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# ❧ EVIDENCE FOR ❧ TORAH M'SINAI I

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## Historical Approaches for Providing Evidence for National Revelation

Two Morasha classes present a broad spectrum of evidence that the entire Jewish nation received the Torah from God at Mount Sinai. The evidence is organized into several categories: historical; non-Jewish affirmation; the approach of the Kuzari; internal Jewish affirmation; the ability to rely on the descendants of witnesses to the Sinai Revelation; fulfillment of Torah prophecies; mitzvot that demonstrate Divine control of the world; the Torah's honest critique of its leaders and its people; the miracle of Jewish survival; and the uniformity of Torah scrolls worldwide.

This class addresses the following questions:

- ~ How much evidence must be presented to prove the truth of Torah M'Sinai?
- ~ Which major world religions support the Jewish claim of Torah M'Sinai?
- ~ What is the Kuzari's approach to substantiate the Exodus from Egypt and Divine Revelation?
- ~ How do we know that Torah M'Sinai is a historical event and not a legend?
- ~ Which unique Jewish traditions corroborate Divine Revelation?

### Class Outline:

- Section I. How Do We Ascertain that the Torah is True?
- Section II. External Affirmation of Torah M'Sinai
- Section III. The Kuzari Approach to Torah M'Sinai
  - Part A. Foundation of Judaism — Eyewitness Testimony
  - Part B. The Hebrew Language, Moshe Rabbeinu and Tracing National History
  - Part C. Origin of the Seven-Day Week
  - Part D. Proof of the Exodus From Egypt
  - Part E. The Oral and Written Character of the Ten Commandments
  - Part F. The Divine Revelation of the Torah and the Origins of Other Religions
  - Part G. Summary and Analysis of the Kuzari Argument
- Section IV. Torah M'Sinai as a Historical Event and Not a Legend
  - Part A. Overview of the History and Legends Approach
  - Part B. How Does One Verify a Claim of Revelation?
  - Part C. Reasonable vs. Unreasonable Foundations of a Religion
  - Part D. The Jewish Claim of Revelation
  - Part E. The Uniqueness of National Revelation is itself a Torah Prophecy
  - Part F. History vs. Legends
  - Part G. Torah Prophecy in Light of its Historical Basis
- Section V. Internal Affirmation of Torah M'Sinai
  - Part A. Observance of the Mitzvot for Generations
  - Part B. Unbroken Chain of Torah Transmission

## SECTION I. HOW DO WE ASCERTAIN THAT THE TORAH IS TRUE?

The separate components of evidence presented in these classes may not seem “conclusive.” Taken individually, a skeptic might question their credibility. The combination of all the proofs, however, leads to a conclusion to present Judaism as a more probable alternative.

### 1. The Goal is to Show that the Torah is the More Probable Alternative

Now we will begin a review of the evidence. I will start with two cautionary remarks. First, when I present evidence, the significance of the evidence is that it makes it probable that the Torah is true. To respond that it is still conceivable that the Torah is false is quite correct, but irrelevant. *The goal is not to remove every conceivable alternative, it is to present Judaism as a more probable alternative.*

### 2. All the Evidence Combined Proves the Case

Second, we are now gathering evidence. To gather evidence means no one piece of evidence need carry the case by itself. This is similar to a courtroom procedure. If you want to convict a murderer, just finding his fingerprints at the scene of the crime isn't enough, just finding a weapon similar to the one that caused the murder in his house is not enough, just having a motivation is not enough, just his having been seen at the place of the murder at the time of the murder is not enough. But, when you put them all together, it can be enough. So, again, it will not be relevant to respond that, “This piece of evidence is not enough to justify believing that the Torah is true.” Of course it isn't. No one piece of evidence is enough. It is all the evidence together which is enough.

## SECTION II. EXTERNAL AFFIRMATION OF TORAH M'SINAI

### 1. Four Main Religions Affirm Judaism's Claim

Christianity, Islam, Sikism, and Bahai all affirm Judaism's claim that God, through Moshe (Moses), gave the Torah to the Jewish people. This is a total of over 3.4 billion people, over 53% of the world's population. This is a postulate upon which they all agree – that at one point in history Jewry possessed God's plan. For them all, the Torah is a divine document. The only discord is whether Moshe's revelation was superseded by later prophets, and if so how many times.

## SECTION III. THE KUZARI APPROACH TO TORAH M'SINAI

The Kuzari, written by Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi, a sage, doctor and poet in 11th Century Spain, is a defense of the authenticity of Judaism. As will be explained later in greater detail (see Part F), the basic structure of Kuzari's argument is that it is implausible that an entire generation was duped into believing a false national history as written in the Torah. Because of the wealth of historical and social history mentioned in the Torah, whose authenticity was verified by the entire Jewish nation and then transmitted generation after generation, it follows that the Torah cannot be a simple fraud.

## PART A. FOUNDATION OF JUDAISM — EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY

### 1. Kuzari, Metsudah Edition, pp 2-3

The faith of the Jewish people is based on eyewitness testimony and requires neither proof nor demonstration.

אמונת ישראל מיסדת על הראיה, ואין צריך עמה לא ראייה ולא מופת

### 2. Ibid., pp. 2-5 – The Jewish God was Recognized by the Ancient Nations.

In his opening remarks to Pharaoh, Moshe told him, “The God of the Hebrews sent me to you” (Shemot/Exodus 7:16), referring to the God of Avraham (Abraham), Yitzchak (Isaac), and Yaakov (Jacob). Moshe used this description of God because the Patriarchs were well known to the nations of the world. They acknowledged that the Divine Spirit clung to the Patriarchs, that they were guided by God, and that He performed miracles for them.

Moshe did not say to Pharaoh, “The God of heaven and earth sent me,” or “My Creator and your Creator sent me,” for Pharaoh would have denied Divine Creation.

כשפתח משה לדבר עם פרעה, אמר לו: “אלהי העברים שלחני אליך” (שמות ז:טז), רצה לומר: אלהי אברהם יצחק ויעקב. מפני שהיה דברם מפרסם אצל האומות, כי התחבר אליהם הדבר האלהי והנהיג אותם ועשה להם נפלאות.

ולא אמר: “אלהי השמים והארץ שלחני אליך”, ולא: “בוראי ובוראך”.

### 3. Ibid., pp. 4-5 – God was Known to the Jewish People through the Exodus.

God also revealed Himself to the Jewish people at Sinai in the same manner, saying, “I am the Lord, your God, Who has taken you out of the land of Egypt” (Shemot 20:2). He did not introduce himself by saying, “I am the Lord your God, Who created the world and yourselves.” The fact that God took them out of Egypt was indisputable. The Divine Revelation at Sinai was also an indisputable truth which they personally witnessed and experienced. Consequently, the unbroken tradition of the Oral Law was as valid to them as something they had seen with their own eyes.

וכן פתח הקדוש ברוך הוא דבריו אל המון ישראל: “אנכי ה' אלהיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים” (שמות כ:ב). ולא אמר: “אני בורא עולם ובוראכם.” ולכל קהל ישראל התברר אצלם המעמד ההוא בראות עיניהם, ואחר כן הקבלה הנמשכת, שהיא כמראה העין.

## PART B. THE HEBREW LANGUAGE, MOSHE RABBEINU AND TRACING NATIONAL HISTORY

### 1. Kuzari, Metsudah Edition, pp. 12-15

Avraham himself lived during the generation in which the separation of languages occurred. He and his relatives retained the language of his forefather, Ever, and for that reason he was called Ivri. Four hundred years later Moshe appeared. The world was fully acquainted with astrology

אברהם אבינו היה בעצמו בדור ההפלגה, ונשאר הוא וקרוביו בלשון עבר אבי אביו, ולכן נקרא “עברי”. ובא משה אחריו, לאחר ארבע מאות שנה, והעולם מלא מוחכמות שמים וארץ, ובא אל פרעה וחכמי מצרים. וחכמי בני ישראל חוקרים עליו, על אשר לא האמינו לו

and physics when he appeared before Pharaoh and spoke in the name of God. The sages of Egypt and even the Jewish Sages were skeptical about the authenticity of his Divine mission, because they were not convinced that God spoke to man until they heard Him declare the Ten Commandments at Sinai.

The rest of the people were also not fully convinced. Their lack of faith in Moshe did not stem from ignorance but rather from their wisdom. They wanted to be certain that he was not deceiving them with magic, astrological calculations, or similar fraud that would not stand up to close examination. Who can imagine then that these people would accept as fact – if it were not true – that the language spoken for five hundred years before them was the exclusive language of Ever; that the world was split up in the time of his son Peleg; and that each nation could be traced directly to Yefet, Shem, or Ham? Is it conceivable that anyone today could induce an entire people to accept his false statements concerning the origin, history, and language of well-known nations dating back only four hundred years? This is not possible! How could they? Since we possess books in the handwriting of their authors written five hundred years ago!

אמונה שלמה כי הבורא מדבר עם אדם – עד שהשמיים דבריו בעשרת הדברים.

ואיך יעלה בדעת שידמה אצלם כי הלשונות אשר היו לפניו חמש מאות שנה היו לשון עבר לבדה, ונפלגה בבבל בימי פלג, ויחס אמה זו אל יפת, ואמה זו אל שם, ואמה זו אל חם, וארצותם אלו? היתכן לאדם היום לאמת אצלנו כזב ביחס אמות מפרסמות ובדבריהם ובלשונותם, ויהיה הדבר פחות מארבע מאות שנה? ואיך יתכן זה, ואנחנו מוצאים החכמות בכתב ידי מחבריהם מלפני חמש מאות שנה!

## PART C. ORIGIN OF THE SEVEN-DAY WEEK

### 1. Kuzari, Metsudah Edition., pp. 14-15

Regarding the number of days in the week: is there a nation in existence that does not consider a week to be seven days starting with the first day and ending on the Sabbath? How is it possible that the people of China concur with those of the Western world unless there was some common early convention or agreement? It is unlikely that such a world-encompassing accord could have been reached or was in fact reached. The only plausible solution is that all men share a common tradition because they are descendants of Adam or Noach from whom they received the tradition of a seven-day week.

המנין המסכם לימות השבוע. השמענו על אמה שחולקת בשבוע הידוע, שהתחלתו מיום ראשון והשלמתו בשבת? היתכן שישו בזה אנשי הצין עם אנשי איי המערב, מבלי התחלה והקהל והסכמה? והלא לא יתכן זה אלא בהסכמה מן הכל, וזה רחוק: או שיהיו המדברים כלם בני אדם או בני נח או זולתם, ויהיה השבוע אצלם מקבל מאביהם.

## PART D. PROOF OF THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT

### 1. Kuzari, Metsudah Edition, pp. 15-17 – Jewish Nation Enslaved in Egypt.

Six hundred thousand male Jews between the ages of twenty and sixty lived as slaves in Egypt.

היו בני ישראל משעבדים במצרים, שש מאות אלף

These Jews were deeply conscious that they were descendants of the twelve sons of Yaakov; not one of them separated himself or escaped to another country, nor did any stranger enter their ranks. They yearned for the fulfillment of the promise which had been made to their ancestors, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, that the land of Canaan would be their inheritance. Their hope was not diminished even though Canaan was then ruled by seven mighty, prosperous nations while they were in the depths of misery, in bondage to Pharaoh who ordered their children to be killed in order to prevent their numbers from increasing.

עשר שבטים, לא נמלט מהם איש ולא ברח אל ארץ אחרת, ולא נכנס ביניהם נכרי, מיחלים המועד אשר יעד בו אל אבותם, אברהם יצחק ויעקב, שינחילם את ארץ כנען. וארץ כנען היתה בעת ההיא בידי שבע אמות בתכלית הרב והחזקה וההצלחה, ובני ישראל – בתכלית הדלות והעוני ביד פרעה, שהיה הורג את בניהם כדי שלא ירבו.

## 2. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17 – God Strikes Egypt with the Ten Plagues.

Despite the Jewish position of weakness, God sent Moshe and Aaron to Pharaoh, who was then the world's mightiest ruler, and granted them the power to effect changes in nature. Pharaoh was unable to evade them or to harm them. He was powerless to protect his country from the ten plagues, which struck the Egyptians and affected their streams, land, air, flora, and fauna, their bodies, and even their souls. At one moment, at midnight, the most precious and beloved members of their families all the firstborn males, died. There was no home in which there was no death except for the homes of the Jews.

All these plagues were preceded by admonitions and warnings, and they came at the exact moment Moshe told Pharaoh to expect them. The plagues also came to a halt at the exact moment that Moshe promised Pharaoh they would cease; this was to convince everyone that the plagues were ordained by God, Who does what He wants when He wants. They were not natural phenomena, nor were they the results of stellar activity or mere coincidence.

ושלח ה' את משה ואהרן עם חלשתם, ועמדו כנגד פרעה עם חזקתו, באותות ובמופתים ובשנוי המנהגים, ולא יכל פרעה להסתער מהם, ולא לצוות עליהם רע, ולא למנוע עצמו מעשר מכות אשר חלו במצרים, במימיהם ובארצם ובאזורים ובצמחיהם ובבהמתם ובגופם ובנפשותם, שמת מהם ברגע אחד, בחצות הלילה, היקר שהיה בבתיהם והחביב להם, כל בכור, ואין בית אשר אין שם מת, זולתי בתי בני ישראל.

וכל המכות האלה היו באות באזהרה ובהתראה ובמועד, ומסתלקות באזהרה ובהתראה, כדי שיתברר כי הן בכונה מאת אלוה חפץ, עושה חפצו בעת שיחפץ, לא מצד הטבע, ולא מצד הכוכבים, ולא מצד כשפים, ולא במקרה.

## 3. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-19 – Death of the First Born and the Splitting of the Yam Suf.

The Jews marched out of Egypt at the command of God on the same night and at the exact moment that death struck the Egyptian first-born. They reached the Sea of Reeds, to which they were guided by the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. At their head were their revered leaders, Moshe and Aaron, who were both over eighty years old.

ואחר כך יצאו בני ישראל בדבר השם בלילה ההוא, בעת שמתו בכוריהם, מעבדות פרעה. והלכו דרך ים סוף, ומנהלם עמוד ענן ועמוד אש, הולכים לפניהם ומנהיגים אותם, ונגידיהם וכהניהם – שני הזקנים האלקיים, משה ואהרן, היו בעת שהתנבאו בני שמונים שנה ויותר.

At this point, the Jews had only a few mitzvot, which they had inherited from Adam and Noach. These laws were never nullified but were added to at Sinai.

When Pharaoh pursued them, they were not skilled in the ways of warfare and needed no arms. God divided the sea, through which they then passed. Pharaoh and his army, however, were drowned in the sea and their corpses carried toward the Jews so they could see them with their own eyes. It is a well-known episode.

ועד העת ההיא לא היו להם מצוות כי אם מעט, מורשה מן היחידים ההם, מאדם ונח, ולא בטלן משה, אבל הוסיף עליהן.

ואחר כך רדף אחריהם פרעה, ולא נצטרכו אל כלי מלחמה, ולא היו העם מלמדי מלחמה, ובקע את הים ועברו בתוכו, וטבע בו פרעה וחילו, והשליכם הים מתים לעיני בני ישראל, והדבר ארך וידוע.

#### 4. Ibid., pp 18-19 – The Manna in the Desert.

This is certainly a revelation of Divine Power, and the commandments associated with it must therefore be accepted. There can be no doubt about these events nor can it be suspected that they were the results of witchcraft, trickery, or fantasy. If the division of the waters of the Sea of Reeds and the crossing of the sea were imagined, did they also imagine their deliverance from bondage in Egypt, the death of their oppressors, the capture of their booty, and the fact that they kept their wealth? Only the stubborn obstinacy of heresy could cause one to deny the historicity of these events.

Afterwards, when they came to the desert, a place in which nothing grew, God provided them daily with food [manna, the heavenly bread] for forty years, except on Shabbat (when they received a double portion the previous day).

זהו הענין האלהי באמת. ואין נכנס בלב מחמתו ספק, לא מכשפים ולא מתחבולה ולא מדמיון. ואלו נדמה להם הבקע הים ועברם בתוכו – ידמה להם הצלתם מן העבדות ומות מעבידיהם וקחתם שללם והשאר ממונם אצלם? זו עקשות מאפיקורסים!...

ואחרי זה כשעמדו במדבר, מקום אין זרע, והוריד להם לחם נברא יום יום, מלבד השבת, אכלוהו ארבעים שנה.

### PART E. THE ORAL AND WRITTEN CHARACTER OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

#### 1. Kuzari, Metsudah Edition, pp. 96-97 – Splitting of the Reed Sea and the Ten Commandments.

There is no reason for us to reject any aspect of the account that we have received about the Revelation at Sinai. Regarding the difficulty of its physical implications, we must say that we do not understand how the spiritual word of God became materialized so that our ears could perceive it. We also do not know what new things God created or which existing elements He used to reveal the Torah to us in the form of tablets of stone, for His power is unlimited. Our view is that He created the tablets and engraved a text on them in the same manner as He created the heavens and the stars – purely by His will.

אמנם מן הדין שלא נדחה מה שקבלנו מן המעמד ההוא, ונאמר, שאין אנחנו יודעים איך נגשם הענין עד שהיה לדבור וקרע את אוזנינו, ולא מה שברא לו יתברך ממה שלא היה נמצא, ולא מה שהעביד לו מן הנמצאים – כי לא תחסר לו יכולת. ונאמר, כי הוא יתברך ברא את הלוחות וכתב אותם כתב חרות – כמו שברא את השמים והכוכבים ברצונו בלבד. ורצה יתברך ונגשם בשעור אשר חפץ ובמתכנת אשר חפץ, ונחרת בהם כתב עשרת הדברים –



God desired it, and they acquired the precise physical form specified by His will, engraved with the text of the Ten Commandments.

Similarly, we say that He divided the sea and formed it into two walls which stood on the right and on the left of the people, for whom He also made roads and smooth ground for them to walk on without trouble or obstacles (Shemot 14:21, 22). The dividing of the sea and the construction and arrangement of the walls and roads are attributed to God, Who required neither tools nor assistance, as a human being would. Just as the water solidified and shaped itself at His command, so too the air which reached people's ears at Sinai was transformed into word-sounds, which conveyed the matters that God wanted to communicate to the prophet and to the people.

כמו שנאמר כי קרע את הים ושמהו לחומות עומדות מימין העם ומושאלם, ומסלות מסדרות ורחבות וארץ ישרה, ילכו בה מבלי טרח וללא עכוב. וכן הקריעה והבנין והתקון מיחסים אליו יתברך, לא נצטרך בו לכלי ולא לסבות אמצעיות – כפי שיש צורך במעשי הנבראים. כי המים עמדו במאמרו ונצטירו בחפצו. וכן יצטיר האויר המגיע אל און הנביא בצורות האותיות שהן מורות על הענינים שהוא חפץ להשמיעם אל הנביא או אל ההמון.

## 2. **Ibid., pp. 96-99 – The Entire Jewish Nation Witnessed and Was Convinced by all These Events.**

I do not insist that this is exactly how these things occurred, for perhaps the matter is too deep for me to comprehend. The important point, however is the result — that everyone who witnessed these happenings was convinced that they were ordained and caused directly by the Creator without intermediaries. In this respect, these events may be compared to the original creation of the world. The belief in the Divine origin of the Torah, which is related to these events, is as firmly established as the belief in the Divine creation of the world. Furthermore, the believer understands that God created the world in the same manner in which He created the two tablets, the manna and tablets, the manna and similar phenomena. The doubts which assail the philosopher and the materialist are thus removed from the heart of the believer.

ואינני גוזר הענין על הדרך הזה, ואולי היה על דרך יותר עמק ממה שיעלה במחשבותי. אך העולה מזה: האמנת מי שראה המעמדות האלה כי הענין ההוא מאת הבורא, מבלי מצוע, מפני שהם דומים לבריאה הראשונה וליצירה הראשונה, ותאמין הנפש בתורה הנתנת בהם – עם האמונה כי העולם חדש וכי ה' בראו, שברא הלוחות והמן וזולתו, ויסורו מלב המאמין ספקות הפילוסופים ובעלי הקדמות.

## **PART F. THE DIVINE REVELATION OF THE TORAH AND THE ORIGINS OF OTHER RELIGIONS**

### 1. **Kuzari, Metsudah Edition, pp. 148-149 – It is not Possible to Convince People of What They Did not See.**

Our Master, Moshe, arrayed the people at Mount Sinai so that they too might see the Divine light, which they did, each according to the level of his spiritual development. He then called forth the seventy elders to see it, as is written, "They saw the God of Israel" (Shemot 24:10).

משה רבינו עליו השלום העמיד ההמון אצל הר סיני לראות את האור, אשר ראוהו כפי יכולתם. ואחר כך קרא לשבעים זקנים, וראוהו (לפי מדרגתם), כמו שאמר: "ויראו את אלהי ישראל" (שמות כד:י). ואחר כך קבץ את שבעים הזקנים השניים, וחל עליהם מאור הנבואה,

He later assembled a second convocation of seventy elders, and conferred upon them so much of his prophetic spirit that they became his near equals, as it is written, "And he concentrated some of the spirit that was upon him and conferred it upon the seventy elders" (Bamidbar/Numbers 11:25). Each of them related what he saw and heard to the others.

The concept and practice of prophecy was so well established that it was impossible to suspect this was a conspiracy of the few to mislead the multitudes. It was impossible to convince a large number of people that they had seen something which they really did not see. [In the case of Divine Revelation there was a unanimous consensus that they witnessed God giving the Torah.]

עד שנשתוו עמו בו, כמו שאמר: "וַיֹּצֵל מִן הָרוּחַ אֲשֶׁר  
עָלָיו וַיֵּתֶן עַל שִׁבְעִים אִישׁ הַזִּקְנִים" (במדבר יא:כה). והיו  
מעידים אלו לאלו, על מה שהיו רואים ושומעים.

ונתרחקו מהאמה המחשבות הרעות, שיחשב כי  
הנבואה היא טענה של יחיד שטען לה. כי לא יתכן  
להעביר הסכמה שייסכימו עליה המונים (שראו בעינים,  
מה שלא ראו. וכאן היתה הסכמת המונים).

## PART G. SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF THE KUZARI ARGUMENT

The following is the short outline of the full Kuzari Argument presented by Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb in Living Up to the Truth, 1996, pp. 40–47.

<http://www.dovidgottlieb.com/publications.htm>

### 1. How Does One Believe in an Early Historical Event?

We begin by taking a miracle which is described as occurring to a large number of people, in our case the entire generation. Take, for example, the revelation at Sinai. There are people who believe that the revelation at Sinai occurred. I'm not going to assume that because people believed it that it must have occurred. That is called "begging the question." However, it is a fact that there are people who believe it occurred.

Now they believe it because the previous generation taught it to them. Likewise, that generation believes it because the previous generation taught it to them. So you have a chain of generations of believers going back in time. That is a fact. The question then is, how did the chain get started? Who were the first believers? How did they arrive at their belief?

### 2. Structure of Kuzari Argument

Again, oversimplifying, (this is only the outline): There are two broad possibilities. One: the event at Sinai took place and people witnessed it, and that caused their belief. Or two: the event did not take place. If the event did not take place, then someone invented the story and convinced the people to believe it.

The Kuzari's argument proceeds by investigating the second alternative, that the event didn't happen, that the story was made up and was sold. The argument shows that the second alternative is not credible. It is not credible to believe that the story was made up and then sold. If you can defeat the second alternative, that leaves only the first alternative, that it happened and was witnessed. That is the structure of the argument.



### 3. **Impossibility of Convincing an Entire Nation About a False National Event**

The outline of the refutation of the second alternative proceeds as follows. Imagine someone making up the story and trying to sell it. He is going to come to a group of people and he is going to tell them that sometime in the past their ancestors stood at a mountain and heard God speak. He is not talking about people in China or Tibet. He is talking about the ancestors of his audience. He is claiming that God revealed Himself to all of their ancestors simultaneously and by so doing founded a new religion.

What is the question with which the audience will confront him? The obvious question is: If this happened to our ancestors, how is it that no one knows about it but you? What happened to the memory of that event? Everybody simply forgot it? They were more interested in the soccer scores? No one told us about it? The whole religion just disappeared? It is simply not credible to tell an entire nation that their collective ancestors witnessed such an earth-shattering event and that it was forgotten. It would be impossible to explain why the memory of the event disappeared. Therefore, says the Kuzari, the person inventing the story and trying to sell it will never succeed.

### 4. **Analogies of the Kuzari Principle**

To give you a simple parallel, suppose someone told you today that five hundred years ago gold grew on trees throughout Romania. Gold grew on trees for twenty years and then there was a blight that killed all the gold trees. Would you believe it? Would you have to go to an encyclopedia and look up Romanian history? I don't think that you would need to investigate the history of Romania. If such a thing had happened, you would already know about it. It would have been so spectacular that everyone would know about it. The books would be filled with it; novels would have been written about it; there would be botanical research projects to find out what happened to the gold trees and how to reproduce them. It is not the kind of thing that people forget.

Or, to take an example which does not involve a miracle, imagine being told that in 1690 the European settlers in North America conquered all of Central and South America. You would reject such a statement on the same grounds: if it were true, surely we would already know it.

Similarly, the revelation of God to an entire ancestry of a nation is not the kind of event that would be forgotten; and therefore if a person is inventing the story and trying to sell it, he will not be able to sell it to his audience. The reason is that he will not be able to explain why no one else remembers that incredible event. That means that the alternative of making it up and selling it is not credible. If that alternative is not credible, we are left with only one alternative, and that is that the event really happened and that people witnessed it. That is the general structure of the argument in an incomplete and outlined form.

## SECTION IV. TORAH M'SINAI AS A HISTORICAL EVENT AND NOT A LEGEND

(by Rabbi Asher Resnick — Yeshivat Aish HaTorah)

### PART A. OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY AND LEGENDS APPROACH

There are four components of this analysis showing evidence for the veracity of Torah:

1. Contrasting the claimed revelation of God by individual prophets of other religions to Judaism's claim of National Revelation.
2. Two of the Torah's prophecies are examined to show their extraordinary uniqueness and ability to validate or disprove Judaism:
  - a. That no other national revelation will ever occur, and
  - b. Such an event will never be claimed by any other people.
3. The Sinai event is shown to be a confirmed historical event in contrast to a mere legend.
4. Major principles of Judaism are shown to be used by civilizations worldwide

### PART B. HOW DOES ONE VERIFY A CLAIM OF REVELATION?

#### 1. Self-Appointed Rebbe Analogy

Let's begin with a story: There was once a Chassidic Rebbe who was the head of a large community. He had three different sons: the eldest, the biggest scholar, and the most charismatic. Everyone always understood that whenever the Rebbe would die, one of his three sons would take over as the new head of the community. Since all three were so well qualified, this was clearly a decision that only the father could make. The problem was that the Rebbe ended up dying before he was able to determine which of his sons he wanted to be his successor. Weeks went by and as much as all three sons wanted to be the new Rebbe, none of them was able to demonstrate that their father had really been leaning more towards them than towards the other two. One morning, one of the sons came over to his two brothers. He told them, "Last night I had a dream. [Can you guess what it was?] I dreamt that our father came to me in my dream and told me that he wanted me to be the new Rebbe."

#### 2. The Dilemma

Let's try to put ourselves into the mindset of the other two sons. How would we be likely to feel about this? What would we answer back to our brother?

[Common responses: "I'd claim that I had the same dream myself," "Prove it!" "You're lying!" or simply "I don't believe you."] This was a real dilemma. On the one hand, the brother claiming to have had the dream couldn't possibly prove that it **had** really happened. On the other hand, the other two brothers could never prove that it **hadn't** happened. Based on this seeming standoff, the one son told the other two that since they had nothing better to go with, they should at least preliminarily accept his claim.

#### 3. Rejecting the Claim

In fact, not surprisingly, the two brothers did not accept their third brother's claim. They rejected it on the basis of a very simple point of logic. While they had no difficulty with the idea itself that their father could come back in a dream and communicate his intentions on this critically important issue of succession, the way that their brother claimed it occurred made no sense to them. Once their father was going to make it known who he wanted as the new Rebbe, why would he have told only the one son? Wouldn't it be more reasonable for him to have also told the other two? In other words, why

would the two brothers as well as the rest of the community be expected to have accepted this claim as a pure leap of faith when the father could just as easily have given them all clear knowledge of its truth? Please take a moment to pause and ask yourself – “Does this logic make sense to me?”

#### 4. Understanding the Meaning of this Analogy

This story, as you may have guessed, is actually an analogy. The Rebbe is analogous to God, the one son with the dream to a claimed prophet, and the other two brothers to the rest of the nation. In order to appreciate this idea, let's apply the logic of the Rebbe story to the establishment of Islam. What would we imagine all the Arabs to have said when Muhammad first came to them claiming that God had designated him to be their leader? Following the Rebbe story model, we would have expected – “That doesn't make any sense! If God had wanted us to believe in you, then He would have told us directly that you were His prophet!” [Why the Arabs didn't, in fact, offer this type of a challenge is more of a psychological question than a theological one. And, of course, it is a question which is certainly not unique to Islam. All throughout history, charismatic leaders have convinced people to follow them without any evidence at all.]

### PART C. REASONABLE VS. UNREASONABLE FOUNDATIONS OF A RELIGION

#### 1. Reasonable vs. Unreasonable Foundations of a Religion

What we see, therefore, is that in the most general sense, there are two possible foundations that a religion could have:

- a. Reasonable – the claimed prophet is directly verified by God to the people themselves,
- b. Unreasonable – the claimed prophet says that God communicated only to him personally.

#### 2. The Surprising Beginnings of Major World Religions

Let's do an exercise to be able to better appreciate this issue in the broader context of world history. Imagine that we were completely ignorant of all world religions, knowing only the names and the approximate number of people that today accept them as true. For example, we know that there was a group called “Christianity” with well over one and a half billion believers, one called “Islam” with over one billion followers, hundreds of millions of Hindus, etc. Which type of a foundation would we guess was the basis of these different religions – the reasonable or the unreasonable one? We would certainly have expected their foundations to follow the reasonable structure. With all of the billions of people throughout the world today believing in one or another of these various religions, we would definitely have assumed that there was originally some sort of a logical basis to them. If someone would then have informed us that even a single one of these major world religions was actually based on the unreasonable claim of God expecting an entire nation or group to blindly follow some lone individual, we would probably be quite surprised. And if, beyond this, we were told that, in fact, every single one of the non-Jewish religions throughout the world were based on this type of a claim, we would be absolutely shocked.

As incredible as this situation would sound to us, hearing it for the very first time, this happens to be the actual reality. Billions and billions of people are basing their lives in this world, as well as their situation for all of eternity, on some single individual. This person may be Muhammad or Paul or Buddha or Joseph Smith or someone else amongst the hundreds or thousands of claimed prophets all throughout human history.

## PART D. THE JEWISH CLAIM OF REVELATION

### 1. The Jewish Claim

What, on the other hand, is Judaism based on? The Jewish claim is that the entire Jewish people (i.e., every single man, woman, and child that were living 3300 years ago) had Moshe personally verified to them by God as they stood at the base of Mount Sinai. This claim of revelation on a national level is actually the exact claim which we would have also expected every other major world religion to make. This is because it is the only claim which a reasonable person could possibly deal with. Why it is, in fact, unique to Judaism is a question which clearly demands an explanation.

### 2. The Problem with Basing One's Life on a Leap of Faith

The greatest problem with all of the non-Jewish religions requiring their followers to base their lives on a leap of faith is, in fact, much more fundamental than the demand to make the actual leap of faith itself. It is rather the absolute impossibility amongst every single member of the nation of knowing which way that they should leap. Imagine a truth seeker who is fully prepared to do whatever is necessary in order to find truth. If in fact, God had chosen, for reasons unfathomable to human logic, to only communicate to a single prophet, what position would that leave this sincere truth seeker in? Even if one of the non-Jewish religions was definitely true, the odds against him picking that one correct one would be overwhelming. Should he leap towards Paul or Muhammad? What about Buddha, or perhaps Joseph Smith? How about towards one of the thousands of lesser known claimed prophets of truth? The key point is that while the various religions of the world may claim that they are merely asking people to have trust in God, which seems quite reasonable, they are in fact requiring every member to have faith specifically in their claimed prophet based on no evidence whatsoever, which is quite unreasonable.

### 3. The Unique Nature of Judaism

While it may be absurd for human beings to ever presume to understand how God would or wouldn't establish a religion, the fact is that all of the various religions of the world do believe that God created mankind with a mind and the ability to think. And we all constantly use our minds to make decisions, from the most trivial to the most significant, from which flavor of ice cream we enjoy to what career we pursue. It would be incomprehensible, therefore, if we were completely incapable of using our minds for that single decision which dwarfs all others in importance, which determines our relationship to reality itself in both this world and the next. While we may, therefore, never be absolutely certain that God would not have spoken only to a single prophet, no thinking person could possibly accept as true any religion that says He did. And beyond our perception of how logically God would establish a religion, there is also the practical question of how we should make decisions in our lives? Incredibly, Judaism remains the only religion in the entire world which a reasonable person could possibly DEAL with.

## PART E. THE UNIQUENESS OF NATIONAL REVELATION IS ITSELF A TORAH PROPHECY

### 1. The Source of this Idea is in the Torah Itself

As striking as the contrast between Judaism and all other religions has been all throughout history, perhaps even more remarkable is the fact that this distinction was actually prophesied in the Torah itself over 3,300 years ago! In Deuteronomy 4:25-39, Moshe speaks to the Jews in the desert about their descendants who will be exiled from the land of Israel, left few in number, scattered amongst the nations, and will be searching for God in the "End of Days." Moshe dramatically challenges this "latter days" generation to "Ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God

created man upon the earth, and from one side of heaven to the other, whether there has been any such thing as this great thing is, or whether anything has even been heard like it? Did a nation ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of fire, as you have heard, and live?"

## 2. National Revelation, Two Prophecies and the Jewish Claim are Unique

Through Moshe asking this generation in the end of days to span the entirety of human history, in both time and location, he is stating in the clearest possible terms the absolute uniqueness of national revelation to the Jewish people. It is important to appreciate, however, that this uniqueness has two different aspects to it. Not only did Moshe tell us that no nation would ever actually experience a national revelation, he further stated that we would never even hear about a nation claiming that it had. In other words, the Torah has hereby outlined two distinctly different prophecies:

1. Never again in human history will there be another national revelation event.
2. Additionally, throughout all of world history there will never even be a single instance of another national revelation claim.

## 3. Are These Prophecies of Equal Magnitude?

Both of these prophecies are certainly quite striking. It is remarkable that we are able to look back today at the literally thousands of world religions that have existed, and note the absolute uniqueness of the Jewish claim. However, it is altogether different to have been able to have stated this uniqueness ahead of time, over 3300 years ago. An interesting question to consider is whether these two prophecies are of equal magnitude. Are they equally difficult to have been originally predicted or was one significantly more difficult than the other?

## 4. Understanding the First Prophecy: There will Never be Another National Revelation Event

There is a widespread perception that it is the second of these two prophecies, i.e., that there will never be another *claim* by any other religion or group, which is clearly the more difficult to have originally been made. To appreciate why, let us consider what the situation would have been had the Torah made only the first of the two prophecies, i.e., that there would never be another national revelation event within any other religion or group. Let us then imagine that we would do some research to test out the validity of this prediction and that we would actually find some group somewhere that said that this had, in fact, occurred to large numbers of their ancestors. Would this necessarily be a problem for Judaism? Would we be forced to conclude that the Torah's prophecy of no more national revelation events had just been disproven by this group which says that there was one? Of course not. All that the Torah would then have been saying was that there would never ever be another national revelation event. This hypothetical other nation or religion, on the other hand, would merely have been *claiming* that such an event had occurred. We could then offer up a number of possible explanations (i.e. they were mistaken about what happened, they lied, they were fooled, etc.) rather than be forced to admit that the Torah's prophecy had been disproven.

## 5. Understanding the Second Prophecy: There will never be Another Claim to National Revelation

However, once the Torah says that there will never even be the *claim* of a national revelation, the situation becomes very different. In terms of the validity of the prophecy, it is now absolutely irrelevant whether any national revelation claimed by another nation or religion actually occurred. Any religion which merely *said* that this is what happened to their ancestors would automatically transform this into a false prophecy! And, of course, even a single false prophecy would destroy the validity of the

entire Torah. Even for God Himself, it would seem “challenging” to absolutely ensure that this second prophecy would never be overturned. Unless God were prepared to limit freewill throughout all of human history and not allow anyone to even claim a national revelation, it would seem inconceivable that there wouldn't be even a single instance of someone simply making up this most reasonable basis for a religion.

## 6. The Difference between the Two Prophecies

This is the logic which seems to tell us that the second prophecy: No National Revelation *claim*, is clearly stronger than the first one: No National Revelation *event*. If we look more deeply into the matter, however, we will see that, in fact, it is the exact opposite which is true. In order to understand this, we need to discuss some basic principles of history.

## PART F. HISTORY VS. LEGENDS

### 1. History vs. Legends

In a very general sense, we could divide all accounts of past events into two different categories: History and legends. History refers to events which we feel certain actually occurred based on solid evidence. Legends, on the other hand, are stories which we may or may not accept as true, and specifically have no objective evidence for corroboration. The key question, of course, is how does one distinguish between history and legend?

### 2. Analogies of the Cherry Tree and the Black Plague

Two different historical accounts: The Cherry Tree story and the Black Plague, will serve as models for these two types of historical categories.

### 3. The Cherry Tree: How Many People Actually Believe it Happened?

Virtually every American has heard the story of George Washington and the cherry tree — when he was a boy he chopped down his father's cherry tree. His father was naturally upset and began inquiring as to what had occurred. Little George is reputed to have said, “I cannot tell a lie. It was I that chopped down the tree.” How many of the millions of Americans that have fondly retold it generation after generation feel certain that it actually occurred? If only a tiny number believe that it actually happened, what is the explanation?

### 4. The Calamity of the Black Plague: Regarded as a True Occurrence

Contrast this story with the Black Plague in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Here we have an account of a terrible calamity which is estimated to have caused millions of deaths in Europe hundreds of years ago. How many people today regard this as a true occurrence? What is the key distinction which causes the great majority today to view it so differently from the cherry tree story?

### 5. The Distinction Lies in the Number of Eyewitnesses Present

The most basic distinction between these two very different accounts is the number of claimed eyewitnesses and participants. Even if the cherry tree story had actually occurred, how many individuals would possibly have been there to testify to its authenticity? On the other hand, the Black Plague is the type of an event which millions of individuals alive at that time would have known about.



## 6. History vs. Legend is Based on Number of Original Witnesses

Based on the fundamental numerical distinction between these two above cases, we can formulate a very simple rule:

- a. If huge numbers are claimed to have witnessed an event, and huge numbers of their own descendants afterwards have accepted this claim as true (as in the case of the Black Plague) then this claim is a reliable historical fact.
- b. If, however, the number of claimed participants or eyewitnesses of an event are small, then even if huge numbers of individuals come to accept this claim as true afterwards, this claim will always be properly characterized as legend.

## 7. Large Numbers of Eye Witnesses and Successive Validation

It is very important to point out that this distinction between history and legend is in no way meant to imply that only claims which fall into the history category should be considered as true. It is obvious that in every time and place, the number of events which have actually involved huge numbers of people have been a fraction of a percent of the total number of true events. The point is rather that in those exceptionally rare cases in which there actually are huge numbers (both at the event itself as well as in terms of its acceptance afterwards), this single point alone can give us certainty as to the validity of the claim. In all other cases, with no claim at all of huge numbers having been present originally, we will either have to rely on some other mechanism for establishing its truth, or, more likely, we will have to conclude that there is simply no means of proving its authenticity.

## 8. Understanding why Large Numbers of Eyewitnesses Establishes Historical Certainty

It is also important to appreciate why large numbers are such an effective means of establishing historical certainty. This rule is based on a very simple and intuitively obvious principle in human psychology — while masses of people will often accept as true some claim which they have no evidence for either way (if for some reason they feel that it is in their interest to do so), they will never accept a claim which they know for certain to be false. This rule is particularly *relevant* with *history* and claimed *events*, because it is obvious that the question of occurrence is such a black and white one, i.e. either a particular event did occur or it didn't. When it comes, on the other hand, to ideology and propaganda, which most people almost never view in black and white terms, this principle doesn't apply. And, of course, there have certainly been no shortage of examples of huge numbers of people accepting false ideology in all societies.

## 9. The Significance of Large-scale Eyewitness Testimony

If we apply this principle to history, however, we will see why the numbers of claimed participants or eyewitnesses to an event are so significant. If a particular event is claimed to have occurred to only a tiny number (and contains no additional evidence of any kind such as archeological ruins or written corroboration), then its acceptance afterwards will clearly have nothing to do with evidence at all. Its acceptance or rejection will then be a function of other factors, such as political, nationalistic, religious or personal preferences. If, however, a particular historical event is claimed to have occurred to large masses of people, then the situation for later generations will be crystal clear. Either the event will be widely known and spoken about, in which case it would be absurd to deny it, or it will never have been heard of, in which case it would be equally absurd to believe in it. With small numbers and no expectation of the event being widely known, however, this lack of general awareness is obviously irrelevant.

## 10. Validation of the Eyewitness Principle

This principle, that huge numbers of claimed participants or eyewitnesses (accepted afterwards by similarly huge numbers) constitutes reliable history, is absolutely ironclad. To deny it would require believing that huge masses of people will accept as true claims which they all know with certainty are false. Leaving Judaism and the Torah aside, throughout all of the thousands of years of world history, there has never been even a single exception to this rule. In other words, every single instance in which a historical claim has had huge numbers as its basis (i.e. both at the original event as well as afterwards) the event has been viewed as reliable history. And there has never been even a single instance of a historical claim with huge numbers which any reliable historian has ever denied.

## PART G. TORAH PROPHECY IN LIGHT OF ITS HISTORICAL BASIS

### 1. Torah Prophecy in Light of its Historical Basis

We are now ready to revisit our previous question concerning Moshe's two prophecies of the uniqueness of the national revelation at Mt. Sinai. The widely held perception is that as impressive as it is for the Torah to tell us that all throughout history there will never be another national revelation *event*, it is far more remarkable that the Torah can prophesize that there will never even be another national revelation *claim*. The reasoning is that while it may be difficult for some person or some group to fabricate an actual *event* involving huge numbers, to merely *claim* that such an event had occurred would be relatively easy. This perception, however, is directly contradicted by our above stated principle of history: "If huge numbers are *claimed* to have experienced an event, and huge numbers of their own descendants afterwards have accepted this claim as true (as in the case of the Black Plague) then this claim is reliable historical fact." Contrary to popular belief, you can't just say whatever you want and be guaranteed some believers. As we have pointed out, everything depends upon the numbers claimed. A fabrication claiming huge numbers would have such an enormous expectation of widespread awareness to overcome that no group would ever be naive enough to accept it, and therefore no one would ever be foolish enough to attempt it. With small numbers and no expectation, however, since there would be nothing stopping any group from accepting such a fabrication, there would similarly be nothing stopping anyone from attempting one.

### 2. The First Prophecy of No Other National Revelation Event is the Greater of the Two Prophecies

Since it is clear both from logic as well as historical precedent that it would be an absolute impossibility to fabricate national history, once the Torah prophesies that no other nation will ever have a national revelation *event*, then any human being could make the second prediction of no national revelation *claim*. One need not be a prophet to know that no nation will ever consciously accept a lie, and then proceed to teach that lie to their own children. Therefore, it is specifically the first of the two prophecies, no other national revelation *event*, which is the more impressive; the second one, no other national revelation *claim*, simply follows logically.

### 3. Powerful Evidence for Torah M'Sinai

The implications of this are very significant. In order to appreciate them, let's go directly to the central question of this entire argument – did the Torah originate from human beings or from God?

- a. If people fabricated the Torah, then this means that the revelation at Mt. Sinai *never* happened and it is somehow possible to invent national history. Aside from the obvious difficulty of believing this in terms of all that has been discussed until now, the prophecies of uniqueness (in Devarim 4:25-39) raise two new questions —

1. If a human author was himself so successful at fabricating national history, why would he prophesy that no one else would ever even attempt it?
  2. Additionally, what would then explain the incredible uniqueness of the Sinai claim, i.e. that no one else ever even attempted to do what the Torah's author is supposed to have done so successfully?
- b. If, however, the words of the Torah came directly from God, then that would mean the revelation at Mt. Sinai *did* happen, and there is *no* reason to believe that national history can be falsified. We would then have no difficulties whatsoever. Aside from there being no conflict with anything stated previously, the prophecies would now be perfectly understandable. Since God can obviously decide never to appear before any other nation again, there is no difficulty in Him declaring this in the Torah. And since it is impossible for a claim of this magnitude to be fabricated, there is no problem in understanding how the Torah could predict that no other group or nation would ever even claim that it did occur.

#### 4. Summary of the Possibilities

In summary, the absolute uniqueness of both the event as well as the claim of national revelation in both fact as well as prophecy is either:

- a. An insurmountable difficulty if one believes that the author of the Torah was a human being and Sinai never occurred, or
- b. No difficulty whatsoever if one believes that the Author of the Torah was God and He did, in fact, speak to the entire Jewish people at Mt. Sinai.

#### 5. Universal Use of Many Jewish Principles Strengthen the Sinai Claim

One final point underlining the striking uniqueness of the Sinai claim is just how much of the rest of the Torah has been borrowed by various groups and religions throughout the world. Mitzvot like Shabbat, Kashrut, circumcision, pilgrimage, Mikvah, the Sabbatical year; and concepts like monotheism, love your neighbor, peace on earth, just to name a few. The fact is that there is virtually no major concept in all of Judaism which has not been borrowed by some other group or religion, aside from that which is the basis of the entire system, the national revelation at Mount. Sinai. This foundation separates Judaism from every other world religion, and this is the claim which we would have expected every other religion to at least have attempted to have made. As we discussed, it is the only claim which a thinking person can reasonably deal with, and therefore it is the only way which makes sense for God to establish a religion. How, therefore, do we account for its absolute uniqueness among all world religions? One obvious answer, of course, is that God really did speak to the entire Jewish people at Mount Sinai 3300 years ago and the oral tradition of the encounter has been passed down from one generation to the next, up until and including the present day. The key question we need to ask ourselves is whether any other approach is even a possibility.

## SECTION V. INTERNAL AFFIRMATION OF TORAH M'SINAI

### PART A. OBSERVANCE OF THE MITZVOT FOR GENERATIONS

The fulfillment of Torah commandments by the Jewish people from generation to generation testifies to the continual remembrance and affirmation of the Exodus from Egypt and the National Revelation at Mount Sinai.

#### 1. Ramban (Nachmanides), Shemot 13:16

There are many commandments that are in remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt. All are to be for us, in all generations, testimony that the wonders will not be forgotten and so there should not be an opportunity for a denier to deny belief in God. One who buys a mezuzah for one coin, by fixing it on his doorpost and having proper intent for what it means acknowledges [his belief in] the renewal of the world, and his knowledge of God, His Providence, and prophecy, and that he believes in all aspects of the Torah, as well as acknowledging the greatness of God's kindness upon those who fulfill His Will; and that He redeemed us from slavery to freedom.

This is why our Sages say that one should be as particular regarding a seemingly insignificant mitzvah as he would be with a severe one, as all mitzvot are desired and beloved, because through their performance a person acknowledges God. The intention of all mitzvot is that we should believe in God and thank Him for creating us, and this is the intention of creation ...

וכן כל כיוצא בהן מצות רבות זכר ליציאת מצרים. והכל להיות לנו בכל הדורות עדות במופתים שלא ישתכחו, ולא יהיה פתחון פה לכופר להכחיש אמונת האלהים. כי הקונה מזוזה בזו אחד וקבעה בפתחו ונתכוון בענינה כבר הודה בחדוש העולם ובידיעת הבורא והשגחתו, וגם בנבואה, והאמין בכל פנות התורה, מלבד שהודה שחסד הבורא גדול מאד על עושי רצונו, שהוציאנו מאותו עבדות לחירות.

ולפיכך אמרו (אבות פ"ב מ"א) הוי זהיר במצוה קלה כבחמורה שכולן חמודות וחביבות מאד, שבכל שעה אדם מודה בהן לאלהיו, וכוונת כל המצות שנאמין באלהינו ונודה אליו שהוא בראנו, והיא כוונת היצירה...

#### 2. Devarim 29:13-14 — Judaism is for every generation.

Not with you alone am I establishing this covenant and this oath, but with all those who are standing here with us before the Lord our God and those who are not here with us today.

ולא אתכם לבדכם אנכי כרת את הברית הזאת ואת האלה הזאת:  
כי את אשר ישנו פה עמנו עמד היום לפני יקוק אלהינו ואת אשר איננו פה עמנו היום:

#### 3. Rashi, ibid.

"Those who are not with here with us." This refers to forging a covenant with the future generations.

ואת אשר איננו פה — ואף עם דורות העתידים להיות

**PART B: UNBROKEN CHAIN OF TORAH TRANSMISSION**

The chart below traces one of the many unbroken chain of Torah transmission from Moshe at Mount Sinai until today. (From Rabbi Lawrence Kelemen. For more information see Permission to Receive and [www.Lawrencekelemen.com](http://www.Lawrencekelemen.com)).

**God (Mt. Sinai=1312 B.C.E.)**

Moses  
 Joshua  
 Pinchus  
 Eli  
 Samuel  
 David  
 Achiah  
 Elijah  
 Elishah  
 Yehoyada  
 Zechariah  
 Hoshea  
 Amos  
 Isaiah  
 Michah  
 Yoel  
 Nachum  
 Chavakuk  
 Tzafaniah  
 Jeremiah  
 Baruch  
 Ezra  
 Shimon Hatzadik (310 B.C.E.)  
 Antigonus of Socho (305 B.C.E.)  
 Yosi ben Yoezer and  
 Yosef ben Yochanon (280 B.C.E.)  
 Yehoshua ben Prachya and  
 Nitai of Arbel (243 B.C.E.)  
 Yehuda ben Tabai and  
 Shimon ben Shetach (198 B.C.E.)  
 Shmaya & Avtalyon (140 B.C.E.)  
 Hillel & Shammai (40 B.C.E.)  
 Rabban Shimon (10 B.C.E.)  
 Rabban Gamliel Hazaken (20 C.E.)  
 Rav Shimon ben Gamliel (50)  
 Rabban Gamliel (90)  
 Rabban Shimon (140)  
 Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi (180)  
 Rav, Shmuel, and Rabbi Yochanon (230)  
 Rav Huna (270)  
 Rabbah (310)  
 Rava (340)  
 Rav Ashi (420)  
 Rafram (443)  
 Rav Sama B'rei d'Rava (476)  
 Rav Yosi (514)

Rav Simonia  
 Rav Ravoi Me-Rov (589)  
 Mar Chanan Me-Ashkaya (608)  
 Rav Mari  
 Rav Chana Gaon  
 Mar Rav Rava  
 Rav Busai (689)  
 Mar Rav Huna Mari  
 Mar Rav Chiyah Me-Mishan  
 Mar Ravyah  
 Mar Rav Natronai  
 Mar Rav Yehuda (739)  
 Mar Rav Yosef (748)  
 Mar Rav Shmuel  
 Mar Rav Natroi Kahana  
 Mar Rav Avrohom Kahana (761)  
 Mar Rav Dodai  
 Rav Chananya (771)  
 Rav Malka (773)  
 Mar Rav Rava  
 Mar Rav Shinoi (782)  
 Mar Rav Chaninah Gaon Kahana (785)  
 Mar Rav Huna Mar Halevi (788)  
 Mar Rav Menasheh (796)  
 Mar Rav Yeshaya Halevi (804)  
 Mar Rav Kahanah Gaon (797)  
 Mar Rav Ibomai Gaon (814)  
 Mar Rav Yosef  
 Mar Rav Avrohom  
 Mar Rav Yosef (834)  
 Mar Rav Yitzchak (839)  
 Mar Rav Yosef (841)  
 Mar Rav Poltoi (858)  
 Mar Rav Achai Kahana  
 Mar Rav Menachem (860)  
 Mar Rav Matisyahu (869)  
 Rav Mar Abba  
 Mar Rav Tzemach Gaon (891)  
 Mar Rav Hai Gaon (897)  
 Mar Rav Kimoi Gaon (905)  
 Mar Rav Yehuda (917)  
 Mar Rav Mevasser Kahana Gaon (926)  
 Rav Kohen Tzedek (935)  
 Mar Rav Tzemach Gaon (937)  
 Rav Chaninah Gaon (943)  
 Mar Rav Aharon Hacoen (959)  
 Mar Rav Nechemiah (968)  
 Rav Sherirah Gaon (1006)  
 Meshulam Hagadol  
 Rav Gershom Meor Hagolah (1040)  
 Rav Yaakov ben Yakar (1064)  
 Rav Shlomo Yitzchaki — “Rashi” (1105)  
 R' Shmuel ben Meir (Rashbam) (1174)  
 R' Yaakov ben Meir (Rabbenu Tam) (1171)



Eliezer Me-Metz (1175)  
 Rokeach (1238)  
 R' Yitzchak of Vienna (Ohr Zaruah)  
 Rav Meir of Rothenberg (1293)  
 R' Yitzchak of Duren (Shaarei Durah)  
 R' Alexander Zusiein Hakohen (Agudah) (1348)  
 Meir Bar Baruch Halevi (1390)  
 R' Sholom of Neustadt  
 R' Yaakov Moelin (Maharil) (1427)  
 R' Yisroel Isserlein (Trumas Hadeshen) (1460)  
 R' Tavoli  
 Rabbi Yaakov Margolies (1501)  
 Rabbi Yaakov Pollak (1530)  
 Rabbi Sholom Shachna (1558)  
 Rabbi Moshe Isserles "Rama" (1572)  
 Rabbi Yehoshua Falk Katz (1614)  
 Rabbi Naftoli Hirsch ben Pesachya (1650)  
 Rabbi Moshe Rivkas — "Be'er Hagolah" (1671)  
 Rabbi Avraham Gombiner (1682)  
 Rabbi Moshe Kramer (1688)  
 Rabbi Eliyahu Chasid (1710)  
 Rabbi Yissachar Ber (1740)  
 Rabbi Shlomo Zalman (1765)  
 Rabbi Eliyahu Kramer — "Vilna Gaon" (1797)  
 Rabbi Chaim Voloziner (1821)  
 Rabbi Zundel of Salant (1866)  
 Rabbi Yisroel Salanter (1883)  
 Rabbi Simcha Zissel of Chelm (1888)  
 Rabbi Yerucham Lebovitz (1936)  
 Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe (2006)...

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