

ENGLISH ABSTRACTS

RABBAN GAMLIEL'S TELESCOPE AND PROPOSED METHOD FOR MEASURING VALLEY DEPTHS: A TALMUDIC GEODESY

Uri Zur, Yehuda Ashkenazi

This paper reviews the methods proposed by several commentators to measure distances in plains and valley depths using a telescope. These interpretations are based upon Rabban Gamliel's method in Tractate Eruvin (43b), which is not sufficiently clear. The commentators attempted to explain the measuring method based on contemporary mathematical knowledge. Some suggested simple and brilliant methods of measuring, while others proposed complicated methods or repeated the explanations of their predecessors in a simplistic manner, occasionally including mathematical errors.

A NATION BY DESIGN – AVRAHAM AS THE GENETIC TEMPLATE FOR A “GODLY“ BLOODLINE

Batya Wachtfogel

The roots of the People of Israel lie, according to tradition, in a single family of genetically closely inbred individuals. This is also the pattern you would find if observing the creation of a bloodline characterized by specific inheritable traits.

I propose that a specific gene, a *catalyst* for the facilitation of the human characteristic “*Zelem Elokim*” (usually translated as “*Image of God*”), whose *phenotypic* expression is normally influenced by environment, was inherited by Avraham and intentionally cultivated by him, by means of close inbreeding, the “culling” of offspring, and by maintaining a supportive environment, in order to create a bloodline (the Patriarchal family) which would in turn seed a nation. This

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trait could help protect the existence of that embryonic nation during the germinal stage of its creation, until a stable, self-sustaining environment would provide a framework for the normalization of “godly” behavior, irrespective of individual genotypic makeup.

A model of inheritance is presented for this genetic trait, found in heterozygous form in Avraham and culminating in a *homozygous genotype* in Jacob. A period of short and intense outbreeding from the time of Jacob’s offspring until their enslavement in Egypt, and of an extended genetic-incubation period in Egypt and the wilderness, and their sequelae, are also described.

There can be no hypothesis here, subject to trial and experiment, with conclusive proofs or disproof. The theories presented are reasonable speculation and conjecture, and provide new perspectives and understanding. The models utilize evidence from Genesis and Exodus: Scripture, Midrash, and Commentary.

WOMEN’S ROLE IN CULPABLE ACTS: *MIDRASHEI HAZAL* FROM VICTIMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Michal Wolf, Sara Ben David

The viability of victimological accounts, positivist and radical, to *Midrashey Hazal* is examined, based on two related biblical stories: Lot and his daughters and Tamar and Yehuda. The expected connection between the two bodies of knowledge was found. The positivist approach matched *midrashim* that emphasize the culpability of the apparent victim (Lot and Yehuda respectively) while the radical approach matched *midrashim* that focus on the intentions and other circumstantial factors that led the apparent offender (Lot’s daughters and Tamar respectively) to a “no choice” place. These findings are conceived here as a reflection of an unusual biblical pattern: the offenders voiced themselves as if they were victims while the victims did not. A gender-bounded account is suggested and the potential contribution of the findings to both bodies of knowledge is described.

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THE GENERAL SCIENCES IN THE DOCTRINES OF
R. ELIJAH OF VILNA AND R. ABRAHAM ISAAC KOOK

Shifra Mescheloff

R. Abraham Isaac Kook studied in the Yeshiva of Volozhin at a formative point in his life, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that some of his ideas were shaped there. The yeshiva was founded by R. Chaim of Volozhin, who was a student of R. Elijah of Vilna. In this paper we compare the position taken by R. Kook concerning the study of the sciences to that of R. Elijah. We find that both Rabbi Kook and Rabbi Elijah supported the study of the sciences as a matter of principle, since it makes both one's Torah study and one's service of God more complete. One can also find support for the suggestion that they both saw in the sciences not only instrumental value, but, also, an inherent, substantial value for human spiritual development.

This paper touches on other points of similarity between Rabbi Kook and Rabbi Elijah on this issue: their distinguishing between the natural sciences and philosophical sciences, their attitude towards using scientific tools in Torah study, their directive that each person should study those areas that are appropriate to his own personal leanings, and their emphasis on the special importance of studying the sciences in the era that constitutes the beginning of the final redemption. We also touch upon points of difference between these two major figures, such as Rabbi Kook's view that the goal of studying the sciences is to provide a person with a profession and a livelihood, and, similarly, his position that the study of the sciences is necessary in order to influence the zeitgeist. There is no parallel to these attitudes in the words of R. Elijah. Both men expressed various reservations about the study of the sciences, yet their general approach appears to have supported such study.

TA' AMEI MITZVOT AND MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

Leo Levi

Mitzvot can be divided into two groups: halakhic and aggadic (i.e. ideological). The former guide our actions in detail, and intentions are not central to them. In contrast, the latter are highly flexible and shaped by circumstances and by our personality. In aggadic *mitzvot*, intention is central. According to the behavioristic school, our conduct shapes our personality, independent of any thought accompanying it. This can therefore explain the benefits inherent in halakhic *mitzvot*. The cognitive psychologies, on the other hand, hold that thoughts and beliefs shape our actions and feelings. Their conclusions can explain the benefits bestowed by the aggadic *mitzvot*. The profound power of unconscious drives is the foundation of the analytic school of psychology. This, too, explains important halakhic concepts. Hence all three major psychological schools can give insight into the benefits provided by *mitzvot*.

But beyond this, we show that the Torah sages preceded these schools in understanding personality development. Sages throughout the generations have taught the behaviorist principles. R. Yisrael of Salant preceded Freud in stressing the importance of unconscious drives, and even exceeded him in their evaluation.

ON THE PHILOSOPHICAL MEANING OF THE BOOK OF *KOHELET*
IN LIGHT OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF ALBERT CAMUS

Alexander Klein

Chazal understood that the book of *Kohelet*, which raises fundamental and profound questions that have echoes in general philosophy, contains elements that seemingly are not in line with traditional religious thought. Indeed, it is possible to find in this book nascent and undeveloped ideas that later serve as a basis of more advanced philosophical doctrines. This fact is well known, and some authors have dealt with the subject, but not in great detail or depth. This article presents a detailed comparison of the book of *Kohelet* and the thought of Albert Camus, one of the founders of the "Philosophy of the Absurd", and the author of the important book

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The Mythos of Sisyphos. We conclude that *Chazal*, who included the book of *Kohelet* in the biblical canon, did not recoil from confronting fundamental questions, understanding that naive faith is not the exclusive way to reach devotion to God.

THE BIBLE AND ARCHAEOLOGY
THE CHALLENGE OF RECONCILING ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS
WITH THE BIBLE

Daniel Moshe Levi

The accepted date of the Exodus from Egypt by researchers is the era of the New Egyptian Kingdom (18th-19th dynasty). However, the proof for this is weak. This article brings evidence that Joseph lived at the time of the 3rd Dynasty and that the Exodus took place at the end of the 4th Dynasty.

THE ROLE OF THE CONJUNCTIVE “VAV” (“VAV HAHIBUR”)
IN THE DESIGN OF THE SHAPE OF THE HOSHEN

Israel Z. Salomon

In the book of Exodus 28:17-20 and 39:10-13, the command for making the *hoshen* (composed of three stones in each of four rows) appears with a performance account to demonstrate the precise application of the command.

These two groups of verses are distinguished by several differences, which are not derived from the fact that one group deals with a command (before execution) and the other group deals with an account (after execution).

Thus, the word “*tur*” (row) is written in the two verses concerned with the first row (called “*hatur ha’echad*” [the one row] and not “*hatur harishon*” [the first row]), and also in the command, the word “*turim*” (rows) is used and in the account, “*turay*” (rows of) is used. Furthermore, in regard to the fourth row, the stone is only specified with the name “*shoham*” in one instance, and in the other instance it is specified with the additional “*vav hahibur*” (conjunctive ‘*vav*’) as “*veshoham*”.

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In one instance the word “*mosavos*” (encircled) is written, and in the parallel verse this word is left out. Also, in one of the verses “*yeheyu bemeluotam*” (with ‘*vav*’) (should be in their fillings) is emphasized as compared to the unemphasized text “*bemeluotam* (missing ‘*vav*’)” (in their fillings) in the parallel verse.

The article settles all the above comments on the basis of the mathematical-grammatical function of the “*vav habibur*,” by pointing out three different purposes for “*vav habibur*,” with the assistance of different geometrical configurations and by examining the position of this letter in the text. The article concludes directly and in a proven and forceful manner in regard to the shape of the “*choshen*,” that was made resembling a table composed of three stones in each of four rows, joined together in a unique and unequivocal shape.

As concluded from the above, so is interpreted the text that was engraved on the “*choshen*”.