Absence Of Evidence Is Not Evidence Of Absence

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HISTORY AND IDENTITY

One of the most important principles of Judaism is the belief in the authenticity of the Tora, the Hebrew Bible. We Jews consider that the Tora was revealed by God to Moshe (Moses) and transmitted in writing to the people of Israel by the great Jewish leader.
The Tora is essentially a book of precepts. But it also contains historical accounts, from the creation of the world to the death of Moses. The stories of our patriarchs do not belong to old history books that few read. And are not kept in museums, where the epics of extinct civilizations are preserved. From the day we left Egypt, we *celebrate* our history. The departure from Egypt in Passover; the giving of the Tora in Shabuot, and the journey in the desert in Sukkot. We Jews permanently *relive* the biblical stories in an experiential way. And by doing so, we do what few others do: we transform our history into our identity.
All this makes clear that a Jew who recognizes his or her own history does not need to find the remains of broken vessels in the Sinai desert to confirm that our ancestors were there. The departure from Egypt, or the experience of captivity, or the journey in the desert, is not information that we Jews possess: it is part of who we are.

BIBLICAL CRITICISM

But this natural way of transforming our history into our identity is in crisis. At least for a large part of our people, who did not had the opportunity to receive a formative Jewish education.I know several students who had the first

formal contact with Bible studies in college. All prestigious universities in the United States, and I believe that all over the world, have a Department of Biblical Studies. Universities offer elective courses in the first years of college, and one of these courses could be, for example, “Introduction to the Bible”. Many young students register in these courses thinking naively that they will learn in depth the content of the most influential Book in the history of mankind. They do not imagine that these courses have a very different purpose: to discredit the Bible, to demonstrate that what the Tora says, especially the Hebrew Bible (what non Jews call the Old Testament) is not credible! Is fake news.Biblical criticism basic hypothesis is that Biblical texts are apocryphal, false. Biblical critics asserts that the protagonists of the biblical did not exist. That the Tora was not written when it says it was written, before entering the promised land, but 700 or 800 years later. That the Biblical stories are legends, invented by some obscure anonymous scribes in the Kingdom of Judea, to give the Jewish people a history that unifies them. And that the miracles described in the Book of Books are fruit of the imagination of the Jews.
This way of “studying” the Bible, denying it all historical credibility, is not the exception but regrettably the rule.This is the way the Bible is taught in hundreds of universities around the world, from Harvard to Oxford, and from Cambridge to Tel Aviv. Also the media and most historical documentaries use the hypothesis of Bible Criticism to “present” the Bible.

NEGATIVE EVIDENCE

To demonstrate their theories, academics use resources that are very questionable. One of them is negative evidence: what we did not find, did not exist.
Let’s see an example:
In the words of the Jewish archaeologist, professor at Tel Aviv University, Israel Finkelstein: Jews were never in Egypt;

the captivity did not exist; the Exodus never happened. And what is the evidence to sustain such a hypothesis and disprove the millenary tradition of the Jewish people?That the Egyptian history does not record it. That there are no monuments that show the Exodus, or papyri or books (scrolls) that mention it.
Now, if an individual is not familiar with the scientific methodology, he or she will probably think that this way of presenting the evidence is compelling, and especially, since those who make these claims are "academics," who supposedly analyze archaeological discoveries with objectivity, and present their conclusions without any agenda.
Nothing could be farther from the truth..…
Let's see briefly some examples of information that is not revealed when these affirmations are made.

MONUMENTS

The Egyptian Pharaohs did not erect monuments to remember their defeats. The monuments that they erected were to immortalize their triumphs and achievements. Defeats humiliated them; made them feel weak and less powerful than their predecessors. It is absurd to think that a Pharaoh, or for that matter any other monarch of antiquity, would have any reliefs that register events that were humiliating for him.

PAPYRUS

As the great Egyptologist and archaeologist Kenneth Kitchen explains in his book: "On the reliability of the Old Testament", 99% of Egyptian papyri have been lost. Papyrus is not made to last, they decompose very easily, and especially if they were exposed to water or mud, something that was not uncommon in Egypt, with the floods caused by the rise of the Nile.

OTHER HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

Several ancient historians recorded in one way or another the history of the Egyptian Pharaohs. The Library that housed all

of these ancient writings, an estimated of approximately 400,000 papyri and scrolls, was the Library of Alexandria, in Egypt, which was destroyed by a fire in the time of Julius Caesar (48 BCE).

As we can see, the fact that some archeologists did not find records of Jews in Egyptian monuments, can be explained in many ways and be the consequence of many other factors.

One of these factors its that archeological discoveries can never be exhausted. And the incredible news is that, against all odds, in recent years archeologists have discovered some solid evidence of the presence of the Hebrews in Egypt, as I will later demonstrate .

To be continued