

Chapter 1 – The Bible Code Myth

Preliminary Matters

What is the Bible Code and How Does it Work?

As Jeffrey Satinover detailed in his work on the Bible code, belief in such a code has its roots in ancient and medieval Jewish Mysticism.¹ Simply stated, the current belief refers to the notion that the letters of the Hebrew text of the Torah, as delivered by God to Moses, will produce, if strung together without spaces and rearranged in equal columns of any length, intelligible words and phrases that could not otherwise be detected in the text as it stands.²

For example, medieval rabbis were fond of claiming that significant words or phrases could be found in the Hebrew text of the Torah by counting out letters that occurred at recurring, equal intervals. By way of illustration, one scholar notes that if one begins with the last letter of the first word of the Hebrew Bible (a “t” in our alphabet, in the word "bereshit"), and then proceeds to skip fifty letters, the next letter would be the Hebrew letter that functioned as the long “o” vowel. Skipping another fifty brings one to an “r”. Two more skips of fifty would yield the last two letters of the word “T-O-R-A-H” itself.³ The rabbis were very adept at finding such “meaningful patterns” and attributing significance to the results.

Probably the most important modern rabbinical figure in the quest to find such encrypted sequences was Michael Dov Weissmandl. In addition to being a child prodigy in the study of the Talmud, Weissmandl was also a trained scholar in the fields of astronomy and mathematics. Weissmandl spent years of his life studying the Torah, searching for encoded words and phrases, and wrote out the entire 304,805 letter sequence of the Torah on 10 letter-by-10 letter grids toward that end.⁴ World War II interrupted his studies, but some of his work was published posthumously in 1958.⁵

Rabbi Weissmandl’s work proved to be the foundation for the work of the two Israelis responsible for the current Bible code controversy, the eminent mathematician Eliyahu Rips, and Doron Witzum, an ultra-orthodox graduate student in physics who left that field to study the Torah full time. Rips and Witzum combined their expertise to conduct research into the subject of “equidistant letter sequences” (the “letter skips” noted above; hereafter referred to as ELS). Through the use of computers, Rips and Witzum could perform searches and analyze the text in ways that Weissmandl could only have dreamed. By 1985, they discovered that pairs of words that conceptually belonged together could be discovered in Genesis using a variety of ELS skip values. More importantly, they were able to “prove” that such occurrences were too regular to be (mathematically speaking) the result of chance. Their findings were eventually published in 1988 in the highly respected *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*. Several years later, they published the study for which they are now famous (or notorious), an experiment in which they searched the text of the Torah for the names of thirty-two

famous rabbis and their birth and death dates. The result was the claim that most of the names were detected. Moreover, the names of these rabbis often appeared in close proximity to the dates of their birth or death. This allegedly well-beyond-chance finding made its way into the prestigious journal *Statistical Science*, and became the basis for Michael Drosnin's best-selling book, *The Bible Code*.

Although more will be said about the procedure of ELS, it is important to briefly point out the suspect nature of "meaningful" patterns using such a technique. The impression a reader is given upon initial exposure to the "code" is that one need only group the Hebrew letters in a page of the Torah and start looking for encrypted sequences, much like working on a word-finder puzzle. This is not the case. With the advent of computers, proponents of Bible codes can (and do) put any ELS figure into the computer and look for results. In other words, the procedure is more like taking that same word-finder puzzle and then rearranging it over and over again until you find something meaningful.

Taking the "stunning" prophecy of Yitzhak Rabin's assassination as an example, one can see how manipulative the methodology really is. When *The Bible Code* first hit bookstores, the cover featured a small block of Hebrew letters arranged in ELS patterning. Rabin's name was marked as a meaningful sequence, as was the phrase "assassin will assassinate," as in the illustration below:

הו יחננו באלושו יסעו סאלושו יחננו כרפי ד
הדכר אשר צוה יהוה להכניח צלפחד לאסרלטו
ואוכלעסו למלחמה יצהנו יתנהו יהוה אלה
השמעלנו סמסרו צח אשר ירצח אחר עהו כבלי
ספני יהמו גמאחה צרעה ישלח יהוה אלה יכנס
האלה יכו שמר חסמרת חותקת יווספטי וו
האלה יכה סו ציאכסאר צמצר יססכי תעכדיס
תהא ישאו אתה אשהו סקלת סכאכני סוסחועל
נחלו נגשוה כהני סכני לוי כי כסכחר יהוה
בכחטאלא יוסחו אכותעלכני סוכני סלא יו
ופרי אדמחכשגראלפי כועשתר חצאנכארו ר
קלו ככלאשר אנכי מצוה יוסאחהו כני ככ

- Yitzhak Rabin
- Assassin who will assassinate

Besides the fact that the translation of the "assassin will assassinate" phrase was inaccurate and self-authenticating (See Part III of this book), the reality that the ELS skip sequence was 4,772 letters was completely lost in the hysteria of such a "hit." What this means is that the letters of the Torah were arranged in several rows of 4,772 letters to produce the hit, so that *the letters in Yitzhak Rabin's name were each 4,772 letters apart!*⁶ Yet the picture on the cover of the book gives the distinct impression that the names are right next to each other in the Hebrew text and all one needs to do to find them is take out the vowels and spaces and do some slight letter-shifting. Finding specific letters with thousands of other letters between them and calling the assembled words meaningful and even "prophetic" is simply deceptive.

Who Are the Critics of the Bible Code and What Have They Said?

Secular Journalists

Criticisms of the Bible code have been published in book reviews, scholarly journals, and in books devoted to the subject. Most of the reviews written by secular journalists have expressed skepticism about the code.⁷ Their skepticism is primarily borrowed from their non-religious worldview, but also proceeds from the supposition that one could find meaningful words and phrases in any book to which the ELS methodology was applied.

Christian Reviewers Not Credentialed in the Hebrew Bible

Unfortunately, when lay-reviewers espouse a religious perspective (Christian or Jewish) that could be reinforced were the code to be true, their reviews tend to be cautiously favorable.⁸ Surprisingly, though, some within the Christian community who are credentialed in mathematics have also been favorable, linking the code's "design" by analogy to their arguments for intelligent design (contra Darwinism) in creation.⁹

Scholars in the Field of the Hebrew Bible and Rabbinics

To this author's knowledge, however, the same cannot be said for reviewers and scholars whose expertise is in the field of Hebrew Bible. Naturally, Hebrew scholars who have no commitment to the evangelical position on biblical inspiration could be expected to be quite critical of a code in the text of the Hebrew Bible. However, such scholars who have weighed in on the subject have done so on the basis of the data relating to textual history and uncertainty of *every-letter* textual preservation, not the basis of theology.¹⁰ Significantly, Hebrew scholars who do hold to the Old Testament's inspiration have echoed the criticisms of their non-evangelical colleagues.¹¹ This consensus of scholarly opinion across theological lines is significant. Unfortunately, though, these contributions have come only in the form of reviews posted on the Internet (and they presuppose too much knowledge of textual history and Hebrew) or reviews in publications read only by those trained in biblical studies.

Rabbinical experts have also vehemently denied the validity of the code, on the basis of not only the textual material, but also because of how the rabbinical data has been handled.¹² Chief among these critics is Dr. Shlomo Sternberg. Not only is Rabbi Sternberg an orthodox rabbi, who has taught Talmud and rabbinical law for over forty years, he is also a professor of mathematics at Harvard University.¹³

Scholars from Other Disciplines

Criticisms of the Bible code from mathematicians and scholars in other disciplines have been numerous. Appendix 1 at the end of this book is devoted to a summation of these rebuttals.¹⁴

Who Believes in the Bible Code?

I am aware of no Hebrew Bible specialist who believes in the validity of the Bible code. Believers in the code within the Christian religious camp tend to be laypeople who do not know Hebrew, and who have no grasp of the historical transmission of the text of the Torah.¹⁵ Unfortunately, laypeople seem to think that if there are Jewish Hebrew-speakers who accept a Bible code, there must be something to it. This isn't at all true. While some Christian authors who favor the Bible code may have taken a Hebrew class at some time in their lives, their knowledge of the language goes scarcely beyond the ability to do word studies. But this deficiency is of secondary importance.

In truth, the *real* necessity for evaluating the Bible code is not the ability to read Hebrew – it is an understanding of how the text was transmitted and how the Torah we have today came to us in the form we possess. Typically, due to having an interest or expertise in some other area, most believers in the code are not aware that the history of the text is even the issue.¹⁶ This is true for native Jewish speakers of Hebrew as well (Jewish defenders of the code). Admittedly, knowing Hebrew does help in understanding the transmission of the text by the scribes, but an English-only speaker can attain an adequate knowledge of the history of the Hebrew text, sufficient to judge the Bible code as a mirage.

So why do people believe in the code? As noted above, lack of knowledge of scribal practices and textual history has a lot to do with it. There is, however, one other factor that promises just as much explanatory power: the interest in protecting and promoting a very narrow, "fundamentalist" view of the Bible.¹⁷

By "fundamentalist" here, I am not referring to the twentieth century American religious phenomenon. Many fundamentalists would reject the Bible code outright; others would not. I am using the term here to point to two notions. First, there are some people who suppose that the Bible is either more divine than human, or that every word (every letter!) was *dictated* by God. While a few American fundamentalists do believe in a "dictation theory" of inspiration, most who know the biblical languages (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic) and are familiar with the varied writing styles of the biblical authors do not hold such a view.¹⁸ Second, some feel the Bible code is proof that biblical prophecy is "provable." This notion ignores the data of history – that history is sufficient for demonstrating the reality of biblical prophecy – and assumes that if the Bible code can be proven real, unbelievers will be compellingly convinced of this truth. Both of these mistaken notions demonstrate a lack of close attention to the Bible's own contents and a certain theological insecurity.¹⁹

What I have said about a "fundamentalist" perspective applies equally to Jewish defenders of the Bible code. Jewish Bible code proponents are typically either Orthodox Jews (Jews who practice close adherence to the Torah) or "Messianic" Jews (Jews who believe Jesus is the Messiah and practice a blend of Christianity and Judaism). Many within either variety of Judaism want the Bible code to be true for basically the same reasons as summarized above: the need to "prove" the Torah came from God and that prophecy is real and reliable. It is well known by those who have read Drosnin's book and others that the Jerusalem-based orthodox Aish HaTorah College of Jewish Studies has promoted the Bible code idea heavily through public presentations. The goal of the

college's "Discovery Seminar" is to prove the divine origin of the Torah and thereby win Jews over to Orthodox Judaism.²⁰

Like Aish HaTorah, Messianic Judaism's interest in the Bible code reflects a concern to demonstrate the divine authorship of the Torah (and the New Testament as well). Unlike their orthodox counterparts, though, Messianic Jewish proponents of the code are equally convinced that the Bible code reveals the name of the Messiah to be Jesus of Nazareth, and so they seek to use the code to convince Jews to accept the messiahship of Jesus. Yacov Rambsel, for example, has claimed there are numerous encoded references to Jesus as Messiah ("Jesus is my name") in both the Torah and other portions of the Hebrew Bible.²¹ Such claims have not held up under scrutiny by non-messianic Jews, who subsequently found encoded phrases such as "Mohammed is my name," "Koresh is my name," and "Buddha is my name,"²² and even "Jesus is a false prophet," and "Jesus is a liar."²³

Essential Terminology for Understanding The Fundamental Flaw in the Bible Code

Now that we have a basic idea of what the Bible code phenomenon is and why people believe in it, we need to proceed to the fundamental problem with the entire enterprise. In the process of doing so, however, it will be vital that the reader be acquainted with the jargon of textual criticism. At the beginning of each chapter I include a listing of the most important terms the reader must understand in order to follow the discussion in the chapter. At times these terms will be repetitious "reminders" of prior terms. Although redundant, this will help the reader stay familiar with the terminology from chapter to chapter. I have also chosen to periodically boldface and italicize certain of these terms for the reader within the discussion to alert readers that they can go back to the brief glossaries if necessary.²⁴

One word on Dead Sea Scroll materials is also in order now. I will use the standard labeling for Dead Sea Scroll texts. The labeling is designed to tell the student / reader the cave in which the text was discovered, the book of the Torah from which it comes, and if more than one fragment came from the same book of the Torah. For example:

4QDtn^j = Cave 4 of Qumran (=Q), book of Deuteronomy, tenth manuscript from that book ("j" is the tenth letter of the alphabet).

For Further Reading:

George C. Hammond, *Westminster Theological Journal* 59 (1997): 329-331 (book review)
Ronald S. Hendel, "The Secret Code Hoax," *Bible Review* 13:4 (August, 1997): 23-24
H. Van Dyke Parunak, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41 (1998): 323-325 (book review)
J. Paul Tanner, "Decoding the 'Bible Code'," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (April-June 2000): 141-159
Richard A. Taylor, "The Bible Code: 'Teaching Them [Wrong] Things'," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43:4 (December 2000): 619-636.

¹ Ibid., 1-10.

² The subject of whether or not the Torah was dispensed by God letter-by-letter (as strict Orthodox Jewish tradition contends) or whether Moses even composed or assembled the majority or entirety of the Torah (as conservative Christian and Jewish theologians and scholars maintain) is beyond the scope of this book. Satinover and other reviewers of *The Bible Code* argue that the presence of a code within the Torah would overturn the higher-critical view that the Torah is actually a “patchwork quilt” of several documents (J, E, P, and D) that were written and edited together well after Moses lifetime. Consequently, they feel a genuine Bible code would prove Mosaic authorship. The presence of a code would do nothing of the sort. Those scholars who would presumably be forced to admit there was a code could easily attribute it to the final editors (redactors) of the Torah. There is no logically necessary link between the Bible code and the conservative view of the authorship of the Torah.

³ J. Paul Tanner, "Decoding the 'Bible Code'," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (April-June 2000): 142.

⁴ Satinover, 5.

⁵ H.M.D. Weissmandl, *Torat Chemed* [“Torah of Delight”] (Mount Kisco, New York: Yeshivath Mount Kisco, 1958).

⁶ Drosnin, 27.

⁷ See, for example, *Newsweek* (June 9, 1997): 66ff.; *Time* (June 9, 1997); and *USA Today* (June 4, 1997).

⁸ See Phillip E. Johnson, "What Would Newton Do?" *First Things* (Oct.-Nov. 1998). Johnson is well-known in the Christian apologetics community for his defense of intelligent design in creation. By training, however, he is a lawyer and law professor, not a scientist, mathematician, or Hebrew scholar. One could also cite Satinover's book-length "review" (and defense) of the code here.

⁹ See William Dembski's review of Satinover's "Cracking the Bible Code" in *First Things* (Aug.-Sept., 1998). Dembski holds two doctorates, one of them in mathematics.

¹⁰ See Jeffrey Tigay, "The Bible 'Codes': A Textual Perspective," <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~jtigay/codetext.html>, and Ronald S. Hendel, "The Secret Code Hoax," *Bible Review* 13:4 (August, 1997): 23-24. Tigay (Ph.D., Yale University) is a professor of Hebrew Bible and Rabbinic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Hendel (Ph.D., Harvard University) is a professor of Hebrew Bible at Southern Methodist University.

¹¹ See George C. Hammond, *Westminster Theological Journal* 59 (1997): 329-331 (book review); H. Van Dyke Parunak, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41 (1998): 323-325 (book review); J. Paul Tanner, "Decoding the 'Bible Code'," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (April-June 2000): 141-159; and Richard A. Taylor, "The Bible Code: 'Teaching Them [Wrong] Things'," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43:4 (December 2000): 619-636.

¹² See Menachem Cohen, "The Idea of the Sanctity of the Biblical Text and the Science of Textual Criticism," <http://cs.anu.edu.au/~bdm/diligum/opinions/CohenArt/>. The latter half of this online article deals with the Hebrew text from the early rabbinic period through the Middle Ages, as well as rabbinical opinion about the perfection of the text.

¹³ Shlomo Sternberg, "Snake Oil for Sale," *Bible Review* 13:4 (August, 1997): 24-25.

¹⁴ The Appendix focuses on the work of professional mathematicians and statisticians. Outside those fields, two physicists have offered critiques: Randall Ingermanson, *Who Wrote the Bible Code? A Physicist Probes the Current Controversy* (USA Waterbrook Press, 1999); and Mark Perakh, "The Rise and Fall of the Bible Code," <http://www.nctimes.net/~mark/fcodes/codepaper.htm>.

¹⁵ See J. Satinover, *Cracking the Bible Code*; Chuck Missler, *Cosmic Codes: Hidden Messages from the Edge of Eternity* (Koinonia House, 1999); Grant Jeffrey, *The Signature of God: Astonishing Biblical Discoveries* (Toronto: Frontier Research, 1996); idem, *The Mysterious Bible Codes: The Phenomenal Discovery That Proves the Truth of Bible Prophecies* (Toronto: Frontier Research, 1998); Ralph O. Muncaster, *Are There Hidden Codes in the Bible* (Harvest House, 2000); and John Weldon and Clifford Wilson, *Decoding the Bible Code: Can We Trust the Message?* (Harvest House, 1998). All of these are good examples of Christian publishers being more interested in making money than making sure they put out accurate information (to be fair, though, Weldon, et.al. is somewhat skeptical).

¹⁶ Even the Aish HaTorah website, maintained by Judaism's most ardent Bible code defenders, seems unaware of this most significant weakness to their entire thesis. See the latest response (1999) to code critics, which lacks any reference to criticisms based on textual history: http://aish.com/seminars/discovery/Codes/responding_to_the_critics.htm.

¹⁷ I am not, of course, referring to people like Michael Drosnin, whose motivation is perhaps financial.

¹⁸ While rather small portions of the Torah claim divine dictation (e.g., the giving of the Ten Commandments, portions of Revelation), there is little actually said in the Bible to support word-for-word dictation. A few who believe in inspiration somehow feel such a belief is theologically necessary to "protect" the Bible, but they are simply not familiar enough with the Bible's own contents or orthodox church history to know this isn't the case – and never has been. The "synoptic problem" is a case in point that speaks to both varied writing styles and the absolute assurance that neither testament was dictated by God. Briefly, the "synoptic problem" refers to the fact that (in both testaments) portions of the Bible contain the same (in many cases, word-for-word) or virtually the same material. This is most easily seen in the gospels (the first three - Matthew, Mark, and Luke – are referred to by scholars as the "synoptic gospels" because so much of the material overlaps). Synoptic gospel study is a whole sub-field within New Testament studies, for scholars wonder why it was that each gospel writer chose to include so much material found in the other gospels – and why at points each did not. The fact that this phenomenon occurs is proof positive of *human* authorship – at least one gospel writer tells us he used extant sources as well (Luke 1:1-4). The gospel writers made decisions on content and word choice. Why would such variety and overlap exist if God dictated everything? The same phenomenon occurs in the Old Testament as well between the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles.

¹⁹ Orthodox Christian teaching has always maintained that it is the work of the Holy Spirit upon a person's heart that convinces that person of the truth of Scripture. While our faith must be defended intellectually (we have a *reasonable* faith), belief is not

exclusively, or even primarily, a matter of the head. The real issue is the heart, which is the province of the Spirit.

²⁰ Tanner, 146. See also Calmetta Y. Coleman, "Seminar Tries Science to Revive Faith," *Wall Street Journal*, November 11, 1996, and the Aish HaTorah website, <http://aish.com/seminars/discovery/>.

²¹ Yacov Rambsel, *Yeshua – The Name of Jesus Revealed in the Old Testament* (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 1996).

²² Taylor, 627 (quoting rabbi R. Daniel Mechanic, "Jesus Codes: Uses and Abuses," <http://www.jewsforjudaism.org/codes/jesuslb.htm>).

²³ Taylor, 627.

²⁴ These terms are often equally meaningful with regard to the New Testament as well. Our concern here is for the Torah, though.

Chapter 2 (The Bible Code Myth)

A Short History of the Torah Text

Writing about the history of *anything* can cause a writer great anxiety. On the one hand, studying history is viewed as such a mind-numbing exercise that an author hesitates to include details that will be viewed as adding to the tedium. On the other hand, the fear of being simplistic is ever-present, for I know I will also encounter readers who are interested in some minutiae, and for whom the acceptance or rejection of the material may hinge on such "trivia." This fear notwithstanding, I have chosen to risk erring on the side of less detail. The text of the Hebrew Bible is already unfamiliar enough to most readers that such a decision seems wise.¹

At this point, we could launch into a windy exposition detailing the various theories of scholars. I think it best, though, to move through history from period to period, describing what went on in each period that contributes to our subject of the textual uncertainty that undermines the Bible code. We'll break down the history of the Torah text into four periods:

- Beginnings – The Initial Composition of the Torah (time unknown to, at the latest, 300 B.C.)
- Early Transmission of the Square-Lettered Consonantal Text of the Torah (300 B.C. to around 100 A.D.)
- Transmission of the "Standardized" Text by the Masoretes (100 A.D. to around 1100 A.D.)
- Transmission up to the present day (1100 A.D. up to now)

Essential Terms:

Witness – An existing portion of the ancient Hebrew text of the Torah.

Manuscript – An existing witness, regardless of whether it is just a small fragment (even one word) or the entire Torah. Technically, a "manuscript" refers to a hand-written witness, but the term is often used for any witness, whether copied by hand or printed (after the advent of the printing press).

Scroll – A manuscript that is rolled up.

Codex – A manuscript written on animal skin (vellum) and bound on the side like a book.

Consonantal Text – The text of the Torah before any vowel markings were inserted (a process begun in roughly 500 A.D.)

Masorettes – The scribal families who developed: (1) a system of vowel marks (called "points") for the consonants of the Torah; and (2) a system of notations (the Masorah) in the margins of the Torah text concerning the condition of the text itself.

Text Families – Groups of manuscripts that have a high degree of agreement with one another, and a high degree of common *disagreement* with other manuscripts (see "Plurality of Texts" below). Essentially, a text family is an "edition" of the Torah. It must be recognized, however, that although the word "edition" makes it seem that one text family followed another chronologically, this is not the case when speaking of text families of the Torah. "Edition" is used here for convenience, since the word "version" means something entirely different in text-critical terminology.

Plurality of Texts – The fact that there was more than one text family. In other words, before the text became "standardized" in roughly 100 A.D., Jews in Palestine and other parts of the Mediterranean used a variety of "editions" of the Torah – there was more than one text, and those texts never agreed in every place. We know this is true because the manuscripts found at Qumran (site of the Dead Sea Scrolls discovery) did not agree with each other. Hence, they reflected different texts of the Torah, and were thus grouped by scholars into "text families." Significantly, the people who lived at Qumran apparently did not care that the Torah existed in several "editions" that differed at points. It was only in the first century A.D. that textual standardization became a concern.

Standardization – The process of arriving at one text "edition" of the Torah. The process was completed by around 100 A.D.

Masoretic Text (referred to as "MT" by textual critics) – One of several text families. The Masoretic Text was the Hebrew Bible passed down through centuries (since 100 A.D.) by the Masorettes. The MT eventually became the official text of the Torah. Even before the Masorettes existed as a professional group that "standardized" the Torah text and added vowel marks and other notes to the margins of that text, there existed a text-family that resembled the one the Masorettes would eventually produce. This text-family would be one of the three unearthed at Qumran, site of the Dead Sea Scrolls library. Once this lost text family was discovered, scholars immediately could see that the medieval manuscripts used and copied over and over by the Masorettes must in some way be related to this more ancient text-family. As a result, scholars called the Dead Sea finds of this text family the "Proto (Prior) Masoretic Text" so as to give it priority of place. In this book, unless I specify that I am talking about either the Qumran or the medieval MT for a specific point, I will use "Masoretic Text" as a label that covers both the Dead Sea family and the later Medieval "standardized" MT.

Samaritan Pentateuch (commonly abbreviated by scholars as "SP") – Another text family testified to at Qumran along with the "Proto" Masoretic Text. This text family only contains the first five books of the Old Testament (the Torah or "Pentateuch") and was common in the region of ancient Palestine known as Samaria. It contains many deliberate changes that reflect the religious idiosyncrasies of Samaritan Judaism.

Septuagint (commonly abbreviated by scholars as "LXX") – Another text family testified to at Qumran along with the "Proto" Masoretic text and the Samaritan

Pentateuch. In modern times, the word "Septuagint" also refers to the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (a work done somewhere between 300-100 B.C.). The reason scholars use this word to refer to a *Hebrew* text family among the Dead Sea Scrolls and a *Greek* translation of the Hebrew Bible is because those scholars who translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek used a particular text family when they did so – *one that did not match the Proto-Masoretic Text or the Samaritan Pentateuch*. In other words, the "base text" used by the Greek translators of the Septuagint came from a Hebrew text family witnessed to at Qumran, but that did not match MT in many places. Hence, scholars refer to certain Hebrew manuscripts from the Dead Sea (or elsewhere) as "Septuagintal" or as "Septuagint manuscripts." The "LXX" ("70") abbreviation comes from the largely fanciful tradition that 70 men translated the Septuagint in 70 days.

Orthography – The rules of spelling.

- **Matres Lectionis (Latin, "mothers of reading")** – Refers to the use of certain consonant letters in Hebrew that were also used as vowels before there were vowel marks inserted into the text of the Torah by the Masoretes. Based on ancient Hebrew inscriptions on stone (not related to the Bible), this practice began in Hebrew around 600-500 B.C. These "double-duty" consonants "mothered" or "guided" young readers in correct pronunciation. Many manuscripts of all text families spell words with and without the *matres* – so that spelling in the Torah is not consistent. This fact alone significantly damages the Bible code thesis, for the code requires *every-letter* preservation. It also proves that the Hebrew text as we have it (in terms of spelling and grammar) only came into existence centuries after Moses, the accepted author of the Torah according to all Bible code adherents.
- **Defective Spelling** – Words spelled without *matres lectionis*.
- **Plene ("Full") Spelling** – Words spelled with *matres lectionis*.

Paleography – The study of ancient handwriting styles and scripts.

Babylonian Captivity / Babylonian Exile – By both biblical and Babylonian records, Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C. at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. A good portion of the Israelite population was deported to Babylon at that time, and stayed there until the Persians, who conquered the Babylonians in 539 B.C., allowed them to return to their homeland under Persian rule. This period is important for our purposes in that it was during this time that Hebrew started to be written in the square or "block" letter style familiar to us today.

Period # 1: Beginnings – The Initial Composition of the Torah (time unknown – at the latest ca. 300 B.C.)

This "period" is actually an entire field of inquiry in Old Testament studies. At the outset, the reader should be aware that the text of the Torah during this time contained only consonants, and could have often been written without spacing between words. This is important to keep in mind, for it is in this period that the rise of *matres lectionis* appears.

Some scholars and students believe the Torah was written either in its entirety, or substantially, by Moses, shortly after the Israelites emerged from Egyptian bondage. Others say Moses didn't write a single word of the Torah (if he even existed at all). We aren't going to get bogged down here, but the reader still needs to understand several things relevant to this era.

With respect to those who hold to some sort of Mosaic authorship, the dates for the exodus offered by the biblical text and interpreted by biblical scholars and archaeologists vary. The common conservative estimate (taking the biblical records at face value) has Israel leaving Egypt in 1446 B.C. Other scholars (mostly "liberal" or "critical" scholars, but some conservatives as well) would put the exodus at around 1260 B.C. – the time of Ramesses II (the Great). If Moses wrote the Torah, he would have done so, at the latest, at roughly 1200 B.C.²

Those who deny any form of Mosaic authorship would assert that the Torah is actually composed of several separate "documents," the earliest of which was written down (after being orally transmitted for centuries) at around 900 B.C. These documents were eventually woven together like a patchwork quilt by a group of professional editors during either the time of the Israelite captivity in Babylon (roughly 550 B.C.) or the time of Ezra the Scribe (the mid 400's B.C.) or a little later (to about 300 B.C.).³

The debates over dating and composition of the Torah are important because, since the time of composition, both the script and the language of Hebrew have evolved. Restated, the letter shapes, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and word order of the Torah that Moses (or that those people who recorded and then edited the "oral documents") have changed through time. This evolution created the opportunity for the misreading of letters and copying mistakes when new scripts were adopted.⁴

We know this because of archaeology. Specifically, archaeology has yielded inscriptions in Hebrew that date to these time periods, as well as inscriptions in the language that the Semitic slaves of Israel would have brought out of Egypt. Let's start with the latter.

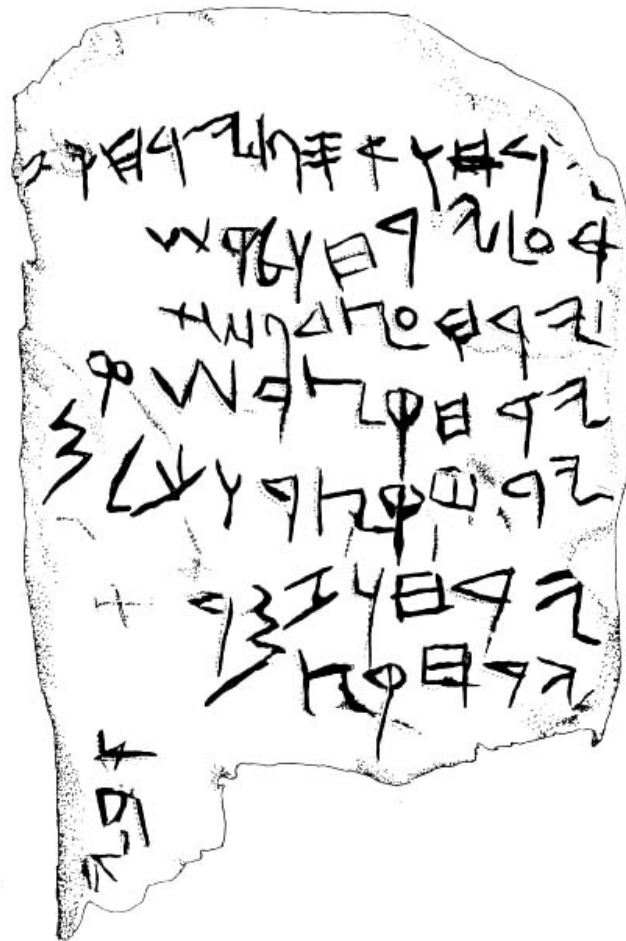
Many scholars acknowledge that the language used by Semite slaves (including the Israelites) was originally developed from Egyptian hieroglyphs. This language has been uncovered in what are known to scholars as the "Proto-Sinaitic" inscriptions. In one instance, inscriptions of this language were found in turquoise mines, where Egyptian taskmasters held Semitic slaves for labor, at a place known as Serabit el-Khadim. The language is obviously written in Egyptian-like characters, but it is Semitic in its grammar.⁵ Below is an example of these inscriptions, as well as a list of letters that bear unmistakable similarity to hieroglyphs.



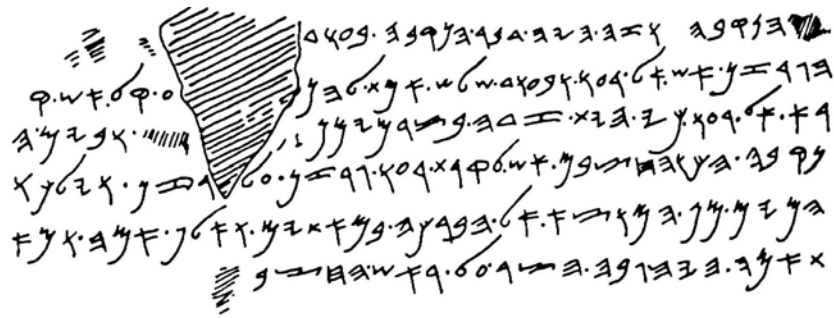
This brief inscription⁶ means "to the (divine) lady," and probably refers to Hathor (it was written on a small sphinx figurine).

One of the early principal investigators of these inscriptions was the famous Semitist, William Foxwell Albright. Albright wrote a book detailing the alphabet of the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions.⁷ The Hebrew letter shapes of stone inscriptions that date from the time of David through Israel's exile to Babylon came from the Phoenician alphabet, whose letters had evolved from these earlier "Egyptianized" letters.

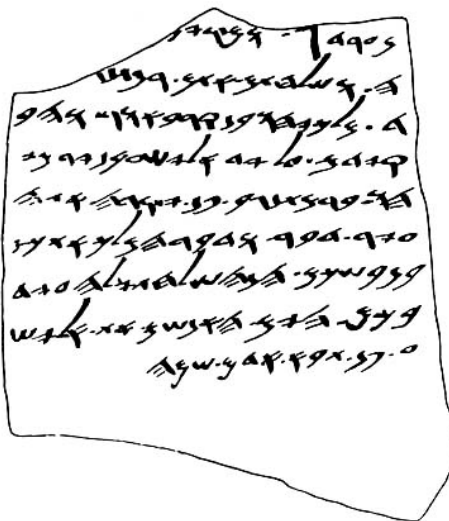
With respect to ancient Hebrew stone inscriptions, the script adopted from the Phoenicians and used from 1000-600 B.C.⁸ (referred to as "paleo-Hebrew" by scholars) was also not at all like the familiar squared script that readers are used to seeing in Drosnin's *The Bible Code* and other books about the code. This squared script was adopted in Babylon, ca. 550 B.C. Famous inscriptions such as the Gezer calendar, the Siloam inscription, and letters from Arad are proof positive of this older lettering. These inscriptions are illustrated below:



The image above is the earliest known *Hebrew* inscription, the Gezer calendar, which dates to sometime in the 900s B.C.⁹ On the next page is the Siloam inscription,¹⁰ which dates to the time of Hezekiah - 725-697 B.C. Note again the shapes of the letters – how different they are when compared to the modern script of the earlier example from Drosnin's book.



The final example below is a letter found at the Palestinian site of Arad. It was written on a piece of pottery (they didn't have stationery back then!).¹¹



At the risk of redundancy, the difference in script style is important because of the fact that when the lettering was "updated" to the familiar square script during the exile in Babylon, mistakes in spelling could easily be made in the transition. The chart below illustrates how certain letters in the paleo-Hebrew script could be confused with one another due to similarity in appearance. Just take a minute to look at how similar several of the shapes are to one another.

For example, the first right-hand vertical column of the chart shows the paleo-Hebrew evolution of the Hebrew letter *aleph* (we don't have this letter in English). Numbers 1-7 (reading from top to bottom) show examples of *aleph* as it appears in various inscriptions. For sake of visual comparison, count to the fifth column (from the right). This column illustrates the way the letter *heh* (our "h") is written in the Hebrew pre-dating the Exile. Note how similar in appearance *aleph* and *heh* could be. To muddy things even further, look at the second last column (from the left this time). This is an altogether different letter, the letter *yodh* (our "y"). Depending on the handwriting of the scribe, *yodh* could be easily mistaken for *heh*. As you look at the rest of the letters in the chart,¹² you can see that these letters weren't the only ones that could be mistaken with others – and this is only a third of the letters in the Hebrew alphabet! In fact, confusion between letters was a common problem.



The difference in script style is more than a visual problem. Just alerting the reader to the fact that the script changed helps prepare the reader to understand that the *language itself* was also different. The language of Proto-Sinaitic is not sufficiently known for detailed grammatical analysis, but the language of the Hebrew inscriptions noted above (and hundreds of others) is well understood.¹³ Briefly, the Hebrew of the period prior to the Exile differs from the Hebrew of today's Torah editions in general spelling practices, word order, the use of *matres lectiones* to mark vowels, the addition and spelling of suffixes and prefixes that determine the grammar of words, and inclusion of direct object markers (a two letter word in Hebrew).¹⁴ *All of these variables in the transmission history of text of the Torah by definition affect the sequence of letters that supposedly form the Bible code.*¹⁵

The rabbis of the Middle Ages were well aware of this fact. As one scholar notes, a passage in the Talmud actually contains the medieval commentary that “We are not experts on full and defective spelling.”¹⁶ Likewise, the Masoretes themselves who transmitted the standardized text knew of this spelling problem (it was their job to account for every letter). As Tigay notes, “Masoretic treatises such as *Minhat Shai* (1626) - which is still commonly printed in rabbinic Bibles (*Mikra’ot Gedalot*) - regularly discussed spelling differences between model texts.”¹⁷

Other more technical differences could also be listed, but these suffice to make the relevant point. The claim that God inserted a special code in the Torah text when he moved Moses or anyone else to write the Torah cannot stand in the face of the inscriptional material we possess today. There is no way we can know or determine or reconstruct such a text and, more importantly for this discussion, *the every-letter sequence of that text* because the script, spelling, word order, and grammar of the language that originally conveyed the Torah has demonstrably changed over time. Comparing how a scribe of 800 B.C. would have written out the text of the Torah letter by letter with today's modern Hebrew editions would instantly produce enough letter variations to meet Satinover's aforementioned standard for undoing the Bible code – but there is much more to come. The story gets much worse for the Bible code.

Period # 2: *Early Transmission of the Square-Lettered Text of the Torah (300 B.C. to around 100 A.D.)*

Perhaps this is a good point to pause and reassure readers of a more conservative religious persuasion that, although errors in transmission are a reality, the integrity of God should not be thought compromised. The Bible nowhere promises perfect transmission, and distinctions between copies and originals were made even in biblical times in the Bible itself.¹⁸ Most variants are irrelevant to anything doctrinal or even interesting. They often are at the level of questioning whether the original text should read, "Moses said to Aaron" versus "Moses argued with Aaron."

There are bigger issues, of course, and some do affect doctrine or historical content in some way. These are often noted in contemporary study Bibles.¹⁹ In these cases, the Bible student should put some effort into learning something about textual history so that he or she can understand the content of study Bible footnotes and prefatory comments. Denying history and the very real data left to us does not strengthen our faith.

Once the *consonantal text* (still no vowels) of the Torah was converted to the square script (regardless of who composed or edited its "final form"), it had to be copied and distributed for use. Fortunately, textual scholars and students have clear manuscript evidence for this time period, and the harsh realities of transmitting a text by hand. Indeed, this period is perhaps the most crucial for understanding the current textual state of affairs, for it was at this time that many variant readings crept into the text of the Old Testament (including the Torah proper), producing several clearly discernible transmission chains (*text-families*).

Though it lies well outside the chronological parameters of our second period, 1948 is a significant date for the study of this period. That was the year of the discovery of the first Dead Sea Scrolls, a find that revolutionized our knowledge of the transmission of the Hebrew Bible. Since the Dead Sea Scrolls, when tested by Carbon-14 and by analysis of handwriting styles (paleography), date anywhere from 300 B.C. to the first century A.D., the scrolls give us the beginning date for the chronology of our second period of transmission. Prior to 1948, the manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible to which scholars had access were all medieval, the earliest witness being the great manuscript *Leningradensis* (B19), which was dated by the copyist to 1009 A.D.! Hence, scholars who worked prior to the Dead Sea Scroll discoveries had to try to figure out how the text of the Torah was transmitted using manuscripts that were well over one thousand years behind the curve.

Before the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, the medieval manuscript data left scholars with a conundrum. Three things were painfully evident from the existing medieval material. First, while it was true that there was a high degree of conformity between all the manuscripts, no manuscript agreed with any other 100% of the time – there were no identical manuscripts of any meaningful length. Second, the manuscripts scholars possessed seemed to be classifiable into three distinct "families" – the *Masoretic Text* (MT), the Hebrew text that was the textual base for the *Septuagint* (LXX), and the *Samaritan Pentateuch* (SP). Third, one of those families, MT, known from other historical sources to have been professionally copied by families of Jewish scribes from late antiquity, claimed the vast majority of the manuscripts.

Naturally, this state of affairs gave rise to questions like: Why did one family have so many manuscripts? Did this imbalance indicate God had chosen that one family to protect the "true" text? Or, was the Masoretic text "artificial" – that is, did it reflect a biased, systematic elimination of other texts to suppress something? Did Jewish people of antiquity use the texts in the other families or did they ignore them? If they ignored them, why do we have them? How did we get all the manuscript variations? For sure, there were theories, but prior to 1948, scholars despaired of ever being able to answer these questions and others.

This all changed with the discoveries in the caves of Qumran by the Dead Sea. Virtually overnight scholars were transported back in time over one thousand years in text-historical terms. In general, the discovery evidenced several things:

1) There was a remarkable accuracy in the transmission of the Hebrew text, but there were sometimes dramatically different editions of the Torah content (which naturally alters the letter sequence).

2) The same text-families (MT, LXX, and SP) that showed themselves in the medieval manuscripts *were present in the Dead Sea Scrolls*. This proved that *a plurality of texts existed as early as 300 B.C.* That is, almost immediately from the time transmission began after the Exile, Jewish people were using more than one edition of the Torah. This find solved one question – whether the ancient Jewish people had more than one kind of Torah – but gave rise to another: Why did such textual plurality occur so early?

The importance of the very real textual plurality in Judea as early as 300 B.C. cannot be overstated. As noted earlier, in books that promote the Bible code, it is often asserted that the Hebrew text of the Torah has somehow been unaltered (or barely altered) since remote antiquity. For example, consider the words of Satinover:

Can we say that the text of the Torah used universally in Jewish practice is the original text? No, we cannot. Whatever the tradition may claim, the evidence is that variations have crept into the text over the years. No process of transmission carried out by humans can possibly be perfect. But the minuteness of errors that are known to have crept into the text is striking.²⁰

Though well meaning, Satinover's comments are uninformed. For one thing, he is referring to the MT only. He has not even considered in these comments that the readings of the other two text families, the LXX and SP, might be preferable in places within the Torah. He has also not considered the Dead Sea Scroll material for the Torah. In Part II I will introduce the reader to a single example that involves a difference of *fifty* letters between a Dead Sea Scroll text and the MT!²¹ Satinover and other Bible code proponents have badly underestimated the differences that exist in the Torah manuscript evidence.

The Qumran evidence for textual plurality also brings us to another claim made in books that promote the Bible code: that the text used today in which the Bible code

allegedly resides (the Koren edition of the MT) has been accepted by all Jews as the "best" (or even divinely-dispensed) text. This is true only from 100 A.D. onward. Such claims entirely whitewash the faithfulness of other Jews in ancient Palestine, the fact that no two manuscripts *within* the MT tradition always agree in all places, and that the commentaries and opinions of rabbis in the Talmud quote MT manuscripts that disagree.²² We know from the Dead Sea Scrolls that Torah plurality not only existed in the Jewish religious world, but also *was accepted and tolerated*.²³ This is shown from the following data that has been drawn from study of the Qumran material:

1. Thorough scholarly studies on the habits of Qumran scribes demonstrate conclusively that the scribes made no attempt to suppress other text families.²⁴
2. Jesus, the disciples, and the apostle Paul quoted from the Septuagint far more often than they quoted from the MT tradition (roughly 80 percent of the time) when they quoted the Old Testament in the pages of the New Testament.²⁵ Why would Jesus and the apostles use the "wrong" text? Didn't they know better? The answer is that they had no sense that the MT was "better." There were several Hebrew texts available in Jesus' day. There is no hint in the ancient material that Jesus or the apostles even cared which text they were using.

Perhaps not surprisingly, in light of the apparent absence of any knowledge of textual history, proponents of the Bible code seem to have given little thought to these issues. They never tell us *why* the MT should be preferred or given the nod among the text-family choices; its priority is just assumed. Just because the MT was the received text of the medieval Masoretes does not prove it *merits* textual priority among today's extant witnesses, or that it had textual priority in biblical times. If anything, the attitude of the Qumran scribes would suggest that, in biblical times, few people ever worried about which text was the "best" or most sanctified. It matters not that the LXX or SP are "outnumbered." The correct reading of the text cannot be verified merely by *counting* manuscripts. Manuscripts must be evaluated by strict but sensible criteria. What matters is which readings in manuscripts of *any* family can best explain the rise of the others, and thus show the others to be later or *secondary*.

Very simply, *no text* should be assigned *a priori* superiority in textual history or textual evaluation. Determination of the best reading cannot be made on the basis of presumptions about divine guidance over the "correct" text, a procedure which would require omniscience, and which would rebel against the data at our disposal (not to mention common sense).

But if textual plurality in the period 300 B.C. to 100 A.D. is indisputable, what happened in 100 A.D. to change this? How did the MT come to be the *textus receptus* ("received text")? Hebrew scholars and textual critics are virtually unanimous in their agreement that the reason MT rose to prominence only after centuries of textual *diversity* was not due to "intrinsic factors related to the textual transmission . . . but by political and socio-religious events and developments."²⁶ Emanuel Tov, the chief editor of the Dead Sea Scrolls, explains:

By the end of the 1st century A.D., the LXX had been accepted by Christianity and abandoned by Jews. Copies of the Samaritan Pentateuch were available, but in the meantime, that sect had become an independent religion, so that their texts were considered Samaritan, not Jewish anymore. The Qumran sect, who had preserved a multitude of texts, did not exist after the destruction of the temple. Therefore, the sole texts that existed in this period were the ones that were copied and distributed by the central group in Judaism . . . This situation gave rise to the wrong conclusion that the MT had 'ousted' the other texts.²⁷

As noted above by Tov, one of the key events that led to the MT achieving its sanctified status among Jews was the rise of Christianity. The text of choice of Jesus and the apostles, the LXX, was *rejected* since it often preserved readings that Jewish Christians embraced and used in debates with Jews who opposed Christianity (remember, Christianity is a derivative of Judaism).²⁸ How ironic that so many believers in the Bible code are evangelical Christians! Thus, "standardization" of the Hebrew text was motivated not by sound textual evaluation, but by religious disagreement.²⁹ In other words, religious disagreement became the basis for certain rabbis arguing in favor or against certain textual readings, and thereby certain text families.

Period # 3: *Transmission of the "Standardized" Text by the Masoretes (100 A.D. to around 1100 A.D.)*

Once Christians were dispersed to other parts of the Mediterranean by persecution,³⁰ it became an easy matter to "standardize" the text of the Torah in favor of the MT, thereby disregarding the textual plurality that existed prior to the advent of Christianity. The standardized MT was then repeatedly copied. This is the main reason why most manuscripts we have today can be placed into the MT text family. The two most complete Hebrew Bible manuscripts of the MT tradition, B19 and the Aleppo Codex, come from this period.

Keeping the theme of how the history of the text points to textual uncertainty (in terms of every-letter sequence), there are basically two items to highlight in this period of Torah transmission. First, the fact that the Masoretes themselves were hesitant to accept certain readings within the MT tradition they were now perpetuating. Second, that Jewish rabbis at times preferred other readings outside the standardized MT text. Let's take them in order.

Along with strict copying of the standardized text, the Masoretes devised a system of vowels and their own version of "study Bible" notes – the Masorah.³¹ The Masorah is especially significant for our purposes of critiquing the idea of a Bible code. The Masorah demonstrates conclusively that *within the chosen MT text family there were manuscripts with differing readings*. Now, the Masoretes were not interested in seeing if the divergent MT manuscript readings matched up with readings in the LXX or SP. Instead, they restricted their decision as to the "best" readings to only manuscripts within the MT tradition. Examples of Masorah notes in the Torah relevant to the textual uncertainty that undermines the Bible code will be given in Chapter 3. It is sufficient here

only to point out that disagreements within the accepted tradition certifiably damage the code.

Along with the Masorah, there are other sources from this time period that prove there were a number of variant readings in manuscripts that belonged to the MT text family. Most notable here are the rabbinic writings. While it is certainly true that most rabbinic quotations correspond to MT,³² scholars acknowledge that there is "a wealth of variant Hebrew readings"³³ in the rabbinic material.

To better understand what we mean here, one must realize that this is the era that corresponds to what is known as the Talmudic period of history. The Talmud, in simplest terms, is a collection of rabbinic commentary on the Torah. When the rabbis quote the Torah in their discussions and debates, the words of the quotation usually correspond exactly to MT. Sometimes, however, there are differences, and those differences indicate the survival of variant readings within MT manuscripts. As the disciples of the famous rabbi Rashi put it, "Our Talmud disagrees with our Bibles."³⁴

As one rabbinic textual scholar notes, these variations denote extraneous authorized traditions within the framework of the MT tradition, and not the single, "authorized" MT text the Masoretes wished to perpetuate.³⁵ It is important to remember that the rabbis were *not* comparing MT to the LXX or SP and quoting alternative text families – those text families had previously been set aside by the Masoretes, who gave the rabbis of the medieval period a "standardized" text. Rather, some rabbis preferred alternative readings in manuscripts *within the stream of textual tradition used by the Masoretes* – readings set aside by the "official" scribes.

Even more interesting, many of the variant readings within the MT family do not match scribal notes in the Masorah. This means these readings reflect ancient textual traditions like the LXX³⁶ that the Masoretes had not managed to eradicate.³⁷ As one Talmudic scholar has observed, "there are about 300 discrepancies between Talmudic quotations of the Hebrew Bible and the Koren edition" – the edition used in the original Bible code experiment.³⁸ However, while many such variants probably do reflect ancient text families, many arose during the medieval period. Regardless of their origin, the point is clear – how can we today establish *with certainty* the *every-letter* sequence of the Torah in light of so much textual variance – even within the accepted stream of tradition? The actual textual evidence points conclusively to the fact that, contrary to the ridiculous claim of Drosnin that the Hebrew text has been the same for over a thousand years, no manuscripts – even those within the sanctified text family – are uniform in all respects.

Period # 4: Transmission up to the present day (1100 A.D. up to now)

From the 12th century on, thousands of MT manuscripts using the now-familiar vowel markings were produced.³⁹ Two scholars, Benjamin Kennicott and Johannes B. de Rossi, studied these manuscripts in detail for variations. Most of the variants in these manuscripts were introduced during this late period, and few if any are thought to reflect earlier competing text families.⁴⁰ Again, though, the issue is not the origin of variation, it is the *fact* of variation within the accepted Masoretic tradition. When one needs, as in the case of a Bible code, every-letter preservation, *any* variant is significant.

From about 1450, Hebrew Bibles began to be printed rather than hand copied. By the sixteenth century, printed Bibles had all but replaced hand-written copies in regular use.

The first complete printed Hebrew Bible was produced in 1488 (in Soncino). A major development in the printing of the Torah came with the so-called Rabbinic Bibles. Daniel Bomberg published the first of these in 1516-1517. The famous second Rabbinic Bible was edited by Jacob ben Hayyim ben Adoniyahu and printed again by Bomberg in 1524-1525. This Bible is noteworthy in that it contained the entire vocalized Hebrew text, all of the Masorahs, and notes by the outstanding Jewish commentators Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and David Qimhi.

The Second Rabbinic Bible became embraced as the received edition, and was "the determinative text for all branches of Jewish life and subsequently also for the scholarly world."⁴¹ The Koren edition (1966), the edition used in the original Bible code experiments chronicled by Michael Drosnin in *The Bible Code*, follows this text with minor variations in verse division and spelling.

The dominance of the ben Hayyim text ceased in 1929. In 1905, a new editor in charge of producing a Hebrew Bible for study, Rudolph Kittel, had replaced the Rabbinic Bible's critical notes. Kittel's Bible (or BHK) used the Rabbinic Bible's Hebrew text in its first two editions (1905, 1913), but for the third edition (1929), switched to the text of B19, *Leningradensis*. Kittel's work was revised in 1967 by W. Rudolph and K. Elliger in Stuttgart, Germany. This edition (still using B19 as the text) was called BHS – *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. The third edition of BHS (1977) is the one in greatest circulation today. A new (fourth) edition is currently in process. An altogether new Hebrew text edition using the *Aleppo Codex* manuscript as a base, the Hebrew University Bible Project (HUBP), is also in process.

Summation

To sum up, throughout the history of the Hebrew Torah, literally thousands of variants have arisen. These variants at times are due to the existence of three text-families, all of which Jews accepted and which were tolerated as late as 100 A.D. Other variants came about as a result of changes in the script, the grammar of the language, spelling conventions, accidental mistakes by scribes, and some deliberate choices by scribes for religious reasons. Since we are not omniscient, we cannot know which text family is "best" in general. We cannot even know which late medieval variants within the accepted MT tradition may belong to the "original" Torah. Therefore, we cannot know for certain what letters belong in sequence to even create a "Bible code."

These are all facts that render the current Bible code sequence irrelevant. But rather than just take my word for variants within the Torah, the reader is invited to consider the examples in the next chapter.

For Further Reading:

John Healey, *The Early Alphabet*, Reading the Past, vol. 9 (Univ. of California Press, 1991)

Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Old Testament Text," pages 159-199 in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1970)

Paul Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations : The Origin and Development of the Bible* (Baker, 2000)

¹ Much of what follows has been culled from several sources, and readers who desire more detail can consult those sources: Ellis R. Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* (Baker, 1994; recommended for beginners); P. Kyle McCarter, *Textual Criticism: Recovering the Text of the Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986); Emanuel Tov, "Textual Criticism (OT)," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. VI, ed. David N. Freedman (Doubleday, 1992); Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

² For a defense of Mosaic authorship, see Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964); and Duane Garrett, *Re-Thinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the First Book of the Pentateuch* (Baker, Out of Print).

³ For a defense of the "documentary hypothesis" of the Torah, see Richard E. Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (Harper, 1997).

⁴ The change in script is also important, due to the existence of another "Bible code" myth that the very shape of the Hebrew letters conveys some sort of mystical truth – a "spiritual code" as it were. If we cannot determine with certainty what the text given by God through men even looked like at its initial composition, the notion that God has conveyed some spiritual knowledge through the shapes is nonsensical. For a brief online introduction to the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions, see <http://www.lib.byu.edu/~imaging/negev/Origins.html>. For a scholarly introduction to the development of the Semitic alphabet, see Benjamin Sass, *The Genesis of the Alphabet and its Development in the Second Millennium B.C.*, *Agypten Und Altes Testament*, Band 13 (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz); and Joseph Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet: An Introduction to West Semitic Epigraphy and Paleography* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982).

⁵ The Egyptian and Semitic language systems have a number of grammatical and syntactical differences. For this specific linguistic item, one would have to be familiar with at least one of them to comprehend the point. Without this background, one could venture to the following scholarly sources and compare the descriptions of how the languages "work": Antonio Loprieno, *Ancient Egyptian: A Linguistic Introduction* (Cambridge, 1995); and Patrick Bennett, *Comparative Semitic Linguistics: A Manual* (Eisenbrauns, 1998). For the Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions, see John Healey, *The Early Alphabet*, *Reading the Past*, vol. 9 (Univ. of California Press, 1991); and P. Kyle McCarter, *Ancient Inscriptions: Voices from the Biblical World* (Biblical Archaeology Society).

⁶ The image is from Joseph Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet*: 24.

⁷ Naveh, 25.

⁸ This is the period when Israel was in the land of Palestine under David, Solomon, and later kings, prior to being destroyed by Babylon in 586 B.C.

⁹ Naveh, 63.

¹⁰ The image is from <http://www.historian.net/siloam.htm>.

¹¹ The image is from Naveh, 72.

¹² The images are from Naveh, 77, 93.

¹³ See Graham Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: Corpus and Concordance* (Cambridge, 1991); Sarah Gogel, *A Grammar of Epigraphic Hebrew* (Eisenbrauns, 1998); and Angel Saenz Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Cambridge, 1996).

¹⁴ See especially Saenz Badillos here, who catalogues and illustrates all these categories.

¹⁵ For the history and archaeological data demonstrating the use or non-use of *matres lectionis* in ancient Hebrew, the reader is pointed to the following sources: F.M. Cross and D. N. Freedman, *Early Hebrew Orthography: A Study of the Epigraphic Evidence* (Eisenbrauns 1952); D. N. Freedman, A. Dean Forbes, and Francis Andersen, *Studies in Hebrew and Aramaic Orthography*, Brown Biblical and Judaic Studies, vol. 2 (Eisenbrauns, 1992); Ziony Zevit, *Matres Lectionis in Ancient Hebrew Epigraphs* (Cambridge, 1980). These sources are for the specialist, and cannot be understood without knowledge of Hebrew. I include them here for reference and to prove to the skeptic that such material does exist.

¹⁶ The reference is found in Kiddushin 30a of the Talmud, and is quoted here as referenced by Jeffrey Tigay, "The Bible 'Codes' – A Textual Perspective," 8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁸ The best resource I know for this issue is Craig Bahnsen, "The Inerrancy of the Autographa," in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman Geisler (Moody Press, 1980).

¹⁹ A good resource in this form is the *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)* of the Bible, since its editors and translators often chose to include textual material that differs with the Masoretic text. See especially I Samuel of that Bible translation for examples.

²⁰ Satinover, 47,55.

²¹ See Satinover's comments once again on page 212 of his book: "[It] requires 77 deletions to erase the Bible Code entirely . . ."

²² See chapter 4 in this book.

²³ The mere fact that multiple text families existed at Qumran is proof of this. See Tov, "Textual Criticism (OT)," 402.

²⁴ The point here is that alternative readings were *preserved* by Qumran scribes. For studies of scribal practices at Qumran, see Emanuel Tov, "Scribal Markings in the Texts from the Judean Desert," in *Current Research and Technological Developments on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996); Malachi Martin, *The Scribal Character of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2 vols. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1958).

²⁵ See Karen Jobes and Moises Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Baker, 2000): 183-205.

²⁶ Tov, "Textual Criticism (OT)," 395, 407.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 407.

²⁸ For a discussion of an important example, see Michael S. Heiser, "Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158: 629 (January-March 2001): 52-74.

²⁹ This is also the case in the rejection of SP, since mainline Jews rejected Samaritan religion and thus their Torah edition.

³⁰ See the New Testament book of Acts here, especially the first 8 chapters.

³¹ In reality, two methods of vowel markings became popular, the Babylonian system (invented by Jews in Babylon) and the Tiberian system (invented by Jews in Tiberius, near the sea of Galilee). Eventually, the Tiberian system won the day and became the accepted method of vocalizing the consonants. This is why most medieval manuscripts have the Tiberian vowel marks.

³² Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 34-35.

³³ Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Old Testament Text," pages 159-198 in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1970): 176. These variants have been collected and discussed in several sources: V. Aptowitzer, *Das Schriftwort in der rabbinischen Literatur*, vols. I-IV (Vienna, 1906-1915; repr. New York 1970); Y. Maori, "The Text of the Hebrew Bible in Rabbinic Writings in Light of the Qumran Evidence," in D. Dimant and U. Rappaport (eds.) *The Dead Sea Scrolls – Forty Years of Research* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992): 283-289.

³⁴ The quotation (translated above in English) appears in B. Shabbat 55b, s.v. מריבעם, and is quoted from Jeffrey Tigay, "The Bible Codes: A Textual Perspective," 8.

³⁵ M. Cohen, "The 'Masoretic text' and the Extent of its Influence on the Transmission of the Biblical Text in the Middle Ages," *Studies in the Bible and Exegesis* 2 (Hebrew; Rammat Gan 1986): 229-256.

³⁶ Maori, 284.

³⁷ Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 38.

³⁸ Sternberg, 25.

³⁹ Brotzman, 58. Most of the material for this section is adapted from Brotzman, pp. 59-61.

⁴⁰ Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 35-37.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

Chapter 3

To Err is Human: The Imperfection of Manuscript Transmission

Before I sat down to put this work together, I'd actually been thinking about writing such a book for over a year. The main reason for my hesitancy concerns this chapter.

I *know* the Bible code is fraudulent because I know about the history of the Torah text, and have worked in the original languages doing textual criticism. I have spent many hours studying variant readings in various books of the Hebrew Old Testament, and am very well acquainted with its textual uncertainty. Indeed, the text itself and its variances are the most powerful arguments against the Bible code. Unfortunately, I also knew that, for the most part, readers of this book would not have this background, and would probably not be able to read Hebrew or Greek. Hence my dilemma – how to illustrate what I am asserting in such a way that it is digestible to the non-specialist and non-Hebrew reader.

In this chapter, I attempt to bridge these language and experiential gaps. I will do my best to show and explain how textual differences arose and where text-families disagree with each other. I will restrict my examples to books in the Torah (and these are a very small percentage of the variants that exist in the Torah).¹ Yes, I will put the texts in Hebrew.² Again, *you do not need to be able to read Hebrew*, so don't be frightened by the strange-looking letters. All you really need to be able to do is count the letter differences! I will provide translations for any Hebrew (the affected words are in italics), and will arrange the texts so that you can visually discern the important point for each example: *that letters in the Hebrew text of MT, the "accepted text" behind the Bible code, have either been lost, been added by scribes for various reasons, or have otherwise changed over time*. I will also keep a running count of the variants after each example, noting specifically:

- (1) How many letters are affected;
- (2) The letters *lost* in MT – that is, letters of the accurate text that MT does not have, but should have;
- (3) The letters which *should be deleted from MT for textual accuracy*.

With respect to this last category, the reader should recall Satinover's admission here, that 77 deletions from the text of the Torah used for the Bible code would be sufficient to destroy it. Hence, the "running count number" for the total letters that don't

belong in the accurate text of the Torah (and therefore should be deleted) is the most important for our purposes. In short, I will demonstrate with actual examples the textual uncertainty *that undermines the every-letter sequence* required for a Bible code. The chapter is divided into four sections, which will be taken in order:

- Manuscript Errors in MT Due to Accidental Scribal Mistakes
- Manuscript Errors in MT Due to Deliberate Scribal Changes
- Manuscript Uncertainty in MT Due to Text-Family Disagreement
- Manuscript Uncertainty in MT Noted by the Scribes

New Essential Terms (and Some Reminders):

Masorettes – The scribes who put the vowels into MT and created the Masorah

- **Masorah** – The collection of scribal notes placed into the margins of the text of the Torah once the text became "standardized" in late antiquity on through the early Middle Ages (roughly 500-1000 A.D.).

Text Families – Groups of manuscripts that have a high degree of agreement with one another, and a high degree of common *disagreement* with other manuscripts.

Plurality of Texts – The fact that there was more than one Torah text family in the ancient Jewish world.

Masoretic Text (MT) – One of several text families; the "official" text after 100 A.D.

Samaritan Pentateuch (SP) – Another text family that only contains the first five books of the Old Testament (the Torah or "Pentateuch").

Septuagint (LXX) – Another text family testified to at Qumran along with MT and SP.

Matres Lectionis (Latin, "mothers of reading") – Refers to the use of certain consonant letters in Hebrew that were also used as vowels before the vowel marks were inserted into the text of the Torah by the Masorettes.

Textual Critic – scholar who endeavors to reconstruct the correct (most closely "original") text of the Torah from all the manuscript remains.

Reading(s) – A particular group of letters, which usually make up words or phrases in the text, but which may be garbled by mistakes in transmission. In other words, a "reading" is what any given witness reads/says at any given place.

- **Secondary Reading** – When a reading is determined to be derived from another reading (and thus it is not "original").

Variance– A discrepancy between readings.

Variant – An individual reading that disagrees with at least one other reading.

Textual "Plus" – A portion of a text not found in another manuscript (appears to be an "added" element).

Textual "Minus" – A portion of a text missing in comparison to another text (appears something has dropped out accidentally or was deleted).

Note: Determining whether something is a Plus or Minus is the job of the textual critic. It is often difficult (and sometimes impossible) to know whether the manuscript you are working with has a false addition, or whether another manuscript to which you are comparing your manuscript has been corrupted by an omission.

Gloss – An explanatory expansion inserted into the text by a scribe. At times it is difficult to tell whether the suspected gloss is a true gloss or an original part of the text.

Manuscript Errors in MT Due to Accidental Scribal Mistakes³

Despite the seriousness with which they took their task, and the great care they exercised in performing that task, scribes who copied the Torah made mistakes. At times, they introduced errors themselves or copied an error made by a previous scribe. The heat of the day, someone talking nearby, or perhaps a pesky insect could each distract a scribe. There are clear instances of such distraction, when a scribe's eye would slip from one place in the line he was copying to another. Or where he would repeat copying a letter or word he had just copied. Sometimes the penmanship of a prior ancient hand or quality of eyesight affected a scribe's ability to distinguish letters. What matters is not *how* an error crept into the text, *but that it is there at all*. It also matters not if meaning is not altered significantly. When one speaks of a Bible code and its required every-letter sequence, *any* change in the sequence causes the "code" to shift.

I have grouped the examples below into categories recognized by textual scholars.

1. Graphic Confusion (Letter Confusion)

Graphic confusion is when a scribe confused one letter for another when copying, due to the visual similarity of the letters. Notice below in the examples how similar the mistaken letters (enlarged and boldfaced) are to each other.

Genesis 22:13

MT וִירָא וְהִנֵּה אֵיל אַחַד נֶאֱחַז בְּסַבֵּךְ בְּקַרְנָיו
("He looked up and there *was behind* (. . .?) a ram caught by its horns in a thicket")

SP וִירָא וְהִנֵּה אֵיל אֶחָד נֶאֱחַז בְּסַבֵּךְ בְּקַרְנָיו
("He looked up and there *was one* (*a*) ram caught by its horns in a thicket")

Here the confusion over one letter creates a translation difference. Clearly, MT is deficient, for the sentence makes little sense – it leaves the reader to guess what is going on. SP makes perfect sense. One letter in the Torah is affected.

Genesis 11:30

MT ותהי שרי עקרה אין לה ולד
SP ותהי שרי עקרה אין לה ילד

Both = "But Sarai was barren; she had no *child*"

This is a clear instance of an error in MT where the scribe confused two similar letters (ו / י ; w / y). In fact, in the Dead Sea Scrolls, this is one of the most notoriously difficult letter distinctions. At times the two letters are completely indistinguishable.

Scholars know that SP here is superior and accurate since *the noun ילד (y-l-d) occurs over 100 times in the Hebrew Bible (20 times in Genesis), and only here is the spelling ולד (w-l-d)*. This is also a good example of language/spelling change from earliest Hebrew to the Hebrew of the Babylonian exile. In the oldest *non-biblical* Hebrew inscriptions available, the word "child" is actually spelled ולד (w-l-d), not ילד (y-l-d). The transition from w to y occurred in the early second millennium B.C. (between 1500 and 1000 B.C.).⁴

Total letter differences = 2

Letters lost in MT = 0

Deletions from MT for textual accuracy = 0

2. Dittography (Letter Repetition)

Dittography refers to the accidental duplication of a letter or *nearly* identical letters (writing the letter twice when the original had only one letter).

Genesis 2:11

MT = כל-ארץ החוילה
SP = כל-ארץ חוילה

MT = "all the land of *the* Havilah"

SP = "all the land of Havilah"

Note that the MT has an extra letter. In Hebrew grammar, this letter is the definite article (the Hebrew equivalent to the English word "the"). Scholars are certain MT is defective here (the letter should NOT be here) for two reasons: (1) everywhere else in

the Hebrew Bible, "Havilah" is written without the article; and (2) in Hebrew grammar, proper nouns do not take the article.

Total letter differences = 3

Letters lost in MT = 0

Deletions from MT for textual accuracy = 1

3. Graphic Transposition (Letter Switching)

Graphic transposition is when the proper order of two letters in a word has been switched by a scribal error.

Deuteronomy 31:1

MT משה וידבר וילך ("and Moses *went and spoke*")

4QDtn משה וידבר ויכל ("and Moses *finished speaking*")

A little Hebrew knowledge would help here, but it isn't essential. The letters enlarged and boldfaced above have been switched. The reason they don't look exactly alike is that the letter "k" in Hebrew is written in two ways – one way within a word (כ) and another at the end of a word (ך). The context argues for going with the Dead Sea text 4QDtn, since Moses was already in the presence of the children of Israel according to the larger context (i.e., he didn't need to "go" and speak; he was already at his destination). Two letters are affected.

Total letter differences = 5

Letters lost in MT = 0

Deletions from MT for textual accuracy = 1

4. Haplography

Haplography is an important category of scribal error, and requires a little more explanation. Basically, haplography is when a copyist misses a set of identical letters (or one identical letter) in a phrase or sentence *by copying them only once when those letters were in the original more than once*. Haplography involves the eye's skipping from one part of the copied line to another by accident. It's probably easier to describe this phenomenon than define it. The example below will illustrate.

Genesis 4:7

This is a well-known textual error in MT, and it illustrates haplography well. It's from the Cain and Abel story.

LXX, SP, and 4QGen^{b#} all read =

לפתח חמאת תרבץ

While MT has לפתח חמאת רבץ

The translation should be "sin is crouching at the door," but the grammar in MT is erroneous, thus making this translation incongruous, due to the missed letter (see below).

Note that LXX, SP, and 4QGen^{b#} all have an extra letter (a "t" in Hebrew - ת). This extra letter is certainly original because Hebrew grammar requires it. Since the noun / subject in the phrase ("sin") is feminine in gender (in Hebrew) the verb must match (a feminine verb form is needed). The feminine verb form is properly spelled תרבץ (imperfect third singular feminine verbs begin with a "t"). What has happened here is that the scribe of MT wrote the "t" (ת) that ends the prior word – the noun – but missed the "t" that begins the immediately following word. His eye somehow skipped it and moved on to the following letter, creating the grammatical error (the רבץ of MT is a *masculine* participle, rather than the needed feminine verb). Only one letter is affected.

Total letter differences = 5

Letters lost in MT = 1

Deletions from MT for textual accuracy = 1

5. Parablepsis

Like haplography, parablepsis involves the eye's skipping from one part of the copied line to another by accident. The difference is that the skipping was not due to mistakenly omitting an identical letter right next to its twin; it was due to seeing the identical letter later in the line being copied.

Genesis 4:8

MT reads:

ויאמר קין אל-הבל אחיו ויהי בהיותם בשדה

(Literally, "And Cain said to Abel his brother <?> And it came to pass, when they were in the field")

MT has lost what Cain said. Scholars have found these words in the two other major text families.

LXX and SP read (note the extra enlarged and boldfaced letters):

וַיֹּאמֶר קַיִן אֶל-הָבֶל אָחִיו נֵלְכֵה הַשָּׂדֶה וַיְהִי בְהֵיוֹתָם בַּשָּׂדֶה

(Literally, "And Cain said to Abel his brother, 'let us go to the field.' And it came to pass, when they were in the field")

This is a classic example of parablepsis. The scribe's eye skipped from the ׀ (waw) at the end of one word (the last letter of the fifth word [reading right to left] just before the enlarged letters) to the same letter occurring at the beginning of the first word after the enlarged words. The result was the loss in MT of the two words in question. Not only do the LXX and SP have the missing words, but scholars are also sure the MT is deficient here for other reasons:

- a. The extra words are in the Syriac translation (the Peshitta) the Latin translation (the Vulgate), and the Palestinian Targum (an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Torah).
- b. The *Masoretes noticed the deletion*, and noted that something was missing in the text by their insertion of a section division marker in the *middle* of the verse (section division markers are almost always placed at the end of verses).⁵

A total of eight letters are affected.

Total letter differences = 13

Letters lost in MT = 9

Deletions from MT for textual accuracy = 1

Genesis 5:23

LXX and SP read

וַיְהִי כָל-יְמֵי חֲנוּךְ

MT = וַיְהִי כָל-יְמֵי חֲנוֹךְ

Both are translated "And the days of Enoch were . . . [365 years]," but MT's grammar is wrong.

This parablepsis is certain, but indeterminate as to causation. Somehow, once again, the MT scribe's eye skipped a letter (perhaps his eye went from the ׀ of the word וַיְהִי in MT to the same letter that begins ׀מ׀). The LXX and SP wording is certifiably correct since their text spells out a plural verb form, required by the plural subject ("days") of that verb. In other words, the missing letter of MT is what makes the word /verb plural, and so it is correct and original.

Total letter differences = 14

Letters lost in MT = 10

Deletions from MT for textual accuracy = 1

Manuscript Errors in MT Due to Deliberate Scribal Changes⁶

1. Explanatory Insertions (Glosses)

A gloss is a scribal insertion to clarify or explain a difficult or potentially ambiguous reading (for sake of future readers). At times, such attempts caused more confusion than clarification.

Genesis 7:13-15

To properly understand why MT is corrupt here, one needs first to read the contents of verse thirteen:

"The very same day, Noah, along with Shem and Ham and Japheth, Noah's sons, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, entered into the ark."

The above text is very clear in that Noah, his wife, and their three sons and their wives entered the ark. *In the very next verses* we read (in English for now – note the boldfaced words for the Hebrew problem):

(14) **They**, and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth after its kind, and every flying creature after its kind, every bird of every sort. (15) **And they went in to Noah into the ark ...**

In case the problem is not clear, taken together, these verses are saying that *Noah* (and his family) "*went in to Noah* into the ark." The MT text causes the odd translation.

Verse 14 (in MT) erroneously inserts a three-letter pronoun (אִנְיָ; English, "they") into the verse, a pronoun that *must* grammatically refer to the list of verse 13 (which includes Noah!). Not only is it impossible for Noah to come to Noah, but *his family had already entered the ark* according to verse 13! As an editorial aside, this is the kind of "Bible difficulty" that those who scoff at the Bible as being God's word often bring up. The "error" evaporates with the application of textual criticism.

For our purposes, LXX does not have the inserted pronoun, and is the superior text.

Total letter differences = 17

Letters lost in MT = 10

Deletions from MT for textual accuracy = 4

2. Substituting Euphemistic Language for Certain "Offensive" Wordings in the Text

Deuteronomy 25:11

MT = וַהֲחִזִּיקָהּ בַמְּבַשִּׁיּוֹ (Literally, "and she seized him by
that which arouses shame")

SP = וַהֲחִזִּיקָהּ בַבְּשָׂרוֹ ("and she seized him by *his flesh*"
– i.e., *his genitals*)

The issue here is that the MT scribes wanted to avoid the reference to a man's genitals in the context of them being touched by a woman in any way. To avoid this offense, the scribe cleverly added one letter (the second to last in MT), and rearranged the order of three others, which created a participle from an altogether different word in the place of the word for "flesh/genitals." Consequently, there are four letters affected, one of which should be deleted from MT for accuracy.

Total letter differences = 21

Letters lost in MT = 10

Deletions from MT for textual accuracy = 5

3. Deliberate Theological Changes

An excellent example of a place where scribes changed the wording of the text for theological reasons is Deuteronomy 32:8. In this case, and others, the problem was that the scribe thought a reading sounded polytheistic, and so an alteration was made.⁷

Deuteronomy 32:8

MT = לְמִסְפַּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ("according to the number of the sons of Israel")

Some manuscripts of LXX and 4QDeut^g =

לְמִסְפַּר בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים

4QDeut^j = לְמִסְפַּר בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים

Either translation = ("according to the number of the sons of God")

The issue here is the phrase "sons of God," which many scholars have noted refers in other ancient semitic texts to multiple divine beings. As Tov notes, the MT scribe, "did not feel at ease with this possibly polytheistic picture."⁸ There are five letter differences here, all five of which should be removed from MT and replaced for accuracy.

Total letter differences = 26
Letters lost in MT = 10
Deletions from MT for textual accuracy = 10

Genesis 14:22

MT = ואמר אברם אל מלך סדם הרימתי ידי אל
יהוה אל עליון קנה שמים ארץ

("And Abram said to the king of Sodom, 'I swear to *the LORD*, God Most High [Lit. – El Elyon], creator of heaven and earth.")

LXX and the Dead Sea text 1QapGen (col. XXII, line 21) both lack יהוה ("Yahweh") the divine name enlarged in the example.

MT added the divine name here for theological clarification (it is a theological gloss). The reason was because El Elyon ("God Most High") was the name of God to the pagan Canaanites. The scribe wanted to be clear that it was Yahweh who was the Most High God, and so added the name.⁹ This MT insertion concerns four letters. Again, they should be deleted as secondary from MT for textual accuracy.

Total letter differences = 30
Letters lost in MT = 10
Deletions from MT for textual accuracy = 14

Manuscript Uncertainty Due to Text-Family Disagreement

As noted in our brief discussion of the history of the Hebrew text of the Torah, the Dead Sea Scrolls show us that there were at least three different text families (what would become known as MT, LXX, and SP) used during the period of 300 B.C. to 100 A.D.

In this section, I will utilize a dramatic content comparison between a Dead Sea Scroll of Exodus versus the MT text of the same passage. The reader need not be a linguist to grasp the comparison – all he or she needs to do is observe how certain underlined letters are (1) missing in MT; or (2) spelled differently at times in the Dead Sea text (the scrolls have the "plene" [full] spelling noted earlier). The point is simple but profound: the Bible code requires accounting for every *letter* of the text and its sequence, but there is no way, short of omniscience, that we can tell which text families reflect the original texts composed for the Torah.

We turn then to the striking disagreement in the major text families in Exodus 32:10-11.¹⁰ Scholars are not in consensus as to whether the disagreement should be thought of as a wholesale MT deletion or wholesale SP / LXX addition. The point is moot, though, for our purposes. At issue is *textual uncertainty in terms of an every-letter sequence*. It is *possible* that MT has lost, in this example, roughly *fifty letters* (see the underlined portions).

4QpaleoExod^m (Exodus 32:10b-11)

Note: Brackets [] are for missing letters in the scroll fragment; the reading is certified by parallel passages (cf. Deut. 9:20)

1 אִוְתַךְ לְגוֹי גָדוֹל [וּבְאַהֲרֹן הַתְּאֵנִי יְהוָה מְאֹד לְהַשְׁמִידוֹ]
2 וַיַּחַל מֹשֶׁה בְּעַד אֲנָהֲרֹן [] [ו] []
3 וַיַּחַל מֹשֶׁה אֶת פְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי וַיֹּאמֶר לְמַנְה [יְהוָה יִחַב אֶנְפֶךָ]
4 בְּעַמְךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאת מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּצַח גָּדוֹל [בְּבוֹרֵעַ חֹזְקָתָ]

Masoretic Text

1 אוֹתְךָ לְגוֹי גָדוֹל
2
3 וַיַּחַל מֹשֶׁה אֶת פְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי וַיֹּאמֶר לְמַנְה [יְהוָה יִחַב אֶנְפֶךָ]
4 בְּעַמְךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאת מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּצַח גָּדוֹל וּבִיד חֹזְקָה

Translation:

- 1 (. . . but I will make) you a great nation. But against Aaron the LORD was very angry, (enough) to destroy him;
- 2 so Moses prayed on behalf of Aaron.
- 3 And Moses entreated the LORD his God and said, "Why, O LORD, does your anger burn
- 4 against your people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and a mighty arm?"

With these fifty letters, the tally for overall textual uncertainty is now:

Total letter differences = 80

Letters lost in MT = 60

Deletions from MT for textual accuracy = 14

Hopefully the reader is getting the picture. The Bible code is "dead on arrival" when understood from the perspective of the textual evidence left to us by time (and God, no less) – and we're just getting to the notes made by the *Masoretes* themselves about the text. I say this since the Masoretes actually note one place in MT where no less than 85 letters (and thus necessary deletions) *were viewed suspiciously!* That one instance alone would surpass Satinover's "magic 77."

Manuscript Uncertainty in MT Noted by the Scribes¹¹

This is perhaps the most damning category of the four, for it is the scribes themselves that speak *against* the kind of textual certitude required for the Bible code.

As noted in the glossary section of our introduction, the *Masoretes* themselves kept careful watch over the text, and when they came across problems, they noted them for us. At the risk of redundancy, let me reiterate that *their notations concern the "accepted" Masoretic text they themselves were perpetuating for posterity.* The Masoretes were not commenting on other text families. By definition, they were concerned about only the text family they had given their lives to copying. Before proceeding it is imperative to remember that *the text used for the Bible code does not*

take into consideration these Masoretic notations. As a result, the Hebrew text in which the code allegedly resides is defective, since it fails to incorporate the learned opinions of the scribes concerning its transmission.

The Masoretic notations listed and illustrated below are not by any means exhaustive. Since I am restricting my examples to the books of the Torah, I am prevented from showing the reader much more of what the Masoretes noted. The abbreviated survey will suffice.

1. The *Kethiv* – *Qere*

The Masoretic notation system of *Kethiv-Qere* is perhaps the most well known of their devices. In simplest terms, when the scribe came across a word he felt was erroneous (the *kethiv* – "what is written"), he made a marginal notation instructing the reader what to read instead of the word actually in the MT (the *qere* – "what is [should be] read").¹² There are anywhere from 800-1600 *Kethiv-Qere* notes in the Hebrew Bible, depending on the scribal records cited.¹³

Genesis 24:33

MT – *Kethiv* = ויִשֶׁם לִפְנֵי לֹאכֵל

The *Qere* = (same text) ויִשֶׂם

The correct (*Qere*) reading is "when food was set before him," a translation that can still be inferred from the *Kethiv*. The important point, though, is that the Masoretes thought there needed to be a letter correction here.

Total letter differences = 81

Letters lost in MT = 60

Deletions from MT for textual accuracy = 14

Genesis 2:12; 3:12,20; 4:22; 7:2; 10:11,12

The seven verses noted above all have the same *Kethiv-Qere* problem. Seven times in the Torah the MT reads וְהָיָה for the third person pronoun "he" when it should read (and the *Qere* notes) וְהָיָה. The problem involves graphic confusion of the ׁ (waw) and ׀ (yodh).

At this point, a native Hebrew reader will think I've made my own mistake in the text of this book, since "he" *should be spelled (and is in the Hebrew Bible – outside the Torah) as* וְהָיָה. For some odd reason,¹⁴ the middle waw in the typical proper spelling is a yodh in this word in the Torah (called a "*perpetual qere*" in the Torah). The Masoretes knew this, and noted seven occurrences where the flip-flop wasn't consistent. This means that we have seven more instances where MT has a wrong letter.

Total letter differences = 88
 Letters lost in MT = 60
 Deletions from MT for textual accuracy = 14

2. Dots Over Doubtful Letters (the "extraordinary" dots)¹⁵

In ten places in the Torah, the Masoretes placed dots over certain letters because they doubted these letters should be in the text. This was also a common practice of ancient scribes at Qumran to indicate that these letters *deserved erasure*.¹⁶ In two instances, their omission is even preserved in ancient manuscripts – manuscripts in the rabbinic and MT tradition!¹⁷ The specific verses and words that bear these letters are listed below:¹⁸

Passage	Words with Dotted Letters Above
Gen 16:5	וביניך
Gen 18:9	אליו
Gen 19:33	ובקומה
Gen 33:4	וישקהו
Gen 37:12	את
Numbers 3:39	ואהרן
Numbers 9:10	רחקה
Numbers 21:30	אשר
Numbers 29:15	ועשרון
Deuteronomy 29:28	לנו ולבנינו

When the dots are added up, we have a total of 33 letters *that by Masoretic notation should be deleted from MT* (not counting the required dots over the letter ׀).

Total letter differences = 121
 Letters lost in MT = 60
 Deletions from MT for textual accuracy = 47

We have nearly surpassed Satinover's figure of 130 total letter differences for undermining the Bible code. After our next example, we will be well in excess of the 130 – as well as his "required" 77 MT deletions for destroying the code totally.

3. The "Inverted Nuns"

In the printed MT of BHS an important Masoretic scribal notation is recorded for us. Before and after Numbers 10:35-36, the Masoretes placed the Hebrew letter *nun* (נ) in backward position (ן).¹⁹

The importance of these unusual signs is that the Masoretes used them to indicate that the letters (in this case two whole verses) between the two *nuns* did not make sense in the text. That is, they were "a subtle means of removing an element or section from the text."²⁰ These signs are discussed in rabbinic literature on Numbers 10:35-36.²¹ The verses appear as follows (in Hebrew):

35 וַיְהִי בְּנִסְעַ הָאָרֶץ וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה קִוְּמָה יְהוָה
וַיִּפְּצוּ אֵיבִיךָ וַיִּנָּסוּ מִשְׁנֵאִיךָ מִפְּנֵיךָ:
36 וּבְנַחַח יֹאמֶר שׁוּבָה יְהוָה רַבְבוֹת
אַלְפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל]

These letters, which *the Masoretes themselves* thought should be removed from the Torah, add up to 85 deletions. We have then, in just two verses, enough letters rightly deleted from MT to satisfy Satinover's figure of 77 for totally eradicating the Bible code. Our own tally, though, blows the code to bits:

Total letter differences = 206
Letters lost in MT = 60
Deletions from MT for textual accuracy = 132 (*nearly twice* Satinover's figure)

By providing a mere one or two examples of each of the types of scribal errors that are common in the text, I have surpassed Satinover's criteria for invalidating a Bible code. I could go on to provide literally thousands more examples if I were to use the entire Hebrew Bible.

No, Virginia, there is no Bible code.

For Further Reading:

Ellis R. Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* (Baker, 1994)
Karen Jobes and Moises Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Baker, 2000)
Page H. Kelley, Daniel S. Mynatt, and Timothy G. Crawford, *The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Eerdmans, 1998)
Malachi Martin, *The Scribal Character of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Louvain, 1958)
P. Kyle McCarter, *Textual Criticism: Recovering the Text of the Hebrew Bible* (Fortress Press, 1986)
Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Fortress Press, 1992)

¹ Many examples can be found in Ronald Hendel, *The Text of Genesis 1-11* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). Hendel catalogues in excess of one hundred textual problems just in the first eleven chapters of the first book of the Torah! I could choose from literally thousands of examples if I were to use the whole Hebrew Bible.

² The reader must understand that when a reading is given for the LXX, which is written in Greek, the Hebrew displayed for that reading has been *retroverted*. That is, scholars have looked at the Greek and then "reverse translated" what they see back into Hebrew. Since they know that this too is a fallible enterprise, I have chosen examples that aren't too complicated and where there is virtual (or actual) unanimity on what the Hebrew text of LXX would have read.

³ The examples have been drawn from several sources already noted: Ronald Hendel, *The Text of Genesis 1-11*; P. Kyle McCarter, *Textual Criticism: Recovering the Text of the Hebrew Bible*; and Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*.

⁴ See the discussion in Hendel, *Text of Genesis 1-11*, 59.

⁵ See the discussions in Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 53; and Hendel, *Text of Genesis 1-11*, 46.

⁶ I have chosen not to include any of the so-called *Tiqqune sopherim* ("changes of the scribes") or the *Itture sopherim* ("omissions of the scribes"). The former category refers to 18 places where, according to rabbinic tradition, scribes made deliberate changes in the text (three of these are in the Torah – Gen. 18:22; Numbers 11:15 and 12:12). Scholarly sources differ as to whether these changes are genuine or just part of rabbinic tradition. Concerning the latter, the changes involve only the omission of a single letter (a *waw* conjunction) from the text. Tov notes that the scribes were probably correct in doing this, and so MT is sound (Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 67, note 46). For discussion of the *Tiqqune Sopherim*, see Tov, 64-66; Carmel McCarthy, *The Tiqqune Sopherim and Other Theological Corrections in the Masoretic Text of the Old Testament*, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 36 (Gottingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981).

⁷ For a discussion of this example from an evangelical source, see Michael S. Heiser, "Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158:629 (January-March 2001): 52-74. This article is especially useful for pointing out the superiority of the LXX reading here, and showing why this reading does not require polytheism in the text.

⁸ Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 269. Tov (and I agree) considers 4QDeut^l the best reading of the three.

⁹ See Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 282.

¹⁰ The example has been adapted from Eugene Ulrich, "Multiple Literary Editions: Reflections toward a Theory of the History of the Biblical Text," in *Current Research and Technological Developments on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996): 83.

¹¹ An excellent introduction to the Masorah is Page H. Kelley, Daniel S. Mynatt, and Timothy G. Crawford, *The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

¹² See Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism*, 101-102 for a brief explanation.

¹³ Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 58.

¹⁴ See the discussion in Hendel, *Text of Genesis 1-11*, 43-44.

¹⁵ See the discussion in Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 55-56.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁸ The chart from which this list is drawn comes from Kelley, et. al., *The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 32.

¹⁹ Actually, the sign was not originally the letter *nun*, but the Greek scribal signs for the letter sigma (Σ) and a backward sigma (or, antisigma). The Masoretes passed the marks down as backward *nuns*.

²⁰ Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 54.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 55. Tov quotes *Sifre Numbers* (p. 80) on Numbers 10:35-36 and references the *Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat* 115a-116a.

Chapter Four

The Flawed Methodology Used To "Prove" the Bible Code

Readers may be wondering at this point, "Okay, it's pretty obvious that the manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible undermine rather than support the Bible code – but why does it seem to work then?" Answering this question is the focus of this chapter.

The concise answer is, flatly, because the practitioners of the Bible code *make it work*. More bluntly, Bible code proponents, whether intentionally or through ignorance, are simply misleading their readers. They know they have written to an audience that predominantly lacks knowledge of Hebrew. They also know that Christians or Jews who take their religion seriously *want* to believe in the code. That is, the readership's predisposition toward believing the Bible is something utterly unique from God works in favor of acceptance of the Bible code.

As I noted earlier, I am willing to believe that most of the promotion of the Bible code is due to ignorance of the history of the text, textual transmission errors, and the work of the Masoretes. In other words, people with good motives – they want people to believe in the Bible and in God – make the code "work," or refuse to critically assess it, because this will help to accomplish these goals. The ends are justifying the means.

In this chapter, we won't be looking at so much Hebrew (relatively speaking). We'll concentrate on how Bible code practitioners manipulate their findings in the text and produce "hits" to wow their audience. One does not need to be able to read Hebrew or be an expert in textual history to see how self-authenticating these methods of "code interpretation" really are.

The reader should also understand that this chapter is of necessity brief, due to the contents of the Appendix. All of the "techniques" to which readers will be introduced in this chapter have been applied to books other than the Bible. These applications demonstrate conclusively that if Bible code exists and is an intelligently designed code from God that proves the Bible is inspired, then *War and Peace*, *Moby Dick*, and other works of common, secular literature are just as "inspired." More space will be devoted to the alleged code's "amazing accuracy" in the Appendix, where the scholarly opinions of mathematicians are summarized. This chapter is designed to familiarize the reader with the self-

authenticating methods of Bible code practitioners, so that the material in the Appendix can be better understood. The chapter will be organized into five sections:

- Use Dyslexic Translation Technique – but Only When Necessary
- Don't Pay Attention to that Man Behind the Curtain
- The Limits of the Limitless Knowledge of the Torah
- Immaculate Detection? The Manufactured "Jesus Codes"
- Putting the Cart Before the Horse: Doing Bad Science in the Name of Jesus Codes
- An Incoherent Cloudburst: The "Amazing" 22 Letter Bible Code Hit

Use Dyslexic Translation Technique – But Only When Necessary

By "dyslexic translation technique" I refer to the deliberate tactic of Bible code researchers of translating the Hebrew letters of the Torah in any direction – just to generate "hits." Readers by now know that Hebrew (biblical and modern) is read from right to left, not left to right, as in English. It would make sense that, if God gave Moses and successive biblical authors a divine code in their *Hebrew* Bible, He would arrange the letters in accord with the rules of their language. Often, however, Bible code researchers find messages in the ELS sequencing by reading and translating the letters in any direction – even diagonally. In fact, in some cases, the letters are "sequenced" by skipping letters *within* the skip sequence itself. This amounts to no more than taking a page full of letters and picking those which "make sense" to the "decoder." All of this begs the question: Were these secret messages meant for people whose language is to be read right to left, left to right, in columns, etc.? Since different languages are read in differing directions, there is no control over what "hits" one might find. The method is completely contrived.

For example, in the celebrated Bible code prophecy that Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin would be assassinated, the name of the assassin, "Amir" was also found – in reverse spelling. More will be said of this example, for it is a prime example of other self-serving methodologies. For now, let it suffice to say that the kind of translational (directional) latitude needed for encoded "hits" undermines the credibility of the research. It is inconsistent to talk about the preservation of the Hebrew text and the alleged supernatural code in it, and then turn around and translate in such a manner that assumes God could not produce a code in correct Hebrew letter order.

Don't Pay Attention to that Man Behind the Curtain

In the movie, *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy and her companions learn to their dismay that the mighty wizard they have been soliciting for the solutions to their needs is really a quite ordinary old man who operates a deceptive façade of the wizard's awesome and potent visage from behind a curtain. "Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain!" the old man exclaims when little Toto the dog pulls the curtain back. In the case of the Bible code, the advice is appropriate.

Much of the hoopla over the "hits" researchers have found in the Bible code could be put to rest when one discerns how such findings are produced by deliberate *mistranslation*. To understand this criticism of the Bible code methodology, we need to return to how the letters of the Torah are sequenced.

The reader will recall that all vowels and spaces are removed from the letters of the Torah, and then, on command via a computer program, those letters are arranged in artificial columns according to how many letters the decoder wants the computer to skip count. Using the Yitzhak Rabin example once more, the letters that yielded this remarkable "hit" were arranged in columns 4,772 letters long. When this was done, the letters in Rabin's name lined up *vertically* (see the illustration below).ⁱ

הו יחננו כאלו שו יסעו סאלו שו יחננו כרפי ד
הדכרא שרצוה יהוה להכנו וחצלפחדלאסרלטו
ואוכלעסולסלחסה יהצהו יתנהו יהוהאלה
השמשלנו שסטררו צחאשר ירצח אחרטהו כבלי
ספני הסו גסאחהצרעה ישלח יהוהאלהי ככס
האלהי כושטרחסטרח וחקתיו וסשפטיו ו
האלהי כהסוציאכסארצמצר יססכיתעכדיס
תהאישאו אתהאשהו סקלתסכאכניסוסחועל
נחלונגשוהכהניסכנילו יכיסבחר יהוה
בכחסאלאי וסחו אכוחעלכניסוכניסלאיו
ופרי אדסחכשגר אלפי כועשטרחצאנכארור
קלונככלאשראנכיסצו כהי וסאחהוכני כככ

Yitzhak Rabin

Assassin who will assassinate

The vertical column is thus the encoded column. The horizontal row is just composed of the running Torah text. As a result, the horizontal row contains the actual verses of the Torah, only with the spaces removed, and lines broken (depending on the length of the lines required by the instructions given to the

computer program by the researcher). There is no doubt that the vertical letters (read top to bottom, and not right to left!) spell "Yitzhak Rabin." At issue is the translation of the *horizontal* letters:

רוצח אשר ירצח

This phrase, translated by Drosnin as "assassin who will assassinate,"ⁱⁱ actually comes from (in the running sequence) Deuteronomy 4:42. In that verse, *the context* tells us plainly that Drosnin's translation is categorically wrong. Deuteronomy 4:42 is in a passage about "cities of refuge," places where someone who *accidentally* killed someone may flee to avoid capital punishment. The phrase therefore means "someone who kills inadvertently" – pretty much the opposite of Drosnin's fanciful rendering.ⁱⁱⁱ

Drosnin's mistranslation of horizontal sequences from the Torah cannot be isolated to this one instance either. Ronald Hendel, writing in *Bible Review*, briefly lists (in his words) other translation "howlers."^{iv} Among Hendel's examples of Drosnin's "cavalier attitude toward biblical language" are:^v

1. "[Jacob] set it up as a standing stone" (Genesis 31:45) is rendered as "Shooting from the military post."
2. "Which she [Rebekah] had made" (Genesis 27:17) is translated as "Fire, earthquake."
3. "[The men] numbered by Moses" (Numbers 26:64) is rendered as "Code will save."
4. "After the death of Abraham" (Genesis 25:11) is rendered as "After the death of the Prime Minister in July."^{vi}

This last example is particularly notorious. As other reviewers have pointed out, Drosnin here takes the horizontal phrase out of Genesis 25:11 . . .

אברהם	מות
Abraham	died

and then *divides the consonants* of Abraham's name differently . . .

רהם	אב	מות
Prime Minister	July	died

It should be obvious how self-serving this "translation technique" is. When one is free to just break up "non-coded" consonants in the free-running Torah text to get the "hits" you desire, you can find anything you want. As the

Appendix will show, people have done so in works outside the Torah – to illustrate the absurdity of such an approach.

The Limits of the Limitless Knowledge of the Torah

Earlier in the book, I noted that part of the belief in a Bible code among Jews has to do with the belief that the Torah contains all the knowledge in the universe. When I first heard about the Bible code and the Jewish scholars who had produced the mathematical experiments that demonstrated the code, I wondered immediately if they had searched to "answer" the question of whether Jesus was the Messiah. After all, it seemed logical that the birth, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus, arguably among the most pivotal events in western civilization, would get some encoded commentary in the Bible code.

Surprisingly, both Jewish and Christian reviewers of the code took great pains to avoid the question, insisting that the Bible code should not be made to serve such ends. My question was simply, why not? I would think God knew the answer – and why would God withhold such vital information? The real answer was that such religious questions are not politically correct, and would immediately cut off a substantial number of customers. Either the Torah had *all* knowledge encoded in it or it didn't. I found it difficult to believe that God would be more interested in telling us that an Israeli Prime Minister would be assassinated than whether He'd sent the Messiah in the first century.

Eventually, though, the "Jesus code" researchers surfaced. For instance, Yacov Rambsel, a Messianic Jew, claims to have found many occurrences of the name of Jesus ("Yeshua" in Hebrew) in the Bible code. In typical manipulative fashion, though, he at times makes the decision to remove the vowel letter / *matres lectionis* for the long "u" vowel in the name to get a hit,^{vii} and also deliberately extracts the needed consonants from within Hebrew words, breaking up those words as in the Abraham example above.

Predictably, Jewish Bible code proponents have not been swayed by Rambsel's use of the very methods those Jewish code researchers allow themselves. Instead, as noted in the Introduction, they have produced their own "Jesus readings," which produce the messages that "Jesus is a false prophet," and "Jesus is a liar."^{viii} I am amazed and chagrined that both Jewish and Christian researchers will not simply admit at this point that the methods used to decode the Torah letters really are self-serving across the board – and across religious lines. It is inconsistent to argue in favor of a code and then forbid code searches you don't like that utilize code searching methods you accept. *But should the "Jesus codes" even be accepted? Are they real?*

My answer to this question is an unqualified, "No." Toward supporting my conclusion, the remainder of this chapter examines the claims of Grant Jeffrey, the most widely-published promoter of the Jesus codes. Jeffrey's work

fails to account for all the arguments detailed in this book thus far, as the examples drawn from his books will clearly show.

Immaculate Detection? Manufactured "Jesus Codes"

Generally, Jeffrey's work is more respectable than that of other Bible code proponents because he recognizes the invalidity of lengthy ELS sequences such as the Yitzhak Rabin example referred to above. Jeffrey contends that if one takes *smaller* portions of the Hebrew Bible and *restricts* ELS skip searches to under 100 skips, then the code results are basically immune from the kind of textual corruptions in the Hebrew letter sequence I have demonstrated in my book to this point. Unfortunately, this assertion reflects a woeful misunderstanding of the textual situation.^{ix}

Jeffrey's most publicized test case is Isaiah 52:13-53:12. In these fifteen verses – a very small textual chunk – Jeffrey claims to have found dozens of encoded names associated with the life and times of Jesus, thereby showing that the great messianic passage of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 encrypted the identity of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Jeffrey estimated that a very small number of textual discrepancies might show up in such a sample, perhaps less than a dozen.^x As I will demonstrate below, a shocking 115 spelling differences occurs in these fifteen verses, utterly destroying Jeffrey's premise.

Naturally, as a Christian, I accept Jesus as Messiah and God incarnate. I do not, however, accept any of Jeffrey's "encoding" work. My reasons are twofold: the textual uncertainty of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 when it comes to the every letter sequence, and the manipulative way the "hits" are detected.

The Text of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 – The Impact of Letter Differences Caused by Ancient Scribal Spelling Practices

When I refer to "textual uncertainty" in this portion of the Old Testament, I am not referring to the *content* of the text. It does, I believe, prophesy a suffering Messiah, whom I believe on New Testament authority to have been Jesus. Rather, I am referring to the every-letter sequence needed by Jeffrey to produce his "Jesus codes." This sequence is markedly different in our most ancient manuscripts – the ones closest to the time when the prophet Isaiah received this message from God – than it is in the text used by Bible code practitioners.

Put simply, by comparing the *spelling* in the text of this passage in the Dead Sea Scrolls' famous Great Isaiah Scroll – the scroll that, above all others demonstrated the amazing accuracy of textual transmission – we can prove that the sequence of letters is incredibly different. These spelling conventions of ancient scribes do not affect content, but they are deadly to a letter sequence.

If the reader is wondering how it is that the Bible can be a reliable document when spelling was so variable, recall that we are only discussing

letters. For example, meaning is not compromised if a personal name or familiar word is spelled one way in the MT and another in different Hebrew text. We spell a man's name today "Jon" or "John", "Steven" or "Stephen". We may spell the word "color" as "colour" or "endeavor" as "endeavour." Meaning is not affected, but the letters used vary. This is the kind of phenomenon we see in the Hebrew of the ancient Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hebrew Bible used in classrooms today.

Letter Differences in Isaiah 52:13-53:12

In order for the reader to understand what I am arguing here, a few words of explanation will be helpful.

First, the reader will see three lines of text for each verse:

Line 1 = The actual Dead Sea script

The photos of the script come from *The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsaa): A New Edition*, ed. by Donald W. Parry and Elisha Qimron (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

Line 2 = The Dead Sea scroll script put into modern type-face for readability.

Once the reader compares line 1 with line 2, it will be apparent how easily a scribe could have confused certain letters. One can also note how the letter styles have changed. At times the manuscript is damaged, so readability varies. A few notes of interest about scribal techniques are interspersed for the reader as well.

Line 3 = The Masoretic Text used by Bible Code Proponents (from "BHS" - *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*)

This line is the consonantal text of *BHS*, plus vocalization and accentual pointing. The pointing does not alter the consonantal text used by the Bible code proponents - they simply remove the point-markings for their letter string.

Second, to discern the point being made here about spelling differences, *the reader needs to visually compare the spelling (the letters) of LINE 2 and LINE 3*. The differences are shaded for the reader's convenience. You will find that there are many *letters* in the words in the Dead Sea Isaiah scroll that are *missing* from the text used by Bible code practitioners (LINE 3). In other words, there are undeniably many spelling differences between the text used by Bible Code proponents and the Dead Sea Scrolls, the scrolls closest to the biblical period

(roughly 200 BC) – *far more* than Jeffrey presumes. In fact, there are an astonishing 115 letter differences in this small portion of text! As a result, the scrolls that most likely preserve the spelling of the biblical Old Testament text when put in its final composed form *disagrees* with the letter sequences used by Bible code practitioners.

I repeat my basic question raised earlier in this book: how do we *know* which text is right and which spellings were given by God so we could "discover" his code?

We'll discover how badly Jeffrey and other Bible code proponents have underestimated the textual situation in the Hebrew manuscripts by going verse by verse from Isaiah 52:13-53:12. The reader will note that the Dead Sea Scroll text has parts of verses on each line (i.e., one line may have v. 5 and the beginning of verse 6). Note the shaded letters which disrupt the letter sequence used by Bible code practitioners.

Isa 52:13-14a

והנה ישכיל עבדי וירום ונשא וגבה מאד 14 כאשר שממו
 13 הנה ישכיל עבדי וירום ונשא וגבה מאד: 14 כאשר שממו

Isa 52:14b

עליו רבים כן משחת מאיש מראהו ותארו מבני האדם
 עליו רבים כן משחת מאיש מראהו ותארו מבני אדם:

Isa 52:15a

כן יזה גוים רבים עליו וקפצו מלכים פיהם כיא את אשר
 כן יזה גוים רבים עליו וקפצו מלכים פיהם כי אשר

Isa 52:15b

לא ספר להם ראו ואת אשר לוא שמעו התבוננו
 לא ספר להם ראו ואת אשר לא שמעו התבוננו:

Isa 53:1-2a

בְּרֵאשִׁית לְעִוְוֹתָם צִוּוּ וְזָרְעוּ אֶלֶּם וְגַלְתָּהּ וְאֶל־עֵוֹנוֹתָם יִגְדֹּר

1 מי האמין לשמועתנו וזרוע יהוה אל מי נגלתה 2 ויעל כיוונק לפניו
מי האמין לשמענתנו וזרוע יהוה על-מי נגלתה: ויעל פיונך לפניו

Isa 53:2b

וְעִוְוֵי־שָׂרָף עָרָאָה לֹא וְנֶאֱמָר לוֹ וְלֹא אֶזְדָּבְלוּ וְנֶאֱמָר לֹא מִיֵּאָדָר

וכשורש מארצ ציפה לוא תאר לו ולוא הדר לו ונראנו ולוא מראה
וכשורש מארץ ציפה לא-תאר לו ולוא הדר ונראהו ולוא-מראה

Isa 53:2c-3a

וְנֶאֱמָרָם צַוּוּ וְאֶזְדָּבְלוּ אֶמְשַׁחֲךָ וְאֶשֶׁר צָצָא בְּנוֹר וְיִמָּצֵא אֹרֶךְ

ונחמדנו (3) נבזה וחדל אישים איש מכאבות וידע חלי
ונחמדהו: נבזה וחדל אישים איש מכאבות וידע חלי

Isa 53:3b-4a

וְנֶעֱמָדָהּ בְּנוֹר צִנֵּעַ וְנִמְוָדָהּ לֹא וְיִשְׁאָר בְּגֹדֶיהָ אֵצֶל אֲשֵׁרֵי הַמָּוֶד

וכמסתר פנים ממנו ונבזהו ולוא חשבנהו (4) אכן חלינו הוא
וכמסתר פנים ממנו נבזה ולוא חשבנהו: אכן חלינו הוא

Note the tiny raised yodb (ם) above the second last word (from left) in the DSS – it's a scribal correction.

Isa 53:4b

וְנִשָּׂא וְצָרָא וְעָרָא מִגִּלְתָּהּ וְאֶמְשַׁחֲךָ אֶשְׁמַחֲךָ נֶגֶד וְנֶצְרָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

נשא ומכאבינו סבלם ואנחנו חשבנהו נגוע ומכה אלהים
נשא ומכאבינו סבלם ואנחנו חשבנהו נגוע מכה אלהים

Isa 53:4c-5a

וְצָרָא וְעָרָא וְהָאֵרָא צָרָא וְנֶשְׁחָתָהּ וְנֶעֱמָדָהּ וְנֶעֱמָדָהּ

ומענה (5) והוא מחלל מפשענו ומדוכא מעונותינו מוסר
ומענה: והוא מחלל מפשענו מדכא מעונותינו מוסר

Isa 53:5b-6a

שלומנו עליו ובחבֵרְתוֹ נרפא לנו (6) כִּלְנו כְּצֹאן תְעִינוּ אִישׁ לְדַרְכּוֹ

Isa 53:6b-7a

פנינו ויהוה הפגיע בו את עֵוֹן כִּלְנו (7) נִגַּשׁ וְהוּא נֶעֱנָה וְלֹא

Isa 53:7b

יפתח פִּיּוֹ כִּשֶׁה לִטְבַּח יוֹבֵל כִּרְחֵל לִפְנֵי גְזוּזִיָּה נֹאֲלָמָה וְלֹא פִתַּח

The last word in the line (reading right to left) is a different verb form in the DSS than in MT (where we see פתח instead of פתח). In the MT (and our English Bibles) the verb reads "and he would not / will not open his mouth." Thus it sounds prophetic (it's a Qal Imperfect). In the DSS, though, the scribe has "he opened not his mouth" – it apparently made more sense to him that the action would already be PAST – he apparently did not take this phrase to be a prophecy. This is an example of a content disagreement in a manuscript. The scribe is not speculating on any "fulfillment" since he sees no prophetic content here. The DSS text is odd since the other imperfect verb forms and prophetic context are the same as MT. It's a good contextual argument for seeing MT (in this case) as the better reading. The Bible code proponent nevertheless has another letter disruption.

Isa 53:7c-8a

פִּיּוֹ מֵעַצֵּר וּמִמְשַׁפֵּט לִקַּח וְאֶת־דוֹרוֹ מִיָּשׁוּחַ כִּי נִגְזַר מֵאַרְצָן

Note again the raised letter (scribal correction) in the second word from the right in the DSS to correct the text (and MT had it right).

Isa 53:8b

חַיִּים מִפֶּשַׁע עָמִי נִגַּע לְמוֹת

The last four words in this phrase are transcribed smaller and bracketed because in the DSS manuscript (you can't see it well without the color photo) these words ARE in fact lighter in color. They were most likely added by a second or subsequent scribe who thought they belonged in the text, probably on the basis of another copy he was referencing. At any rate, this is only for interest – except for the shaded letter, the MT and DSS match.

Isa 53:9a

וְהָיָה אֲדָרְשָׁעִים קָבְרוּ וְעַל עֵשֶׂר בְּמֹתוֹ

9 בִּיְהוָה עַתְּ רִשְׁעִים קָבְרוּ וְעַתְּ עֵשֶׂר (ס) בְּמֹתוֹ
וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־רִשְׁעִים קָבְרוּ וְאֶת־עֵשֶׂר בְּמֹתָיו

The (ס) in parentheses in the transcribed version reflect an ERASURE made by the scribe in his scroll (one that would show up in magnification or infrared – see the yellowed blotch). In regard to the raised letter for footnote "a," see the raised dot above the third word from the left (ועת - MT has ואת). This is a dot written by scholars who transcribed this text for in book from which I photocopied the DSS script. The DSS text had ועם originally, and a scribe put the correct letter over the wrong one (see the actual script for a raised letter above the rest; it's a scribal correction).

In regard to footnote "b," there are also two dots over two of these letters (again, placed there by modern scholars) to tell us there was great difficulty determining the lettering of the script (it could be several things grammatically).

Isa 53:9b-10a

עַל לֹא חָמַס עָשָׂה וְלֹא מְרֵמָה בְּפִיָּהּ (10) וַיְהוּה חָפֵץ דְּכָאוּ וַיְחַלְלֵהוּ
עַל לֹא־חָמַס עָשָׂה וְלֹא מְרֵמָה בְּפִיו: וַיְהוּה חָפֵץ דְּכָאוּ הַחֲלִי

The last word in this line is different in the DSS. The word there means "he (God) profaned him (the sufferer in the chapter)." In MT it means "he (God) made him sick/weak". A slight difference, but not terribly significant – unless you are counting letters – here there would be six variations in a single word.

Isa 53:10b

אִם תִּשְׂמַח אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר נִפְשׁוּ וְרָאָה זֶרַע וַיֵּאָרֶךְ יָמִים וְחָפֵץ יְהוּה
אִם־תִּשְׂמַח אֱלֹהִים נִפְשׁוּ יִרְאֶה זֶרַע יֵאָרֶךְ יָמִים וְחָפֵץ יְהוּה

Isa 53:10c-11a

בִּידוֹ יִצְלַח 11 מֵעַמַּל נִפְשׁוּ יִרְאֶה אֹרֶךְ יִשְׁבַּע וְבִדְעַתוֹ יִצְדִּיק
בִּידוֹ יִצְלַח: מֵעַמַּל נִפְשׁוּ יִרְאֶה יִשְׁבַּע בְּדַעַתוֹ יִצְדִּיק

Isa 53:11b-12a

צָדִיק עֲבָדוֹ לְרַבִּים וְעוֹנֵתָם הוּא יִסְבֹּל (12) לְכֵן אֶחְלַק לוֹ בְּרָבִים
צָדִיק עֲבָדֵי לְרַבִּים וְעוֹנֵתָם הוּא יִסְבֹּל: לְכֵן אֶחְלַק־לוֹ בְּרָבִים

Isa 53:12b

וְאֵת עֲצוּמֵי יַחֲלֵק שְׁלַל תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הָעֵרָה לְמוֹת נַפְשׁוֹ וְאֵת פְּוֹשְׁעִים
וְאֵת־עֲצוּמִים יַחֲלֵק שְׁלַל תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הָעֵרָה לְמוֹת נַפְשׁוֹ וְאֵת־פְּשָׁעִים

Isa 53:12c

נִמְנָה וְהוּא חֲטָא רַבִּים נְשָׂא לַפְּשָׁעִים יִפְגֵּעַ
נִמְנָה וְהוּא חֲטָא־רַבִּים נְשָׂא וְלַפְּשָׁעִים יִפְגֵּעַ:

Incredibly, when faced with this evidence, Jeffrey would have those who believe in the codes simply respond by saying we should just go with the later *BHS* text as the text God wanted us to have – and so use it authoritatively for Bible code research. This is not only illogical but also reflects an ignorance of the history of *BHS*. It demands that the Christian community of faith embrace a text about which several noteworthy comments can be made:

(1) The early church predominantly used the LXX, not the MT (upon which *BHS* is based), which was reworked and textually conformed to create a text that disagreed with the LXX used by Christians.

(2) The Jewish Masoretes "standardized" in 100 A.D. so as to assist the rabbinical scholars in debating *against* the LXX, the Bible of the Christians.

(3) The letter sequence of *BHS* was produced by *removing* consonants from the Dead Sea Isaiah scroll and replacing them with point-markings. If one wanted to detect a code placed within the Hebrew letters by God, wouldn't one want to use the text closest to the time of prophetic inspiration, rather than a later text? In short, shouldn't Bible code researchers argue the opposite of what Jeffrey suggests and go with the Dead Sea material?

(4) If one argues as Jeffrey does that we should just "go with *BHS* / MT" we are still left with the problem of manuscript disagreements between *BHS* and other MT manuscripts.

(5) If Bible code researchers reject the DSS to produce their sequences, then they willingly choose to use a text reworked by later Jewish scholars. Are we to believe that the very Jewish scholars who revised the spelling of the DSS material, and who rejected the messianic claims of Jesus, then cryptically inserted hints to Jesus's messiah-ship? If one in turn argues that God did this unbeknownst to the unbelieving Masoretes, we are back to the earlier problems this book has repeatedly demonstrated – how do we know which string is divine? We also are confronted

with a new question: If God used these unbelievers to hide His code, why didn't He do that with the earlier DSS texts so close to the prophets themselves?

Putting the Cart Before the Horse: Doing Bad Science in the Name of "Jesus Codes"

If one persists in embracing Jeffrey's work in Isaiah 52:13-53:12, one must deal with the methodological problems of that work in addition to the textual obstacles.

On pages 130-131 of his book *The Mysterious Bible Codes*, Jeffrey asserts that he has detected dozens of encoded names and references to the life and times of Jesus, thereby proving the existence of a code and the messianic identity of Christ from that code. Unfortunately, both the way these hits are detected and the criteria for defining a hit are fatally flawed.

How "Scientific" is the Method By Which Hits are Detected?

In regard to the former problem, Jeffrey and other code researchers repeatedly refuse (as correct scientific method would require) to put forth which names and which spellings would constitute hits *before* checking the letter sequence. In other words, they refuse to first form a hypothesis for subsequent testing. The method of Bible code researchers is to look for meaningful words and phrases in an ELS sample, and *afterward* determine how such hits fit together. The results are therefore spectacularly un-miraculous. This is precisely one of the problems that led mathematicians almost universally to declare the original Witzum-Ripps experiment invalid (upon which Drosnin's book, *The Bible Code*, was based; see the Appendix).

To illustrate, if you flip a coin 1,000 times and *record* the sequence, the odds that you would get that particular sequence are 10^{300} to 1 - but this is no miracle - someone was just flipping a coin and writing the results down. Hence the astronomical numbers thrown about as "science" by Bible code researchers mean little. However, *if you had predicted beforehand* that the 1,000 coin flips would result in that particular sequence, that would be far beyond chance, and miraculous. But this is exactly what Bible code researchers do *not* do. Bible code practitioners do not tell us beforehand what they expect to find - *which* names, *which* places, etc. They just start looking for letter combinations *after* they've told the computer to set up a search string. What is needed is the old scientific method:

- (1) START WITH A HYPOTHESIS - the *specific* names and their *exact* spellings in a *specific* language or stage of the language (see my critique below), then . . .
- (2) Eliminate the textual letter differences by choosing the most ancient, reliable text through textual criticism, then . . .

(3) Conduct your search / ELS sequencing.

To date, Bible code research has done NONE of these things. Jeffrey needs to start with a hypothesis and set up an experiment to weed out chance probability - he doesn't. There is too much wiggle room at every stage.

What Constitutes a "Hit"?

Unfortunately, since Jeffrey and others do not scientifically define the criteria for their hits, we cannot specifically critique their method in their own words. Apparently anything that is legible - in any language or stage of a language - is acceptable. Let me illustrate:

Jeffrey's Encoded "Hits" in Isaiah 52:13-53:12

The table below catalogues the words detected by Jeffrey in the fifteen verses in this messianic passage of Isaiah. On the surface, the results appear impressive.

Name / Term	Ancient Spelling
Yeshua Shmi (Jesus is his name)	ישוע שמ׳
Nazarene	נזיר
Messiah	משיח
Shiloh	שילה
Passover	פסח
Galilee	גליל
Herod	הורד
Caesar	קיסר
Evil Roman city	רע עיר רומי
Caiaphas	כיפה
Annas	ענן
Mary	מרים
Mary	מרים
Mary	מרים
The Disciples	למדים
Peter	כפה
Matthew	מתתי
John	יוחנן
Andrew	אנדרי
Philip	פילף

Thomas	תומא
James	יעקב
James	יעקב
Simon	שמעון
Thaddeus	תדי
Matthias	מתיה
"let him be crucified"	יצלב
Cross	צלב
Pierce	דקר
"lamp of the Lord"	נר יהוה
His signature	מתתִּימו
The Bread	הלחם
Wine	יין
Zion	ציון
Moriah	ומריה
Obed	עבד
Jesse	ישי
Seed	זרע
Water	מים
Levites	לויים
Pharisee	פרוש
"from the atonement lamb"	מכפר טלא
Joseph	יוסף

Analysis According to Statistical Laws/Methods, Ancient Spelling Variations, Textual Criticism, and Contextual Logic

A. Statistical Laws

According to the work of computational physicist Dr. Randall Ingermanson (a specialist in statistical probability and author of *Who Wrote the Bible Code?*), any word of *four* letters and less should be excluded from ELS sequence results since the probability of finding such words is no greater than that of chance. In other words, to protect the statistical validity of one's encoding research, words of four letters or less should not be accepted as hits since they are, by definition, not miraculous.

I'll be a bit more generous here, and only exclude words with *three* letters or less in this step (I will, however, keep the following three letter-words: Peter (כפה) and "cross" (צלב), which have other problems). Here's what's left:

Name / Term	Hebrew
Yeshua (Jesus)	ישוע
Nazarene	נזיר
Messiah	משיח
Shiloh	שילה
Galilee	גליל
Herod	הורד
Caesar	קיסר
Evil Roman city	רע עיר רומי
Caiaphas	כיפה
Mary	מרים
Mary	מרים
Mary	מרים
The Disciples	למדים
Peter	כפה
Matthew	מתתי
John	יוחנן
Andrew	אנדרי
Philip	פילף
Thomas	תומא
James	יעקב
James	יעקב
Simon	שמעון

Matthias	מתיה
"let him be crucified"	יצלב
Cross	צלב
"lamp of the Lord"	נר יהוה
His signature	מתתיו
The Bread	הלחם
Zion	ציון
Moriah	ומריה
Levites	לוים
Pharisee	פרוש
Joseph	יוסף

Ten deletions were made, leaving 31 names/terms.

B. Spelling Variations

Basically this problem has two aspects:

(1) Jeffrey (and those on whose research he depends) apparently feels free to consider names and terms in *both* modern and ancient Hebrew as hits – why? Why not specify *beforehand* what language was encoded? The answer is that this latitude drives the hit number up, since it lets the "decoder" find names and terms as spelled in either language stage. This is unscientific and somewhat contrived, since in at least one case, ("cross") the hit shows up *nowhere* in the Hebrew language of the Hebrew Bible – it's completely modern (see below).

2) Jeffrey and others ignore the fact that the names of New Testament people should be encoded in their Aramaic spelling, since that was the language spoken in Jesus' day. At the very least, the language (and the names themselves, correctly spelled in that language) should have decided upon *beforehand* as a scientific hypothesis would require.

The specific cases of spelling and language variance are shaded:

Name / Term	Hebrew	Explanation
Yeshua (Jesus)	ישוע	
Nazarene	נזיר	
Messiah	משיח	
Shiloh	שילה	

Galilee	גליל	
Herod	הורד	This may be a typographical error in Jeffrey's book. "Herod", as one can see, has the "o" vowel in the <i>second</i> syllable. It is spelled this way in the Greek New Testament, and also in Aramaic. The Hebrew (and Aramaic proper name spelling should therefore be הֶרֶד not הֶרֶד as it appears in Jeffrey's book). It isn't a hit because it's misspelled.
Caesar	קיסר	
Evil Roman city	רע עיר רומי	
Caiaphas	כיפה	In Aramaic the name is spelled כִּיפָא.
Mary	מרים	
Mary	מרים	
Mary	מרים	
The Disciples	למדים	
Peter	כפה	Those familiar with the New Testament will immediately recognize this "hit" as Peter's <i>Aramaic</i> name (spelled in Greek, "Cephas"; his "true" Greek name was "Petros"). However, in Aramaic this name is actually spelled כִּיפָא.
Matthew	מתתי	
John	יוחנן	This would be a miss unless specified beforehand. Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (cf. David's friend Jonathan) this name is spelled יְהוֹנָתָן
Andrew	אנדרי	
Philip	פילף	
Thomas	תומא	
James	יעקב	
James	יעקב	
Simon	שמעון	
Matthias	מתיה	
"let him be crucified"	יצלב	
Cross	צלב	
"lamp of the Lord"	נר יהוה	
His signature	מתתימו	
The Bread	הלחם	
Zion	ציון	
Moriah	ומריה	
Levites	לוים	The problem here is that "Levites" can be (and is) spelled differently in extant Aramaic manuscripts as לוֹיִם - 2 more letter differences
Pharisee	פרוש	
Joseph	יוסף	

Five names were problematic, leaving twenty-six terms.

C. Contextual Problems in Vocabulary and Logic

This category relates to the lack of specifying *beforehand* in which language the hits would be expected, as well as to "hits" which just don't make any sense. These are (with explanation):

Nazarene	נזיר	This one is curious. Jeffrey is obviously thinking of Matthew's pronouncement that the Christ would come from Nazareth (he quotes <i>something</i> – see below for why I say this – as predicting: "he [the Messiah] shall be called a Nazarene"). Unfortunately, (1) There is no such prophecy in the Old Testament. This is a classic problem in New Testament studies discussed in commentaries, but is too broad for this discussion; (2) the Hebrew Jeffrey has here is, in the Old Testament, the word for "Nazirite." A Nazirite was <i>not</i> a person from Nazareth (there was no such city at the time). He was person who vowed not to drink wine or eat any fruit of the vine, not to touch a dead body, and not to cut his hair (cf. Numbers 6:1-13). Jesus took no such vow.
Evil Roman city	רע עיר רומי	This is also curious. Peter clearly lays the blame for the crucifixion at the feet of the Jews, not Rome (Acts 2).
"let him be crucified"	יצלב	Taking the next two in tandem: the word צלב is <i>modern</i> Hebrew and occurs nowhere in the Hebrew Bible. Jeffrey needs to specify whether hits were encoded in ancient or modern Hebrew beforehand.
Cross	צלב	See above
"lamp of the Lord"	נר יהוה	This must be some kind of reference to Jesus declaring himself "the light of the world." Unfortunately, that's a different phrase than Jeffrey's hit. The phrase "light of the Lord" occurs once in the Bible (at least in my computer search), and the word for light isn't נר in that case anyway (Isa. 2:5).
"His signature"	מחתימו	This phrase has nothing to do with Jesus; I don't know why it's even listed, other than to allude to Jeffrey's earlier book, <i>The Signature of God</i> . The word is also misspelled, according to the <i>Oxford English-Hebrew Dictionary</i> (it should be חתימו).

Removing these six problems leaves 20 hits left.

D. The Text-Critical Problem

There's only one of these:

Shiloh	שילה	<p>The word "Shiloh" appears nowhere in the New Testament, so one would wonder what the association with Jesus is. It's based on a messianic prophecy in Genesis 49:10, that the scepter [rulership] shall not depart from Judah [the tribe of Jesus] "until Shiloh come."</p> <p>Since no New Testament author ever referenced Shiloh, and since Shiloh is a place, not a person, this verse/prophesy has been enigmatic. The confusion is actually caused by a textual problem – failure to correctly divide the words up in the original manuscripts. (This is fairly complicated unless you know Hebrew grammar, but providing a reason for rejecting this as a hit requires some explanation). "Shiloh" is spelled שילה as Jeffrey has it. These four letters should actually be broken up to:</p>
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		<p>שִׁי לְהַ. The first pair (read right to left) isn't actually a Hebrew word. שִׁי is the relative pronoun שִׁ plus an attached י (the yodh letter is sometimes used in this way in Hebrew grammar to do nothing more than attach the word that precedes it to the word that follows^{xx}). שִׁ by itself means "that which" or "he who." This pronoun is then to be linked to the next word by the small yodh letter י. The following word, לְהַ, means "(belongs) to him", so that the whole phrase should be translated "the scepter shall not depart from Judah until "he that belongs to him [the tribe] shall come." The verse is certainly messianic, since it is saying that Judah's tribe would inherit rulership when a member of that tribe would come – and Jesus was of the tribe of Judah. While this is appropriate, it means a non-hit for a Bible code. A real hit here would be to guess <i>beforehand</i> that the <i>solution</i> to the text-critical problem to Genesis 49:10 would be found encoded in Isaiah 52:13-53:12!</p>
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One Final Word on Statistical Probability

At this point we must return to the work of Ingermanson and what we know about the likelihood of finding hits using very common letters. There is a reason why *Wheel of Fortune* spots its contestants the most common English letters – r,s,t,l,n, and e. It's because there is great likelihood that in any puzzle those letters will be found. Scientists trained in statistics like Ingermanson know that such letters occur well above the level of chance, and so "encoded" words containing those letters corrupt the sample from being any less probable than mere chance. The only way to overcome this flaw is to hypothesize which words in which language in precise spellings will appear in your ELS sample *before* one ever begins looking in the sample.

If one compare the remaining hits in Jeffrey's list to a listing of the statistically most common HEBREW letters (r,s,t,l,m,n,h,y, and w - ר ש ת ל מ נ ה י and ו), and then eliminate all the words that have *at least two* of these letters in them, you are left with ONE word - יעקב - which only contains one of the most common letters.

Name / Term	Hebrew	Statistically Common Letters in the "Hit"
Yeshua (Jesus)	ישוע	י ש
Messiah	משיח	מ ש
Galilee	גליל	ל י ל
Caesar	קיסר	י ר
Mary	מרים	All four letters
Mary	מרים	All four letters
Mary	מרים	All four letters
The Disciples	למדים	ל מ י ם
Matthew	מתתי	All four letters
Andrew	אנדרי	נ ר י

Philip	פִּילִיפּ	פִּ
Thomas	תּוֹמָא	תּוֹמ
James	יַעֲקֹב	ב
James	יַעֲקֹב	ב
Simon	שִׁמְעוֹן	שִׁמּוֹן
Matthias	מַתִּיָּת	All four letters
The Bread	הַלֶּחֶם	הֶלֶם
Zion	צִיּוֹן	צִוּוֹן
Moriah	וּמְרִיָּה	All five letters
Pharisee	פַּרְוֹשֵׁי	פַּרְוֶשׁ
Joseph	יֹסֵף	יֹפֶ

An Incoherent Cloudburst: The "Amazing" 22 Letter Bible Code Hit

Briefly stated, one website devoted to Bible code research recently announced an alleged 22 letter Jesus code that has been touted as proof positive for a Bible code, since it the odds are *685 billion times 1 billion to 1* that a readable string this long would be found in the Hebrew text of Isaiah 53. It was detected by beginning at Isaiah 53:5, word two, letter one, and then counting (supposedly) every 20th letter. I say "supposedly" because that's what the explanation that the website www.biblecodedigest.com provides. However, if the reader will note below, the second letter of the "amazing" chain *adds* a letter I can't find in any of my own Hebrew texts.

Analysis Point # 1

Compare Isaiah 53:5 in the Masoretic text of *BHS* – noting the highlighted letter. The highlighted letter is DIFFERENT in the MT from the text used by the Bible Code proponents. This is because another letter has been inserted (deliberately?) to make the “amazing” hit work:

8th letter from
first red letter
▽
the first “red” letter
in chart below
▽

מַחֲלָל
מִפְּשַׁעֵנוּ
מִדְּכָא
מֵעוֹנֹתֵינוּ

▽
▽

The letter insertion is marked by me with a red arrow below (the red column is the "amazing" hit). Just find the first red letter in the red column, and count eight letters to the left. You'll see the letters are different. The *actual* letter in the Hebrew text of MT (the one Bible code people say they use) is the next letter to the left of the one marked with the red arrow. A letter has been inserted:

letters that precede Isaiah 53:5 and count only the letter differences that occur from 53:5 on 5 (from whence the 22 letter hit comes), *we are still left with 63 letter differences in a seven verse span*. There is simply nothing amazing going on here – the data set is terribly flawed.

Analysis Point 3

The resulting phrase of the 22 letters is below:

שקק מעל ישוע שמי עז ששו עבים

The proposed translation is, "Gushing from above was Yeshua, my mighty name, and the clouds rejoiced." Besides wondering what this "sentence" is supposed to mean in coherent English, I have the following comments.

First to translate שקק as "gushing" is extremely strained. According to the *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon* and a computer search, this verb is found in only six verses, none of which ever refer to cloud activity. The verb is used of land animals, chariots, or locusts, and means "rushing." In short, the translation doesn't work, and the phrasing makes little sense as offered anyway.

Second, if one accepts the translation, it is chiasmic in structure, but there is no apparent parallelism in the string, as is characteristic of Hebrew poetry (Line A, what's more, Line B). Not only is it incoherent in meaning, but it is butchered Hebrew poetry.

No, Virginia, there's no Jesus code either.

ⁱThe Rabin encoded text illustration is in Drosnin's book, but this particular example is from the internet article by Maya Bar-Hillel and Avishai Margali, "Madness in the Method," December 1999 (http://www.dartmouth.edu/~chance/teaching_aids/books_articles/Maya.html).

ⁱⁱ Drosnin, 13.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hendel, "The Secret Code Hoax," 23. See also Taylor, 622.

^{iv} *Ibid.*, 23.

^v *Ibid.*, 23.

^{vi} Hendel misses the "in July" phrase.

^{vii} Ramsel, 14.

^{viii} Taylor, 627.

^{ix} Jeffrey has no training in Hebrew textual criticism or (as far as I know) the biblical languages.

^x Debate between Grant Jeffrey and Michael S. Heiser, *Coast to Coast AM* with Art Bell, June 12, 2001.

^{xi} This phenomenon is known as the *hireq compaginis*. See B. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990): pp. 127-128.

Chapter Five

In Case the Horse Isn't Quite Dead Yet

We've all heard the adage about not beating a dead horse. If the horse is dead, why continue to beat it? In my judgment, the horse called the Bible code is dead—dead on arrival, as I noted earlier—but some readers still may not agree. If you fall into that category and are still clinging to the hope that your horse still maintains an ebb of life, this chapter is for you. My intention is not to be cruel or “beat a dead horse.” Rather, it is to quietly and finally pull the plug on the topic so you can move on to more fruitful intellectual pursuits.

This chapter will introduce you to four significant problems faced by textual critics—those scholars whose work focuses on establishing the original text of the Hebrew Bible. These problems go beyond the examples I have already shown you, where it is fairly easy to determine what the original text is since (a) there is more than one manuscript tradition that has a variant reading for comparison; (b) the examples were, for the most part, small, involving only a few words; and (c) the errors and variant readings were explainable by some “mechanical” process. One or all of those conditions evaporates in the face of the problems in this chapter:

- A Small Code Problem: I Samuel 13:1
- A Big Code Problem: The Book of Esther
- An Even Bigger Code Problem: The Book of Job
- The Mother of All Code Problems: The Book of Jeremiah

As the overview suggests, the content of this chapter takes us outside the Torah. Since Michael Drosnin and other Bible code enthusiasts have expanded their coding research well beyond the Torah, the other three-quarters of the Hebrew Bible are fair game in demonstrating the fabrication that is the Bible code. The material here could get quite technical, but I'll keep it simple. You already have enough knowledge about text "families" or "versions" (Masoretic Text=MT; Septuagint=LXX) to digest the significance of what you'll see here, but I won't exceed what it is you've learn to this point. Instead of feeling any intimidation about venturing farther into the land of textual criticism, I hope you find it exciting and fascinating. If you are desperate to maintain a belief in the Bible code, though, you'll once again find it disturbing.

A Small Code Problem: 1 Samuel 13:1

1 Samuel 13:1 is a well known text-critical dilemma for those who work in the Hebrew text. It is virtually unknown to those who can read the Bible only in English. This ignorance is directly related to the fact that all English translations prior to and except for the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV, 1990) have camouflaged the problem. To illustrate the problem, let's start with the NRSV translation:

Saul was . . . years old when he began to reign; and he reigned . . . and
two years over Israel.

One notices immediately that there are missing words for King Saul's age at the start of his reign. The NRSV also suggests that there are missing words related to the duration of Saul's reign as king. That may be the case. The interpreter must decide if the historical events described in 1 Sam 13–31 are conceivable in a two-year period. Scholars are divided as to that

possibility.¹ As such, we will restrict our discussion here to the item about which there is no dispute. Simply put, *there is no surviving Hebrew text* for the gap in I Samuel 13:1 relating to Saul's age when he became king. Further, most of what are considered the best LXX manuscripts are missing the entire verse. A few LXX manuscripts read "thirty," but this is certainly a contrived scribal addition for two reasons. First, the number is probably drawn from II Samuel 5:4 to match the length of David's reign. Second, since we are told Saul's son Jonathan was old enough to have 1,000 troops under his command in the very next verse, 13:2, and since Saul had a grandson before his death (2 Sam 4:4), an age of forty or more is plausible, especially if he did indeed only reign two years over Israel as the Masoretic text of 13:1 says.

For the Bible code proponent, this is not a huge problem. Supposing that the scribal insertion of "thirty" were the correct reading, there may only be five consonants involved. The real issue is that this example demonstrates that, as good as the textual transmission of the Hebrew Bible was (and there is nothing in the ancient world that is even close), it was not perfect or even complete as Bible code researchers claim.

A Big Code Problem: The Book of Esther

The problem here is also simply stated: *almost half* of the verses in LXX Esther are not found in MT Esther. The book of Esther in MT has roughly (using round numbers for convenience) ten chapters, 170 verses, and 3,000 words. In mathematical terms, assuming that each verse had 17 words (3,000 divided by 170), then MT and LXX differ by a word count of 595 words (17 x 85—half the verses of MT Esther). If each of those words had four letters, then there is approximately 2,380 letter differences between MT and LXX. At this point the reader

¹See Ralph W. Klein, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Samuel* (WBC 10; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 125.

needs to recall our earlier text examples that indicated that the LXX often has the best reading and thus the original text. The reader also needs to recall our discussion of the impossibility of knowing (short of omniscience on our part) which text family is the right text. Appeals to Providence and faith here are not helpful for solving the problem, since God would be the One who preserved the manuscripts in either case. Saying the Jewish scribes just “went with MT” is a bit misleading as well, since they *created* MT *after* 100 A.D.—what about the textual traditions they discarded? For Christian Bible code proponents this question is especially acute, since the LXX was the Bible of the early church, and it is well known that the Jewish scribes “standardized” the text partly out of the need to keep people away from certain readings in LXX which were helping Christian evangelism. An appeal to God guiding the Jewish scribes while the scribes were simultaneously taking great care to oppose Christian doctrine makes no sense at all.

An Even Bigger Code Problem: The Book of Job

Succinctly, LXX Job is about *one-sixth smaller* than MT Job, and *includes an ending not in any existing Hebrew text*. The mathematics of this reality are again striking. The MT book of Job has roughly (again using round numbers) 42 chapters, 1,070 verses, and 18,000 words. This means that there is an approximate word count difference between MT and LXX Job of 3,000 words (18,000 divided by 6). Once again, if those 3,000 words each had four letters, that would mean a potential 12,000 letter sequence disruption in the every-letter chain used by Bible code researchers. The illogic and misguided appeals to Providence noted above won’t work here, either. We simply cannot know which text has the “inspired” sequence and what that sequence is. The very preservation of the Hebrew Bible in the manuscripts we are fortunate to have destroys the validity of the Bible code proposal at its point of origin. But it gets even worse.

The Mother of All Disruptions: The Book of Jeremiah

As devastating as the material in this book has been to the Bible code to this point, the real smoking gun of why the Bible code should be considered a myth is the problem for letter sequencing in the book of Jeremiah. The situation in Esther and Job involved several thousand potential letter disruptions. In the case of Jeremiah, we are talking *tens of thousands* of letter disruptions.

Jeremiah is the second-longest book in the Hebrew Bible (52 chapters, 1,364 verses, and roughly 42,000 words). There is a *dramatic* difference between the Masoretic Text (MT) of Jeremiah used by all code researchers and the Hebrew biblical text that was used to create the Septuagint (LXX) of Jeremiah. The fact is that the MT of Jeremiah is roughly 15% *longer* than the LXX text of Jeremiah. This amounts to roughly 6,000 *words*. Using the familiar estimate above, at four letters per word, that adds up to *24,000 letter displacements*.

Recall that, according to standard text-critical rules, which are based on logic and the fact that the scribes held the Scriptures to be sacred, the MT is arguably *not* the original text in many cases.² This is because a scribe who considered Jeremiah to be holy material would be far more likely to *add* letters and words than he would to eliminate letters or words. Hence one of the most familiar text-critical rules: “the shorter text is more likely to be original than the longer text.” That is, when you have two texts of the same holy document, the longer one has likely been *added to* rather than the shorter one having suffered deletions at the hands of faithful scribes. This would mean that MT Jeremiah, the text of the Bible code, very likely has a good bit of secondary material in it. The code then (if it existed, and it does not) cannot claim to be inspired – the tens of thousands of letters in the longer text of Jeremiah have “infected” the code.

² I won't say “all” here because textual criticism is not about size or counting. All readings, long or short, should be considered “potentially right” until they are weeded out by data.

Interestingly, Dead Sea Scroll fragments of the book of Jeremiah often agree with the *shorter* LXX text against the longer MT text!

To make matters even worse (for the Bible code), not only is there a 6,000 word discrepancy between MT and LXX Jeremiah, but *chapters 46-51 of Jeremiah turn out to be chapters 25-31 of LXX!* The arrangement of the material within each text is dramatically different. There are 224 verses 46-51 which contain roughly 12,000 letters. This means that, even if MT and LXX Jeremiah were the same length, there may be as much as a 12,555 word mis-arrangement in the “code” sequence! Here is the precise breakdown:

MT	LXX
1:1—25:13	1:1—25:13a
25:14—46:5	46:1—51:35
46:6—51:64	25:13b, 15—31:44
ch. 52	ch. 52

By way of illustrating both problems, below is the MT text of Jeremiah 46-51. The underlined letters are those letters *not found* in LXX.³ There are 1,531 letters involved. As this is sinking in, remember that the entirety of these chapters—all the letters you see here—are in a different place within the respective MT and LXX book of Jeremiah. There are other text-critical items in these chapters that could be added to this code conundrum, but this much will suffice. It’s time to put the horse to rest.

³ The MT text here is fully pointed (BHS). The word divergences are based upon the work of text-critical expert Emanuel Tov. See his new electronic work, *The Parallel-Aligned Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Texts of Jewish Scripture*, available through at <http://www.logos.com/products/details/1785> through Logos Research Systems.

- 46 ¹ אֲשֶׁר הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יִרְמְיָהוּ הַנְּבִיא עַל־הַגּוֹיִם:
- 2 לְמַצְרַיִם עַל־חֵיל פְּרָעָה נָכוֹ מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה עַל־נְהַר־פַּרְתַּי בְּכַרְכַּמְשׁ
אֲשֶׁר הָכָה נְבוּכַדְרֶאצַּר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל בְּשָׁנַת הַרְבִּיעִית לִיהוִיָּקִים בֶּן־יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ מֶלֶךְ
יְהוּדָה:
- 3 עָרְכוּ מִגֵּן וְצִנָּה וּגְשׁוֹ לַמֶּלֶחֶמָה:
- 4 אֲסָרוּ הַסּוֹסִים וְעָלוּ הַפָּרָשִׁים וְהִתְיַצְבוּ בְּכוּבָעִים מֵרְקוֹ הַרְמָחִים לְבָשׁוּ הַסְרִינַת:
5 מִדְּוַע רָאִיתִי הֵמָּה חֲתִים נֹסְגִים אַחֲזוֹר וְגִבּוֹרֵיהֶם יָכְתוּ וּמְנוֹס נָסוּ וְלֹא הִפְנוּ מִגּוֹר
מִסָּבִיב נְאֻם־יְהוָה:
- 6 אֶל־יָנוּס הַקָּל וְאֶל־יִמְלֹט הַגְּבוּר צְפוּנָה עַל־יַד נְהַר־פַּרְתַּי כְּשָׁלוֹ וְנִפְלוּ:
7 מִי־זָה כִּי־אֵר יַעֲלֶה כְּנַהֲרוֹת יִתְגַּעֲשׂוּ מִימּוֹ:
8 מִצְרַיִם כִּי־אֵר יַעֲלֶה וּכְנַהֲרוֹת יִתְגַּעֲשׂוּ מִיָּם וַיֹּאמֶר אֶעֱלֶה אֶכְסֶה־אֶרֶץ אַבְיָדָה עִיר
וַיֹּשְׁבֵי בָּהּ:
- 9 עָלוּ הַסּוֹסִים וְהִתְהַלְּלוּ הָרֹכֵב וַיִּצְאוּ הַגְּבוּרִים כּוֹשׁ וּפּוֹט תַּפְשִׁי מִגֵּן וְלוֹדִים תַּפְשִׁי
דְּרָכֵי קִשְׁת׃
- 10 וְהַיּוֹם הַהוּא לֹאֲדַנִּי יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת יוֹם נִקְמָה לְהַנָּקֵם מִצְרַיִם וְאָכְלָה חֶרֶב וְשִׁבְעָה
וְרוֹתָה מִדָּמָם כִּי זָבַח לֹאֲדַנִּי יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ צָפוֹן אֶל־נְהַר־פַּרְתַּי:
11 עָלִי גִלְעָד וּקְחֵי צָרִי בְּתוֹלַת בֵּת־מִצְרַיִם לְשׂוֹא הַרְבִּיתִי רַפְאוֹת תִּעֲלֶה אֵין לָךְ:
12 שְׁמַעוּ גוֹיִם קְלוֹנָךְ וְצוּחֲתֶךָ מְלֵאָה הָאָרֶץ כִּי־גְבוּר בְּגִבּוֹר כְּשָׁלוֹ יַחֲדִיו נִפְלוּ
שְׁנֵיהֶם: פ
- 13 הַדְּבַר אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל־יִרְמְיָהוּ הַנְּבִיא לְבוֹא נְבוּכַדְרֶאצַּר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל לְהַכּוֹת
אֶת־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:
- 14 הִגִּידוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם וְהִשְׁמִיעוּ בְּמִגְדּוֹל וְהִשְׁמִיעוּ בְּנֶף וּבְתַחֲפַנְחַס אִמְרוּ הִתְיַצֵּב וְהִכֵּן
לָךְ כִּי־אָכְלָה חֶרֶב סְבִיבֶיךָ:
- 15 מִדְּוַע נִסְחַף אֲבִירֶיךָ לֹא עָמַד כִּי יְהוָה הִדְפוֹ:
16 הַרְבָּה כּוֹשֵׁל גַּם־נָפַל אִישׁ אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ קוּמְהָ וְנִשְׁבָּה אֶל־עַמְּנוּ וְאֶל־אֶרֶץ
מוֹלִדְתָנוּ מִפְּנֵי חֶרֶב הַיּוֹנָה:
- 17 קְרָאוּ שֵׁם פְּרָעָה מֶלֶךְ־מִצְרַיִם שְׂאוֹן הַעֲבִיר הַמוֹעֵד:
18 חִי־אֲנִי נְאֻם־הַמֶּלֶךְ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ כִּי כְתָבוֹר בְּהָרִים וּכְכַרְמֶל בַּיָּם יָבוֹא:
19 כְּלִי גוֹלָה עָשִׂי לָךְ יוֹשֶׁבֶת בֵּת־מִצְרַיִם כִּי־נָף לְשִׁמָּה תִהְיֶה וְנִצַּתָּה מֵאֵין יוֹשֵׁב: ס
20 עֲגֹלָה יִפְה־פִיָּה מִצְרַיִם קֶרֶץ מִצָּפוֹן בָּא בָּא:

21 גַּם־שִׁכְרִיָּה בְּקִרְבָּהּ כְּעַגְלֵי מִרְבֵּק כִּי־גַם־הֵמָּה הִפְנוּ נְסוּ וַיַּחֲדִיו לֹא עָמְדוּ כִּי יוֹם
אִידָם בָּא עֲלֵיהֶם עֵת פְּקֻדָּתָם:

22 קוֹלָהּ כְּנַחֲשׁ יִלְדֵךְ כִּי־בַחֲלִיל יִלְכוּ וּבְקִרְדָּמוֹת בָּאוּ לָהּ כַּחֲטָבֵי עֵצִים:

23 כָּרְתוּ יַעֲרָה נְאֻם־יְהוָה כִּי לֹא יַחְקֹר כִּי רַבּוּ מֵאַרְבֶּה וְאִין לָהֶם מִסְפָּר:

24 הִבִּישָׁה בְּתִמְצָרִים נִתְּנָה בְיַד עַם־צָפוֹן:

25 אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הִנְנִי פּוֹקֵד אֶל־אֲמוֹן מִנְּאֻ וְעַל־פְּרַעֲה

וְעַל־מִצְרַיִם וְעַל־אֱלֹהֵיהֶּ וְעַל־מַלְכֵיהֶּ וְעַל־פְּרַעֲה וְעַל הַבְּטָחִים בּוֹ:

26 וְנִתְּתִים בְיַד מִבְקָשֵׁי נַפְשָׁם וּבְיַד נְבוּכַדְרֶאֶצַּר מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל וּבְיַד־עַבְדָּיו וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן

תִּשְׁפֹּן כִּי־מִי־קָדָם נְאֻם־יְהוָה: ס

27 וְאַתָּה אֶל־תִּירָא עַבְדֵי יַעֲקֹב וְאֶל־תַּחַת יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי הִנְנִי מוֹשְׁעֶךָ מִרְחוֹק

וְאַתָּה־זֶרַעֶךָ מֵאַרְץ שׁוֹבִים וְשׁוֹב יַעֲקֹב וְשִׁקְטוּ וְשִׁאֲנוּ וְאִין מִחְרִיד: ס

28 אַתָּה אֶל־תִּירָא עַבְדֵי יַעֲקֹב נְאֻם־יְהוָה כִּי אַתָּה אָנֹכִי כִּי אֶעֱשֶׂה כָּלֶּה בְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם

אֲשֶׁר הִדְחַתִּיךָ שָׁמָּה וְאַתָּה לֹא־אֶעֱשֶׂה כָּלֶּה וַיִּסְרַתִּיךָ לְמִשְׁפָּט וְנִקָּה לֹא אֲנַקֶּךָ:

ס

47 אֲשֶׁר הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יִרְמְיָהוּ הַנְּבִיא אֶל־פְּלִשְׁתִּים בְּטָרָם יָבֵה פְרַעֲה

אֶת־עֲזָה: ס

2 כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה הִנֵּה־מִים עֹלִים מִצָּפוֹן וְהָיוּ לְנַחַל שׁוֹטֵף וַיִּשְׁטְפוּ אֶרֶץ וּמְלוֹאָהּ

עֵיר וַיִּשְׁבִּי בָּהּ וַזְעִקוּ הָאָדָם וְהִלְלִל כָּל יוֹשֵׁב הָאָרֶץ:

3 מִקּוֹל שִׁעֲטַת פְּרִסוֹת אַבְיָרָיו מִרְעַשׁ לְרִכְבּוֹ הַמּוֹן גְּלָגְלָיו לֹא־הִפְנוּ אַבוֹת

אֶל־בָּנִים מִרְפִּיזֵן יָדַיִם:

4 עַל־הַיּוֹם הַבֹּא לְשָׂדוֹד אֶת־כָּל־פְּלִשְׁתִּים לְהַכְרִית לְצַר וּלְצִידוֹן כָּל שְׂרִיד עֶזְרָ

כִּי־שָׂדֵד יְהוָה אֶת־פְּלִשְׁתִּים שְׂאֲרִית אֵי כַפְתּוֹר:

5 בָּאָה קָרְחָה אֶל־עֲזָה נְדַמְתָּה אֲשַׁקְלוֹן שְׂאֲרִית עַמְּקָם עַד־מָתִי תִתְגַּדְּדִי: ס

6 הוֹי חָרַב לִיהוָה עַד־אָנָּה לֹא תִשְׁקָטִי הָאֲסָפִי אֶל־תִּעַרְךָ הִרְגָעִי וְדָמִי:

7 אֵיךְ תִּשְׁקָטִי וַיְהוֶה צָוָה־לָּהּ אֶל־אֲשַׁקְלוֹן וְאֶל־חֹוֹף הַיָּם שָׁם יַעֲדָה: ס

48¹ לְמוֹאָב כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הוֹי אֶל־נְבוֹ כִּי שִׁדְדָה הִבִּישָׁה

נִלְכְּדָה קְרִיתִים הִבִּישָׁה הַמִּשְׁגָּב וַחֲתָה:

2 אִין עוֹד תִּהְלֹת מוֹאָב בְּחִשְׁבוֹן חִשְׁבוּ עָלֶיהָ רָעָה לָכֵן וְנִכְרִיתָנָה מִגּוֹי גַם־מִדָּמָן

תִּדְמִי אַחֲרֶיךָ תִּלְדֵךְ חָרַב:

3 קוֹל צַעֲקָה מִחֲרוֹנִים שָׂדֵד וְשִׁבְרֵ גְדוֹל:

4 נִשְׁבְּרָה מוֹאָב הַשְּׁמִיעוּ זַעֲקָה צְעוּרִיָּה:

5 כִּי מַעֲלָה הַלְחֹות בְּבָכִי יַעֲלֶה־בְּבָכִי כִּי בְמוֹרֵד חוֹרְנִים צָרִי צַעֲקַת־שִׁבְרֵ שָׁמְעוּ:

- 6 גִּסּוּ מַלְטוּ נַפְשְׁכֶם וְתִהְיֶינָה כְּעֲרוּעֵר בַּמִּדְבָּר:
- 7 כִּי יַעַן בִּטְחַדְךָ בַּמַּעֲשִׂיִךְ וּבְאַוְצְרוֹתֶיךָ גַּם־אֶת תִּלְכָּדֶי וַיֵּצֵא כְּמִישׁ בַּגּוֹלָה כַּהֲגִיו וְשָׂרְיוֹ יִחַד:
- 8 וַיָּבֵא שִׂדְד אֶל־כָּל־עִיר וְעִיר לֹא תִמָּלֵט וְאֶבֶד הָעַמֶּק וַנִּשְׁמַד הַמִּישָׁר אֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה:
- 9 תִּנְוֲצִיץ לְמוֹאָב כִּי נִצָּא תֵצֵא וְעָרֶיהָ לְשִׁמָּה תִהְיֶינָה מֵאִין יוֹשֵׁב בָּהֶן:
- 10 אַרוּר עֲשֵׂה מְלֹאכֶת יְהוָה רַמְיָה וְאַרְנוֹר מִנְעַ חֲרָבוֹ מִדָּם:
- 11 שְׂאֲנָן מוֹאָב מִנְעוּרָיו וְשִׁקֵּט הוּא אֶל־שְׁמָרְיוֹ וְלֹא־הוֹרַק מִכָּלִי אֶל־כָּלִי וּבַגּוֹלָה לֹא הִלָּךְ עַל־כֵּן עָמַד טַעֲמוֹ בּוֹ וְרִיחוֹ לֹא נָמַר: ס
- 12 לָכֵן הִנֵּה־יָמִים בָּאִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי־לוֹ צְעִים וְצִעָהוּ וְכָלְיוּ יָרִיקוּ וּנְבָלֵיהֶם יִנְפְצוּ:
- 13 וּבֶשׂ מוֹאָב מִכְמוֹשׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר־בִּשְׂוֹ בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִבַּיִת אֵל מִבְּטַחָם:
- 14 אִידָךְ תִּאֲמָרוּ גְבוּרִים אֲנַחְנוּ וְאֲנֹשֵׁי־חֵיל לְמַלְחָמָה:
- 15 שִׂדְד מוֹאָב וְעָרֶיהָ עָלָה וּמִבְּחַר בַּחֲזוּרָיו יִרְדּוּ לְטַבַּח נְאֻם־הַמֶּלֶךְ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ:
- 16 קְרוֹב אִיד־מוֹאָב לְבוֹא וְרַעְתּוֹ מִהֲרָה מְאֹד:
- 17 גִּדּוּ לוֹ כָּל־סִבְיָיו וְכָל יַדְעֵי שְׁמוֹ אֲמָרוּ אֵיכָה נִשְׁבַּר מִטֶּה־עֵז מִקַּל תִּפְאָרָה:
- 18 רַדִּי מִכְּבוֹד יִשְׁבִּי בְצִמָּא יִשְׁבֶּת בַּת־דִּיבּוֹן כִּי־שִׂדְד מוֹאָב עָלָה בְּךָ שַׁחַת מִבְּצָרֶיךָ:
- 19 אֶל־דָּרֶךְ עַמְדֵי וְצַפִּי יוֹשֶׁבֶת עֲרוּעֵר שְׂאֵל־נֶס וְנִמְלָטָה אֲמָרִי מִהִנְהִיתָה:
- 20 הַבִּישׁ מוֹאָב כִּי־חָתָה הִילָלִין וְזַעֲקֵי הִגִּידוּ בְאַרְנוֹן כִּי שִׂדְד מוֹאָב:
- 21 וּמִשְׁפָּט בָּא אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַמִּישָׁר אֶל־חֲלוֹן וְאֶל־יְהֻצָּה וְעַל־מוֹפְעֵת:
- 22 וְעַל־דִּיבּוֹן וְעַל־נְבוֹ וְעַל־בֵּית דְּבַלְתָּיִם:
- 23 וְעַל קְרִיתָיִם וְעַל־בֵּית גָּמוֹל וְעַל־בֵּית מְעוֹן:
- 24 וְעַל־קְרִיּוֹת וְעַל־בְּצָרָה וְעַל כָּל־עָרֵי אֶרֶץ מוֹאָב הַרְחַקוֹת וְהַקְּרִבוֹת:
- 25 נִגְדָּעָה קֶרֶן מוֹאָב וּזְרָעוֹ נִשְׁבָּרָה נְאֻם יְהוָה:
- 26 הַשְׁפִּירָהוּ כִּי עַל־יְהוָה הִגְדִּיל וְסָפַק מוֹאָב בְּקִיאוֹ וְהָיָה לְשִׁחַק גַּם־הוּא:
- 27 וְאַם לֹא הַשְׁחַק הָיָה לְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל אִם־בְּגַנְגָּבִים נִמְצָאָה כִּי־מִדֵּי דְבַרֶיךָ בּוֹ תִתְנוּדָד:
- 28 עֲזָבוּ עָרִים וְשָׁכְנוּ בַּפְּלַע יִשְׁבִּי מוֹאָב וְהָיוּ כִּיּוֹנָה תִקְנָן בְּעִבְרֵי פִי־פַחַת:
- 29 שְׁמַעְנוּ גְאוֹן־מוֹאָב גְּאוֹה מֵאֵד גְּבָהּ וּגְאוֹנוֹ וּגְאוֹתוֹ וְרַם לְבוֹ:
- 30 אֲנִי יַדְעֵתִי נְאֻם־יְהוָה עֲבַרְתּוֹ וְלֹא־כֵן בְּדִיו לֹא־כֵן עָשׂוֹ:

- 31 על־כֵּן עַל־מוֹאֵב אֵילִיל וְלִמּוֹאֵב כָּלָה אֲזַעֵק אֶל־אֲנָשֵׁי קִיר־חֶרֶשׁ יִהְיֶה:
- 32 מִבְּכֵי יַעֲזֹר אֲבָכָה־לָךְ הַגִּפֶּן שִׁבְמָה נְטִישׁ־תִּידְ עֲבָרוּ יָם עַד יָם יַעֲזֹר נִגְעוּ
עַל־קִיצֵךְ וְעַל־בְּצִירֵךְ שִׁדְד נָפַל:
- 33 וְנֶאֱסָפָה שְׂמֵחָה וְגִיל מִכַּרְמֶל וּמֵאֲרֶץ מוֹאֵב וַיֵּין מִיקְבֵּים הַשְּׂפֵתִי לֹא־יִדְרֹךְ הַיַּד
הַיַּד לֹא הַיַּד:
- 34 מִזְעַקַת חֻשְׁבוֹן עַד־אֲלַעְלָה עַד־יֵהֵץ נִתְּנוּ קוֹלָם מִצַּעַר עַד־חֲרוֹזִים עַגְלַת שְׁלִשְׁיָה
כִּי גַם־מִי נִמְרִים לְמִשְׁמֹת יִהְיוּ:
- 35 וְהַשְּׂבֵתִי לְמוֹאֵב נֶאֱסִי־הוּהוּ מֵעֵלָה בָמָה וּמִקְטִיר לֹא־הָיוּ:
- 36 עַל־כֵּן לְבִי לְמוֹאֵב כַּחֲלָלִים יִהְיֶה וְלִבִּי אֶל־אֲנָשֵׁי קִיר־חֶרֶשׁ כַּחֲלָלִים יִהְיֶה
עַל־כֵּן יִתְרַת עֲשֵׂה אֲבָדוֹ:
- 37 כִּי כָל־רֹאשׁ קָרְחָה וְכָל־זֶקֶן גְּרָעָה עַל כָּל־יָדַיִם גְּדֹת וְעַל־מִתְנַיִם שָׁק:
- 38 עַל כָּל־גְּגוֹת מוֹאֵב וּבִרְחֻבֹתֶיהָ כָּלָה מִסֶּפֶד כִּי־שִׁבְרֹתִי אֶת־מוֹאֵב כַּכִּלִּי אִין־חַפֶּץ
בּוֹ נֶאֱסִי־הוּהוּ:
- 39 אֵיד תַּתָּה הַיִּלְלוּ אֵיד הַפְּנֵה־עַרְף מוֹאֵב בּוֹשׁ וְהִיָּה מוֹאֵב לְשֹׁחַק וְלִמְחַתָּה
לְכָל־סְבִיבָיו: ס
- 40 כִּי־כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה הִנֵּה כִנְשֵׁר יִדְאָה וּפְרֵשׁ כְּנַפָּיו אֶל־מוֹאֵב:
- 41 נִלְכְּדָה הַקְּרִיֹּת וְהַמְצָדוֹת נִתְּפָשָׁה וְהִיָּה לֵב גְּבוּרֵי מוֹאֵב בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כָּלֵב אִשָּׁה
מִצָּרָה:
- 42 וְנִשְׁמַד מוֹאֵב מֵעַם כִּי עַל־יְהוָה הַגִּדִּיל:
- 43 פָּחַד וּפְחַת וּפַח עָלֶיךָ יוֹשֵׁב מוֹאֵב נֶאֱסִי־הוּהוּ:
- 44 הַנְּיָס מִפְּנֵי הַפְּחַד יִפֹּל אֶל־הַפְּחַת וְהַעֲלָה מִן־הַפְּחַת יִלְכַּד בַּפֶּח כִּי־אָבִיא אֵלֶיָּה
אֶל־מוֹאֵב שְׁנַת פְּקֻדָּתָם נֶאֱסִי־הוּהוּ:
- 45 בְּצֹל חֻשְׁבוֹן עֲמָדוֹ מִכַּח נָסִים כִּי־אֵשׁ יֵצֵא מִחֻשְׁבוֹן וְלַהֲבֵל מִבֵּין סִיחוֹן וְתֹאכַל
פָּאֵת מוֹאֵב וְקִדְקַד בְּנֵי שְׂאוֹן:
- 46 אוֹיֵלֶךְ מוֹאֵב אֲבַד עַם־כְּמוֹשׁ כִּי־לָקְחוּ בְנֵיךָ בְּשָׁבִי וּבְנִתִּיךָ בְּשָׁבִי:
- 47 וּשְׂבֵתִי שְׁבוֹת־מוֹאֵב בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים נֶאֱסִי־הוּהוּ עַד־הֵנָּה מִשְׁפַּט מוֹאֵב: ס
- 49¹ לְבָנֵי עַמּוֹן כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה הַבְּנִים אֵין לְיִשְׂרָאֵל אִם־יִוְרֹשׁ אֵין לוֹ מִדּוֹעַ יִרֵשׁ מִלְּכָם
אֶת־גֹּד וְעַמּוֹ בְּעָרָיו יָשֵׁב:
- 2 לָכֵן הֵנָּה יָמִים בָּאִים נֶאֱסִי־הוּהוּ וְהַשְּׂמַעְתִּי אֶל־רַבַּת בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן תְּרוּעַת מִלְחָמָה
וְהִיָּתָה לְתֵל שְׂמָמָה וּבְנִתֶיהָ בְּאֵשׁ תִּצְתַּנֶּה וְיִרֵשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־יְרֻשׁוֹ אָמַר יְהוָה:
- 3 הַיִּלְלִי חֻשְׁבוֹן כִּי שִׁדְדָה־עֵי צַעֲקָנָה בְּנוֹת רַבָּה חֲגֵרְנָה שְׁקִים סִפְדָּנָה
וְהִתְשׁוּטְטָנָה בְּגִדְרוֹת כִּי מִלְּכָם בְּגוֹלָה יִלְךְ כַּהֲנִיו וּשְׂרָיו יַחֲדִיו:

- 4 מה־תִּתְּהִלְלִי בְּעַמְּקֵים זָב עַמְּקֶךָ הַבַּת הַשּׁוֹבְבָה הַבְּטָחָה בְּאַצְרֹתֶיהָ מִי יָבֹא אֵלַי:
- 5 הַנְּנִי מִבֵּיא עָלֶיךָ פֶּחַד נְאֻם־אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה צְבָאוֹת מִכָּל־סִבְיָיִךְ וְנִדְחֹתֶם אִישׁ לִפְנֵיו וְאִין מְקַבֵּץ לְנַדָּד:
- 6 וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן אָשִׁיב אֶת־שְׁבוֹת בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן נְאֻם־יְהוָה: ס
- 7 לְאָדָּם כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הָאֵין עוֹד חֲכָמָה בְּתִימָן אֲבָדָה עֵצָה מִבְּנִים נִסְרָחָה חֲכַמְתֶּם:
- 8 גָּסוּ הַפְּנֹו הֶעֱמִיקוּ לְשֹׁבֵת יִשְׁבֵי דָדוֹן כִּי אֵיד עֲשׂוּ הַבְּאֲתִי עָלְיוֹ עַת פְּקֻדָּתִיו:
- 9 אִם־בְּצָרִים בָּאוּ לָךְ לֹא יִשְׁאָרוּ עוֹלָלוֹת אִם־גְּנָבִים בְּלִילָה הַשְּׁחִיתוּ דַיִם:
- 10 כִּי־אֲנִי חֲשַׁפְתִּי אֶת־עֲשׂוֹ גִלְתִּי אֶת־מִסְתָּרָיו וְנִחְבָּה לֹא יוֹכֵל שֹׁדֵד זָרְעוֹ וְאָחִיו וְשִׁכְנָיו וְאִינָנֹו:
- 11 עֲזָבָה יִתְמִיךָ אֲנִי אַחִיָּה וְאֶלְמֵנְתֶיךָ עָלִי תִבְטָחוּ: ס
- 12 כִּי־כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה הִנֵּה אֲשֶׁר־אֵין מִשְׁפָּטָם לְשִׁתּוֹת הַכּוֹס שָׁתוּ יִשְׁתּוּ וְאַתָּה הוֹא נָקָה תִנָּקָה לֹא תִנָּקָה כִּי שָׁתָה תִשְׁתָּה:
- 13 כִּי בִי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי נְאֻם־יְהוָה כִּי־לִשְׁמָה לְחִרְפָּה לְחִרְבַּ וְלִקְלָלָה תִהְיֶה בְּצָרָה וְכָל־עֲרִיָּה תִהְיֶינָה לְחִרְבוֹת עוֹלָם:
- 14 שְׁמוּעָה שָׁמַעְתִּי מֵאֵת יְהוָה וְצִיר בְּגוֹיִם שָׁלוּחַ הִתְקַבְּצוּ וּבָאוּ עָלֶיהָ וְקוּמוּ לְמַלְחָמָה:
- 15 כִּי־הִנֵּה קָטָן נִתְתִּיךָ בְּגוֹיִם בְּזוּי בְּאָדָם:
- 16 תִּפְלָצְתָךְ הִשִּׂיא אֶתְךָ זְדוֹן לְבָךְ שְׁכָנִי בַחֲגוּנִי הִסְלַע תִּפְשִׂי מְרוֹם גְּבַעָה כִּי־תִגְבִּיָּה בְּנִשְׁרַ קִנְיָךְ מִשֵּׁם אֹרִיךְךָ נְאֻם־יְהוָה:
- 17 וְהִיתָ אָדָּם לְשִׁמָּה כָּל עֵבֵר עָלֶיהָ יִשָּׁם וְיִשְׂרָק עַל־כָּל־מְבוֹתָהָ:
- 18 כַּמֵּה־פִכֶּת סֶדֶם וְעַמְרָה וְשִׁכְנֶיהָ אָמַר יְהוָה לֹא־יֵשֵׁב שָׁם אִישׁ וְלֹא־יִגְוֹר בָּהּ בֶּן־אָדָם:
- 19 הִנֵּה כְּאַרְיֶה יַעֲלֶה מִגְּאוֹן הַיַּרְדֵּן אֶל־נְגֹוֹה אֵיתָךְ כִּי־אַרְגִּיעָה אַרְיֻצְנֹו מֵעָלֶיהָ וּמִי בַחֲזוֹר אֵלֶיהָ אֶפְקֹד כִּי מִי כְמוֹנִי וּמִי יַעֲיֹדְנִי וּמִי־זֶה רֹעֶה אֲשֶׁר יַעֲמִד לִפְנָיִ: ס
- 20 לָכֵן שָׁמְעוּ עֲצַת־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר יַעַן אֶל־אָדָּם וּמַחְשְׁבוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר חָשַׁב אֶל־יִשְׁבֵי תִימָן אִם־לֹא יִסְחָבוּם צְעִירֵי הַצֹּאן אִם־לֹא יִשִּׁים עָלֵיהֶם נוֹהֵם:
- 21 מְקוֹל נִפְלֵם רָעָשָׁה הָאָרֶץ צָעֲקָה בְּיַם־סוּף נִשְׁמַע קוֹלָהּ:
- 22 הִנֵּה כְּנִשְׁרַ יַעֲלֶה וַיִּדְאַה וַיִּפְרֹשׁ כְּנַפָיו עַל־בְּצָרָה וְהָיָה לֵב גְּבוּרֵי אָדָּם בְּיָוִם הַהוּא כְּלָב אִשָּׁה מְצָרָה: ס

- 23 לְדַמְשֶׁק בּוֹשָׁה חֶמֶת וְאַרְפָּד כִּי־שָׁמְעָה רָעָה שָׁמְעוּ נִמְגּוּ בַיַּם דְּאָגָה הַשֶּׁקֶט לֹא יוֹכֵל:
- 24 רָפְתָה דַמְשֶׁק הַפְּנֵתָה לְנוֹס וְרִטְטוּ הַחֲזִיקָה צָרָה וְחִבְלִים אַחֲזַתָּה כִּי־לֹדְדָה:
- 25 אֵיךְ לֹא־עֲזָבָה עִיר תְּהִלָּה קָרִית מְשׁוֹשִׁי:
- 26 לָכֵן יָפְלוּ בַחֲוָרֶיהָ בְּרַחֲבֶתֶיהָ וְכָל־אֲנָשֵׁי הַמְּלַחֲמָה יָדְמוּ בַיּוֹם הַהוּא נְאֻם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:
- 27 וְהִצַּתִּי אֵשׁ בְּחוֹמַת דַּמְשֶׁק וְאָכְלָה אַרְמְנוֹת בֶּן־הַדָּד: ס
- 28 לְקַדְרוּ וְלִמְמַלְכוֹת חָצוֹר אֲשֶׁר הִכָּה נְבוּכַדְרֶאֱצַר מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה קוּמוּ עָלוּ אֶל־קָדָר וְשִׁדְדוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי־קָדָם:
- 29 אֶהְלִיֵּהם וְצֹאנָם יִקְחוּ יְרִיעוֹתֵיהֶם וְכָל־כְּלִיֵּיהֶם וְגַמְלֵיהֶם יִשְׂאוּ לָהֶם וְקָרְאוּ עֲלֵיהֶם מְגוֹר מִסָּבִיב:
- 30 נִסּוּ נְדוּ מֵאֵד הַעֲמִיקוּ לַשַּׁבָּת יִשְׁבִּי חָצוֹר נְאֻם־יְהוָה כִּי־יַעַץ עָלֵיכֶם נְבוּכַדְרֶאֱצַר מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל עֲצָה וְחֶשֶׁב עָלֵיכֶם מִחֲשָׁבָה:
- 31 קוּמוּ עָלוּ אֶל־גּוֹי שְׁלִיז יוֹשֵׁב לְבָטָח נְאֻם־יְהוָה לֹא־דִלְתִים וְלֹא־בְרִיחַ לוֹ בְּדַד יִשְׁכְּנוּ:
- 32 וְהָיוּ גַמְלֵיהֶם לְבִזּוּ וְהִמּוֹן מִקְנִיֵיהֶם לְשָׁלָל וְזִרְתִּים לְכָל־רוּחַ קְצוּצֵי פֶאֶה וּמִכָּל־עֲבָרָיו אָבִיא אֶת־אִידָם נְאֻם־יְהוָה:
- 33 וְהִיְתָה חָצוֹר לְמַעֲוֹן תַּנִּים שְׁמֵמָה עַד־עוֹלָם לֹא־יֵשֵׁב שָׁם אִישׁ וְלֹא־יִגּוֹר בָּהּ בֶּן־אָדָם: ס
- 34 אֲשֶׁר הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יְרֵמְיָהוּ הַנְּבִיא אֶל־עֵילָם בְּרֵאשִׁית מַלְכוּת צְדַקְיָה מֶלֶךְ־יְהוּדָה לֵאמֹר:
- 35 כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הַנְּנִי שֹׁבֵר אֶת־קִשְׁת עֵילָם רֵאשִׁית גְּבוּרָתָם:
- 36 וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶל־עֵילָם אַרְבַּע רוּחוֹת מֵאַרְבַּע קְצוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְזִרְתִּים לְכָל הַרְחוֹת הָאָלָה וְלֹא־יְהִיָּה הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָבֹא שָׁם נִדְחֵי עוֹלָם:
- 37 וְהִחַתַּתִּי אֶת־עֵילָם לְפָנַי אִיבִיָּהֶם וּלְפָנָיו מִבְּקִשֵׁי נַפְשָׁם וְהִבֵּאתִי עֲלֵיהֶם רָעָה אֶת־חֲרוֹן אַפִּי נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי אַחֲרֵיהֶם אֶת־הַחֶרֶב עַד פְּלוֹתֵי אוֹתָם:
- 38 וְשִׁמַּתִּי כֶסֶף בְּעֵילָם וְהִאֲבִדְתִּי מִשָּׁם מֶלֶךְ וְשָׂרִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה:
- 39 וְהָיָה בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים אָשׁוּב אֶת־שְׁבִית עֵילָם נְאֻם־יְהוָה: ס
- 50¹ הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל־בָּבֶל אֶל־אַרְצָן כְּשֵׁדִים בְּיַד יְרֵמְיָהוּ הַנְּבִיא:
- 2 הַגִּידוּ בְּגוֹיִם וְהַשְׁמִיעוּ וְשֹׂאוֹנִים הַשְׁמִיעוּ אֶל־תַּכְתְּדוֹ אָמְרוּ גְּלֹכְדָה בְּבָל הַבִּישׁ בַּל חַת מְרֻדָּד הַבִּישׁוּ עֲצָבִיָּה חַתוּ גְּלוּלִיָּה:

- 3 כִּי עָלָה עָלֶיהָ גְזוֹי מִצְפּוֹן הוֹאֵי־יִשְׁרָיִת אֶת־אֶרֶץ לְשִׁמָּה וְלֹא־יְהִיָּה יוֹשֵׁב בָּהּ מֵאָדָם
וְעַד־בְּהֵמָה גָּדוּ הַלְכּוּ:
- 4 בַּיָּמִים הָהֵמָּה וּבָעֵת הַהִיא נֶאֱסַי־יְהוָה יָבֹאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵמָּה וּבְנֵי־יְהוּדָה יַחְדָּו
הַלֹּךְ וּבָכּוּ יִלְכוּ וְאֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם יִבְקְשׁוּ:
- 5 צִיּוֹן יִשְׂאֲלוּ דָרֶךְ הַנֶּה פְּנִיָּהֶם בָּאוּ וְנָלוּ אֶל־יְהוָה בְּרִית עוֹלָם לֹא תִשְׁכַּח: ס
- 6 צָאן אַבְדוֹת הָיָה עַמִּי רַעִיָּהֶם הִתְעוּם הָרִים שׁוֹבְבִים מֵהָר אֶל־גְּבֻעָה הִלְכוּ שָׁכְחוּ
רַבְצָם:
- 7 כָּל־מוֹצְאֵיהֶם אֲכָלוּם וְצָרִיָּהֶם אָמְרוּ לֹא נֶאֱשַׁם תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר חָטְאוּ לַיהוָה
נֹה־צֶדֶק וּמִקּוֹה אַבּוֹתֵיהֶם יְהוָה: ס
- 8 גָּדוּ מִתּוֹךְ בָּבֶל וּמֵאֶרֶץ כַּשְׂדִּים יֵצְאוּ וְהָיוּ כְּעַתּוּדִים לִפְנֵי־צָאן:
- 9 כִּי הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי מַעִיר וּמַעֲלֶה עַל־בָּבֶל קְהַל־גּוֹיִם גְּדֹלִים מֵאֶרֶץ צְפּוֹן וְעָרְכוּ לָהּ
מִשָּׁם תִּלְכַּד חֲצִי כְּגִבּוֹר מִשָּׁפִיל לֹא יֵשׁוּב רִיקָם:
- 10 וְהִיתָה כַּשְׂדִּים לְשָׁלַל כָּל־שְׁלָלֶיהָ יִשְׁבְּעוּ נֶאֱסַי־יְהוָה:
- 11 כִּי תִשְׁמַחִי כִּי תַעֲלֹזִי שָׂסִי נִחַלְתִּי כִּי תִפּוֹשִׁי כְּעַגְלָה דָּשָׂה וְתִצְחֲלִי כַּאֲבָרִים:
- 12 בּוֹשָׂה אִמְכֶם מֵאֵד חֲפָרָה יוֹלְדֶתְכֶם הִנֵּה אַחֲרִית גּוֹיִם מִדְּבַר צִיָּה וְעַרְבָּה:
- 13 מִקְצָף יְהוָה לֹא תִשָּׁב וְהִיתָה שְׂמֵמָה כְּלָה כָּל עֹבֵר עַל־בָּבֶל יִשֶׁם וַיִּשְׂרַק
עַל־כָּל־מִבּוֹתֶיהָ:
- 14 עָרְכוּ עַל־בָּבֶל סָבִיב כָּל־דְּרָכֶי קִשְׁת יָדוֹ אֵלֶיהָ אֶל־תַּחְמְלוּ אֶל־חַץ בִּי לַיהוָה
חֲטָאָה:
- 15 הָרִיעוּ עָלֶיהָ סָבִיב נִתְּנָה יָדָהּ נִפְלוּ אֲשׁוּלֵתֶיהָ נִהְרְסוּ חוֹמוֹתֶיהָ כִּי נִקְמַת יְהוָה
הִיא הִנְקִמוּ בָּהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂתָה עִשׂוֹלָה:
- 16 כִּרְתוּ זֹרַע מִבָּבֶל וְתִפֶּשׂ מִגָּל בְּעֵת קֶצֶר מִפְּנֵי חֲרָב הַיּוֹנָה אִישׁ אֶל־עַמּוֹ יִפְּנוּ
וְאִישׁ לְאֶרְצוֹ יִנְסוּ: ס
- 17 שֶׁה פְּזוּרָה יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲרִיּוֹת הַדִּיחוּ הָרֵאשׁוֹן אֲכָלוּ מֶלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר וְזֶה הָאֲחֵרוֹן עֲצָמוֹ
נְבוּכַדְרֶאֶצַּר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל: ס
- 18 לָכֵן כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הִנְנִי פֹקֵד אֶל־מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל וְאֶל־אֶרְצוֹ
כַּאֲשֶׁר פִּקַּדְתִּי אֶל־מֶלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר:
- 19 וְשִׁבַּבְתִּי אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־נֹהוּ וְרַעָה הַפְּרָמֶל וְהַבְּשָׁן וּבִהָר אֲפָרִים וְהַגְּלֵעַד
תִּשְׁבַּע נִפְשׁוֹ:
- 20 בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם וּבָעֵת הַהִיא נֶאֱסַי־יְהוָה יִבְקֹשׂ אֶת־עַוֹן יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִיֻּנּוּ וְאֶת־חֲטָאָת
יְהוּדָה וְלֹא תִמְצָאִינָהּ כִּי אֶסְלַח לְאֲשֶׁר אֲשָׂאִיר:

- 21 עַל־הָאָרֶץ מִרְתִּים עָלָה עָלֶיהָ וְאֶל־יֹשְׁבֵי פְקוּד חֲרָב וְהַחֲרַם אַחֲרֵיהֶם
נֶאֱמַר־יְהוָה וַעֲשֵׂה כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ: ס
- 22 קוֹל מַלְחָמָה בָּאָרֶץ וְשֹׁבֵר גְּדוֹל:
23 אִיד נִגְדַע וַיִּשְׁבֵּר פְּטִישׁ כָּל־הָאָרֶץ אִיד הִיתָה לְשֹׁמֵה בְּבַל בְּגוֹיִם:
24 יִקְשְׁתִּי לָךְ וְגַם־נִלְכַדְתָּ בְּבַל וְאֵת לֹא יִדְעַת נִמְצֵאת וְגַם־נִתְפָּשֶׁת כִּי בִיהוּה
הַתְּגָרִית:
- 25 פָּתַח יְהוָה אֶת־אוֹצְרוֹ וַיּוֹצֵא אֶת־כְּלֵי זַמְמוֹ כִּי־מִלְאָכָה הִיא לְאֲדָנִי יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
בָּאָרֶץ כְּשָׂדִים:
26 בְּאוֹלָה מִקֶּץ פִּתְחוּ מֵאֲבֹסִיָּה סְלוּהָ כְּמוֹ־עֲרָמִים וְהַחֲרִימוּהָ אֶל־תְּהִי־לָהּ
שְׂאֵרִית:
- 27 חָרְבוּ כָּל־פְּרִיָּה יִרְדּוּ לַטֶּבַח הוּי עָלֵיהֶם כִּי־בָא יוֹמָם עַת פִּקְדָתָם: ס
28 קוֹל נְסִים וּפְלִטִים מֵאָרֶץ בְּבַל לְהַגִּיד בְּצִיּוֹן אֶת־נִקְמַת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִקְמַת
הַיְכָלוֹ:
- 29 הַשְּׁמִיעוּ אֶל־בְּבַל רַבִּים כָּל־דְּרָכֵי קֹשֶׁת חָנוּ עָלֶיהָ סָבִיב אֶל־יְהִי־וֹ פְּלֹטָה
שְׁלֹמוֹ־לָהּ כַּפַּעֲלָה כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂתָה עֲשׂוֹ־לָהּ כִּי אֶל־יְהוָה זָדָה אֶל־קְדוֹשׁ
יִשְׂרָאֵל:
- 30 לָכֵן יִפְלוּ בַחֲוָרֶיהָ בְּרַחֲבֹתֶיהָ וְכֹל־אֲנָשֵׁי מַלְחָמָתָהּ יִדְמוּ בַיּוֹם הַהוּא נֶאֱמַר־יְהוָה:
ס
- 31 הַנְּנִי אֵלֶיךָ זָדוֹן נֶאֱמַר־אֲדָנִי יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת כִּי בָא יוֹמֶךָ עַת פִּקְדָתִיךָ:
32 וְכָשֶׁל זָדוֹן וְנָפַל וְאִין לוֹ מְקוֹם וְהִצַּתִּי אֵשׁ בְּעַרְוִיו וְאָכְלָה כָּל־סְבִיבְתָיו: ס
33 כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת עֲשׂוֹקִים בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְנֵי־יְהוּדָה יַחֲדוּ וְכֹל־שְׂבִיֵּיהֶם
הַחֲזִיקוּ בָם מֵאֲנֹו שְׁלָחַם:
34 גְּאֻלְסוּ חֲזֹק יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ רִיב רִיב אֶת־רִיבָם לְמַעַן הַרְגִיעַ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ
וְהַרְגִיז לְיֹשְׁבֵי בְּבַל:
- 35 חָרַב עַל־כְּשָׂדִים נֶאֱמַר־יְהוָה וְאֶל־יֹשְׁבֵי בְּבַל וְאֶל־שָׂרֵיהָ וְאֶל־חַכְמֵיהָ:
36 חָרַב אֶל־הַבָּדִים וְנֶאֱלָו חָרַב אֶל־גְּבוּרֶיהָ וְחַתּוֹ:
37 חָרַב אֶל־סוֹסָיו וְאֶל־רִכְבּוֹ וְאֶל־כָּל־הָעָרָב אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹכָהּ וְהָיוּ לְנָשִׁים חָרַב
אֶל־אוֹצְרֹתֶיהָ וּבָזּוֹ:
- 38 חָרַב אֶל־מִימֶיהָ וַיִּבְשּׁוּ כִּי אָרֶץ פְּסָלִים הִיא וּבְאִימִים יִתְהַלְלוּ:
39 לָכֵן יִשְׁבּוּ צִיִּים אֶת־אִיִּים וַיִּשְׁבּוּ בָהּ בְּנֹת יַעֲנָה וְלֹא־תִשָּׁב עוֹד לְנִצָּח וְלֹא תִשְׁכּוֹן
עַד־דָּוָר וְדָוָר:

- 40 כַּמֵּה־פִּלְת אֱלֹהִים אֶת־סֹדֶם וְאֶת־עַמֶּרָה וְאֶת־שֹׁכְנֶיהָ נֹאֵם־יְהוָה לֹא־יֵשֵׁב שָׁם אִישׁ וְלֹא־יִגְוֹר בָּהּ בֶּן־אָדָם:
- 41 הִנֵּה עִם בָּא מִצְפּוֹן וְגוֹי גָדוֹל וּמַלְכִים רַבִּים יַעֲרוּ מִירְכַת־אֶרֶץ:
- 42 קִשְׁת וְכִידָן יַחֲזִיקוּ אַכְזָרֵי הַמָּה וְלֹא יִרְחֲמוּ קוֹלָם כִּי־ם יִהְיֶה וְעַל־סוֹסִים יִרְכָּבוּ עָרוֹךְ כְּאִישׁ לְמַלְחָמָה עָלֶיךָ בַת־בְּבַל:
- 43 שָׁמַע מֶלֶךְ־בְּבַל אֶת־שִׁמְעָם וּרְפוּ יָדָיו צָרָה הַחֲזִיקְתָּהּ חֵיל כִּי־לִדְדָה:
- 44 הִנֵּה כְּאֲרִיָּה יַעֲלֶה מִגְּאֹן הַיַּרְדֵּן אֶל־נֹה אִיתָן כִּי־אֲרַגְעָה אֲרוּצִים מִעֲלֶיהָ וּמִי בַחֲזֹר אֲלֶיהָ אֶפְקֹד כִּי מִי כְמוֹנִי וּמִי יוֹעֲדֵנִי וּמִי־זָה רַעָה אֲשֶׁר יַעֲמֵד לִפְנֵי:
- 45 לָכֵן שָׁמְעוּ עַצְת־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר יַעַן אֶל־בְּבַל וּמַחֲשַׁבוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר חָשַׁב אֶל־אֶרֶץ כְּשָׂדִים אִם־לֹא יִסְחָבוּם צְעִירֵי הַצֹּאן אִם־לֹא יִשִּׁים עֲלֵיהֶם נוֹה:
- 46 מִקּוֹל נִתְפָּשָׂה בְּבַל נִרְעָשָׂה הָאֶרֶץ וְזַעֲקָה בַּגּוֹיִם נִשְׁמַע: ס
- 51¹ כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה הַנְּגִי מַעִיר עַל־בְּבַל וְאֶל־יֹשְׁבֵי לֵב קָמִי רוּחַ מִשְׁחִית: וְשַׁלַּחְתִּי לְבַבְלָא זָרִים וְזָרוּהָ וַיִּבְקְקוּ אֶת־אֶרְצָהּ כִּי־הָיוּ עֲלֶיהָ מִסָּבִיב בְּיוֹם רָעָה: וְאֶל־יַדְרֹךְ הַדֶּרֶךְ קִשְׁתוֹ וְאֶל־יַתְעַל בְּסַרְיָנוּ וְאֶל־תַּחֲמָלוּ אֶל־בַּחֲרִיָּה הַחֲרִימוּ כָּל־צְבָאָה:
- 4 וְנָפְלוּ חַלְלִים בְּאֶרֶץ כְּשָׂדִים וּמִדְּקָרִים בַּחוּצוֹתֶיהָ:
- 5 כִּי לֹא־אֶלְמָן יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהוּדָה מֵאֵלֶיהֶן מִיְהוָה צְבָאוֹת כִּי אֶרֶץ מְלָאָה אֲשָׁם מִקְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל:
- 6 נָסוּ מִתּוֹךְ בְּבַל וּמִלְטוּ אִישׁ נַפְשׁוֹ אֶל־תַּדְמוּ בַּעֲוֹנָהּ כִּי עַת נִקְמָה הִיא לַיהוָה גָּמוֹל הוּא מְשַׁלֵּם לָהּ:
- 7 כּוֹס־זָהָב בְּבַל בִּיד־יְהוָה מִשְׁכַּרְת כָּל־הָאֶרֶץ מִיִּנְהָ שָׁתוּ גוֹיִם עַל־כֵּן יִתְהַלְלוּ גוֹיִם:
- 8 פָּתְאִם נָפְלָה בְּבַל וַתִּשְׁבַּר הַיְלִילוּ עָלֶיהָ קָחוּ צָרִי לְמַכְאוּבָהּ אוּלַי תִּרְפָּא:
- 9 רַפְּאֵנוּ אֶת־בְּבַל וְלֹא נִרְפְּתָה עֲזֹבוּהָ וְנִלְךְ אִישׁ לְאֶרְצוֹ כִּי־נִגַּע אֶל־הַשָּׁמַיִם מִשְׁפָּטָה וְנִשְׂא עַד־שָׁחֻקִים:
- 10 הוֹצִיא יְהוָה אֶת־צִדְקַתְּנוּ בָּאוּ וְנִסְפְּרָה בְּצִיּוֹן אֶת־מַעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ:
- 11 הִבְרֹו הַחֲצִיִּם מִלְּאוּ הַשְּׁלֹטִים הַעִיר יְהוָה אֶת־רוּחַ מְלָכֵי מְדֵי כִי־עַל־בְּבַל מִזְמַתּוֹ לְהַשְׁחִיתָהּ כִּי־נִקְמַת יְהוָה הִיא נִקְמַת הַיִּכְלוֹ:
- 12 אֶל־חֹמַת בְּבַל שְׂאוּ־נֶס הַחֲזִיקוּ הַמְשַׁמֵּר הַקִּימוּ שְׁמֵרִים הַכִּינוּ הָאֲרָבִים כִּי גַם־זָמַם יְהוָה גַּם־עָשָׂה אֶת אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר אֶל־יֹשְׁבֵי בְּבַל:
- 13 שִׁכְנֹתַי עַל־מַיִם רַבִּים רַבַּת אוֹצְרֹת בָּא קַצֵּךְ אִמַּת בְּצַעֲךָ:
- 14 נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת בְּנַפְשׁוֹ כִּי אִם־מִלְּאֲתֶיךָ אָדָם כִּי־לֶקַע וְעָנּוּ עָלֶיךָ הַיַּדְד: ס

- 15 עֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ בְּכַחוֹ מִכֵּין תִּבְלַבְל בְּחִכְמָתוֹ וּבִתְבוּנָתוֹ נֹטֶה שָׁמַיִם:
- 16 לְקוֹל תִּתְּאוּ הַמֶּזֶן מִיַּם בְּשָׁמַיִם וַיַּעַל נְשָׂאִים מִקְצֵה־אֶרֶץ בְּרִקִּים לְמֹטֵר עֲשֵׂה וַיֵּצֵא רוּחַ מֵאֲצֻרְתָּיו:
- 17 גִּבְעַר כָּל־אָדָם מִדַּעַת הַבֵּישׁ כָּל־עֲרָף מִפֶּסֶל כִּי שִׁקֵּר נִסְכּוֹ וְלֹא־רוּחַ בָּם:
- 18 הִבֵּל הֵמָּה מַעֲשֵׂה תַעֲתָעִים בַּעַת פְּקֻדָּתָם יֹאבְדוּ:
- 19 לֹא־כָאֵלֶּה חֵלֶק יַעֲקֹב כִּי־יוֹצֵר הַכֹּל הוּא וְשִׁבְט נַחֲלָתוֹ יִהְיֶה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ: ס
- 20 מִפִּי־אַתָּה לִי כָלִי מִלְחָמָה וּנְפֻצָתִי בְּךָ גּוֹיִם וְהִשְׁחַתִּי בְּךָ מִמְּלָכוֹת:
- 21 וּנְפֻצָתִי בְּךָ סוֹס וּרְכָבוֹ וּנְפֻצָתִי בְּךָ רֶכֶב וּרְכָבוֹ:
- 22 וּנְפֻצָתִי בְּךָ אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה וּנְפֻצָתִי בְּךָ זָקֵן וְנָעַר וּנְפֻצָתִי בְּךָ בַּחֹר וּבַת־וּלָה:
- 23 וּנְפֻצָתִי בְּךָ רֵעָה וְעֵדְרוֹ וּנְפֻצָתִי בְּךָ אֶכְרִ וְצִמְדוֹ וּנְפֻצָתִי בְּךָ פְּחוֹת וּסְגָנִים:
- 24 וְשַׁלְמָתִי לְבָבָל וּלְכָל־יְשֻׁבֵי כְשָׂדִים אֵת כָּל־רַעְתָּם אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ בְצִיּוֹן לְעֵינֵיכֶם וְנֹאֵם יִהְיֶה: ס
- 25 הַנְּגִי אֵלַיִךְ הָרַר הַמִּשְׁחִית נֹאֵם־יְהוָה הַמִּשְׁחִית אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וְנֹטִיתִי אֶת־יָדִי עָלֶיךָ וְגִלְגַּלְתִּיךָ מִן־הַסִּלְעִים וּנְתַתִּיךָ לְהָר שְׂרָפָה:
- 26 וְלֹא־יִקְחוּ מִמֶּךָ אָבִן לַפְּנֵה וְאָבִן לְמוֹסְדוֹת כִּי־שִׁמְמוֹת עוֹלָם תִּהְיֶה נֹאֵם־יְהוָה:
- 27 שְׂאוּ־נֶס בְּאֶרֶץ תִּקְעוּ שׁוֹפָר בְּגוֹיִם קִדְּשׁוּ עָלֶיהָ גּוֹיִם הַשְׁמִיעוּ עָלֶיהָ מִמְּלָכוֹת אֲרָרְט מִנִּי וְאֲשַׁכְּנוּ פְקֻדוֹ עָלֶיהָ טַפְסֹר הַעֲלוּ־סוֹס כִּילֶק סָמַר:
- 28 קִדְּשׁוּ עָלֶיהָ גּוֹיִם אֶת־מַלְכֵי מִדְּיָ אֶת־פְּחוֹתֶיהָ וְאֶת־כָּל־סַגְּנֶיהָ וְאֵת כָּל־אֶרֶץ מִמְּשַׁלְתָּו:
- 29 וְתִרְעַשׂ הָאָרֶץ וְתַחֲלַל כִּי קָמָה עַל־בָּבֶל מִחִשְׁבוֹת יְהוָה לְשׁוֹם אֶת־אֶרֶץ בָּבֶל לְשִׁמָּה מֵאִין יוֹשֵׁב:
- 30 חָדְלוּ גְבוּרֵי בָבֶל לְהִלָּחֵם יָשׁוּבוּ בַּמַּצְדוֹת נִשְׁתֶּה גְבוּרְתֶם הִיוּ לְנָשִׁים הַצִּיתוּ מִשְׁכַּנְתֶּיהָ נִשְׁבְּרוּ בְרִיחֶיהָ:
- 31 רָץ לְקִרְאֵת־רֵץ יָרוּץ וּמַגִּיד לְקִרְאֵת מַגִּיד לְהַגִּיד לְמַלְךָ בָּבֶל כִּי־נִלְכְּדָה עִירוֹ מִקְצֵה:
- 32 וְהַמַּעֲבָרוֹת נִתְפָּשׂוּ וְאֶת־הָאֲגָמִים שָׂרְפוּ בָאֵשׁ וְאֲנָשֵׁי הַמִּלְחָמָה נִבְהָלוּ: ס
- 33 כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּת־בָּבֶל כְּגֵרָן עַת הִדְרִיכָה עוֹד מְעַט וּבָאָה עַת־הַקְּצִיר לָהּ:
- 34 אֲכַלְנוּ חֲמָמְנוּ גְבוּכְדַרְאֲצַר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל הַצִּיִּגְנוּ כָלִי רִיק בְּלַעְנוּ פִּתְיוֹן מִלֵּא כְרִשׁוֹ מִעַדְנֵי הַדִּיחָנוּ:
- 35 חֲמָסִי וּשְׂאֵרִי עַל־בָּבֶל תֹּאמַר יֹשֵׁבַת צִיּוֹן וְדַמִּי אֶל־יִשְׁבֵי כְשָׂדִים תֹּאמַר יְרוּשָׁלַם: ס

- 36 לָכֵן כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה הַנְּגִידָה אֶת־רִיבְךָ וְנִקְמְתִי אֶת־נִקְמַתְךָ וְהַחֲרַבְתִּי אֶת־יָמָה וְהִבְשַׁתִּי אֶת־מְקוֹרָהּ:
- 37 וְהִיְתָה בְּבֹלָן לְגִלְיָם מֵעוֹזְתָנִים שְׁמָה וְשָׂרָקָה מֵאִין יוֹשֵׁב:
- 38 יַחֲדוּ כַּכְּפָרִים יִשְׂאֲגוּ נְעָרוֹ כְּגוֹרֵי אֲרִיּוֹת:
- 39 בְּחַמִּים אֲשֵׁית אֶת־מִשְׁתֵּיהֶם וְהִשְׁכַּרְתִּים לְמַעַן יַעֲלִזוּ וַיִּשְׁנוּ שְׁנַת־עוֹלָם וְלֹא יִקְיִצוּ נְאֻם יְהוָה:
- 40 אֲזַרְיֶדֶם כְּכָרִים לְטְבוּחַ כְּאֵילִים עִם־עֲתוּדִים:
- 41 אִידָךְ נִלְכְּדָה שִׁשָּׁךְ וְתִתְפַּשׂ תְּהַלֵּת כָּל־הָאָרֶץ אִידָךְ הִיְתָה לְשִׁמָּה בְּבֹל בְּגוֹיִם:
- 42 עֲלָה עַל־בְּבֹל הַיָּם בְּהַמּוֹן גִּלְיוֹ נִכְסְתָה:
- 43 הָיָה עָרִיָּה לְשִׁמָּה אָרֶץ צִיָּה וְעָרְבָה אָרֶץ לֹא־יֹשֵׁב בָּהֶן כָּל־אִישׁ וְלֹא־יַעֲבֹר בָּהֶן בֶּן־אָדָם:
- 44 וּפְקַדְתִּי עַל־בָּל בְּבֹבֵל וְהִצַּאתִי אֶת־בַּלְעוֹ מִפִּי וְלֹא־יִנְהָרוּ אֵלָיו עוֹד גּוֹיִם גַּם־חֹמַת בְּבֹל נִפְלָה:
- 45 צָאוּ מִתּוֹכָה עַמִּי וּמִלְטוּ אִישׁ אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹ מִחֲרוֹן אַף־יְהוָה:
- 46 וּפְנִי־רִדְךָ לְבַבְכֶם וְתִירְאוּ בְשִׁמוּעָה הַנִּשְׁמַעַת בְּאָרֶץ וּבֹא בַשְּׁנָה הַשְּׁמוּעָה וְאַחֲרָיו בַּשְּׁנָה הַשְּׁמוּעָה וְחַמֶּס בְּאָרֶץ וּמִשָּׁל עַל־מִשָּׁל:
- 47 לָכֵן הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים וּפְקַדְתִּי עַל־פְּסִילֵי בָבֶל וְכָל־אַרְצָהּ תִּבּוֹשׁ וְכָל־חִלְלִיהָ יִפְלוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ:
- 48 וְרַנְּנוּ עַל־בְּבֹל שָׁמַיִם וְאָרֶץ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר בָּהֶם כִּי מִצְפּוֹן יִבּוֹא־לָהּ הַשׁוֹדְדִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה:
- 49 גַּם־בְּבֹל לְנַפְל חִלְלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל גַּם־לְבַבֵּל נָפְלוּ חִלְלֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ:
- 50 פְּלִטִים מִחֲרֹב הִלְכוּ אֶל־תַּעֲמָדוֹ זָכְרוּ מִרְחוֹק אֶת־יְהוָה וִירוּשָׁלַם תַּעֲלֶה עַל־לְבַבְכֶם:
- 51 בְּשָׁנוֹ כִּי־שָׁמַעְנוּ חֲרָפָה כִּסְתָה כְּלִמָּה פָּנִינוּ בֵּי בָּאוּ זָרִים עַל־מִקְדָּשֵׁי בַיִת יְהוָה:
- ס
- 52 לָכֵן הִנֵּה־יָמִים בָּאִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה וּפְקַדְתִּי עַל־פְּסִילֵיהָ וּבְכָל־אַרְצָהּ יֶאֱנַק חִלְלֵי:
- 53 כִּי־תַעֲלֶה בְּבֹל הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכִי תִבְצָר מִרוֹם עֲזָה מֵאִתִּי יִבָּאוּ שׁוֹדְדִים לָהּ נְאֻם־יְהוָה: ס
- 54 קוֹל זַעֲקָה מִבְּבֹל וְשִׁבְרֵי גְדוֹל מֵאָרֶץ כְּשָׂדִים:
- 55 כִּי־שָׁדַד יְהוָה אֶת־בְּבֹל וְאָבַד מִמֶּנָּה קוֹל גְּדוֹל וְהָמוֹ גְּלִיהֶם כְּמִים רַבִּים נִתָּן שְׂאוֹן קוֹלָם:

- 56 כִּי בָּא עָלֶיהָ עַל-בָּבֶל שׁוֹדֵד וְנִלְכְּדוּ גְבוּרֶיהָ חֲתָתָהּ קִשְׁתוֹתֶם כִּי אֵל גְּמֵלוֹת
יְהוָה שְׁלֵם יְשֻׁלָּם:
- 57 וְהִשְׁפַּרְתִּי שָׁרִיָּה וְחֲכַמְיָהּ פַּחוֹתֶיהָ וְסִגְנִיָּהּ וְגְבוּרֶיהָ וַיִּשְׁנֹו שְׁנַת-עוֹלָם וְלֹא יִקְיִצוּ
נְאֻם-הַמֶּלֶךְ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ: ס
- 58 כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת חֲמוֹת בָּבֶל הִרְחַבְהָ עָרְעַר תִּתְעַרְעֵר וְשַׁעֲרֶיהָ הִגְבְּהִים
בְּאֵשׁ יִצְתוּ וַיִּגְעֹו עַמִּים בְּדִירֵיק וּלְאֻמִּים בְּדִי-אֵשׁ וַיַּעֲפוּ: ס
- 59 הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר-צִוְּהוּ יִרְמְיָהוּ הַנְּבִיא אֶת-שָׂרִיָּה בֶן-נְרִיָּה בֶן-מַחְסִיָּה בְּלִכְתּוֹ
אֶת-צִדְקִיָּהוּ מֶלֶךְ-יְהוּדָה בָּבֶל בְּשַׁנַּת הַרְבַּעִית לְמַלְכוֹ וְשָׂרִיָּה שָׂר מְנוּחָה:
- 60 וַיִּכְתֹּב יִרְמְיָהוּ אֶת כָּל-הַרְעָה אֲשֶׁר-תָּבוֹא אֶל-בָּבֶל אֶל-סַפֵּר אֶחָד אֶת
כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הַכְּתָבִים אֶל-בָּבֶל:
- 61 וַיֹּאמֶר יִרְמְיָהוּ אֶל-שָׂרִיָּה כְּבֹאֲךָ בָּבֶל וְרָאִיתָ וְקִרְאתָ אֶת כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה:
- 62 וְאָמַרְתָּ יְהוָה אֵתָּה דְבַרְתָּ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה לְהַכְרִיתוֹ לְבִלְתִּי הִיֹּזֵת-בּוֹ יוֹשֵׁב
לְמַאֲדָם וְעַד-בְּהֶמָּה כִּי-שִׁמְמוֹת עוֹלָם תְּהִיָּה:
- 63 וְהָיָה כְּכֹלְתְּךָ לְקִרְאָ אֶת-הַסֵּפֶר הַזֶּה תִּקְשֹׁר עָלָיו אֲבָן וְהִשְׁלַכְתּוּ אֶל-תּוֹךְ פְּרַת:
- 64 וְאָמַרְתָּ כֹּכָה תִשְׁקַע בָּבֶל וְלֹא-תִקוּם מִפְּנֵי הַרְעָה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְבִיא עָלֶיהָ וַיַּעֲפוּ
עַד-הֵנָּה דְבַרֵי יִרְמְיָהוּ: ס

Conclusion

What more can I say about the flaws of the Bible code? There is no question in my mind that the Bible code is bogus. I know this as a certainty because I understand, due to my choice of academic expertise, what goes into textual criticism and what the existing manuscript evidence tells us about how the Hebrew text of the Torah has come down to us. By sticking primarily to those areas of my own expertise, I have tried to contribute something unique to the discussion: a lay introduction to the history of the Hebrew text and manuscript transmission. All the evidence points to a certifiable *textual uncertainty of the every-letter sequence required for a Bible code*. The data, therefore, explodes the myth of a Bible code in the Torah, and extinguishes hope of ever finding one that is genuine. Naturally, it is my hope that this short book has been written in such a way that these data points compel the reader to draw the same conclusion. If a majority of those who read this book discern the textual impossibility of the Bible code, then I will feel as though I have succeeded.

Appendix: Bible Code Criticisms from Mathematicians

General Criticisms

The contention of many Bible code proponents that mathematicians have been unable or unwilling to respond to the "reality" of the Bible code is completely false. Responses to Drosnin's *The Bible Code* from the perspective of scholars trained in fields that make heavy use of mathematics and statistics are by now voluminous. This is particularly true with respect to webpages on the Internet devoted to critiquing the alleged code. A simple search for "Bible Code" on any of the major search engines yields dozens of high-quality scholarly criticisms from trained academics in these fields.

The goal of this appendix is to introduce the reader to the work of mathematics scholars against the existence of a code in the Torah. Since I am not a mathematician, I cannot explain the actual statistical experiments used against the initial statistical experiments that undergird the Bible code, but I can digest the ELS fallacies. What follows are very brief examples which demonstrate that the "hits" in the Bible code really are coincidental and have no claim to inspiration. I also provide the locations of credible critiques on several important websites on the World Wide Web.

By way of a general response of objection to the methodology of *The Bible Code*, more than fifty professional mathematicians (many from Israeli universities) have signed a declaration stating their opposition to the scientific methodology behind the Bible code. This declaration can be found at <http://math.caltech.edu/code/petition.html> and is reproduced below:

We are making this statement concerning what have been called "Bible codes" or "Torah codes". We recognize that many sincere people take this phenomenon seriously, which compels us to speak out on the basis of what our mathematical training tells us about the evidence claimed for this alleged phenomenon.

There is a common belief in the general community to the effect that many mathematicians, statisticians, and other scientists consider the claims to be credible. This belief is incorrect. On the contrary, the almost unanimous opinion of those in the scientific world who have studied the question is that the theory is without foundation. The signatories to this letter have themselves examined the evidence and found it entirely unconvincing.

We refer in particular to the paper, "Equidistant Letter Sequences in the Book of Genesis," published in *Statistical Science* in 1994. This experiment suffers from major problems concerning both its execution and the interpretation of its conclusions. Even without these concerns, we would not take such extraordinary claims seriously without a vastly more systematic and thorough investigation. No such investigation has been carried out, nor has the work so far established a *prima facie* case. In addition, word clusters such as mentioned in Witztum's and Drosnin's books and the so-called messianic codes are an uncontrolled phenomenon, and similar clusters will be found in any text of similar length. All claims of incredible probabilities for such clusters are bogus, since they are computed contrary to standard rules of probability and statistics.

Among the signatories below are some who believe that the Torah was divinely written. We see no conflict between that belief and the opinion we have expressed above.

(The declaration is then followed by the list of those who agree with it, along with their academic credentials, place of employment, and contact information.)

Specific Responses – ELS “hits” in Works Other Than the Torah / Old Testament

The credentialed mathematician who has probably published the most thorough refutation of the Bible code is Brendan McKay. McKay is Professor of Computer Science at the Australian National University in Canberra, Australia, and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science. Among the webpages he has posted with specific responses to *The Bible Code*, several are especially clever and humorous. For example, on one page entitled "Moby Dick vs. Genesis" (<http://cs.anu.edu.au/~bdm/dilugim/mobygen.html>), McKay employs the same ELS technique as used for the Bible code on the literary classic *Moby Dick*. McKay was able to find such amazing “hits” as the phrase "no code in Torah" in the English text of *Moby Dick*!

McKay goes even further on another webpage – in specific response to a challenge issued by Michael Drosnin, author of *The Bible Code*. In an interview with *Newsweek* (June 9, 1997) following the publication of *The Bible Code*, Drosnin challenged code detractors by saying, "When my critics find a message about the assassination of a prime minister encrypted in Moby Dick, I'll believe them." McKay has done just that – several times over (see his webpage, <http://cs.anu.edu.au/~bdm/dilugim/moby.html>).

Through the use of the same ELS sequencing method utilized to "find" the Bible code, McKay "detected" the assassinations of several prime ministers, not to mention other dignitaries, such as President Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Princess Diana. Several of these astounding “hits” are reproduced below:

DR WITH A WHI TE P
NAH ABYOUNG MAN
KLESH ISGRANDD
DSYET INGENERA
THE BLOODY DEED
ERM WHALES HERD
TTO IMPOSSIBLE

Indian Prime Minister Indira Ghandi
was killed on October 31, 1984

IS WHO COMING TO LAY HIM DOWN CA
OUT SET QUEE QUEGAINS ISTE DTHA
IS FIERE YLANCET IN MIGHT IER STR
NDWHEN HE WAS GOING TO COME ON B
ING AND NOT TO BE KILLED BY THEM
VETHERE ARE WHALES HERE ABOUT
ESOPOTAMIAN FAMILY THESE WHA
ILLSTUBB CAUTIOUSLY WHISPER
NTAND COURAGEOUS ENOUGH IN OF
THE INTENSIFYING AGENT IN THI
PREPARE FOR DEATH AND INDEED T

Martin Luther King, Jr. was fatally shot
in Tennessee on April 4, 1968

ARDS **KILLLED** AT YOU
 HTORTENINEACHSW
 ALMOSTSEEMEDTHA
 POINTINGDOWNASW
 ICTAIDTENDONITI
 NGALOWADVANCING
 ARECARRIEDBYEVE
 SINGWHALEARCUT
 EONLEISURELYSEA
 LIZINGVICINITYT

President Abraham Lincoln was shot dead
on April 14, 1865.

This is just a sampling of the kind of mathematical critique that exists on the Internet. Are we to consider *Moby Dick* inspired, containing “the signature of God”? The answer is (or should be) perfectly obvious.

Specific Responses – The “Famous Sages” Experiment

More than anything else, the hype behind the “prediction” of the death of Yitzhak Rabin propelled sales of *The Bible Code*. After all, only God could have been behind the prediction of this event, and if that was the case, God must have indeed inserted a code within the Torah.

What the Rabin “prediction” was to the common lay reader, the so-called “Famous Sages” experiment was to the mathematics community – at least to a handful of mathematicians. This experiment is still referred to by Bible code proponents as indisputable proof that the code is a real mathematical phenomenon. Briefly summarized, this experiment involved the detection of ELS-coded references in the book of Genesis to the names of famous medieval rabbis and sages “in close proximity” to the dates of their birth and death. Two lists of famous rabbis and sages were used for the experiment. Conducted by the mathematicians behind the Bible code explosion, Witzum, Rips, and Rosenberg (hereafter WRR), the results of the “Famous Sages” experiment on the second list were published in the prestigious journal *Statistical Science* in 1994.

As Tigay notes, “In WRR’s experiment, everything hinges on the claim that the sages appear ‘in close proximity’ . . . but ‘close proximity’ does not necessarily mean what laymen are likely to think it means.”¹ It turns out that the phrase “close proximity” was meant to be understood in a technical, mathematical sense.

A detailed refutation of this experiment that demonstrated “close proximity” to actually be well beyond the few letter-distances implied by the term has been published by mathematicians Brendan McKay (Australian National University), and Dror Bar-Natan (Hebrew University), along with Maya Bar-Hillel, of the Department of Psychology and the Center for the Study of Rationality at Hebrew University.² In fact, WRR *didn’t* actually claim that all the sages appear close to their birth and death dates, but merely closer than one would expect *on the average*.³

Shockingly, as Tigay points out in his summary of the “Famous Sages” critique, “Some rabbis are far from their dates . . . and in fact most of them are closer to the dates of some other rabbi than to their own dates.” If the reader recalls the ELS method, this find should make sense. In the ELS method, lines of letters are arranged vertically on top of one another based upon whatever distance between letters the “encoder” commands of the computer. It should make sense that, as lines of the same databank of letters are rearranged, overlapping of “hit areas” can occur, hence the above realization that some sage-names are closer to the birth and death dates of other rabbis. None of this was reported by Drosnin in *The Bible Code* – or subsequently by Christian authors.

In his online article on the Bible code, Tigay has summarized the work of Bar-Hillel, Bar-Natan, and McKay on this point. The chart below was assembled by Tigay, and shows what “close proximity” actually means with respect to the “Famous Sages” experiment. The rabbi names are numbered on the left hand side, along with commentary about how close the name actually appeared to the rabbi’s own birth and death dates:⁴

Rabbi	Comment
1	Close to many dates but closest to the right date.
2	Closer to at least 8 wrong dates.
3	Closer to at least 3 wrong dates.
4	No date used (claimed to be uncertain)
5	No ELS for the date exists. Not close to anything.
6	Closer to at least 5 wrong dates.
7	Closer to at least 15 wrong dates.
8	No dates used (uncertain). Close to 8 wrong dates.
9	Far from right date, close to 7 wrong dates.
10	Far from right date, close to 9 wrong dates.
11	Far from right date, close to 10 wrong dates.
12	Close to many dates but closest to the right date.
13	Far from right date, close to 15 wrong dates.
14	Far from right date, close to 9 wrong dates.
15	Closer to at least 2 wrong dates.
16	Far from right date, close to 11 wrong dates.
17	No ELS for the name exists.
18	No ELS for either name exists.
19	Closer to at least 19 wrong dates.
20	Closer to at least 7 wrong dates.
21	Closer to at least 9 wrong dates. (It seems the date is wrong; should be 1st Iyyar. The right date does even worse.)
22	Good match, equally close to two wrong dates.
23	Close to many dates but closest to the right date.
24	Closer to at least 5 wrong dates.
25	Far from all dates.
26	Closer to at least 7 wrong dates.
27	Closer to at least 12 wrong dates.
28	Closer to at least 9 wrong dates.
29	No ELS for the name exists.

- 30 Good match, equally close to 1 wrong date.
- 31 Good match, equally close to 1 wrong date.
- 32 Far from right date, close to 3 wrong dates.

Finally, in regard to the “Famous Sages” experiment, McKay, Bar-Hillel, and Bar-Natan went so far as to attempt to find (using the same ELS method) the names of the rabbis used for the experiment in the Hebrew text of *War and Peace*.⁵ Their goal (beyond finding the “hits”) was to determine mathematically whether the text of *War and Peace* more accurately “encoded” the names in proximity to their birth and death dates than did Genesis. After following the naming (spelling) and date criteria used by WRR, they were able to conclude that the results from the “Famous Sages” experiment on the text of Genesis could be replicated in *War and Peace*.⁶

Further Mathematical Research and Criticism

McKay and other mathematicians have critiqued the code in full from their respective areas of expertise on other webpages. Below is a listing of several of the best for readers whose backgrounds will enable them to digest the material:

Dr. Brendan McKay's website

<http://cs.anu.edu.au/~bdm/dilugim/torah.html>

Dr. Barry Simon's website

Barry Simon is an Orthodox Jewish mathematician at Cal Tech.

<http://woopr.com/biblecodes/>

Dr. Mark Perakh's website

Dr. Perakh is an emeritus professor of physics. The articles on his site are very technical.

<http://www.nctimes.net/~mark/fcodes/>

Dr. Randall Ingermanson's website

The best response to the idea of a Bible code by an evangelical scholar credentialed in the study of mathematics is Randall Ingermanson's, *Who Wrote the Bible Code?* In his book, Ingermanson, a computational physicist, leads his readers through his own statistical tests on the alleged Bible code. His meticulous research and readable style make it apparent to the open-minded reader that the Bible code has no basis in scientific fact. Dr.

Ingermanson's website is http://www.rsingermanson.com/html/bible_code.html.

¹ Tigay, “The Bible ‘Codes’ – A Textual Perspective,” 9.

² Maya Bar-Hillel, Dror Bar-Natan, and Brendan McKay, “The Torah Codes: Puzzle and Solution,” *Chance* 11:2 (1998): 13-19.

³ Tigay, “The Bible ‘Codes’ – A Textual Perspective,” 10.

⁴ Ibid., 10-11.

⁵ M. Bar-Hillel, D. Bar-Natan, and B.D. McKay, “There Are Codes in *War and Peace* Too,” *Galileo* 25 (1997): 52-57 (in Hebrew).

⁶ Bar-Hillel, Bar-Natan, and McKay, “The Torah Codes: Puzzle and Solution,” 17.