

# Heresy 101 & Rabbinic Responses

## THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS VS. THE GOD-GIVEN TORAH

### PART I: UNDERSTANDING THE HERESY (AND SOME RESPONSES)

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#### ***The Case for a Traditional Approach to the Study of Tanach***

Talking with Rabbi Nosson Scherman, general editor of ArtScroll/Mesorah Publications

DOVID BASHEVKIN, *Jewish Action* (Winter 2018)

RDB: That's remarkable! Did you ever consult with Bible scholars, historians, or archaeologists regarding the translation of Tanach?

RNS: No, we avoid that completely.

RDB: Was that a *she'eilah* or was that a given?

RNS: It was a given. If you're writing on Constitutional law, then you have to explain it the way the Supreme Court has interpreted the Constitution over the last 225 years. If you're going to come up with *chiddushim* on the Constitution, reading the text the way you choose to understand it or the way you think the court should have understood it, that's a fine literary exercise but that's not really interpreting the law. If you're an attorney advising a client that way, you would be guilty of malpractice. To us as Torah Jews, the Torah is the way *Chazal*, the *Rishonim* and the *Acharonim* understood it.

#### **R. Amnon Bazak, *To This Very Day: Fundamental Questions in Bible Study* p. xiv**

At the same time, there is also public and educational importance to dealing with these issues. In recent years I have witnessed increasing distress on the part of graduates of the religious educational system – especially those who have gone on to study at institutions of higher education, and at some stage have been exposed to the world of academic Bible study. This exposure sometimes presents them with questions to which they feel they have no answers; at other times they are astounded and shocked by the dismissal of the entire way of thought that they were brought up with. In some instances they are even angry at the religious educational system for failing to prepare them for this challenge. This reality is problematic in several respects, and it is of great importance that at some stage students are exposed to the fundamental questions and problems, and the various solutions that religiously-committed scholars have proposed.

## I. UNDERSTANDING THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS

א.א. ספר שמות פרק ו' (פרשת וארא)

(ב) וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹקִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי ה':  
(ג) וְאַרְא אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אֶל־יִצְחָק וְאֶל־יַעֲקֹב בְּקֹל  
שְׁדֵי וְשְׁמִי ה' לֹא נֹדַעְתִּי לָהֶם:

א.ב. ספר בראשית פרק ט"ו (פרשת לך לך)

(א) אַחֲרָי | הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הֵיחָ דְּבַר־ה' אֶל־  
אַבְרָם בְּמַחֲזָה לֵאמֹר אֶל־תִּירָא אַבְרָם אֲנֹכִי מִגֵּן  
לְךָ שְׂכָרְךָ הִרְבָּה מְאֹד: ... (ז) וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי ה'  
אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאוּר כַּשְׂדִּים לָתֵת לְךָ אֶת־  
הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְרִשְׁתָּהּ:

א.ב. ספר בראשית פרק י"ז (פרשת לך לך)

(יט) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים אֶבְלֵ שָׂרָה אֲשֶׁתְּךָ יִלְדֶת לְךָ  
בֵּן וְקָרָאתָ אֶת־שְׁמוֹ יִצְחָק וְהִקְמֹתִי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי  
אִתּוֹ לְבְרִית עוֹלָם לְזֵרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיו:

א.ב. ספר בראשית פרק כ"א (פרשת וירא)

(א) וְה' פָּקַד אֶת־שָׂרָה כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר וַיַּעַשׂ ה'  
לְשָׂרָה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר: (ב) וַתְּהַרֵּ וַתֵּלֶד שָׂרָה  
לְאַבְרָהָם בֶּן לְזִקְנָיו לְמוֹעֵד אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר אֹתוֹ  
אֱלֹקִים: (ג) וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם אֶת־שְׁם־בְּנֵוֹ הַנּוֹלְדֹלּוֹ  
אֲשֶׁר־יִלְדָה־לוֹ שָׂרָה יִצְחָק: ... (ו) וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרָה  
צָחֵק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹקִים כְּלִי־שִׂמְעָה יִצְחָק־לִי:

א.ג. ספר בראשית פרק ל"ג (פרשת וישלח)

(יח) וַיָּבֹא יַעֲקֹב שָׁלֵם עֵיר שְׁכֵם אֲשֶׁל בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן  
בְּבֹאוֹ מִפְּדַן אֲרָם וַיַּחֲזֵן אֶת־פְּנֵי הָעִיר: (יט) וַיִּקְוֶן  
אֶת־חֲלֻקַּת הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר נָטָה־שָׁם אָהֳלוֹ מִיַּד בְּנֵי־  
חַמּוֹר אֲבִי שְׁכֵם בְּמֵאָה קֶשֶׁטָה: (כ) וַיַּצְבֵּ־שָׁם  
מִזְבֵּחַ וַיִּקְרָא־לוֹ קֵל אֱלֹקֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

1a. Exodus 6 (*Parashat Vaera*)

(2) God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD." (3) I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El Shaddai, **but I did not make Myself known to them by My name the LORD.**

1b. Genesis 15 (*Parashat Lekh Lekha*)

(1) Some time later, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great." ... (7) Then [God] said to him, "**I am the LORD** who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to assign this land to you as a possession."

2a. Genesis 17 (*Parashat Lekh Lekha*)

(19) God said, "Nevertheless, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, **and you shall name him Isaac**; and I will maintain My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring to come.

2b. Genesis 21 (*Parashat Vayera*)

(1) The LORD took note of Sarah as promised, and the LORD did for Sarah what had been announced. (2) Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken. (3) Abraham gave his newborn son, whom Sarah had borne him, **the name of Isaac**. ... (6) Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter; everyone who hears **will laugh with me.**"

3a. Genesis 33 (*Parashat Vayishlah*)

(18) Jacob arrived safe in the city of Shechem which is in the land of Canaan—having come thus from Paddan-aram—and he encamped before the city. (19) The parcel of land where he pitched his tent he **purchased** from the kin of Hamor, Shechem's father, for a hundred kesitahs. (20) He set up an altar there, and called it Kel-Elokei-Yisrael.

גב. ספר בראשית פרק ל"ד (פרשת וישלח)

(כו) וְאֶת־חַמּוֹר וְאֶת־שָׁכֶם בְּנֵוֹ הָרְגוּ לְפִי־חָרָב וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־דִּינָה מִבֵּית שָׁכֶם וַיֵּצְאוּ: (כז) בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב בָּאוּ עַל־הַחָלָלִים וַיִּבְזּוּ הָעֵיר אֲשֶׁר טִמְּאוּ אֹחֻזָּתָם: (כח) אֶת־צֹאֲנָם וְאֶת־בָּקָרָם וְאֶת־חֲמֹרֵיהֶם וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר־בְּעֵיר וְאֶת־אֲשֶׁר בְּשָׂדֵה לְקָחוּ: (כט) וְאֶת־כָּל־חֵילָם וְאֶת־כָּל־טַפָּם וְאֶת־נְשֵׁיהֶם שָׁבוּ וַיִּבְזּוּ וְאֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר בְּבָיִת:

גג. ספר בראשית פרק מ"ח (פרשת ויחי)

(כב) וְאֲנִי נֹתֵתִי לָךְ שָׁכֶם אֶחָד עַל־אֲחִיךָ אֲשֶׁר לְקַחְתִּי מִיַּד הָאֱמֹרִי בְּחַרְבִּי וּבִקְשֵׁיטִי:

דא. ספר שמות פרק י"ב (פרשת בא)

(ט) אֲלֹת־אֲכָלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ נָא וּבִשְׁלַל מִבְּשָׁל בְּמַיִם פִּי אִם־צָלִי־אֵשׁ רֵאשׁוֹ עַל־כְּרַעְיוֹ וְעַל־קַרְבּוֹ:

דב. ספר דברים פרק ט"ו (פרשת ראה)

(ז) וּבִשְׁלַת וְאָכַלְתָּ בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בּוֹ וּפְגִיטָתְךָ בַּבֹּקֶר וְהִלַכְתָּ לְאֵהָלֶיךָ:

הא. ספר בראשית פרק א' (פרשת בראשית)

(א) בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: (ב) וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֵהוֹ וְנָהוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם: (ג) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר וַיְהִי־אוֹר:

הב. ספר בראשית פרק ב' (פרשת בראשית)

(ד) אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ בְּהִבְרָאָם בְּיוֹם עֲשׂוֹת ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם: (ה) וְכָל | שֵׁיחַ הַשָּׂדֶה טָרֶם יִהְיֶה בָאָרֶץ וְכָל־עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה טָרֶם יֵצֵמַח כִּי לֹא הִמְטִיר ה' אֱלֹהִים עַל־הָאָרֶץ וְאָדָם אֵינֶן לְעַבֵּד אֶת־הָאֲדָמָה:

3b. Genesis 34 (*Parashat Vayishlah*)

(26) They put Hamor and his son Shechem to the sword, took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went away. (27) The other sons of Jacob came upon the slain and plundered the town, because their sister had been defiled. (28) They seized their flocks and herds and asses, all that was inside the town and outside; (29) all their wealth, all their children, and their wives, all that was in the houses, they took as captives and booty.

3c. Genesis 48 (*Parashat Vayhi*)

(22) And now, I assign to you one portion more than to your brothers, which I wrested from the Amorites with my sword and bow.

4a. Exodus 12 (*Parashat Bo*)

(9) Do not eat any of it raw, or cooked in any way with water, **but roasted**—head, legs, and entrails—over the fire.

4b. Deuteronomy 16 (*Parashat Re'eh*)

(7) You shall **cook** and eat it at the place that your God the LORD will choose; and in the morning you may start back on your journey home.

5a. Genesis 1 (*Parashat Bereishit*)

(1) When God began to create heaven and earth— (2) the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water— (3) God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

5b. Genesis 1 (*Parashat Bereishit*)

(4) Such is the story of heaven and earth when they were created. When God the LORD made earth and heaven— (5) when no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, because God the LORD had not sent rain upon the earth and there were no human beings to till the soil,

## II. RABBINIC RESPONSES

### A. RABBI DOVID ZVI HOFFMAN

ו. הקדמה לספר ויקרא מפורש בידי רד"צ הופמן ... בפרושי, נחזיק בשתי ידינו בנסח המסורה. נרחיק ממנה לגמרי בקרת הנסח היוצאת מחוג המסורה ופורצת את תחמיה. ... נפרק מעלינו על הבקרת העליונה, המתאמרת להיות השופט העליון עלהתנ"ך שלנו. אנחנו גלד לאור המסורה, שאנו מאמינים באלהותה. ועל פיה ועל ידה נשתדל לבאר את דברי הכתוב. אלא שאף על פי כן נשים לב לבאורים שיש להם נקדת מבט שונה משלנו, ונהפך בזכותם עד כמה שאפשר.

ז. ספר בראשית מפורש בידי רד"צ הופמן, צ"א נותר עוד לבדק, אם השני שבלשון ובאפן הבטוי שבין שני התאורים מצדיק את ההנחה, שכאלו שני מחברים לפרקים אלה, אחד לפרק הראשון, ואחד לשני הפרקים שאחריו. וכאן יש להעיר קדם כל, כי אפלו אם נכון הדבר, שאפשר למצא סגנונות שונים בתורה, אין זה מוכיח עדין, שיש ליחס סגנונות אלה למחברים שונים. ... וכי יכתב אב אל בנו באגרת שלום רגילה באותו לשון שבו ישתמש כאשר בא להרצות בפניו על אמתות חשובות ונשגבות, או כאשר בא להודיעו על תגליות מדעיות חדשות?

### 6. Introduction, *Leviticus as Explained by R. D.Z. Hoffman*

... In this commentary, we will grab with both hands the Masoretic version. We will do our utmost to repel the criticism based on texts opposed to the Masoretic grade, seeking to breaks down its walls. ... We will throw off the yoke of High Criticism, which appoints itself the lofty judge of our Tanakh. We will go in the light of the *mesora*, for we believe in its divinity. According to it and through it we will try to explain the words of the verses. Nevertheless, we will pay attention to explanations which have a point of view different from ours, and we will give them the benefit of the doubt as much as is possible.

### 7. *Genesis as Explained by R. D.Z. Hoffman*, p. 91

We must still question whether the variation in language and in the forms of expression in the two descriptions justifies the assumption that there are two authors for these chapters, one for the first chapter, and one for the two chapters afterwards. Here we should note first of all, that even if the contention is correct and it is possible to find different styles in the Torah, this still does not prove that we should relate these styles to different authors. ... Consider this: would a father write to his son in a standard missive about his welfare with the same language which he will use when he comes to lecture him about significant, sublime truths or when he comes to tell him about new scientific discoveries?

### 8. R. Aharon Lichtenstein, *The Source of Faith Is Faith Itself (Jewish Action, Fall 1992)*

The source of my support was not confined to my immediate *rebbeim*. At one point, during my late teens, I was troubled by certain ethical questions concerning Amalek, *ir hanidachat*, etc. I then recalled having recently read that Rabbi Chaim Brisker would awaken nightly to see if someone hadn't placed a foundling at his doorstep. I knew that I slept quite soundly, and I concluded that if such a paragon of chesed coped with these laws, evidently the source of my anxiety did not lie in my greater sensitivity but in my weaker faith. And I set myself to enhancing it.

**9. R. Mordechai Breuer, *Shitat ha-Behinot***

These conclusions of biblical scholarship are based on firm evidence which can in no way be refuted, and anyone who seeks the truth and acknowledges the truth cannot deny the truth that arises from the words of these scholars. And since our tradition teaches that one cannot deny that which the eye sees and the ear hears, we too – as faithful Jews – shall not deny that which the human intellect indicates with certainty. We cannot deceive our souls in turning a lie into truth, and truth into a lie. (p. 112) ... The man of science sees in the Torah a collection of documents, written by J, E, D, P, and redacted later on by R. ... The man of great faith, in contrast, sees in the Torah the work of God. This man believes that God Himself wrote J, E, D, and P, and He Himself also took on R's redaction work. (pp. 132–133)

**10. R. Shalom Carmy, “Concepts of Scripture in Mordechai Breuer” *Jewish Concepts of Scripture*, p. 267**

To most outsiders who have heard of Rabbi Mordechai Breuer's “theory of aspects,” Breuer is a dark figure who has devised for his rigorously Orthodox confreres a counterapproach to biblical criticism so potent that they now thrive on the data that should be poisoning their faith, like bacilli that have evolved resistance to antibiotics. Alternatively, he is seen as one who has constructed a halfway house where academically mobile refugees from Orthodoxy can measure themselves for the trappings of biblical criticism on their way up to some form of orthopraxy. Both are correct.