פתח לבי - בתורותיך, ובמצוותיך - תרדוף נפשי, וכו׳

With Your Torah—open my heart;
And with Your commandments—pursue my soul.

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Preface

Increasingly, well-informed traditional Jews may find themselves distrustful of the reliability of Torah as history because of the conclusions of scholarly research from natural science, history, linguistics, Bible criticism, and archaeology. And, they may not be swayed by attempts to restore their trust. If they do not have a fitting theology for their new predicament, they may well give up on Judaism altogether or else give up on their traditional Judaism. Or, they may simply repress their difficulty because they see no way of dealing with it that will allow them to retain their traditional religious loyalty. They will carry on *as if they believed* in the historical veracity of the Torah, when in fact they do not.

As one who has lived this problem, I want to now propose that a person with prior *emunah*, belief and faith/loyalty in God and in the holiness of the Torah remain faithful to keeping God and the holiness of the Torah at the center of his or her life. What is needed is a theology that appreciates the force of the challenge to Torah as history and preserves one's traditional religious loyalty. That is the task of the present book.

Others before me have attempted this task. Yet, I am convinced that in trying to deal with this issue others have departed from Jewish tradition more than is required. Their theologies are more liberal than necessary. The method of my book is to embrace as much of "old-time religion" as possible while recognizing the new situation that more and more traditional Jews are facing. The key is to begin to think of the new developments not as a religious problem but as a religious opening.

My debt is great to many people who were of help when I was writing this book. Menachem Kellner was encouraging on many occasions when I was unsure about proceeding with this book. He made many helpful comments and also provided some sources

from medieval Jewish philosophy. I very much appreciate his friendship.

Early on, Alan Zaitchik read several chapters and challenged me with important philosophical objections, and he offered good advice. I continue to benefit from the many years of our friendship. Rabbi Michael Graetz read a few of the chapters of the book, and I benefited from his knowledge of *haggadic* literature. Jonathan Malino read most of the chapters and with his logical sharpness helped me to clarify just what I was trying to argue in this book. Although we do not see eye to eye on theological matters, he met me on my own grounds and made this a far better book than it otherwise would have been.

Baruch Schwartz was helpful in conversation on my questions regarding the present situation in the discipline of biblical criticism. David Gilad was kind enough to check carefully on some of my claims about the challenge to history in the Torah in Chapter 1. Yehudah D. Zirkind provided pointed and wise comments, but I cannot say he agrees with the position of this book. I greatly appreciate his input. Eliot Sacks was a careful reader of some of the central chapters of this book. He brought to bear his philosophy studies at Cambridge, which were not easy for me to work around. I am grateful to him for forcing me to tackle some issues head-on. Haim Waxman advised wisely at a number of crucial places in the book. I am also thankful to Alick Isaacs for his encouragement and good advice. I also want to thank Cass Fisher for his important comments on realist language about God.

Tamar Ross and I share a deep concern for the topic of this book, and I admire her masterful work and her dedication to Torah and Jewish Law. Yet we disagree about what should be said. Ross read and graciously made various comments on some of the chapters. For that I am greatly appreciative. Her remarks forced me to state some of my positions with more care than I had, and to try to defend them the best I could. Benjamin Sommer checked, and corrected, what I attributed to him in this book. And, in personal communication he was most obliging in discussing his views. We have fundamental disagreements, yet I respect Sommer's devotion to Torah, and to the truth. I should also mention the work of Samuel Fleishacker, which

serves as a good complement to what I am doing here, and I have gained from reading his thoughts.

I am greatly indebted to my teacher of philosophy, a devout Christian, Alvin Plantinga, from whom I learned the art of careful argumentation and from whom I learned to have the courage to defend religious belief when unfairly attacked. Without his guidance, personally and in his writings, this book could never have come into being.

Rabbi Dr. Nathan Lopes Cardozo has a great fault—he vastly overrates the value of my writings. This fault, however, is well redeemed by his constant encouragement and by his readiness to stay by my side. His example has been helpful in my decision to publish this book. His David Cardozo Think-tank graciously invited me early on to present a chapter of this book, from which I gained much.

Much of the religious background I bring to this book lies in Hasidic teachings and spirit, and in the thought of Rabbi Yehuda Leib Ashlag (1885–1954). Rabbi Ashlag's teachings have been distorted and corrupted in various ways by some popularizers of Kabbalah. This is most unfortunate. I have been privileged to study "Ashlag" writings under a gifted, authentic teacher, Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Gottlieb, a pupil of Rabbi Baruch Shalom Ashlag (1907–91), son of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag. Obviously, the thesis of this book is mine alone.

I wish to thank Scott Barker, Kira Nemirovsky, Gregg Stern and the rest of the staff of Academic Studies Press for their efforts in the production of this book. This is my second book with Academic Studies Press, and I am most pleased to have published with them.

I am forever grateful to my wife, Edie (a.k.a. Edith Esther), who above all others has consistently and strongly encouraged me to publish this book. For a good while, I was deeply conflicted about publishing this book because it marks a serious departure from the customary teachings of the Orthodox Jewish community, to which I belong. Edie's understanding of me and her persistence in encouraging me to go ahead with the project are the reasons this book is being published. To her I dedicate this book with love and devotion. May she be blessed.

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Let me tell you a story. One day, at a time that I was unsure whether to publish this book, because of its going "off the way" of Orthodoxy, I went to a nearby synagogue to pray the afternoon *minchah* prayer. As I sat down to pray, I noticed high on a nearby shelf several volumes of the collected letters, the *Igrot*, of the late Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the "Rebbe" of Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidism. I am not a Chabad-Lubavitch Hasid, but I knew that there are followers of the Rebbe who believe that through the volumes of the *Igrot* the Rebbe can communicate advice to those who seek his counsel. They ask the Rebbe a question. Then completely at random they select a volume of the *Igrot*. Then again completely at random they open the volume to any page that comes up and pick a side of the two pages they find open, left or right, again at random. When they scrutinize the page they have selected, they are supposed to be able to find there, on that page, in the words of the Rebbe, the answer to their question.

Looking at the volumes of the *Igrot* on the synagogue shelf, worried about what I should do about the book, quite impulsively I asked the Rebbe (out loud): "Rebbe, should I publish this book?" I then reached up, and without looking I took down a volume of the *Igrot*. I then opened the volume, without looking, and slapped my hand down on the volume on the page on the right side, again without looking.

When I began to read that right-hand page, I was stunned. For the very first sentence, at the very top of the page I had picked at random, in the very volume I had picked at random, read as follows:

אני מקווה שאתה מפרסם ותפרסם

"I hope that you are publishing and that you will publish."

I do not fool myself into thinking that the Rebbe would approve of this book, but maybe, just maybe, he thought it worth something nonetheless, or, perhaps more plausibly, thinking he could not stop me in any case, he thought he might do what he can to make my book better than it would have been by telling me to go ahead with it, with his approval.

Introduction

In the form traditional Judaism has taken for ages, its devotees have been expected to believe that the Torah is a historically accurate account of events that took place in ancient times. In the more strictly traditional circles, this includes that God created the world in six days, less than 6,000 year ago, that Adam and Eve were the first humans, and that multiple languages came to be as a result of the tower of Babel. Although some Orthodox Jews openly will hesitate to accept those accounts as historical, generally, they are expected to take as historically true that Abraham went to Canaan at God's command; that Jacob had twelve sons, who became the twelve tribes; that Joseph was sold unto Egypt and became second to the Pharaoh; that the children of Jacob came to Egypt, were enslaved, and stayed there for a few hundred years, becoming a mighty nation of 2 to 3 million people; and that God liberated them by bringing ten plagues upon the Egyptians. They are expected to believe that the Israelites then wandered the desert for forty years, ate miraculous food, that God gave them the Ten Commandments and the Torah in the desert through Moses, and that the people subsequently stormed and defeated Canaan and settled in the Land of Israel. Finally, they are expected to believe—with few exceptions of text—that it was Moses who wrote the entire Torah with these accounts, at God's direction.

Every one of the above has been broadly challenged in the past two hundred years, and especially so in the second half of the twentieth century. Natural sciences, biblical studies, archeology, and the study of the history of ancient civilizations have together formed a broad, reasoned agreement among scholars that the Torah is not a dependable source of historical information. Some go so far as to claim that there is nothing historical, or almost nothing, to the stories of the Torah. Most think that it is only details of the stories

that are not reliable, but that at least the main stories have some basis in fact. Above these differences rides a broad consensus that one cannot accept the Torah as accurate with respect to historical reality. This conclusion contradicts head-on the traditional view of the historical inerrancy of the text.

I write this book for the sake of those traditional Jews who have become convinced that the Torah cannot be relied on for historical correctness and who cannot be persuaded otherwise. They have been persuaded by the scholarly evidence, too strong for them to deny.[1] As a result, their *emunah* belief in and loyalty to the Torah is in crisis. Their new belief is a clear departure from the tradition as conceived over the ages, yet one increasingly held by traditional Jews, openly or in secret. My conviction is that deeming the Torah not historically reliable should not lead to abandoning the other components of traditional Judaism and should not be cause for abandoning faith in the Torah. I contend that a Jew could concede the lack of historical correctness and continue to believe in Torah from heaven, in Divine Providence, and in the election of the Jewish people. And such a Jew should continue to observe the *mitzvoth* ("the commandments") of Judaism.

Given a previous *emunah,* in God and in the Torah, I shall recommend in this book that a traditional Jew who has become convinced of the historical unreliability of the Torah should acknowledge that Divine Providence itself must be bringing about this recognition of the historical unreliability of the Torah. It is hard to see how it could be otherwise. Also, the traditional Jew should now consider how it *must* be that Divine Providence wants to lead us forward to an understanding of the Torah that draws our attention to nonhistorical readings of the Torah. Divine Providence itself has orchestrated the rise of serious problems with Torah as history to lead us to emphasize the nonliteral meanings of the text. The way for a person who can no longer endorse the historical inerrancy of the Torah to proceed is not to give up on the Torah being from

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1 See Chapter 2, where I accept the possibility of a faith response to this challenge.

heaven, but to say, with deep *emunah* regarding this development of a challenge to Torah as history: מאת ה' היתה זאת—"This was from God." That is the thesis of this book.

For that purpose, I develop here a contemporary theology that takes into account the challenge to the historical reliability of the Torah but at the same time advances a continued loyalty to the Torah and observance of the commandments. The theology stays closer to tradition than others before me would have it. It is an "old-time religion" theology adjusted for the challenge to the Torah history. My theology will be indebted to the Hasidic literature when I come to propose how to proceed in the new situation. My book by another name could be *Biblical Research and the Hasidim*.

It will be beneficial to set down here some preliminary theological tools to be employed throughout. Part II will add further tools to my theological toolbox.

I start with what I will call my "Satisfaction Criterion" for an acceptable existential stance toward one's traditional Judaism:

> Satisfaction Criterion: A contemporary approach to traditional Judaism must leave one with a good religious reason to make great personal sacrifices for the sake of his or her Judaism and to teach one's children (and others, when relevant) to make similar sacrifices.[2]

Great personal sacrifice has gradations, from willing to extremely inconvenience one's time, to spending large sums of money that one might not quite afford, to sacrificing meaningful relationships, if it comes to that, all the way to sacrificing one's life for one's Judaism. In endorsing the Satisfaction Criterion, I will not set down the extent of great sacrifice required, that is, whether it must include sacrificing one's life. I say that even though traditional Judaism does demand giving up one's life for the observance of some of the

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2 I thank Menachem Kellner for helping me formulate this criterion. There may be reasons other than religious ones for which one would be willing to make great personal sacrifices, as, for example, for the sake of the Jewish people. Such sacrifice will not be for religious reasons, but for nationalist ones. (Of course, there can be mixed religious and nationalist motivations.)

commandments of Judaism in certain circumstances. Yet, in today's world I think it would be very hard to expect many traditional Jews to give their lives for their Judaism, even when they take it very seriously. In such a situation, I deem a theology of Judaism successful if it motivates great personal sacrifice, and teaches the same to children, leaving open the exact forms that sacrifice will take.

The Satisfaction Criterion serves as a corollary of my validation of "ultimist" religious belief, in general, and in traditional Judaism, in particular. A religious belief is "ultimist" when, roughly,[3] a person sincerely

1. Endorses that an existing being, state of affairs, truth, or mode of being, is ultimate, that is, it signifies the deepest fact about the nature of reality, and in relation to which an ultimate good is to be attained; and
2. Has an ultimate commitment to cultivating the attainment of the ultimate good, through organized participation with others in a tradition of revered texts, rituals, and/or other activities for expressing, advancing, or understanding, and living in accordance with clause 1.[4]

When people have an "ultimate commitment," they make central to their lives the conforming of how they live to the standards proposed by there being an ultimate existent, truth, or mode of being, in relation to which an ultimate good can be attained. At least in principle, it is the most deeply influential among one's commitments.[5] To be an ultimist, in my sense, is at the very minimum to recognize that one should be aiming to be a full ultimist.

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3 "Roughly" because I could go on to refine the following characterization on several points. Yet, what I present will suffice for the purposes of this book.

4 My use of the term "ultimism," as well as my characterization of religion, is my revision of J. L. Schellenberg, *The Will to Imagine: A Justification of Skeptical Religion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

5 Revision from ibid., 18.

The Satisfaction Criterion is a corollary of ultimism, because I take it that an ultimist would be willing to make the extreme sacrifices required by that definition. And, only ultimist religion is really worth sacrificing for in the extreme way I have in mind.

As a result, I reject ways of dealing with the historical unreliability of the Torah that do not fulfill that criterion and my characterization of ultimist belief. To give some examples, I reject solutions to the problem of history that urge one simply to continue with one's traditional Judaism because it is personally rewarding: simply going along with the talk about history but ignoring its import. Another example: I reject a solution that simply appeals to one's sense of personal identity, that you have a personal identity as a traditional Jew. So, rather than rebel against that identity, simply go along with all of the talk about history, but just ignore its import. That a religious life is rich and rewarding certainly motivates some sacrifice, but it is hard to see it demanding great sacrifice, especially at those points where it might not be so rich and rewarding, which it sometimes is not. And though people might make sacrifices for their perceived self-identity, in today's world self-identities are no longer—if they ever were—monolithic. A complex pattern of identities is more likely the case, with different degrees of importance depending on circumstances and purposes. Identities are easier to realign than ever. Neither of these is ultimist or would fulfill the Satisfaction Criterion. Or, so it seems to me.

For Judaism, the ultimate of all commitments is to God. This brings me to how I am thinking of God in what follows. When writing of God, I, along with the vast majority of believers in God (with notable exceptions), intend discourse about God to be about a real, acting, metaphysical reality that actually, really exists and has characteristics of its own, independently of how anybody thinks of it. My view of God, then, is what philosophers call a "realist" one.

I am rejecting "nonrealist" construals of discourse about God, which do not recognize God to be a real, independent, metaphysical reality. A nonrealist might think of God as an imaginative fiction designed to help us express or encourage a commitment to a way of life. Or a nonrealist might treat talk about God as merely "symbolic,"

an emotive way to point out certain positive features of reality. Or a nonrealist might "posit" God as a "regulative concept," required to regulate this or that aspect of life, but not really believing there is such a thing, really.

I question the very possibility of being able to *state* a nonrealist view of God, one that does not affirm God's real, genuine, actual, independent existence, within traditional Judaism. A Jew is commanded to love God with all her heart, with all her soul, and all her strength (Deut. 6:5). Maimonides instructs us as to a proper love of God: "It is to love God with a great, abundant, most powerful love, until one's soul is bound up with love of God so that one is absorbed in it constantly . . . when one is sitting, when one stands, and when one is eating and drinking."[6] The *Sefer Hachinuch*, by a thirteenth-century, anonymous author, follows Maimonides by listing six commandments, each of which is a *mitzvah t'midit*, involving an obligation demanding constant fulfillment. These include love and fear of God.[7]

One of the great rabbinical figures of the twentieth century, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, wrote an introduction to his commentary to the Jewish prayer book, in which the theme is "the constant prayer of the soul."[8] This is summed up in Psalm 16:8, "I have set the Lord always before me."

In other words, the ideal towards which one is to strive in traditional Judaism is to be at all times in a state of loving intimacy with God. It follows that there is no time in the religious life in which nonrealism can be stated. For to do so is to suspend or demote the existential religious consciousness of God for a dominant external, reflective, philosophical one, and to grant that God does not really, actually exist. To do so at any time—which is at all times—is to actively act against one's obligation that one's religiously existential

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6 Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Repentance, chap. 10; my translation.

7 *Sefer Hachinuch*, commandments 25, 26, 387, 417, 418, 432.

8 Abraham Isaac Kook, introduction to *Olat Raayah* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1963–1964) (Hebrew).

state dominates one's consciousness. Nonrealism reduces our talk of God to a list of "purposes" rather than talk about a living God with whom we are to be in constant relationship. Thus nonrealism about God becomes normatively ineffable for traditional Judaism. There is no time at which it may be uttered or thought. Indeed, the difference between philosophical realism and nonrealism about God collapses within the Jewish ideal, for in that ideal there is only the religious awareness. There exists no place outside of that context to declare nonrealism.

There is no way to arrive at a nonrealist understanding of God without, as it were, stepping outside religious language and observing it from the outside. In practice, therefore, the religious nonrealist cannot live the life of wholehearted religious absorption that in principle is available to the religious realist.[9]

There have been philosophers who have argued against the possibility of metaphysics and thus of a metaphysical God, such as David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and logical positivists, respectively. That contradicts a realist conception of God and serves a nonrealist approach.

David Hume famously wrote:

> If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.[10]

Kant's rejection of metaphysics follows from a complex set of philosophical principles about the nature of human knowledge.[11] And logical positivists, such as A. J. Ayer, forcefully taught that

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9 I thank Eliot Sacks for this way of putting it.

10 David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Eric Steinberg (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 114.

11 This topic is very difficult; however, see Karl Ameriks, "The Critique of Metaphysics: Kant and Traditional Ontology," in *Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 249–79.

only logical truths and statements verifiable by the senses could be semantically meaningful.[12] Each of these rules out metaphysical beliefs, chief among them the existence of God (but Kant did urge "positing" God for the sake of morality).

However, each of these thinkers has argued from specific epistemologies that are tailored from the start to rule out God as an actual metaphysical reality. None of these epistemologies is compelling from a philosophical point of view. Philosophers have largely rejected Hume's epistemology, and that of logical positivism, as simplistic and self-defeating, and they are strongly divided about Kant's epistemology. In any case, in philosophy you rarely get anything like a flat-out proof that clears the field.

Given the plurality of different available epistemologies, a person who believes in God as an actual being should feel under no obligation to capitulate to a contested epistemology fashioned so as to prohibit her from holding her belief. Such a person should take the legitimacy of her belief as a *requirement* of an acceptable epistemology, until the time comes that it becomes impossible to do so by a strong philosophical proof that does not simply beg the question. The possibility of that happening is remote in the extreme.

From another angle, there are some who would protest that a metaphysical God is wholly transcendent or ineffable, so that nothing very meaningful can be said about God at all. So when philosophizing, God does not enter into discourse: God suffers from linguistic transcendence. Within religious practice, (false) images of God are allowed because they serve the pragmatic needs of the religious life. This is not quite nonrealism, but in practice it is almost identical to a nonrealist position about God.

For sure, in Jewish history there have been voices talking this way about God's incomprehensibility. But such conceptions do not do justice to the way people relate to God in religions. The sense of God's realness, especially in prayer, defies this understanding. The insistence on God's incomprehensibility to the point of God's disappearing is little different from nonrealism with respect to God.

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12 A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (London: Penguin, 2001).

Both neutralize God within the religious life. No doubt some sincere people hold this view today, but the idea can be used simply as a way of getting out from under God.

There are respectable conceptions of God that preserve God's mysterious otherness while at the same time preserving the possibility of saying true things about God. For example, Thomas Aquinas had an *analogical* theory of talk about God that preserved God's otherness. In this, God and creatures share attributes but possess them in radically different modes—infinite and finite. We are wise in a creaturely way, but God is not wise in that way, yet both God and we are wise.[13]

There are also "functionalist" analyses of talk about God. William Alston has advanced such a view based on the following functionalist idea:

> The concept of a belief, desire or intention is the concept of a particular function in the psychological economy, a particular "job" done by the psyche. A belief is a structure that performs that job, and what psychological state it is—that it is a belief and a belief with that particular content—is determined by what that job is . . . . Our ordinary psychological terms carry no implications as to the intrinsic nature of the structure, its neurophysiological or soul-stuff character. . . . Thus, on this view, psychological concepts are functional in the same way as many concepts of artifacts, for example, the concept of a loudspeaker.[14]

So, God can be said to have a "belief" in the sense that God has something that functions in God the way belief functions in us. But in God the actualization of the belief is very different than in us. Yet, God's beliefs and ours do the "same job"—and so forth for other attributions to God.

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13 For a respected presentation of Aquinas's theory of analogy, see Ralph McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996).

14 William P. Alston, "Functionalism and Theological Language," in *Divine Nature and Human Language: Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. William P. Alston (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 67–68.

I humbly offer a metaphor for how language about God works that is compatible with both the analogical and functionalist conceptions. Consider, now, the relationship between a computer's chip and its hard drive (the "inside"), on the one hand, and what you see on the visible screen, on the other:

1. What is in the inside is nothing like what you get on the screen. In the inside are no colors or shapes of the picture on the screen. You can peer into the inside with the most powerful microscope, and you will see no pictures of people or words.
2. However, the computer has a "translation" mechanism that accounts for what you see on the screen as a correct manifestation of what is inscribed in the inside.
3. Therefore, what you see on the visible screen is the result of what is to be found in the inside. Change the contents in the inside and you will get something different showing on the screen.
4. What comes on the screen can be distorted by factors neither intended in the inside nor due to the translation mechanism from inside to screen, such as electrical interference, viruses, or grime on the screen. Even then, there is embedded in the inside a route from the inside to the screen that would project correctly from the inside to the screen.

Concerning the relationship between the way God is in God's self and the way we think of God, we can say:

1. Generally speaking, inside God there is nothing true to how God is thought about in the tradition (the "visible screen").
2. However, there exists a divinely ordained metaphysical "translation" mechanism (the "chip" and "hard drive") responsible for faithfully projecting what is inside God into the tradition (the "visible screen").
3. Therefore, the way God is thought of in the tradition is the result of what is inside God. Had God been different, the

tradition would have had a different way of thinking about God.

4. What comes on the visible screen of the tradition can be distorted by various interferences to the mechanism. Even then, though, there is still embedded in the metaphysical mechanism a route from what is inside God to the tradition that would project correctly from God to the world-screen.

The upshot of this is that statements about God are meant to be true, factual statements. So, for example, to say "God has providence over the world," translates into something like the following factual statement: "There is something in God that is correctly projected onto the world as: *God having providence over the world*, even though inside God there is nothing that is so truly describable."

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Part I, "Challenge and Response," begins with Chapter 1, "Torah and History." This chapter provides the basis for the ensuing discussion, presenting main points in the case against the historical reliability of the Torah that many have found convincing, in part or in whole. My main focus is on the crucial events of the stay in Egypt and the Exodus.

I have included the main claims to be found in research of the past two hundred years, from archeology, biblical studies, and natural science. The central scholarly conclusion is that the Torah is not a dependable historical document. Nevertheless, mainline scholars would agree that the case against the historical reliability of the Torah can be consistent with the existence of some historical basis for the central motifs of the Torah narratives. I want to point out, though, that the thesis of this book does not depend in any way on assuming a historical kernel for any of the Torah narratives. It will make sense to you even if you believe, along with "minimalists," that nothing in the Torah really happened.

Chapter 2, "Faith-Responses," considers the "Hard Faith-Response" and the "Soft Faith-Response" to the scholarly challenge to Torah as history. The Hard Faith-Response is simply *dismissive* of

the relevant scholarly claims. It declares that the conclusions of the scholars are not compelling because they are inconsistent with faith in the historical accuracy of the Torah. I acknowledge the legitimacy of the Hard Faith-Response, but only when the person making such a response meets certain conditions.

Unlike the Hard Faith-Response, a Soft Faith-Response does not simply dismiss scholarship from afar. A Soft Faith-Response attempts to demonstrate to the faithful how evidence of scholarship should be interpreted in light of the fact that the Torah is historically accurate. The Soft Response addresses scholarship directly by explaining how matters would be had scholars only had the proper faith in place. The hope is to weaken scholarship in the eyes of the faithful sufficiently until it is no longer credible. The Soft Response as I envision it, tries to defuse scholarship by allowing as much of the evidence as possible, while imposing a faith understanding to deflect the evidence away from naturalistic explanations. I argue that although this response might detract somewhat from the evidence against historical reliability, it does not have enough to it to make any real difference in the larger picture.

If one does not adopt the Hard Response as one's own, then the next best defense might be to turn to apologetic arguments against scholarship. In Chapter 3, "Apologetics," I take up such responses to the challenge to Torah as history. Apologetic responses are not supposed to depend on faith, as do the Faith-Responses, but they are alleged to meet the Challenge entirely on scholarly grounds. I call these "apologetics" without thereby meaning to disparage them from the start in any way. Rather, I use the term "apologetics" as it is commonly used in Christianity to denote a respectable, serious, defense of the faith.

I show that none of the apologetic responses I survey, that represent the genre, alone or together, make a serious impression on the case of the Challenge. Too often, the apologetic moves display a serious lack of knowledge of the issues, or, worse, are deliberate deceptions and conscious manipulations of relevant material to protect a privileged position.

Chapter 4, "A Counterproof," is dedicated to a specific attempt to "prove" the historical reliability of accounts of at least the central

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