



Scientific Refutation of the Bible Codes

by

**Brendan McKay and
Friends**

This is the main web site which examines the Bible Codes (also called Torah Codes) from the point of view of the mathematicians and other experts who have examined them critically.

A brief summary of the codes claims is that the Hebrew text of the Bible (especially of the Torah, the first five books) contain intentional coincidences of words or phrases that appear as letters with equal spacing. More details of the claims from the Jewish point of view can be found [here](#), and from the Christian point of view [here](#). Both those sites present a pro-codes viewpoint.

A brief summary of the result of our very extensive investigation is that all the alleged scientific evidence for the codes is bunk. This page presents much of the evidence for that assertion.

The famous rabbis experiment

The most serious claim of scientific evidence for the Codes was made by three Israelis: Doron Witztum, Eliyahu Rips, and Yoav Rosenberg (WRR). They claim that biographical information about medieval rabbis is "encoded" in the Hebrew text of Genesis. Specifically, the rabbis' names and other appellations are claimed to be encoded closer to their dates of birth and death than should be expected by chance. WRR's "experiment" appeared in the respectable journal *Statistical Science* in 1994.

- [WRR's paper](#)
- The first serious attack on WRR's paper was published by mathematicians Dror Bar-Natan and Brendan McKay. They found that a small change in the choice of appellations for the famous rabbis can lead to **War and Peace** performing just as well as Genesis. The [final edition](#) of this work is accompanied by an extremely detailed disproof of Witztum's alleged refutation.
- In May 1998, a semi-technical presentation of the case against the famous rabbis experiment was published in **Chance**, a magazine of the American Statistical Association. The authors are

Maya Bar-Hillel, Dror Bar-Natan, and Brendan McKay. The paper is available here in [Postscript](#) or [PDF](#) format.

- The discovery of a recording of a **lecture given by Eliyahu Rips** about 1985 cast doubt on the official history of the famous rabbis experiment. A [transcript and some analysis](#) are available.
- Finally, an extensive refutation of the famous rabbis experiment, and of many other alleged experiments, was published by the same journal that published WRR's paper. The paper, by Brendan McKay, Dror Bar-Natan, Maya Bar-Hillel, and Gil Kalai, appeared in the May 1999 issue of **Statistical Science** (printed in September). It is available [here](#) together with **frequently updated discussion**.
- An [amusing look](#) at the flexibility of Hebrew spelling.

Other claims by WRR or Gans, and our replies

Several other papers of WRR exist, though none have been published in journals. More claims continue to appear regularly (especially [here](#)). Given our demolition of all of WRR's early work, we do not feel obliged to answer every new claim. Nevertheless, some of the claims have been answered by us in detail.

- One of the earliest codes "experiments" claiming a tiny probability was the "**25 trees**" experiment of Eliyahu Rips. Read what [our analysis](#) discovered.
- A major unpublished experiment of Witztum et al concerns the **70 nations** of the world listed in Genesis 10. Dror Bar-Natan, Brendan McKay, and Shlomo Sternberg studied the experiment exhaustively and concluded that the very strong result is primarily due to illicit data manipulation. Our evidence is presented in a paper available from [Australia](#) or [Canada](#). WRR's original paper is included in the interests of fairness. A [brief summary](#) of the refutation is also available.
- An apparently objective experiment was described by Doron Witztum on Israeli television, but when we tried it, it didn't work. Our report, available [here](#) also explains how such experiments can be constructed by trickery.
- The holiday of **Chanukah** has been a favourite topic of Witztum for a long time. We have shown a [very large cluster](#) of Chanukah-related words in War and Peace. Witztum's reply and our rejoinder are available [here](#).
- Harold Gans, a retired employee of the National Security Agency, has an unpublished report of an experiment using the **cities of birth or death** of the famous rabbis. The most important part of the experiment (the data) was given to him by an Israeli associate of Doron Witztum. We tried repeating this experiment ourselves, taking the data **exactly** as it appears in the two encyclopedias Gans claims to use, and it [failed completely](#).
NEW Even more seriously, [two careful replications](#) attempted by a committee of supporters and skeptics, using data compiled by independent experts, **could not find the slightest trace** of codes.
- One of our favourite reactions to WRR's "experiments" is to produce similar-looking "experiments" in War and Peace. Examples are
 - [Brendan McKay in War and Peace](#).
(Also see [Doron Witztum's reply and our rejoinder](#).)
 - [Chanukah candles in War and Peace](#).

- [Jesus the Messiah in War and Peace](#).
- [Rosh Hashana in War and Peace](#).

Independent experiments

We have performed many independent scientific tests of the Bible Codes claims. All of them failed to detect anything not easily explained by random chance. These experiments are not to be confused with the demonstrations of trickery that we have constructed in War and Peace.

A summary of our major experiments can be found in our [paper in Statistical Science](#).

These experiments include:

- The famous rabbis experiment, replacing the day and month of birth or death (all that WRR used) by the year, or by the day and month written in other legal manners. Similarly, the dates can be replaced by the names of famous books or by the cities of birth or death.
- The famous rabbis experiment, with the data prepared by an independent expert. Several variations were performed, including a detailed re-enactment of WRR's experiment in the manner they claim it was performed.
- An experiment with the names and dates of birth or death of Israeli presidents, prime-ministers, and Knesset speakers.

All of those experiments, and all the other experiments we have conducted, **failed** to find any "codes" above chance levels.

Expert Opinions

Our [opinions page](#) presents a selection of opinion articles by noted experts. For example, mathematician **Professor Barry Simon** gives convincing reasons for rejecting the claims of the codes proponents and even designed a serious experiment to be sure. Noted Bible scholars **Professor Menachem Cohen** and **Professor Jeffery Tigay** explain why the history of the Bible text makes it implausible that codes exist today even if they existed in the original text. Also, there is a **public statement** of more than 50 professional mathematicians and statisticians who have studied the evidence and found it lacking.

We now have the first part of a new [article by Professor Menachem Cohen](#) about the codes business and the people who support it.

Michael Drosnin's books

The book "The Bible Code" by Michael Drosnin has been the most successful mass-market book about the Torah Codes. Alas, all semblance of scientific method is missing, and all of the important codes proponents have disowned him. By repeated examples, we prove that Drosnin did not find anything that can't be found in any book, even in English.

The center-piece of the book is a "prediction" of the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

- [Famous assassinations foretold in Moby Dick](#).
- [Princess Diana in Moby Dick](#).
- [Drosnin's own murder predicted](#).
- [Bill Gates in the Book of Revelation](#) ([more information](#)) [This is offline; we will reconstruct it.].
- [The comet collision: a failed prediction](#).
- [About minimal skip - a reply to Drosnin](#).
- [Moby Dick versus Genesis](#).
- [Dave Thomas finds aliens and more](#). There is also a [follow-up article](#).
- Moby Dick predicted the "[War on Terrorism](#)". **NEW**(Oct 13)
- We also have brief comments on [Drosnin's second book](#). **NEW**(Dec 29)

Miscellaneous

- Ever since the work of Witztum and Rips became known, claims have been made that messages of **Christian** theological relevance can be also found in the Hebrew text. Most of these claims have little merit due to lack of any scientific discipline. The only scientific experiment we are aware of, by Jim Ober, Guy Cramer, and Lori Eldridge, failed to find any statistical evidence that the name of Jesus is encoded in the passages of the Hebrew Bible regarded as messianic prophecies. Their report can be found archived [here](#).
- Some of the Hebrew and English **texts** used for codes experiments and demonstrations, plus some information about **programs**, can be found [here](#).
- Some photos and brief biographies of **codes people** can be found [here](#).
- A film **Secrets of the Bible Code Revealed**, by Grizzly Adams Productions, is reviewed [here](#).
- If humans really wanted to encode messages as ELSs, they could do [much better](#) than anyone has yet claimed for the Bible.
- A Belorussian translation of this page can be found [here](#).

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