

CIM Review #1
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The Bible Code. By Michael Drosnin. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997. *The Signature of God*. By Grant R. Jeffrey. Ontario, Canada: Frontier Research Publications, 1996. *Cracking the Bible Code*. By Jeffrey Satinover. New York: William & Morrow, 1997.

Tea leaves, stars, the entrails of sheep, and crystal balls have all been used as mediums for divining the future. One would hardly imagine that the Bible could be construed in such a way, but it has! One would have to presume that such a deception must be beyond Satan's wildest dreams. Think about it!

Misdirecting men's thoughts from the clear word of God to words divined from Scripture--people studying the Bible not for its ordinary surface meaning, but its secret and hidden messages! Might I be so bold to suggest that such a procedure borders on blasphemy? All types of divination are strictly forbidden in Scripture (Deut. 18:10). This new-fangled approach to divining messages from "behind," "around" and "under" the words of Scripture is not new. It goes back at least to the 12th Century in Germany when Hasidic Jews began to attribute mystical qualities to Scripture and to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Today this occult practice is known as Cabalism. It arose out of pagan Greek philosophy (Pythagoras) which taught that ultimate reality was composed of numbers. The Cabalists believed there were several levels of meaning in the text of Scripture: one that was on the surface and obvious, and several other levels deeply embedded in the text that could only be discovered if one knew the secret formula. One method (gematria) of finding this hidden meaning was carried out by assigning numerical value to letters in the alphabet and then adding the sums to find the hidden meaning. For example, the Hebrew text of Genesis 1:1 has seven words, and the number of letters in the verse is 28, a number divisible by seven. When more 7s and multiples of 7s were found in the same chapter, it was determined the number 7 had mystical meaning and was therefore the author's real message.

Several years ago the Israeli mathematician, Eliyahu Rips, located a rare book by a Polish Rabbi who devised codes for finding hidden messages in Scripture. The Rabbi's method involved the laborious method of counting equidistant spaces between the Hebrew letters. For example, starting with the first time the letter "t" (in Hebrew) occurs in the book of Genesis, and counting ahead 49 letters you would arrive at an "o." Then, by counting ahead another 49 letters and finding an "r" you would eventually spell the word "Torah." Rips decided to see what would happen if he harnessed the power of the computer to work these codes. What he found (in 1986) was so amazing that he got his results published in a prestigious journal of mathematics and statistics. Rips, for example, found 25 names of trees and plants native to Israel embedded in the text of Genesis 2:7-3:3. Among his other discoveries were the names of 32 prominent Rabbis in Israel's history along with places and times of their births and deaths in close proximity in the text. The main point of Rips' journal article was that this was a statistical anomaly that was not due to mere chance. His method became known as equidistant letter sequencing (ELS). His procedure was roughly as follows: with the text of the Torah (the first five books of the OT) in his computer, he eliminated all spaces between the words creating a long sequence of 304,805 letters

(consonants only in Hebrew).

He next arranged the text in pages, in effect creating cross-word puzzles. Then he instructed the computer to find a certain word in Hebrew that appeared with equidistant sequencing. Once he found a word or name, he would then look to see if any related facts might occur in the nearby text. One of Rips' colleagues found the word "Auschwitz," and, lo and behold, in the text he also found the names of other concentration camps! Enter Michael Drosnin. He seems to have impeccable credentials. He was a reporter for *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and wrote a best-selling biography of Howard Hughes. His book, *The Bible Code* was on the best-seller list for months. The book created quite a stir in England and among college students. Drosnin's book is about Rips' discovery. But it is more than that. After acquiring a copy of the computer program, Drosnin launched his own research. His results and subsequent claims are what made the book a sensation. In the book, he claims he found a prediction of Yitzak Rabin's assassination. He further claims that he warned Rabin prior to the event. After the assassination, Drosnin claimed he found the assassin's name embedded in the text. In the course of the book's 200 plus pages, Drosnin makes many other claims about the codes predictive quality. The implication he presents is that this is supernatural, yet he continually denies that he believes in a god. I guess this is supposed to make his claims more credible to the scientific community. Drosnin believes virtually all knowledge, real and hypothetical, is to be found encoded in the Bible. He also does his share of hedging his bets. While he definitely promotes the predictive characteristic, he nevertheless, believes that the future is not determined, and what is predicted will not of necessity occur. Once a prophecy is known, like Rabin's assassination, the future can be altered. Apparently, this God he does not believe in, does not know the future infallibly, or either is powerless to prevent certain events from happening. This is very akin to the theological writing (process theology) of Rabbi Harold Kushner in his popular book: *Why Do Bad Things Happen To Good People?* Professor Rips, who introduced Drosnin to the codes, has lashed out at Drosnin and others who use the codes for prediction, but ironically, many things found by Rips and his colleagues were also future at the time the first five books of the OT were written (Auschwitz, for example).

The concept of the bible codes is fatally flawed at numerous points. I will mention several, and then refer you to other sources for more detail. First, the way the pages are laid out is arbitrary. How many letters you allow on a page is purely the decision of the computer operator. This affects particularly words that are found vertically or diagonally (as in crossword puzzles). Secondly, the Hebrew text they use is not the same as the original manuscripts. There are variants and textual problems that will affect the outcome. Thirdly, Drosnin's translation of Hebrew leaves much to be desired. For example, in his most publicized piece of evidence, the prediction of Rabin's death, he translates the passage in Dt. 4:42 (the context is the cities of refuge), where Rabin's name appears via the code, as "assassin will assassinate." The correct translation is: "murderer who murders." Many other examples are cited by critics. Fourthly, and perhaps the most damning of all, is the fact that it has been demonstrated by critics, that by using the same method, the same results can be obtained in other works of literature.

Other books that have been tried successfully are *Moby Dick* and *War and Peace*. Sadly enough, several evangelical ministers and writers have jumped on this bandwagon and have proclaimed in books and on cable television that the bible codes are proof of divine inspiration of Scripture. Such is the book, *The Signature of God* by Grant Jeffrey. Jeffrey thinks it is significant that "Yeshua," the OT name for Jesus, is found thousands of times encoded in the OT. What he does not know or admit, is so does the name Buddha and Mohammed! There are demonstrable reasons why "Yeshua" might be found thousands of times. In Hebrew, "Yeshua" is written with only three consonants and they happen to be three of the most frequently used in Hebrew.

In my opinion these books are not worth your time or money. Initially, it was an interesting phenomena that soon dissipated with close scrutiny. The Bible is not some mystical book with encrypted and esoteric messages that can only be found through some complicated method. While the Bible is a Holy book, it needs to be read in an ordinary way as though our lives depended on it.

If you are troubled by the above books, or know someone who has been snared by them, I recommend: *Decoding the Bible* by John Weldon and Clifford Wilson. From my own experience, when Weldon speaks you seldom need look elsewhere. No one is more thorough or knowledgeable about cults and the occult.

For the really serious, you will find a good Biblical perspective on numerology in: *Biblical Numerology* by John J. Davis, and, *Bible Numerics* by Oswald T. Allis. To find these, you will have to look in the used book market, or check at the inter-library loan desk.