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Jerusalem	6:31	Pittsburgh	7:16
Johannesburg	5:41	Seattle	7:10
Los Angeles	7:46	Sydney	5:27
London	7:04	Tokyo	5:35
Miami	7:10	Toronto	7:16
Montreal	6:53	Washington DC	7:03

Weekly Parsha

Kitetze

RABBI BERNIE FOX

“When a man will have two wives, one who is beloved and one who is disliked, and the beloved and disliked wife give birth to children for him; and the son of the disliked wife is the first-born” (Devarim 21:15)

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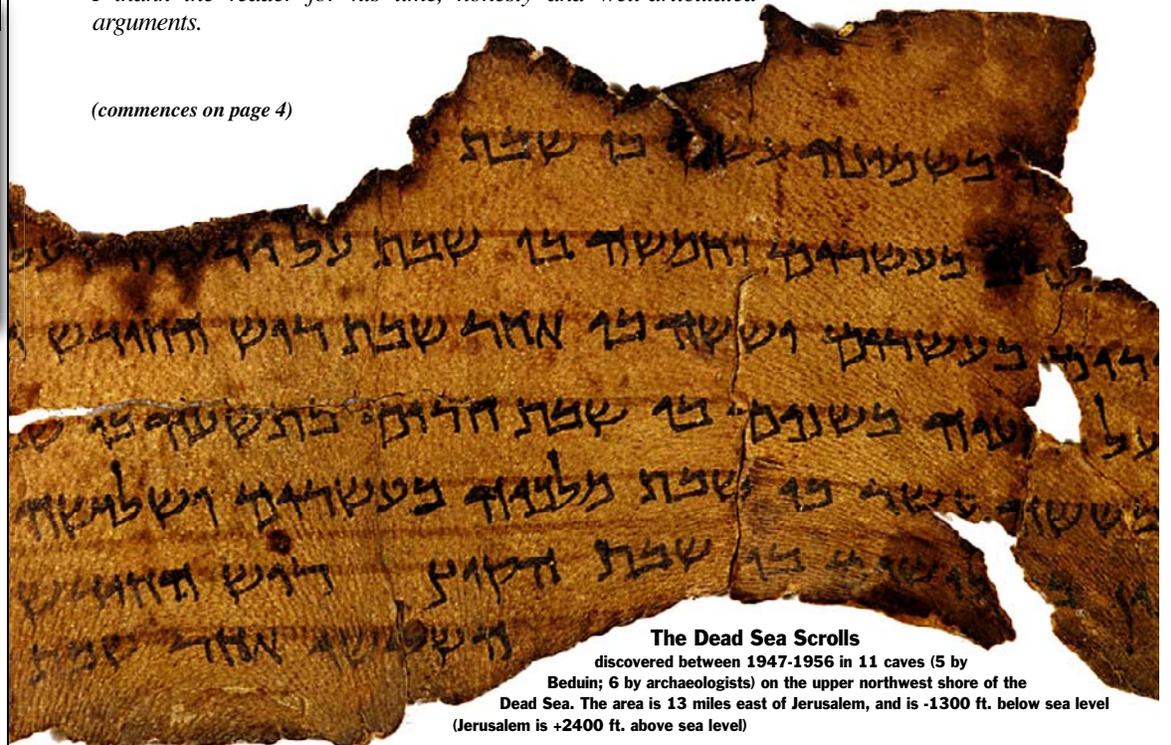
Proof

SINAI

The following is not an actual “dialogue”. I received the “Reader’s” letter questioning Rabbi Israel Chait’s views and my comments on the proof of Torah based on Sinaiic Revelation. I have interjected my comments subsequent to the reader’s complete letter submission. I thank the reader for his time, honesty and well-articulated arguments.

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

(commences on page 4)



The Dead Sea Scrolls
discovered between 1947-1956 in 11 caves (5 by Beduin; 6 by archaeologists) on the upper northwest shore of the Dead Sea. The area is 13 miles east of Jerusalem, and is -1300 ft. below sea level (Jerusalem is +2400 ft. above sea level)

(Kitetze cont. from pg. 1)

Weekly Parsha

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Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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This pasuk introduces the laws concerning inheritance. The Torah explains that a father's firstborn son inherits a double portion of the property of the father. This law applies even in the special case in our pasuk. In this instance, the father has two wives. One is beloved. The other is shunned. The father's firstborn is the child of the shunned wife. The father cannot disregard the inheritance rights of this son. He receives a double portion. The father cannot transfer this right to a younger son from the beloved wife.

Rashi explains that this law is related to the previous discussion in the parasha. In that section the law of yefat toar is presented. The yefat toar is a non-Jewish woman captured in battle. The Torah allows the soldier to have sexual relations with this non-Jewish woman. However, if the man wishes to marry the woman she must accept Judaism.[1]

Why does the Torah allow the soldier to have relations with this non-Jewish woman? Our Sages explain that the Torah recognizes the force of the desires awakened in the violence of war. The Torah assumes that these powerful instincts will overpower many soldiers. These warriors will not be able to overcome the desire to enter into sexual relations with captive women. This creates a dilemma. Enforcement of the normal prohibition against relations with non-Jewish women would be impossible. Therefore, a strict legal framework was created for the relations.[2] It is deemed preferable for the relations to take place in this framework rather than outside of the laws of the Torah.

What is the connection between the laws in inheritance and the mitzvah of yefat toar? Rashi explains that the shunned wife discussed in the laws of inheritance is a yefat toar.[3] In other words, the yefat toar will eventually be despised by the soldier who has taken her as his wife.

Why will the husband come to hate this yefat toar? The answer requires an understanding of human nature.

We have various instincts. At times these desires can overcome us. At these moments we may not be able to control our behavior. However, with time, this passion subsides. We return to our normal, more sane state of mind.

With the return of sanity we attempt to restore our self-image. We wish to see ourselves as good wholesome individuals. We do not wish to be reminded of the animalistic component of our personality. To accomplish the restoration of our self-image, we must purge all memory and reminders of our previous shameful behavior. If we are successful, we can again view ourselves as sane, rational human-beings.

Imagine a person who could not purge his conscious of a previous embarrassing lapse. This individual would be unable to completely restore a positive self-image. Surely, the individual would resent the constant reminder of downfall. The yefat toar is such a reminder. The presence of this wife does not allow the husband to restore his cherished positive self-image. Inevitably, he will come to resent this wife. She is a constant indication of the animalistic desires lurking just under the surface. She will become the shunned wife.



"You should not hang his corpse from a tree. Rather you should bury it on that day. For the hanging is a curse to the L-rd. And you should not defile your land, which Hashem your G-d, gives to you as a portion." (Devarim 21:23)

The Torah requires that the departed receive immediate burial. Our pasuk explains that this law applies even to a criminal executed by the courts. The criminal must receive proper burial within the day.

This command is a response to the argument that the body of the executed criminal should be prominently displayed. What more vivid discouragement can the courts provide to an individual considering a violation of the Torah? We are commanded that despite this consideration the criminal must receive prompt burial. There are various explanations offered by the commentaries for the application of this law to criminals. These authorities also dispute the proper translation of the pasuk.

Maimonides explains that the law is an expression of respect for humanity. Even a criminal is a member of the human race. As such, the body of the criminal must be treated with dignity. Maimonides translates the pasuk somewhat

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differently in order to accommodate his explanation.[4]

Rashi offers a fascinating explanation of the law. He comments that even a criminal is created in the image of the Almighty. The display of the criminal's body might reflect poorly on Hashem. This "negative publicity" is minimized through legislating a prompt burial.

Rashi is making an important point. At times we seem to be surrounded by evil. The news is dominated by demonstrations of humanity's depravity. It may seem that the human race is inherently evil. This is not the case. We must always realize that every human being is created in Hashem's image. This design provides us with the potential to do tremendous good. We have the ability and the free will to chose a productive and meaningful life. The criminal becomes engrossed in evil as a result of his or her own choices. There is no innate disposition which condemns humanity to evil.

Rashi maintains that for this reason we cannot allow the body of the criminal to remain hanging. We do not want to unduly emphasize the human's potential for evil. Instead, we want to stress the opportunity available to every person to do good.[5]

Rashbam takes a completely different approach to explaining the law and translating the pasuk. Rashbam seems to premise his comments on the assumption that a successful legal system requires the support and respect of those governed. Without cooperation the law becomes a source of tyranny.

He explains that sometimes the law will seem very harsh. It will be difficult to accept the punishments indicated by the Torah. This is especially true for the family of a person sentenced to death. Imagine the feelings of the family of an individual executed for a violation of the Shabbat. It may be very difficult for these people to appreciate the ultimate wisdom and justice of the punishment. The harsher and the more protracted the punishment the greater the potential for deep resentment. Placing the body on display, for an unduly long period, unnecessarily torments the family. Such a policy will often result in bitterness. In order to avoid this reaction the Torah commands us to behave with sensitivity and bury the criminal promptly.[6]

“When you build a new house, you should make a fence for your roof. Do not allow a dangerous situation to exist in your house, since someone can fall.” (Devarim 22:18)

The Torah instructs us to remove any hazard from our home. The Torah expresses this law in reference to a flat roof. These flat roofs were used for various functions. Dwellers and others had occasion to walk on these roofs. This created a danger. A careless person could fall from the roof. In order to prevent such an accident, a fence or railing must be placed around the roof.

This mitzvah is preceded by the commandment to send away the mother bird. The next pasuk discusses the prohibition against planting mixed species in a vineyard. Is there any connection between these commandments? Rashi suggests that there is an association between these mitzvot. He explains that these mitzvot are discussed together in order to communicate a message. This message is that the performance of one mitzvah leads to the performance of another mitzvah. How is this message communicated through these passages? First, the Torah discusses the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird. Then, the mitzvah of erecting a fence around a roof is discussed. The message is that the fulfilling the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird will result in the opportunity to perform another mitzvah. This is the mitzvah of erecting a fence. The mitzvah of erecting a fence is followed by the commandment prohibiting planting mixed species in a vineyard. Again, the message is that the performance of one mitzvah leads to the performance of another. The erecting of the fence leads to the observance of the prohibition against planting mixed species.[7]

The simple explanation of Rashi's comments is that the performance of one mitzvah is rewarded by the opportunity to perform another. Rashi is not suggesting that a person who sends away the mother bird will suddenly occupy a new home. No material reward is received for the performance of commandments. Rashi is merely suggesting that the opportunity to perform some mitzvah will arise. This opportunity is the reward.

However, this simple interpretation of Rashi is difficult to accept. First, it seems impossible to derive this lesson from these specific passages. The lesson can be derived from countless combinations of passages. Any three passages that enumerate three commandments can teach the same lesson. The performance of one

commandment is rewarded with the opportunity to perform the other commandment.

Second, these three mitzvot do involve material possessions. According to Rashi, the Torah is telling that the reward for performing a mitzvah is the opportunity to perform another mitzvah. In order to communicate this message, the Torah should have picked a different set of mitzvot. The Torah should have grouped a set of commandments that are not associated with the accumulation of wealth. Why did the Torah pick these specific commandments to act as the vehicle for its message? Why did the Torah choose mitzvot that are associated with wealth?

These two questions suggest a deeper understanding of Rashi's comments. Many of the Torah's mitzvot regulate our involvement in the material world. These commandments establish a healthy relationship between the human being and material possessions. A person should enjoy material blessings. A person should not become absorbed in these blessings. The mitzvot mediate our relationship with our possessions.

Wealth can be a blessing. It can also corrupt an individual. A person who observes the mitzvot establishes an appropriate relationship with the material world. Such a person can be rewarded with greater material wealth. Wealth will not corrupt this person. This person will scrupulously observe the mitzvot that apply to these new possessions. These mitzvot will regulate the person's relationship with these new material possessions.

In contrast, a person that is corrupted by wealth cannot be rewarded with additional wealth. Such a reward would really be a curse. The additional wealth will only encourage the further corruption of the individual. The person will become more absorbed in the material world. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Melachim 8:2.

[2] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Devarim 21:11.

[3] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Devarim 21:11.

[4]

[5] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Devarim 21:23.

[6] Rabbaynu Shemuel ben Meir (Rashbam) Commentary on Sefer Devarim 21:23.

[7] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Devarim 22:8.

Reader: Sinai – The Logical Error:

The essential claim you present is that the Torah must be true due to its citation of 600,000 numbered male witnesses (and by extrapolation, as many as 2-3 million total witnesses) to the events of the Revelation on Sinai. It must be true since no one who lived in that time would have dared to author a work claiming the presence of 600,000 - 3 million witnesses at an event that never happened, because he would immediately be declared a crackpot, being unable to produce those witnesses, and the absence of all those people he claimed had attended the Revelation would immediately expose him as a liar. Since no one could get away with a lie about 600,000 people all attending something in his own time that never happened, if someone living in that time did make that claim, it must be true.

This argument only holds true, however, for someone making those claims about his own time (or a relatively recent period of history). But were someone to claim that 3 million witnesses attended an event that occurred 500 years before, in the absence of a historical record, it's a pretty safe claim, since none of those people, or their children, would be around to deny it.

Mesora: You equate Sinai to a case where a story was first told 500 years after the event...not to the event's attendees. "No one's around to deny it". You therefore say that we possess "belief", and cannot possess proof that our Torah is what Moses wrote. However, this is not accurate. The case of Sinai is not as you suggest, stated all of a sudden "500 years later". There was no gap in its transmission. See Maimonides' unbroken chain of Torah transmitters, from Moshe through 40 generations further. (Beginning of the Mishne Torah)

Reader: So IF the Torah was set down by Moshe at the time of Revelation, the claim of mass attendees in the Torah would prove the actuality of the events. Since we, as b'nei Torah, believe that the Torah WAS set down by Moshe at the time of Revelation, we might therefore conclude that this PROVES that the Torah is true. We would, however, be mistaken, because we don't have sufficient evidence to PROVE that the document we know as the Torah was written by Moshe at the time of Revelation. Which means that to our objective secular observer, the possibility exists that the Torah could have been written hundreds of years later. An author writing hundreds of years later COULD have made up the Revelation with its 3 million witnesses, since it would have been too far back in the mists of history for anyone to really challenge his claim.

Mesora: Incorrect: we do not suggest that "we, as b'nei Torah, believe that the Torah was set down by Moshe at the time of Revelation" to be our basis. This would be no different than Christianity, which bases itself on belief, not proof. Something external to the Torah's written record must prove the event. We have proof. Not first hand knowledge – but second hand knowledge. There is nothing lacking in the facts of a story of such proportions reaching us today second hand, even though we did not attend. Furthermore, you contradict yourself by accepting the man Moses, whose existence itself is based on the evidence you controvert.

To any objective observer receiving the current-day reports of Caesar, he or she must conclude without doubt of Caesar's existence, reign, time frame, and history. This is because of the impossibility of a counterfeit historical record completely and universally replacing the actual record, with no trace at all of the authentic account. The same applies to Sinai.

Finally, the secular objective observer, and the Jew, must operate with identical reasoning, since Jew and non-Jew are identical humans.

Reader: This counter-argument -- the possibility that the claim of the presence of mass witnesses is not a contemporary claim but a historical claim -- is one that you do not deal with in your response to Harris. Rabbi Chait, however, does engage this counter-argument in his "Torah From Sinai" article. He responds by asserting that even an author writing about something that happened in the past still couldn't make up an event witnessed by masses of people, because his contemporary audience should have heard about it either through oral histories or the historical record. Absence of echoes of that event in oral history or the historical record would expose the author to the same claims of fabrication.

Rabbi Chait's response, however, is largely inapplicable, and his own example illustrates exactly why. Rabbi Chait illustrates: "If someone were to tell us that an atomic bomb was detonated over New York City fifty years ago, we would not accept it as true because we would assume that we would have certainly heard about it had it actually occurred." But that only works for an example dealing with a timeline of 50 years (relatively short) and an event placed in 1950, an era where historical documentation is fairly complete, accurate, and objective.

On the other hand, a claim of something that occurred long before - 500 years, for example - in an era with little accurate record of history, would not be subject to rejection because of an absence in the historical records or chains of oral narrative. Let's say I were to write a book claiming that God revealed Himself to 250,000 Egyptians of the Old Kingdom and bade them worship him, imparting to them secrets of construction and mummification still mysterious to science today, and that He then rejected them when they failed to give up other deities. In the absence of a systemic historical record, the assumption "we would have heard about it, had it actually occurred" is simply inoperative. Similarly, if an author in 850 B.C.E. had made up the Torah and claimed the Revelation occurred 400 years earlier, the people of his time would have no way of challenging it.

Mesora: True, if you today created a story about 5000-year-old events; events, which do not contradict anything known, you would find no solid disproofs against you. But do you truly live that way? I am sure if I would suggest some unknown story dating that far back, you would reject me based on the very principle Rabbi Chait mentions: mass silence indicates such an event as false. And this is not the case with Sinai. It is not a story that suddenly appeared, as it was transmitted without a break in the chain. Your equation is inaccurate.

The fact is that we have cases where ancient events did reach later generations, and evidently us today. As far as I am aware, we have no written records dating back to Noah's era. Yet, Torah commentators describe that generation as people who guarded themselves against sins that might bring another Flood. Intelligent, Torah commentators accepted this history, without records.

Even without systemic records, we are not without proof. For unanimously agreed verbal communication is sufficient to validate ancient events. You too would never be accepted, had you written that fable you concocted. For a single person's claim is the very reason we reject a story. You're the only one claiming an event that no one else veer heard about. You will be rejected outright. Thus, the converse – masses – is why we do in fact accept events. In fact, the 850 B.C.E. author would certainly fail, as no verbal account supports him. At best, he will start another Christianity, which is based on belief and not proof, since no verbal accounts supported Jesus' walking on water, feeding masses with crumbs, or any other of the Gospel's 4 contradictory accounts. In fact, those 4 Gospels teach what will happen, should man again attempt to proliferate lies. In the end, conflicting stories will arise, since fact is not on their side. The objective observer will do as current day Noachi-

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Proof

We do not and cannot use a record, to prove itself. That is circular. As I mentioned above, the proof is the unbroken chain of verbal communication. The written record merely mirrors these facts, it does not prove them. Here's the reasoning: if I write a fictitious history right now, and include in this fable that millions saw these hypothetical events...clearly, we cannot accept this record as truth.

des do: abandon such a false religion.

I further disagree with your suggestion, based on theory. A proof cannot be drawn from a hypothetical event. To suggest that "since story X didn't reach us, this is no disproof" is an invalid statement since it discusses something non-existent. You seek to establish a rule, from a non-existent case.

I would also cite Exodus 19:9 wherein God explains Revelation at Sinai as a means for the Jews' acceptance of Moshe "forever". I will not violate my own rule and attempt to prove some account, from that very text. I address only those who already accept the proof of Sinai. This verse is an outright rejection of the earlier statement herein, that older stories lose veracity with age. God clearly disagrees, saying a event can furnish proof "forever".

Reader: An Empirical Disproof:

The basis of our claim to the Torah's objective validity is the sufficiency of a claim of mass attendees within a documentary record to establish the validity of that record. Based on this assertion, any document that claims mass attendees at an event should be accepted by the world as a true and accurate historical record. If we can find a document with such a claim to which we do NOT give historic credence, that will destroy our ability to use the claim of mass attendees as a proof to the Torah's accuracy.

Mesora: You do not understand the proof. We do not and cannot use a record, to prove itself. That is circular. As I mentioned above, the proof is the unbroken chain of verbal communication. The written record merely mirrors these facts, it does not prove them. Here's the reasoning: if I write a fictitious history right now, and include in this fable that millions saw these hypothetical events...clearly, we cannot accept this record as truth. Record cannot act as the sole means of proof.

Reader: But can we find a document with a record of truly mass attendees to use as a test of our claim?

The answer is yes, and it's a fascinating test case, since the dates in question are so close to that of the Torah. Jewish scholars and rabbis place the date of the Revelation on Sinai somewhere between 1313 and 1250 B.C.E. Homer's Iliad records the events of the tenth year of the Trojan War, which Greek authors and historians place somewhere between 1334 and 1150 B.C.E. The Iliad (Book 2, lines 494-759) gives a detailed catalogue of 1186 ships that made up the Greek

force, each holding 120 men. That gives us 142,320 numbered Greek (or more correctly, Achaean, soldiers), plus unnumbered men of the Trojan army as well as the citizenry of Troy.

So what we have here is a document of an event, occurring in roughly the same time period as the Revelation, with a record of masses attending. And yet, no scholar or historian accepts the events set down by Homer as accurate or true, and a healthy debate still exists about whether the Trojan War ever occurred! Clearly, then, records of masses attending an event are of no probative value whatsoever in validating historical claims in the eyes of the objective observer -- and consequently, cannot be objective proof of the truth of the Torah.

Mesora: The Trojan war has no mass, unbroken verbal transmission. This is why it is not accepted as history. Documents alone are insufficient.

Reader: How the World Verifies History:

You pronounce in your article that "Judaism bases its historical truths on the identical methods used to determine any history... Now, world history is verified by mass attendees at a given account."

This turns out to be a very ill-considered statement. For there is indeed a detailed discipline that governs whether the world accepts documented accounts as verified history or not.

The discipline is called Historical Method, and many scholarly individuals - including Gilbert Garraghan, Louis Gottschalk, C. Behan McCullagh, and R.J. Shafer, to name a few - have spent a good deal of time and a great deal of ink arguing about the verification of accounts in historical documents. And the problem is, Historical Method simply does not accept mass attendees at a given account as an appropriate basis for historical verification.

Without going to great length, here's what Historical Method has to say about how historians would assess the historical credibility of the Torah:

Historians' Torah rejection #1: We cannot accurately date the authorship of the Torah (5 Books of Moses), and therefore do not really know - from an objective historian's perspective - if the real author is indeed Moshe giving a first person account of the Torah or not.

Mesora: Inability for secular historians to date Torah authorship without speaking to the Torah

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recipients should cause any objective observer to wonder why these historians failed to do proper research. The Jewish camp has no question on these dates and authorship. And the secular historian is foolish to ignore a Jewish record, based on their assumed bias. Would these historians ask the French, about the history of the Eskimos? No. So ask the Jew about the Jews! For the Jewish camp is not basing anything on belief, but on fact, and the historian must accept fact, and should be able to separate assumptions of bias, from incontrovertible fact.

Reader: Historians' Torah rejection #2: Even if we accept that this is an eyewitness account, it is not historically verified since it can be argued that Moshe is not attempting to merely transmit facts, but to instill and impact specific religious belief and behavior.

Mesora: So am I to understand that a historian cannot distinguish between fact and religious belief?

But the contradiction is glaring...do you see it? The historians both accept and deny Torah records. Moshe is accepted, as are his communications (religious beliefs and behaviors). Simultaneously, what is recorded, is ultimately questioned.

Moshe based his words on the eye-witness account of the Jews he addressed. He repeatedly warned the Jews not to forget "what your eyes have seen". (Of course, this dedication to truth is absent in other religions.) Those Jewish witnesses then transmitted to others their testimony that they did in fact witness what Moshe said they did. Today, we have received this both by way of verbal and written communication. And I stress that we do not have any intelligent Jew who ever offered and "alternative history" of our people. The success of this transmission attests to its accuracy. This takes care of "events". But to suggest that Moshe's spreading of "belief and behavior" can reject witnessed facts, is unreasonable. Apples and oranges.

But, we can parenthetically address belief if you like. "Belief" about some Torah ideal or religious philosophy is not "witnessed". It is intellectually accepted, and I agree, is subject to greater doubt.

Now, beliefs are of two types: intellectual, and moral. Of the former, it is accurate to say that although I never saw someone fail to place a cube in a round hole, my mind tells me this is impossible. But how did Moshe successfully proliferate those "moral" Torah beliefs as being God's word, if they weren't rational-based, like the round hole example? It is clear: Moshe communicates God's law to never alter the Torah: "Do not add or

subtract" is found more than once in the Torah. As such, had Moshe attempted to do so himself, certainly, God would have rejected him as the leader...which of course never occurred. Thereby, Moshe has been eternally endorsed by God Himself as transmitting beliefs and behaviors – both intellectual and moral – as originating in God's will, not his own imagination.

Now if you mean that Moshe was instilling "beliefs in never-witnessed events", this we do not see ever occurred.

Reader: Historians' Torah rejection #3: Seen in the light of oral tradition, this is not historically verified since we do not have parallel, independent series of witnesses; since the chain of tradition was (in light of an inability to know the date of authorship) perhaps many hundreds of years; and since the critical spirit did not exist at the time to challenge the tradition.

Mesora: Parallel accounts exist...there are millions of Jews! (Again, we have Maimonides chain of transmission.) Now, if one suggests the parallel must come from a source external of the Jewish population, I await his reasoning.

Reader: Historians' Torah rejection #4: Mass events are not proof of validity unless the tradition is without protest, is of relatively limited duration, occurs in a time when means of critical investigation exist, and there is no challenge from critical-minded persons.

Mesora: It appears Sinai passes this test. And the term "without protest" must be qualified as a "reasonable protest"...not any disbeliever.

Reader: Historians' Torah rejection 5: Even if the event of the Revelation itself were to be accepted, this would not convey credibility to the rest of the events in the Torah since for each incident within a document, the process of establishing credibility is undertaken, regardless of the general credibility of the author.

Mesora: This is irrelevant, as we are only discussing Sinai. Regardless, I reiterate that verbal communication is the proof, and we have verbal communication for the other events.

I am quite surprised though, that historians will reject the single history held by all Jews, despite the absence of any other account. This is quite astonishing, this belief in "non-existence". This

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does not sound scientific to me. We must also recognize that historians do not earn automatic immunity from emotional error. Intelligence displayed in one area in no way validates all thoughts they possess. Perhaps as the acceptance of Jewish history ipso facto rejects their own religion beliefs or fantasies, they have emotional problems using clear thinking when validating Jewish facts. If someone has not uprooted his emotional biases, he cannot be objective.

Reader: Now, we can take issue with the dictates of Historical Method -- we can study the methodologies and challenge them, arguing that history SHOULD be verified by mass attendees at a given account. But we CANNOT make the argument that world history IS verified by mass attendees and that by the same standard, the Torah is proven true -- since that is NOT how world history is verified. It's a blantly false statement, made, it would seem, in ignorance of the fact that other standards have been developed for the verification of history, or that the discipline of Historical Method even exists.

Mesora: I see I must rephrase myself: Judaism is proven true by the same methods world history "should" use.

Reader: Supporting Errors:

Therein lies the error of comparing belief in the accuracy of the Torah to belief in the truth of Caesar's rule (or Alexander's). For Caesar's rule, we have parallel, independent accounts from multiple sources. For Torah, we only have a single source, with no corroborating accounts (for most events). From a historian's point of view, THAT is why we are 100% convinced of Caesar's existence and rule, and why we cannot be convinced of the events in the Torah. It's the difference between one person claiming the presence of masses at an event - which is NOT of significant evidentiary value - and masses of independent sources testifying to the same event.

Mesora: This suggests that "parallel" accounts are sought so as to eliminate reasonable bias. However, that is not so. The parallel account is sought so as to eliminate "personal motive", and thus, fabrication. When masses communicate an identical story, human nature teaches that such a story must be true, since it is impossible to generate common motive in masses. Motive -- by very definition -- is a subjective phenomenon, inapplicable to masses.

I doubt historians would suggest that had 70,000 Jews attended a baseball game, and all 70,000 later said the Mets beat the Yankees, that there is any chance at all that this report is a lie or an error. Common motive could not exist in such numbers, despite all attendees being Jews. Therefore, it is a poor argument to suggest a parallel account is required, from different "groups". All that is needed, is different "people", which we have.

Reader: Additionally, it's completely inaccurate to assert "the world's acceptance of these Biblical accounts [miracles in Egypt and at Sinai] as truths today." Only religiously oriented Jews and Christians accept the Bible as a historically accurate document (and some Moslems). Among objective, secular observers (and filtering for those historians whose arguments are driven by an antipathy toward religion), the historicity of the Bible is very much under hot debate. The secular, non-Jewish/non-Christian world broadly simply does NOT accept the Bible as true.

I offer these constructive criticisms in the spirit of refining and purifying your arguments, the better to sustain the faith of the many people who turn to you for guidance in the face of today's challenges. And I would, of course, be pleased to hear the flaws in my own arguments, and why the claim of mass attendees is a better proof than I believe it to be.

—Best regards

Mesora: The fact is that Islam's Koran also cites and accepts the Torah. It then corrupts it, but it accepts the history.

In conclusion, this discussion does not exist in a vacuum. I offer some additional thoughts:

The Torah -- in no place -- asks man to do something harmful, but in fact, always seeks to purify man's ideas, emotions, and actions. Is that not interesting, that an ancient document is in complete and brilliant harmony with creation -- with mankind's design? Is it not highly suggestive that the greatest minds found in Torah, evidence of a Superior Mind? That they dwelled on Torah sources for their entire lives? Is it not amazing that some ancient book affords thinkers such enjoyment?

The world didn't create itself. Man didn't design himself. The Torah didn't write itself.

Yet, the universe and Torah completely address all man's needs: from air, water, food and animals, to commands that create social order, and offer deep appreciation for their wisdom, as the greatest of minds attested. And more so, it is amazing that man possesses the faculty -- intellect -- that taps the underlying sciences guiding the universe, and the Torah. Such is not the case with any other religion. That all three entities cited are so perfectly complimentary and intertwined, indicates that these created entities were orchestrated by an Intellect. This alone unveils the Torah's unique character as on par with creation. For Torah bears the Creator's design. It further endorses Rabbi Chait's article "Torah from Sinai" as describing truths. ■

