CRACKING "THE BIBLE CODE"
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For some years now, several Israeli mathematicians and rabbis have been investigating the idea that the Bible contains "code words" hidden in its text.[1] These words are claimed to validate the divine authorship of the Bible and the rabbinic understanding of it, and to give us information about the future, especially about Israel and the end of the age. Recently, some of this material has been published in a popular presentation for lay readers by Michael Drosnin in his book *The Bible Code*.[2]

Using computers to search the text, these investigators look for hidden words that are spelled by letters spaced at equal distances in the text. In some cases the letters are immediately adjacent; in others, they are thousands of letters apart.[3] In one example, Drosnin finds the name of former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in close proximity to the phrase "assassin will assassinate." The context also contains the year Rabin was killed, and the assassin's name![4] In spite of this rather impressive success, some of the predictions Drosnin has found have not come true.[5]

The proposed "Bible Code," like the claim that the Gospel message is displayed in the constellations,[6] is attractive to many who are Bible believers. Obviously, God is capable of doing something of this sort should He choose to. The question is, do we have any good evidence that He has chosen to do so?

Biblical Problems with "The Bible Code"

There are good biblical reasons for thinking that this is *not* God's work. First of all, the Bible does not make much provision for true prophecy that doesn't come true. Deuteronomy 18 clearly indicates that unfulfilled prophecy is a mark of false prophets, and this is a characteristic feature of the biblical teaching elsewhere (1 Kings 22, Isaiah 42-46, Jeremiah 28). The book of Jonah does allow for the possibility that a prophecy might be postponed if those for whom disaster is predicted should repent.[7] Presumably, something similar might happen with a prophecy of blessing if the recipients became arrogant (see Paul's warnings in Rom 11:17-22). I would not, however, want to make any large use of this kind of qualification, given the Bible's emphasis on fulfillment and on God's foreknowledge and control of history. In any case, for the *Bible Code*'s failed prediction of the assassination of Benjamin Netanyahu, there is no evidence of repentance.[8]

Another feature also makes me suspicious. The hidden messages of the *Bible Code* are typically single, disjoint words or very short phrases. These are naturally rather ambiguous, and there is no context available by which to resolve the ambiguity. This is not typical of biblical prophecies, even though these sometimes have ambiguities too.

A very serious problem with the *Bible Code* is related to this. How do we know that in a particular passage we have found all the coded words that are necessary to understand the prophecy? For instance, after some of the "Bible Code" prophecies did not come true, Drosnin found the word "delayed" in several of them![9] But what good is a prophecy for warning or guidance if somewhere in its vicinity we later find the isolated word "not" qualifying it? This resembles the work of astrologers and modern-day occult prophets rather than that of the biblical prophets![10]

Chance and Human Manipulation?

But if this is not God's work, whose is it? Neither humans nor angels can tell the future with consistent accuracy, and in any case, there is no reason to believe the Bible texts have been modified since they were first written down by the ancient Jewish prophets. I suggest that the phenomena are just a combination of chance and human manipulation. Let's see.

In thinking that the *Bible Code* is the work of human manipulation, I am not here claiming that Rips, Drosnin, and friends have changed the text to make things work out. That is too easily checked, and they have been pretty straightforward in showing us where they found their words and in offering to provide copies of their text and search program.

What I am thinking is this: Both the prime code word (usually displayed vertically on the diagrams in the *Bible Code*), and the secondary prophetic code-words which cluster around it, are words that are found by searching the text using various fixed spacings between letters. But with a long enough text and not too long a search word, one is bound to find nearly any code word selected (or some suitable abbreviation or synonym thereof), as we will show below. So there is nothing to finding code words. Around the prime code word a "context" is displayed, typically some 700-1500 characters. This is not always a real context, however, as each line shown may be hundreds or thousands of letters away from the line displayed above or below it. So the question is, can we find some word or words hidden in this array of 700-1500 characters which seem to relate to the prime word in some predictive way, even without supernatural intervention? I believe we can, by a combination of chance and manipulation. Let's look at the chances first.

Chance?

The chance of finding these code words is enormously increased by several techniques employed in *The Bible Code*. All spacing between words is removed, though this was never a characteristic of ancient *Hebrew* manuscripts, so far as I know.[11] Finding code words is also more likely in Hebrew than in most Western languages, as the investigators read it (as is usual in modern Hebrew newspapers) without vowel points. The vowel points used in the standard printed Hebrew Bibles are removed, and Drosnin and company supply their own vowels when they read their code words. In this, at least, the investigators are following the earliest Hebrew Bible manuscripts, which were not written with vowel points either. Of course it is going considerably further to say that you can supply just any vowels of your own. The choice of vowel points in a given passage is strongly constrained by the context, so here the investigators are assuming that one of the rules of this hidden code is to supply whatever vowels are necessary to make it work!

Likewise it is easy to find encoded numbers in the Hebrew language, since Hebrew, unlike western languages, uses (all) the letters of its own alphabet to represent numbers. Thus it will be easy to find specific years given as part of the alleged prophecies.

In trying to evaluate the claims of the *Bible Code*, we are at a serious disadvantage if we are not fluent in modern or ancient Hebrew. We can look at one of Drosnin's diagrams and have no idea *what else* the letters not marked might spell. However, a good test for us Hebrew-challenged types will be to try to do the same thing with some famous text in English (say, the Declaration of Independence, US Constitution, Gettysburg Address, or something from Shakespeare). After some experience with these materials, we should be able to tell whether or not there is anything really peculiar in the biblical text of the sort alleged by Drosnin and the others.

For our test, we chose the text of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.[12] We converted it to something like the compressed and unpointed Hebrew text Drosnin and friends use by changing all the letters to capitals and by deleting all spacing, punctuation, and vowels (a,e,i,o,u, but not y or w). As a result, we ended up with an alphabet of 21 letters, and the condensed Gettysburg Address turned out to have a text length of almost exactly 700 letters!

After spending several hours searching the text visually (a tedious process!), we wrote a program to do the hard work automatically.[13] The program reads in whatever text we are asking it to search, then it asks us to supply a search word. Starting at the beginning of the text, the program searches for a match to the first letter in the search word. When this match has been found, it continues looking forward from that point till it finds a match for the second letter. When this second match is found, the distance between the two matches sets the spacing distance for the rest of the letters of the coded word (as they must be equidistant), and the succeeding search letters are checked against the text at that particular spacing. If successful, the starting position and spacing of the coded word are recorded. Successful or not, the program next goes back and looks for another match for the second letter further along in the text. When all second-letter matches have been tested, the first letter of the search word is moved along to its next match in the text, and the process is repeated until the whole text has been searched. Finally the program reports its results for that search word. Searches for the code word spelled backwards (a common phenomenon in

the *Bible Code*) are not done automatically, but a new search word can be entered which is the first one reversed.

    Some results for the Gettysburg Address are displayed below:

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FRSCRNDSVNYRSGRFTHRSBRGHTFRTHNTHSCNTNNTNWNTNCNCVDNLBRTYNDDDCTDTTHP
RPSTNTHTLLMNRCRTDQLNWWRNGGDNGRTCVLWRTSTNGWHTHRTHTNTNRNYNTNSCNCVDND
SDDCTDCNLNGNDRWRMTNGRTBTTLFLDFTHTWRWHVCMTDDCTPRTNFTHTFLDSFNLRSTNGP
LCFRTHSWHHRGVTHRLVSTHTTHTNTNMGHTLVTSLTGTHRFTTNGNDPRPRTHTWSHLDDTHSB
TNLRGRSNSWCNNTDDCTWCNNTCNSCRTWCNNTHLLWTHSGRNDTHBRVMNLVNGNDDDWHSTRG
GLDHRHVCNSCRTDTFRBVRPRPWRTDDRDTRCTTHWRLDWLLLTTLNTNRLNGRMMBRWHTWSYH
RBTTCNNVRFRGTWHTTHYDDHRTSFRSTHLVNGRTHRTBDDCTDHRTTHNFNSHDWRKWHCHTHY
WHFGHTHRHVTHSFRSNBLYDVNCDTSRTHRFRSTBHRDDCTDTTHGRTTSKRMNNGBFRSTHTFR
MTHSHNRDDDWTKNCRSDDVTNTTHTCSFRWHCHTHYGVTHLSTFLLMSRFDVTNTHTWHRHGHLY
RSLVTHTTHSDDSHLLNTHVDDNVNTHTTHSNTNNDRGDSHLLHVNWBRTHFFRDMNDTHTGVRNM
NTFTHPPLBYTHPPLFRTHPPLSHLLNTPRSHFRMTHRTH
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Figure 1. Gettysburg Address (No Vowels)
and the Civil War Situation

    With a line-length of 66 letters, we get "Lincoln" (spelled phonetically) right in the middle! Above him are "Civil War" and "Battlefield." Both to Lincoln's right and left we find the name of the Confederate commander at Gettysburg, "Gen. R. Lee." The Union commander at Gettysburg, General "G. Meade," appears just below the righthand Lee. Finally, "Abraham" is seen in the lower right corner of the text. All of these, naturally, are spelled without vowels! (LNCN, CVLWR, BTTLFLD, GNRL, GMD, BRHM)

    Now the two longest code words, "Civil War" (5 letters) and "Battlefield" (7 letters) are actually a part of the regular text of Lincoln's speech C not code C and so their appearance is not particularly surprising. But the same can be said for Drosnin's "assassin that will assassinate,"[14] which is the regular text of Deut 4:42, a regulation concerning the cities of refuge to which the "killer that has killed" might escape.

    I admit that I was disappointed not to be able to find the exact spelling of "Lincoln" (LNCLN) in our text, but this is mainly due to the text being so short. *The Bible Code* faces no such problem, having all the resources of the Old Testament text available for search.

    It is important that we think through the probabilities or statistical expectations involved in what we have found in our search of the Gettysburg Address. We have a 21-letter alphabet and a 700-letter text. Ignoring the fact that the various letters of the alphabet occur with rather different frequencies, we can still get a "seat of the pants" estimate by assuming all letters occur with equal frequencies.[15] Then the chance that a particular letter will occur in our text is 700 divided by 21, or 33. We should expect about 33 occurrences of a given letter in our text, on average.

    For a two-letter search word, either letter can occur in either order at any spacing, so the probability is essentially 33 times 33. The pair will occur some 1089 times in the text!

    But for search words of three letters and longer, the rule that the code words appear with equidistant letter-spacing now comes into play to make matches much rarer. The third letter must be exactly the same distance from the second as the second is from the first, and it must be on the opposite side of the second letter from the first. Thus a particular location in the text must contain a particular letter for a match C only one chance in 21. The resulting probability for a three letter search-word is 1089 divided by 21, or 52; so we can expect about 52 matches of a given 3-letter search word in a 700-letter text.[16]

    For a four-letter search word, this is divided by 21 again, giving a probability of about 2.5. For a

5-letter word, divide again by 21, giving .12 C about one chance in eight that a given five-letter search word will find a match in a 700-letter text. Not surprising, then, that we couldn't find the particular 5-letter combination LNCLN in our text.

As a formula for this rough calculation, we can say that the probability (or expected number) N of occurrences of a given search word of length n in a text of T letters using an alphabet of A letters is:

$$N_n = T^2 / A^n, \text{ n = 2 or more (1)}$$

Now let's apply the same reasoning to the Hebrew alphabet and the text of the Hebrew Old Testament. The Hebrew alphabet has 22 letters. We list the calculations for a 700-letter text and a 1,000-letter text:

Table 1: Expected Matches for Hebrew Texts		
Length Search Word	700-Letter Text	1,000-Letter Text
One Letter	32	45
Two	1010	2065
Three	46	94
Four	2	4.3
Five	.095 (9.5×10^{-2})	.19
Six	4.3×10^{-3}	8.8×10^{-3}
Seven	2.0×10^{-4}	4.0×10^{-4}
Eight	8.9×10^{-6}	1.8×10^{-5}

Our English text, the Gettysburg Address, was 700 letters long with the vowels removed. How big is the Old Testament text? We don't need to have an exact count of letters, such as was made by the ancient Hebrew scribes; a rough estimate will be good enough for our purposes. I have here a text of the Hebrew Bible with virtually no footnotes.[17] Taking a typical line, there are some 33 letters per line, and 20-25 lines per page, so 650-750 letters per page. Let's use the number 700 per page, making our Gettysburg Address just the length of one page in this printed edition of the Hebrew Bible. When we count the pages, we find that Genesis takes up 84 pages, the five books of Moses 335 pages, and the whole Old Testament 1360 pages. Since the number of expected matches of 2-letter and longer combinations increases with the square of the text length (as we saw in multiplying 33 by 33, above), a calculation of the number of pages squared (last column, below) will also be helpful.

Table 2: Text Length - Hebrew Bible			
Section	Pages	Letters	Pages Squared
Genesis	84	58,800	7056
Pentateuch	335	234,500	1.12×10^5
Old Testament	1360	952,000	1.85×10^6

If we now compare the last column of Table 2 with the 700-letter text (= single page) column of Table 1, we see that the expected matches for 7-letter search words (per 700-letter page) is 2×10^{-4} and the squared length of Genesis is about 7×10^3, so the two multiplied together C the chance of finding a given 7-letter match in Genesis C is 1.4. We should typically expect to find 7-letter matches in Genesis, if our formula is not too rough. For 8-letter matches, we would probably need the Pentateuch to search, or

even the whole Old Testament. And, indeed, Drosnin points out that the 8-letter combination spelling "Yitzhaq Rabin" in Hebrew occurs only once in the Hebrew Bible, just about what we would expect.

Once we have located our long "prime code word" (of say six to eight letters) to be displayed, what size code words can we expect to find in its vicinity? If we have only 700 letters of text displayed as the "context" of our prime code word, then our typical cluster words will have four letters or less, as we saw above. If our context is, say, 1400 letters (twice as long) then the chances of any particular combination appearing with be four times larger. In general, we can find out the minimum text length in which to expect to commonly find words of length n by solving equation (1), above, for the text length T, with N_n set = 1 and A to 22, for various values of n:

$$T = A^{n/2} = 22^{n/2} \quad (2)$$

The results are given in Table 3:

Table 3: Text Needed for Search Word	
Letters in Search Word	Length of Text
3	103
4	484
5	2270
6	10,678
7	49,943
8	234,256
9	1,098,758

Notice, in our example of the Gettysburg Address (text length 700), that most of the code words which we displayed were four letters in length (LNCN = "Lincoln"; GNRL = "Gen R Lee"; BRHM = "Abraham"), in accordance with the largest sorts of words one will easily find in a text of that length. We could have chosen to display many words of 3 letters or less, but we only chose to display one (GMD = "G Meade"). We will come back to this point when we discuss the matter of human manipulation, of which more later.

We did, however, find two even longer words CVLWR = "Civil War" (5 letters) and BTTLFLD = "Battlefield" (7 letters), which are longer than we would have antecedently expected. In general, one can expect to find some longer code words even in a text of 700 letters. If our calculations for these probabilities are not too far off, perhaps one in eight of the 5-letter search words we try will be successful. But both of our longer words came from the regular text of the Gettysburg Address, just as Drosnin got "assassin who will assassinate" (11 letters) from the regular text of Deut 4:42. Naturally, we can expect to get long meaningful phrases from the regular text of our "context" since this by definition is a meaningful, connected text. So, in our example, we could have expanded CVLWR = "Civil War" to GRTCVLWR = "Great Civil War" (8 letters) and BTTLFLD = "Battlefield" to GRTBTTLFLD = "Great Battlefield" (10 letters) or even GRTBTTLFLDFTHTWR = Great Battlefield of that War" (16 letters)!

Let us now look at the decoding diagrams given in the *Bible Code* to see what sorts of words Drosnin has found. We will tabulate the length of the words which Drosnin marks and comments on. Our table 4 will distinguish between coded words (labelled "Spaced"), which have some space between letters in the original text though they are often aligned vertically in the diagrams with no spacing, and regular text words (labelled "Unspaced"), which have no spaces between letters in the original text, even though some of these will have the words divided differently than in the Bible, or will be read backwards. To give some idea what is going on in each diagram, we will also spell out (sometimes abbreviated) the main code word in each.

Table 4: Length of Diagrammed Words in *Bible Code*		
Page	Spaced (Code Word)	Unspaced
15	8 Yitzhaq Rabin	11
16 = 15	8 Yitzhaq Rabin	14, 6, 4
17	7, 6, 4, 4 Rabin assas.	
19	7, 4, 4, 3 Fire on 3 Shev	5, 3
27 = 15	8 Yitzhaq Rabin	
28 = 15	8 Yitzhaq Rabin	11
29 = 15	8, 4 Yitzhaq Rabin	(11)
32	7 Clinton	5
33	7 Watergate	16
34	8, 5, 4 Econ. Collapse	5
35	7, 5 Man on Moon	
36	8, 4, 3 Shoemaker-Levy	4
37 36	8, 3 Shoemaker-Levy	
40	5, 4 Hitler	7, 5
47	6, 4, 4, 3 Shakespeare	
48(1)	7, 6 Wright Brothers	
48(2)	6, 4, 4 Edison	
49(1)	6, 5 Newton	
49(2)	9, 3 Einstein	10, 8, 6
54 = 15	8 Yitzhaq Rabin	11, 11
55	9 Holocaust of Israel	6
56	10 Atomic Holocaust	5
58	9 The Next War	10, 4, 3
62	8 Libyan Artillery	5
64 = 56	10, 5 Atomic Holocaust	3, 3, 3
66	8 Atomic Atilleryman	9, 5
70	7, 4, 3 Autobus	5
71	7 Autobus	11, 5, 5
73	9 Pr Min Netanyahu	4, 4
76 = 15	8 Yitzhaq Rabin	11, 11, 6, 6
80 = 58	9 The Next War	10, 3!

Table 4: Length of Diagrammed Words in *Bible Code*		
Page	Spaced (Code Word)	Unspaced
81 = 73	9 Pr Min Netanyahu	10, 7, 3, 3
86	6 In 1995-96	11
87	8 World War	11
88 = 56	10 Atomic Holocaust	11
89	7, 5 End of Days	
92 = 89	7, 5, 4 End of Days	5
93 89	7 End of Days	11, 4, 4
96	5 Made by Computer	21
99(1)	6 Bible Code	11
99(2)	4 Computer	24
104	5 (year) 1997	13, 7, 7
106(1) = 87	8 World War	9
106(2)	7 Roosevelt	15, 4
107 = 56	10, 3, 3 Atomic Holo.	3
108	11 Pres Kennedy to Die	5
109	7 Oswald	14, 3
110 = 109	7, 4 Oswald	10
111	6, 6 R. Kennedy; Sirhan	10
113	12 Captivity of Toledano	9, 4, 3
114	7 Goldstein	19, 5
117	8, 7 Oklahoma	7
118	9 Murrah Building	6, 6, 3
119	9, 6, 4, 4 Name Timothy	8, 5
124(1) = 87	8, 4 World War	
124(2) = 87	8, 6 World War	
125 = 56	10, 6 Atomic Holocaust	
128 = 87	8, 2 World War	6, 4
129	8, 5, 4, 4 Communism	3
132	7 Atomic Weapon	6, 5
133 = 87	8 World War	5
134	13 Armegeddon Asad Holo.	9
135	5 Syria	13, 11, 4, 3

Table 4: Length of Diagrammed Words in *Bible Code*		
Page	Spaced (Code Word)	Unspaced
138	6 In (year) 2113	18, 5
139(1)	7, 4 Great Earthquake	
139(2) = (1)	7, 5 Great Earthquake	
141 139	7, 4, 3, 3 Gt Earthquake	
142	6 L.A. Calif.	5, 4?
143 = 139	7, 4, 4 Gt Earthquake	3
145	7, 4 Kobe, Japan	6, 5
146	7 Year of the Plague	9
147(1) = 139	7, 5, 3 Gt Earthquake	
147(2) = 34	8 Economic Collapse	10
149	8, 4, 4 Dinosaur	5
151	6, 4 Swift	11
154	7, 5 Comet	10
155(1)=154	7 Comet	6, 4
155(2)=154	7 Comet	8, 4
157 = 81	9 Pr Min Netanyahu	9
158 = 81	9 ditto	9, 3
160 = 81	9, 4 ditto	12, 9, 3, 3, 3
161 = 58	9 The Next War	12
163 = 87	8 World War	12, 5
164	8, 4, 4 25 July 1996	18
166 = 55	9, 6, 4 Holocaust of Isr	3
167 = 146	7, 4 Year of Plague	9
168 = 87	8 World War	11, 6
169 = 55	9, 5 Holocaust of Israel	
170 = 56	10 Atomic Holocaust	7, 5
171(1) = 55	9 Holocaust of Israel	3, 3
171(2) = 93	7 End of Days	11, 5
176(1)		16, 4 Future Bkwds
176(2) = (1)		16, 6 ditto
180 = 56	10 Atomic Holocaust	11, 7

Looking at the middle column of this table, we see that a number of 8-letter code words have

been found, somewhat fewer 9-letter, and one each of 10, 11, 12, and 13-letter words (most of these are actually phrases):

8-letter:
Atomic Artilleryman
Communism
Economic Collapse
Libyan Artillery
Oklahoma
Shoemaker-Levy (2x)
25 July 1996
World War
Yitzhaq Rabin

9-letter:
Einstein
His Name is Timothy
Holocaust of Israel
Murrah Building
The Next War
Prime Minister Netanyahu

10-letter:
Atomic Holocaust

11-letter:
President Kennedy to Die

12-letter:
Captivity of Toledano

13-letter:
Armageddon Asad Holocaust

We would expect, given the length of the text of the Old Testament, that one could find virtually any 8-letter word desired, or at least some synonym. It should also contain lots of 9-letter words (the text length of the OT C 952,000 letters C is over 90% of that needed [table 3] for 9-letter search words to be very common). Ten-letter and longer words or phrases would be much rarer, but there are also many more such word combinations. With enough searching, investigators are bound to find some. We don't know how much searching they did.

At this point it is possible to see a real problem with the idea that this "Bible Code" is the work of God or even a very clever author. Such a divine or human author who is *constructing* the text of the Bible from scratch ought to be able to insert within it a meaningful coded text of almost any length. (A good experiment would be to try constructing such a text yourself!)[18] Yet the longest coded words or phrases (not regular text or redivided regular text words) that occur in the *Bible Code* are "Captivity of Toledano" (12 letters)[19] and "Armageddon Asad Holocaust" (13 letters).[20]   Getting long words in the regular text is much easier, as we saw with our Gettysburg example. Yet the longest examples used by Drosnin in the *Bible Code* are "to shut up the words and seal the book until the end" (24 letters straight out of Daniel 12)[21] and "the writing of God engraved on the tablets" (21 letters straight from Exodus 32).[22]

It seems like a text the length of the Bible will supply virtually any 8-letter word you wish in the form of code, many 9-letter combinations, long stretches of regular text, and a few longer coded words. Thus the phenomena of the *Bible Code* do not appear to be out of the range of chance.

Human Manipulation?

The presentations by Drosnin and company, however, are not fully explained by chance. They are an excellent illustration of intelligent design at work, namely the designing intelligences of these men!

Comparing tables 2 and 3, above, we see that for the Old Testament, or even the Pentateuch, finding code words of eight letters should not be difficult. Words of seven letters will be, on average, 22 times more common, 6-letter words 484 times, and 5-letter words over 10,000 times more common. Thus around any given 8-letter word, there will be lots of 6- and 7-letter words and literally hordes of shorter words.

It should not be surprising, then, that by some astute selection of data, the investigator should be able to assemble a constellation of these that are striking "fulfillments" regarding persons or events in the past. But as for getting the future right, the investigator, not knowing the future himself, will be no better than any other merely human prognosticator. This, I think, explains Drosnin's dilemma: that God Almighty would be needed to get right all the stuff that Drosnin finds if someone centuries ago really put it there, but that God would not make all the mistakes that turn up when Drosnin decodes the future!

Let's go back and have a look at our Gettysburg Address again. So far, I have presented no prophecy in connection with Lincoln's speech, so one might propose that Abe himself had put in the code words LNCN, GNRL, GMD, and BRHM, if the antecedent probability that he would do any such thing weren't so small. And, indeed, nothing we have presented so far would have been beyond his knowledge at the time he gave the speech.

But we're not finished yet. We do a search on "Booth" (BTH) and "Grant" (GRNT), and lo and behold, we find in the Address some striking fulfilments of prophecy! Selecting out one of the 10 matches found for GRNT, three of the 63 for Booth, and another of the four matches found for LNCN and NCNL, we assemble the following picture:

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FRSCRNDSVNYRSGRFTHRSBRGHTFRTHNTHSCNTNNTNWNTNCNCVDNLBRTYNDDDCTDTTHP
RPSTNTHTLLMNRCRTDQLNWWRNGGDNGRTCVLWRTSTNGWHTHRTHTNTNRNYNTNSCNCVDND
SDDCTDCNLNGNDRWRMTNGRTBTTLFLDFTHTWRWHVCMTDDCTPRTNFTHTFLDSFNLRSTNGP
LCFRTHSWHHRGVTHRLVSTHTTHTNTNMGHTLVTSLTGTHRFTTNGNDPRPRTHTWSHLDDTHSB
TNLRGRSNSWCNNTDDCTWCNNTCNSCRTWCNNTHLLWTHSGRNDTHBRVMNLVNGNDDDWHSTRG
GLDHRHVCNSCRTDTFRBVRPRPWRTDDRDTRCTTHWRLDWLLLTTLNTNRLNGRMMBRWHTWSYH
RBTTCNNVRFRGTWHTTHYDDHRTSFRSTHLVNGRTHRTBDDCTDHRTTHNFNSHDWRKWHCHTHY
WHFGHTHRHVTHSFRSNBLYDVNCDTSRTHRFRSTBHRDDCTDTTHGRTTSKRMNNGBFRSTHTFR
MTHSHNRDDDWTKNCRSDDVTNTTHTCSFRWHCHTHYGVTHLSTFLLMSRFDVTNTHTWHRHGHLY
RSLVTHTTHSDDSHLLNTHVDDNVNTHTTHSNTNNDRGDSHLLHVNWBRTHFFRDMNDTHTGVRNM
NTFTHPPLBYTHPPLFRTHPPLSHLLNTPRSHFRMTHRTH
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Figure 2. Gettysburg Address (No Vowels)
and Civil War Prophecy

Booth's name appears above and behind Lincoln at the top of the figure, just as he did in the Presidential box of Ford's Theatre that fateful night. Lincoln is shot and falls prone (stretched out LNCN crossing original upright LNCN in the middle of the picture). Booth, jumping from the box, falls awkwardly to the stage (upside down BTH below prone LNCN). Booth escapes the scene (BTH going off to the left in our picture). Not only is the fate of Lincoln prophetically sketched for us in his address, but the outcome of the war itself is seen in the pairing by the left margin. Grant (GRNT) and Lee (GNRL) are crossed, with Lee descending and Grant remaining on the level, hinting at the campaign of attrition which brought the war to a close.

Is this really in Lincoln's Gettysburg Address? Yes, in the sense that all the letters are there in the locations shown. But all of Shakespeare is in Webster's Dictionary! The locating of the words, and especially their assembly and presentation is my work C human manipulation.

Let's try another example, this time with the text of the Gettysburg Address without the vowels removed.

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                                                  FOURSCOREANDSEVEN
YEARSAGOOURFATHERSBROUGHTFORTHONTHISCONTINENTANEWN
ATIONCONCEIVEDINLIBERTYANDDEDICATEDTOTHEPROPOSITIO
NTHATALLMENARECREATEDEQUALNOWWEAREENGAGEDINAGREATC
IVILWARTESTINGWHETHERTHATNATIONORANYNATIONSOCONCEI
VEDANDSODEDICATEDCANLONGENDUREWEAREMETONAGREATBATT
LEFIELDOFTHATWARWEHAVECOMETODEDICATEAPORTIONOFTHAT
FIELDASAFINALRESTINGPLACEFORTHOSEWHOHEREGAVETHEIRL
IVESTHATTHATNATIONMIGHTLIVEITISALTOGETHERFITTINGAN
DPROPERTHATWESHOULDDOTHISBUTINALARGERSENSEWECANNOT
DEDICATEWECANNOTCONSECRATEWECANNOTHALLOWTHISGROUND
THEBRAVEMENLIVINGANDDEADWHOSTRUGGLEDHEREHAVECONSEC
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Figure 3. Gettysburg Address (With Vowels)
and Lincoln's Death Prophesied

Though "Lincoln" does not appear in this version, "Abe" occurs frequently. We have selected 4 of the 65 occurrences we found, the three that are vertical with the 50-letter line length we decided to use, plus the one match of closest spacing, with only 2 letters between each. Two of the vertical ABEs share B in common, and are located in the fourth column from the left. The other vertical ABE is in the ninth column from the right. The horizontal ABE begins one line below and five columns to the right of the shared B in the two lefthand ABEs. BOOTH occurs only once in this text. The B is the sixth line, four letters from the right end, and the word angles back in the 7 o'clock direction, with each succeeding letter one line down and eight letters to the left of the previous, the H located three lines directly above the E in the horizontal ABE. Further searches located DIED four times, of which we have used two; SHOT nine times (we used one); GUN nine times (used two); and FORD once. Interestingly, the final D in one of the DIEDs we

chose is also the final D in FORD, and coincides with the first D in the regular text HONORED DEAD. DIED, FORD, BOOTH, GUN, and SHOT all angle downward in the general direction of this regular text phrase, and SHOT even pierces the horizontal ABE. I leave to your imagination the patter that a clever presenter could make out of all this. There were, of course, plenty of relevant search words which we could not find in the text.

Conclusions

We have provided a brief tour of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and the statistics for word matching both here and in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. It appears that nothing particularly unusual has been found in the alleged "Bible Code" that cannot be explained by common probability and human manipulation. Certainly, the level of prediction in the *Bible Code* would be impressive if it were the work of an ancient human, but it would be just about right for a modern interpreter, and rather lousy for the God who knows the end from the beginning and who will do all that He purposes. I conclude that there is no reason to believe that God has hidden such material in the Bible.

It appears to me that if we put a great deal of trust in this sort of material, we will be led away from the details and standards of biblical prophecy into the very divergent details and standards of occult prophecy. That would be a fearful thing, an example of rejecting God's living water to dig for ourselves cisterns that won't hold any water. May God protect us from this error!

References

1. Doron Witztum, Eliyahu Rips and Yoav Rosenberg, "Equidistant Letter Sequences in the Book of Genesis," *Statistical Science* 9 (1994): 429-438. Reprinted as an appendix in Drosnin, *The Bible Code*, below.

2. Michael Drosnin, *The Bible Code* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997).

3. The Hebrew for "Yitzhaq Rabin," mentioned below, for instance, has a spacing of 4772 letters between each of its eight letters; *Bible Code*, p 27.

4. *Bible Code*, chapter 1.

5. *Bible Code*, pp 157-165.

6. Frances Rolleston, *Mazzaroth, or the Constellations* (Keswick, England, 1863); Ethelbert W. Bullinger, *Witness of the Stars* (1893; Grand Rapids: Kregel 1967 reprint); Joseph A. Seiss, *The Gospel in the Stars* (c1882; Grand Rapids: Kregel, c1972 reprint).

7. See also Jer 18:1-11 and Ezk 33:1-11, in which it is clear that prophecies of judgement are calls to repentance.

8. *Bible Code*, pp 157-165.

9. *Bible Code*, pp 164-68.

10. See, e.g., Robert C. Newman, ed., *The Evidence of Prophecy: Fulfilled Prediction as a Testimony to the Truth of Christianity* (Hatfield, PA: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1988); Kenny Barfield, *The Prophet Motive: Examining the Reliability of the Biblical Prophets* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate, 1995).

11. See Alan Millard, "Were Words Separated in Ancient Hebrew Writing?" *Bible Review* (June 1992):44-47, where it is noted that, to date, all known ancient Hebrew manuscripts and inscriptions have spacing between words except for legends on coins.

12. Text of the Gettysburg Address from *TIME 1990 Almanac* on CD-ROM.

13. Robert C. Newman, program DECODE in QuickBasic 4.5.

14. *Bible Code*, chap 1.

15. My training was in astrophysics rather than accounting. Banks do not generally appreciate these sorts of estimates!

16. These and the following numbers are doubtless somewhat high, as they don't take into account those prospective matches that never occur because there is not enough space at the end of the text. For simplicity, we make no attempt to take this into account.

17. Norman Henry Snaith, ed., *Hebrew Old Testament* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, reprinted 1966).

18. I spent a couple of hours on the following, which encodes the first two lines of the nursery rhyme "Mary had a little lamb...": "Many that cover a story with the media will admit that they like spin. Good tales at times lend a real wallop to making a moral. About this same time it seems a fearful shame easier events can never just work that way. As we show what the tale is about, we'll bend details to set the story in that world we want to." The text is a little awkward, mainly because the coded letters are only six places apart, but a coded text of 41 letters was hidden in a plain text of 246 with relatively little trouble.

19. *Bible Code*, p 113.

20. *Bible Code*, p 134.

21. *Bible Code*, p 99.

22. *Bible Code*, p 96.

Other Resources on Bible Codes

Gary S. Cohen, "The Bible Code Examined," *Zion's Fire* 8:6 (Nov/Dec 97): 16-21.

Michael Drosnin, *The Bible Code*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997.

Lori Eldridge, *Torah Codes Archive* website, www.prophezine.com/tcode/
        index.html.

Grant Jeffrey, *The Signature of God* Frontier Research, 1997.

Brendan McKay, *In Search of Mathematical Miracles* website,
        http://cs.anu.edu.au/~bdm/dilugim/torah.html.

John Winston Moore, "Bible Codes, or Matrix of Deception?" *SCP Newsletter* 22:2 and 22:3 (Autumn 97):
        1,4, 8, 14, 16 and (Winter 97/98): 1, 4, 8, 13-14, 16.

Jeffrey Satinover, *Cracking the Bible Code*. William Morrow, 1997.