of Moshe, our teacher, and the ram of Abraham, our father. And some say, also the [first human-made] tongs, made with [Divine] tongs.

This mishnah states the same idea: during Creation, God created alterations in natural law to favor those who follow His will, and

these alterations include the Ten Commandments.

During natural wonders on Sinai, a voice teaching Torah spoke from amidst the flames. Sinai, Marah and Eilim teach a fundamental: God of the universe is the same God of Torah; creation and Torah are intimately connected. From Earth there emerged 12 pools and 70 date palms for those destined to arrive there...the 12 descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their 70 elders, who will follow the “statute and the judgement” given at Marah. The message is fundamental and consistent: the Creator of the universe is the source of the Torah. The Two Tablets again reiterate this theme: natural sapphire contained Torah commands formed in their very crystalized structure. The 10 Commandments were not subsequently etched into the tablets, but they were formed by the sapphire’s crystallization process. The commands grew inside the sapphire tablets in their formation.

God repeats His theme of combining the natural world with Torah directives. The message: Earth exists for the purpose of man following God’s will as expressed in the Torah. “[Sabbath was] last in action; first in His thought” is the Sabbath Licha Dodi prayer. Sabbath came last in creation, but it is creation’s primary purpose: a day removed from physical pursuits, for the sole purpose of studying God’s creation and His Torah. Studying God is the purpose of the Earth. But to live pursuing anything else, King Solomon taught is “futility of futilities” (Koheles 1:2).

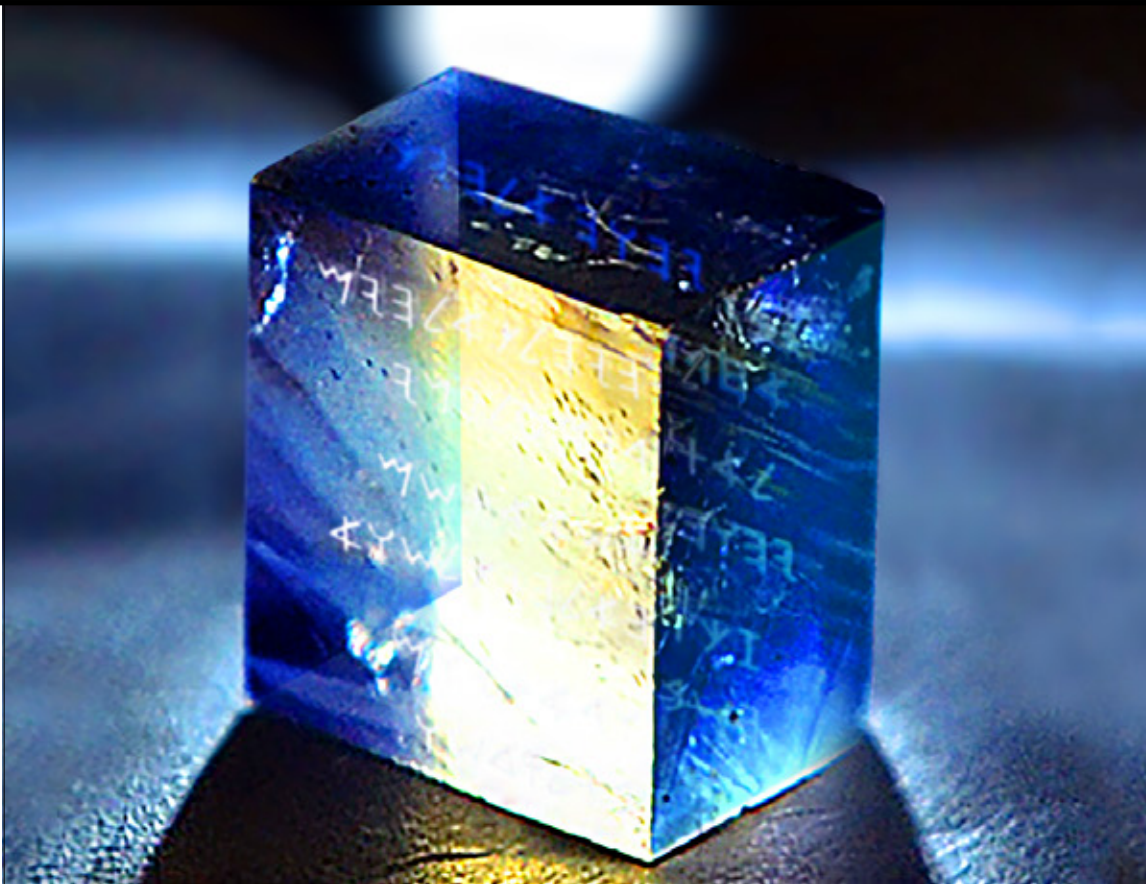
Aside from Torah, the Earth does not have purpose. Enjoy the sweetened water, provided you listen to the “statute and judgements” given there. Enjoy the 12 pools and 70 date palms, provided you recognize their numbers parallel the 12 tribes whom God loved, as they discovered the same truths revealed in the Torah, and lived by those truths.

Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai received [the tradition] from Hillel and Shammai. He used to say: “If you have learned a lot of Torah, do not credit it favorably for yourself, because for this you were created” (Avos 2:8).

As Rabbi Israel Chait cited on this mishnah, Rashi says:

For this reason the world came into existence. God made a stipulation with creation: “If Israel does not accept the Torah, the world would be returned to it primordial chaos.” We find that a great obligation was placed on it [Israel].

(CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)



And the two sapphire tablets containing the 10 Commandments serve to display these lessons in eternal stone: stone—the Earth—contains Torah.

Thereupon Moses turned and went down from the mountain bearing the two tablets of the Pact, tablets written on both their sides: they were written on the one side and on the other. The tablets were God's work, and the writing was God's writing, incised upon the tablets. (Exod. 32:15,16)

On this verse, Maimonides states:

"And the tablets were the work of God" that is to say, they were the product of nature, not of art" (Guide for the Perplexed, book I, chap. lxxvi)

Now, if by "they were written on the one side and on the other" Torah means that they were etched "on" the tablet's surfaces, one might suggest Moshe etched those words. Furthermore, how is etching significant that God must tell this to us? Or, as some hold, if the writing hollowed through the tablets from one side to the other, both sides being legible is an impossibility, as the letters must be inverted on one side. To suggest the letters were legible on both sides is impossible, and God does not perform impossibilities (Maimonides "Guide," book III, chap. XV), like making a square a circle at the same moment. If it's a square, it is not a circle.

I believe "written on both their sides" means that the commands could be "seen from both sides," not that they

were etched onto the surfaces. Sapphire gem stones are translucent; an artifact inside the stone can be seen from both sides. The 10 Commandments were "inside" the sapphire tablet—not on their surfaces—something impossible for man to create through artisanship. This was the miraculous significance of the tablets formed during creation mentioned in Avos 5:6. What an amazing sight that must have been: naturally formed letters and 10 Commandments "inside" the sapphire tablets.

This is why it is so significant that God tells us that the commands could be seen from "both sides," and why Maimonides goes out of his way to write about them, "The writing was God's writing" means a natural phenomenon, not human artistic etching subsequent to the tablets' formation. Trees are natural and are "God's work," but chairs made from their wood is art, man's work. The letters grew into shape and positioning as the sapphire formed. This is the meaning of "God's writing." The tablets were as amazing as sawing a tree open, and finding Hebrew texts forming the interior tree rings.

What is this lesson? God teaches us that Earth exists, provided that man follows God's Torah. Earth has no purpose otherwise. And if man follows God's instruction, nature will accommodate—natural law will even be suspended. This is the lesson of God's Torah commandments formed inside a stone; nature exists as a means for man's Torah study. It is the message of all miracles, which are performed only for God's followers. ■



PARSHA

Our Inner Adversaries

Rabbi Reuven Mann

This week's parsha, Yitro, describes the greatest event in world history, the Revelation at Mount Sinai. The Creator of the Universe made an "appearance" before His Chosen Nation and presented them with the Aseret Hadibrot (The Ten Utterances). These constitute the fundamental principles essential to mankind's moral and spiritual perfection.

The reason the Jews accepted the Torah was not because G-d had instructed Moshe to transmit it to them. That would not have been sufficiently compelling to render the Jews responsible to keep the commandments.

Rather, Hashem wanted them to trust not Moshe's word, but their own eyes and ears. He wanted the entire people to see for themselves that G-d exists and communicates His will to mankind.

This should cause us to rethink our concept of faith. I fear that many religious Jews have been heavily influenced by the Gentile view, which exalts the notion of blind acceptance. They regard it as a virtue to believe in their religious doctrines, even if they do not make sense and are unsubstantiated by any proof.

Why is uninformed believing regarded as an ideal? Hashem has endowed us with a sophisticated intellect capable of abstract thought and logical conclusions.

All of human progress in science, technology, and medicine has been made by applying reason when studying the forces of nature. Someone who places blind faith in an untested medical procedure to cure a serious illness is regarded as a fool.

Yet someone who accepts all the obligations and prohibitions of an unverified religion is respected as a man of faith.

The public Revelation at Sinai attests that Hashem did not want us to "check our brains

at the door" and, like zombies, blindly observe our religion. He wanted us to contemplate the matter carefully and to reach an intelligent conviction about the veracity of Torah.

In this regard, nothing could be clearer than Moshe's final exhortation to the Jews to keep the Torah. He said, "You were shown to know that Hashem is G-d—there is no other than Him." Again, "And you shall know this day and contemplate in your mind that Hashem is G-d in heaven above and on earth below; there is none other."

Moshe never appealed to the Jews to just have faith and accept the mitzvot with no questions asked. That would be tantamount to asking people to behave like fools, an anathema to Judaism.

There is, however, a strange Rabbinic Midrash that must be included in this discussion. The Talmud expounds on the words, "They stood at the bottom of the mountain"; Rav Avdimi said, "This teaches that the Holy One, Blessed is He, held the mountain over them and said to them, "If you accept the Torah, fine. But if not, this will be your burial place."

The plain sense of this statement is that the Jews did not voluntarily accept the Torah, but were compelled, under threat of annihilation, to do so. But that contradicts the Torah narrative, which clearly reports the Jews as saying, under absolutely no compunction, that whatever Hashem says they will do.

This is a perfect example of the idea that a Midrash should not always be taken literally. There is no question that the Jews entered into the Covenant willingly, because they had experienced all of G-d's wonders and majesty.

However, the Torah is fully aware of the deeper and hidden recesses of the human psyche. It is true that, on the conscious level, the Jews had ample rational grounds for

opting to follow the Torah.

But humans are very complex beings. We do not always act reasonably or according to our best interests. We must contend with numerous emotional resistances that distort our vision and deter us from making the demanding efforts and sacrifices necessary for true spiritual growth.

Sometimes a person needs to be impelled to do the right and beneficial thing, because his desire for the good is insufficient to nullify the evil inclination.

We must be cognizant of the emotional adversaries that reside within us. They include egotism, rebelliousness, stubbornness, and, perhaps most insidious, laziness. The desire to pamper ourselves and avoid any type of deprivation is our most significant obstacle on the road to perfection.

The Jews have made monumental contributions to the welfare and progress of mankind. But we have not operated for a single day without awareness that our existence hung in the balance as the mountain hovered over us on that day at Sinai.

A certain amount of existential anxiety can be a useful and positive thing. Let us remember the words of Antigonus of Socho, who framed the doctrine to serve G-d out of love this way: "Be not like servants who serve their master for the sake of receiving a reward; instead, be like servants who serve their master not for the sake of receiving a reward. And let the fear of Heaven be upon you."

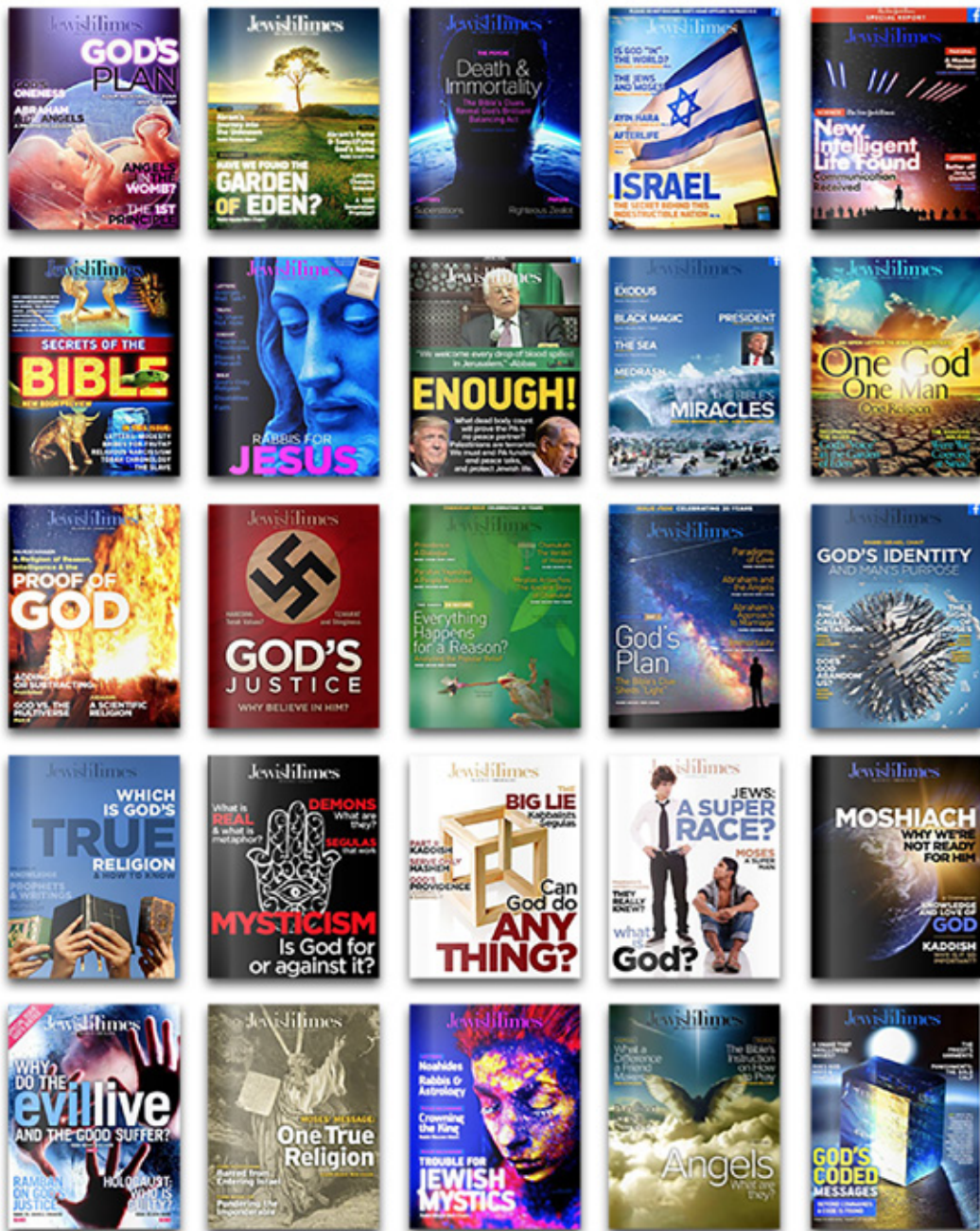
May we strive to live in accordance with this precious teaching.

P.S. Have you completed the essays in Eternally Yours- Genesis and are feeling a bit sad that you don't have thought provoking material to look forward to reading on Shabbat? No worries because Eternally Yours- Exodus is available. The articles offer a new and original perspective on the weekly Parsha which will get you thinking and enhance your appreciation of Torah and enjoyment of Shabbat. Titles include "No Good Deed Goes Unpunished" "Reclaiming One's Dignity" "Love Is Not All You Need" "Saw You At Sinai" "The True Test Of Piety" "Betrayal" and many more. The book on Exodus can be obtained at <http://bit.ly/EY-Exodus> and the book on Genesis is available at <http://bit.ly/EY-Genesis>

Shabbat shalom. ■

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Rabbi: Deut. 1:46 states "And they dwelled in Kadesh many days, as the days they dwelled." The Bible does not say that. Rashi explains this to mean that the Jews dwelled in Kadesh 19 years (not 38) equalling ("as the days they dwelled") all other encampments, which in total was another 19 years.

First, to say "Bible does not give an accurate account of the origins of Israel" is to be illiterate, as the Bible records the lives and places, names and durations which permeate the Bible from Adam through Moses' death.

Secondly, if archeologists and Egyptologists are willing to throw out the singular history of the Jews because they have yet to find satisfactory evidence, they must dismiss the histories of all other peoples on the same grounds. But, as the Jews possess one unanimously agreed history, the only means that such a history became universally accepted (even by other religions) must have been because it is truth. To suggest that a nation of millions abandoned their true history, and collectively replaced it with a fabrication of slavery in Egypt, is impossible. Fabrication might occur in small groups as with the accounts of Jesus, but not en masse. As Rabbi Israel Chait taught, lying requires motive, which is a subjective emotion, and emotions/motives not shared on a national level. A nation will not share a common motive to lie.

Third, had the Jews lied about their history, there would be many who did not accept the revisionists accounts, but retained the true history. There would then be at least two histories of the Jews. But we do not find an alternative Jewish history. Thus, the claim that a universally shared history is false is baseless.

Imagine this impossible scenario: A man today named Moses finds a group of people and tells them they were all on the George Washington Bridge at a certain date and time, and an alien spaceship materialized out of thin air and gave them a book. Not a single person will abandon their knowledge of their true whereabouts, and adopt this man's fabrication. And this story will not become a world religion 3000 years later. Well, these archeologists and Egyptologists are suggesting this can occur, for they feel the Bible is false and that the ancient Moses found a group of people and told them they were slaves in a land for 400 years, that they witnessed 10 miraculous plagues, they were led through a split sea and heard intelligent voice from inside a fiery mountain, they ate bread from the heavens and a rock provided water for 40 years...and they all accepted it in place of their true history.

What motivates such a ludicrous suggestion of adopted fabricated history, is the rejection of God. For to believe the Bible, one must accept the commands of the Creator. Such rejection is also at the heart of anti-Semitism, which is a form of rejecting God. Anti-Semites reject the "people of the book," the people God chose to give His law. Jews follow the Bible, and this threatens those wishing a life free from laws.

Regarding Biblical evidence, I found "PHARAOH'S CHARIOTS FOUND IN RED SEA?" (<http://bit.ly/RedSea2>):

"I am 99.9 percent sure I picked up a chariot wheel," Peter Elmer tells WorldNetDaily after two diving trips to the Gulf of Aqaba branch of the sea. "It was covered in coral." The 38-year-old forklift mechanic from Keynsham, England, traveled to the region with his brother, Mark, after being inspired by videos of explorers Ron Wyatt and Jonathan Gray, who have documented artifacts that in at least one case authorities have confirmed to be a chariot wheel dating to the time of the Exodus.

I found discoveries referencing the Jews in Egypt (<http://bit.ly/JewsinEgypt>):

"Following Petrovich's study of the inscribed Egyptian stone slabs, he asserted that the writings are actually an early form of Hebrew. He believes that the stones recall the Bible's descriptions about the Israelites living in Egypt and concludes that they transformed Egyptian hieroglyphics into Hebrew more than 3,800 years ago."

I also found this article regarding Egyptian papyri referring to the Jews and the plagues (<http://bit.ly/JewsEgypt3>):

Two weeks before Passover, on March 17, Dayan presented her research to an audience of more than 200 at Sinai Temple. Dayan, who earned her Ph.D. in Egyptology from Hebrew University in Jerusalem and is the wife of Jacob Dayan, Consul General of Israel in Los Angeles, told the group that linguistic evidence reveals an ancient and deeply involved Jewish presence in Egypt that eventually disappears. To illustrate, she drew remarkable parallels between the language of Egyptian papyrus (hieroglyphs), the haggadah and the Bible, all of which contain references to the Exodus story. In piecing together these manuscripts, Dayan framed an Exodus narrative based on facts of Egyptian history and language to prove her theory that a mass Exodus did occur and that it happened during the reign of Ramses II.

In each of the Egyptian manuscripts Dayan discussed, the same familiar characters are mentioned: Moses ("an Egyptian name"), Pharaoh, the Red Sea/Sea of Reeds ("Yam Suf" in Hebrew), Hebrews, Israelites and the presence of slaves in Egypt.

In one manuscript, known as the Ipuwer papyrus, there is an eerie description of chaos in Egypt: "Plague is throughout the land," Dayan's translation reads, "blood is everywhere — the river is blood ... and the hail smote every herd of the field ... the land is without light and there is a thick darkness throughout the land ... the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt — from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the prison. ..."

"Ladies and gentlemen," Dayan said with dramatic effect, "this is an Egyptian papyrus that is describing the same plagues that we have in our haggadah." She explained her view that the 10 plagues were not random punishments inflicted by the Jewish God upon Egypt, but a "declaration of war" on the entire Egyptian system. Each plague, she said, corresponds to a different Egyptian god and the element of creation over which they held dominion. This means the plagues were not merely grave misfortunes but the most humiliating insults to the Egyptian people.

Your quote commenced "After a century of research by archeologists and Egyptologists...there is no indication that the Israelites ever lived in Ancient Egypt." I found these articles in just a few minutes, and I am certain many more stories exist. ■



Inset photo suggests the unusual coral formation is due to the coral having crusted over a chariot axle and wheels



ARCHAEOLOGY

This Ancient Hebrew Discovery is About to Rewrite History as We Know it

Tsivya Fox — Dec. 30, 2016 <http://bit.ly/JewsinEgypt>



Dr. Petrovich

After years of intense study, Dr. Douglas Petrovich has gathered sufficient evidence to claim that the ancient Israelites took Egyptian hieroglyphics and transformed it into a writing system of 22 alphabetic letters which correspond to the widely recognized Hebrew alphabet used today.

Archaeologist, epigrapher and professor of ancient Egyptian studies at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Canada, Dr. Petrovich used Hebrew and the Bible to translate inscriptions found on 18 ancient stone slabs. His findings have truly rocked Bible critics to the core.

“Judaism has always believed that ‘God looked into the Hebrew Bible and created the world’ making Hebrew the oldest known language,” noted Roni Segal, academic adviser for The Israel Institute of Biblical Studies, an online language academy specializing in Biblical Hebrew, to Breaking Israel News. “However, to find an archaeologist making a similar claim is fascinating.”

It is generally accepted that hieroglyphics are one of the oldest forms of written communication. Following Petrovich’s study of the inscribed Egyptian stone slabs, he asserted that the writings are actually an early form of Hebrew. He believes that the stones recall the Bible’s descriptions about the Israelites living in Egypt and concludes that they transformed

Egyptian hieroglyphics into Hebrew more than 3,800 years ago.

“Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, who came into Egypt with Yaakov; every man came with his household: Reuven, Shimon, Levi, and Yehudah; Yissachar, Zevulun, and Binyamin; Dan and Naftali, Gad and Asher. And all the souls that came out of the loins of Yaakov were seventy souls; and Yosef was in Egypt already. And Yosef died, and all his brethren, and all that generation.” (Exodus 1:1-6)

Petrovich’s theory is that the Israelites sought to communicate in writing with other Israelites in Egypt. They therefore simplified Pharaoh’s complex hieroglyphic writing system into a 22 letter alphabet.

“There is a connection between ancient Egyptian texts and preserved alphabets,” Petrovich stated recently while promoting his forthcoming book on the subject. “I absolutely was surprised to find [a reference to] Moses, because he resided in Egypt for less than a year at the time of his provoking of astonishment there.”

Petrovich’s big discovery came in January 2012 while conducting research at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. He deciphered the word “Hebrews” in a text from 1874 BCE, which is the earliest known alphabet to date. The Bible notes that the Israelites spent 434 years in Egypt, from 1876 BCE to 1442 BCE.

Petrovich explains that only an early version of Hebrew, which he calls “Hebrew 1.0”, works at translating the Egyptian inscriptions. “There were many ‘A-ha!’ moments along the way, because I was stumbling across Biblical figures never attested before in the epigraphical record, or seeing connections that I had not understood before,” he divulged.

While Bible critics claim that the dates the Israelites’ resided in Egypt are unreliable, Petrovich is proud to use the Bible as his source for proving his translations. He also found the Biblical figure Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his half-brothers and became the most powerful leader of Egypt after Pharaoh, as well as Joseph’s wife Asenath and their sons Manasseh and Ephraim.

Additionally, Bible-esque statements have

(CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)



also been deciphered. The statement, “Wine is more abundant than the daylight, than the baker, than a nobleman,” was found inscribed on a slab dating back to 1834 BCE. This most likely refers to a time when drink was plentiful but food was scarce. The Bible notes that the Israelites, including Joseph and his family, moved to Egypt because of a famine in the Holy Land.

Another sentence reads, “The one having been elevated is weary to forget,” which reflects on the Biblical verse:

And unto Yosef were born two sons before the year of famine came, whom Asenath the daughter of Poti-phaera priest of On bore unto him. And Yosef called the name of the first-born Manasseh: ‘for God hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father’s house.’ (Genesis 41:50-51)

Hebrew, as the world’s oldest alphabet, was first claimed in the 1920’s by German scholar Hubert Grimme. “Although Grimme identified some of the Egyptian inscriptions as Hebrew, he was unable to identify all of the alphabet correctly,” explained Segal. “Petrovich’s translation along with his connecting the texts to the Bible are a very exciting discovery.”

Using Hebrew 1.0, Petrovich translated inscriptions from four different sites in Egypt and the Sinai. “My discoveries are so controversial because if correct, they will rewrite the history books and undermine much of the assumptions and misconceptions about the ancient Hebrew people and the Bible that have become commonly accepted in the scholarly world and taught as factual in the world’s leading universities,” he said. “Truth is un-killable, so if I am correct, my findings will outlast scholarly scrutiny. I have no doubt whatsoever that Hebrew is the world’s oldest alphabet.” ■

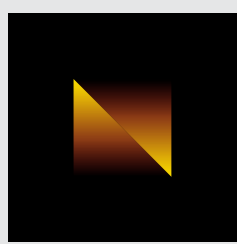
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