THE CITY CONGREGATION for HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

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"A lost book of the Bible is discovered. What's in it?"

Response by Rabbi Peter Schweitzer

I invited a handful of the members of my congregation to weigh in on this question, assuming they even cared about it. In fact, some were quite clear that they had no interest in the question, in the Biblical era or its legends. One countered that "additional books for our bible are being discovered--and written--every day as we develop new ideas, insights, reflections and interpretations of our experiences and the world around us."

But for those who liked the idea of discovering a lost book of the Bible, I was struck by a common theme that emerged. The books they championed were not just lost but obviously suppressed and censored, and could change history and our insights if they were to be made public.

One person said that this "missing book" would contain the same stories of the Bible but told from the perspective of the other, e.g. women as opposed to men, the Egyptians as opposed to the Israelites. For another, the book was authored by a unknown prophet, also a woman, "who recognizes that everything always changes, that Biblical explanations should not be frozen in time but change with it. She goes on to give guidelines about how this idea applies."

Another member attributed the hidden book to Moses who reveals the real truth that he discovered. One day, while wandering in the desert, Moses realized that God was some kind of heat-induced hallucination or trick. Still, the morals he discovered – which, he now understood, came from inside, not from any guy in the sky – still hold. It took an amazing strength of character and bravery for Moses to discover this truth and share it. But in the end his message was suppressed by the priestly/rabbinic class that feared loss of control.

And finally, one member speculated that the lost book was "The Book of Levity" that "stresses the importance of taking all other books with a grain of salt, or sand, whichever the reader prefers."