

Bs”d, Tammuz 5761 (July 01).

A Response to McKay's Response to My Response to His Response concerning my article “Of Science and Parody”

By Doron Witztum

McKay [1] continues his attempts to distract the public from the simple fact that our series of articles has successfully proved that MBBK's paper in *Statistical Science* (like McKay's other publicized papers concerning the Torah Codes)

- a) Has no scientific foundation.
- b) Has falsely "cooked" results.

(See the synopsis “A Review of the Attempts to Invalidate the Torah Codes” and its links to the full articles).

McKay has no reply to these articles. Instead he selectively attacks marginal issues or "straw men" of his own creation. We cannot waste our time on this kind of debate. We will just note one of his attempts to distract, one of his “straw men” and one cynical exploitation of an inaccurate translation. The reader can then examine our original article [2].

"The Cohen Affair"

Our article [2] minutely describes McKay *et al*'s deceptions in everything relating to Prof. Menachem Cohen. We especially noted their false claim that Prof. Cohen certified their list as complying with Havlin's rules (or breaking them) to the same extent as Havlin's list.

McKay has no reply. But, instead of apologizing for his deceit, McKay asserts that “Prof. Cohen is now in the middle of writing a comprehensive document on this subject”.

We are most curious to see what this document will include.

Remember, Prof. Cohen admitted that he **never** examined whether McKay *et al*'s *War and Peace* list complies with Havlin's rules to the same extent as Havlin's list.

Will he now (urged by McKay *et al*) do what he has never done until now? Will he artificially “cook” *a posteriori* justification for McKay *et al*'s false claim?

Prof. Cohen has never hidden his hostility to the Torah Codes research and it's researchers [3]. He never concealed his [erroneous!] anxiety that the Torah Codes research might establish the "Keter Aram Sova" biblical text (whose research is the crowning achievement of his scientific career) as inferior to the traditional text. McKay *et al* take full advantage of this anxiety. Will this push Prof. Cohen to participate in a shameful “cooking” of data? Let's wait and see.

In fact Prof. Cohen has already written, at McKay *et al*'s request, a certain document which includes an alternative list to Havlin's list. Prof. Cohen claims that this list fails in *Genesis*.

This document and its list were given to McKay for publication on the Internet **over a year and a half ago**. Yet so far it has never appeared on McKay's web-site. Why not?

- Perhaps McKay realizes that Prof. Cohen acted **illicitly** by preparing a list **after** carefully studying which names and appellations in Havlin's list were "successful" and which were "failures".
- Or perhaps Cohen's list needs to be "cooked" a little more?

One way or another we cannot give credence to a list which McKay has needed to hide for so long.

"Straw man"

Under the heading "Havlin's Role", McKay quotes Havlin's report where Havlin took full responsibility for the lists of names and appellations. McKay wishes to persuade the reader that WRR couldn't have used the exact data provided by Prof. Havlin.

a) McKay asks:

“How can he [Havlin] remember after so many years all the fine details of the role he played in this experiment and of the data he gave to Witztum?”

But Havlin's quoted report does not say that he validated the data he gave WRR "after so many years". On the contrary, it says that after he compiled the two lists:

“At that time I confirmed that each of these lists of names and appellations ‘was based on my own personal judgment and on the examinations I carried out with the assistance of the database in the Data Retrieval Institute at Bar Ilan University — the Responsa Project’.” (Emphasis mine).

b) McKay concocts the following tale:

- Havlin's data includes amendments of dates and/or affirmations of amendments already done by Witztum.
- One of the dates is an obvious error.
- A top expert like Havlin couldn't have made such an error.

McKay then carefully lays down what he wants the reader to conclude:

“How can Witztum expect us to believe that he followed Havlin’s advice to the letter regarding the appellations, when he clearly didn’t follow it regarding the dates?”

Here we have a classic straw man:

In fact, contrary to McKay claims, Havlin's job was to prepare lists of names and appellations and nothing else. This is clear from Havlin's actual report regarding his part in the experiments. By the way, McKay knows this very well. In reply to a letter from his colleagues, Dror Bar-Natan and Maya Bar-Hillel, of 27 Nov. '96 [4], I explicitly wrote that I amended the dates myself based on examination of additional sources in the National Library in Jerusalem.

Taking Advantage of an Inaccurate Translation

Our previous response was publicized [6] on the Internet in both Hebrew and English. It included the following excerpt:

“McKay claims that we ignored "Anonymous". But we already wrote in [2] (the end of chap. 3): "This work has all the deficiencies of its predecessor, including lies and deceptions obvious to anyone knowledgeable in Hebrew grammar and rabbinical bibliography." We consider the refutations in our

article [5] sufficiently clear and thorough for any expert and anyone capable of examining the bibliographical material. For anyone else, a new detailed response would be of no avail. Only expert opinion can convince such people. And we did indeed bring the opinion of authentic experts agreeing to [5], and opposing the opinion of "anonymous".

McKay quotes the English version of this paragraph. The last sentence reads in the Hebrew original as follows:

"ואכן, הבאנו ב[2] חוות דעת של מומחים אמיתיים המסכימים עם [5], נגד דעת 'אנונימוס'."

It turns out that our translator translated this sentence into English inaccurately, and the correct translation should be

"And we did indeed bring the opinion of authentic experts agreeing to [5], *as opposed* to the opinion of "Anonymous".

A permanent posting on our Internet site announces that our articles are originally written in Hebrew and then translated into English. Therefore the Hebrew version overrides any inaccuracy in the English translation. But McKay, who wrote his response [1] in collaboration with Hebrew speaking colleagues, immediately utilized this inaccuracy to create yet another straw man. He writes:

"But contrary to what Witztum tries to imply here they [the experts] don't comment at all on [A99][=Anonymous], nor do they comment on our corrected version of the list on WNP. They couldn't possibly do that since these letters are dated September 98 and April 99, whereas [A99][=Anonymous] and the second version of our list were published only on May 99!"

However, as we explained, we never claimed that the experts directly criticized "Anonymous" or McKay *et al*'s second list. Our claim was **totally** different. Consider the following four facts:

- a) Bar-Natan and McKay [7] publicized a list of arguments attributing Havlin list's success to deviations from the spelling and bibliographical rules. These claims were also meant to justify their own first list.
- b) Our article [5] destroyed the arguments of Bar-Natan and McKay.
- c) Contrary to this, "Anonymous" [8] justified many of their arguments. McKay *et al* even wrote [9]:
 "In mid-December 1997, Witztum published a "refutation" of a draft version of this paper. Since most of it has no value, hardly any of the small number of changes we made for the final version of our paper are the result of it". (Emphasis mine)
- d) The expert opinion we brought [2] establishes:
 "The list Prof. Havlin prepared is in keeping with the rules. We found that all of their opponents' individual claims concerning deviations from the rules are false, and are a testimony to their astounding ignorance of, and unfamiliarity with the subject."

The obvious conclusion of facts a-d is that expert opinion agrees with [5] and contradicts the opinion of "Anonymous". This is exactly what our original quote said and this is true regardless of *when* "Anonymous" was first publicized.

Thus McKay's entire attack, based on taking advantage of an inaccurate translation (having both versions before him) is only meant to confuse the reader and create the illusion that he had answered our article.

These few samples demonstrate the caliber of McKay's responses. We will not tire the reader discussing the other points "dealt with" by McKay in a similar vein. Instead, we refer the reader to our original article [2] and to our previous response [6].

References

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