**How I Arrived at My Concepts**

I have often been asked to explain how I arrived at the concepts expressed in my books. I shall try to tell the story as briefly as possible.

I think that it was at my fortieth birthday (1935) that my father gave me as a present the Hebrew book by Bar-Droma, *Negeb* (“The South”). Busy as I was with medical practice, I did not read the book, and only opened it at a few places and chanced to read that according to somebody’s view, Mt. Sinai was a volcano.

In the summer of 1937 I was in Paris to read a paper at the International Psychological Congress. In the Bibliotheque Nationale I read the articles of Freud in *Imago* about Moses. When in the Spring of 1939 the articles appeared as a book, *Moses and Monotheism,* I bought a copy in a Tel-Aviv bookstore. The reading of this book brought me to the surmise that pharaoh Akhnaton, who Freud thought to be the originator of monotheism and a teacher of Moses, was in fact the prototype of Oedipus of the Greek legend. In a few weeks I had a rather convincing list of supporting evidence, but the meager Tel-Aviv library did not suffice for the kind of research I needed to do. I planned a sabbatical year in the United States to write a book on “Freud and his Heroes.” I arrived there with my family on the eve of World War II. The next eight months I spent in the Public Library on Forty-second Street in New York, reading on the subject, mostly the Egyptological material on the el-Amarna period. At the very beginning of these efforts, the Egyptologist Otto Ranke (whom I met at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York) gave me some guidance, yet tried strongly to dissuade me from pursuing my subject. However, I persisted.

At the beginning of April, 1940, we intended to return to Palestine, but at the last moment decided to remain a little longer. About that time, discussing with Dr. Gruenbaum, a rabbinical scholar who came to see me at our home on the fifth floor of 5 Riverside Drive, I came upon the idea that the Dead Sea might be of recent origin, because in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah the place is referred to as a plain. The idea had already visited me while still in Palestine, and at that time a check in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* led me to an article by W. Irwin in the *Geological Journal,* printed in England. The calculation of the age of the sea based on the accumulation of salts in it showed that the sea, actually a lake, was not a million years old (the Tertiary period), but only fifty thousand years. Revising these figures (taking as a base for calculation different salts and considering other sources of accretion besides the Jordan), I came to an even more recent age for the Sea. During the discussion that took place with the visiting scholar, I remembered that in some passage dealing with the Exodus the Dead Sea was referred to as recently created. I also remembered the sentence I had read in Bar Droma’s book on the Sinai and surmised that the Exodus took place in catastrophic circumstances. The story of the plagues and of the passage of the sea appeared to me as a description of some calamities in nature.

We decided to extend our stay in the United States. I looked for an Egyptian reference to natural catastrophes. In the textbooks on Egyptian history nothing was mentioned. I read the pamphlet of Charles Beke[(1)](http://www.varchive.org/ce/concepts.htm" \l "f_1) (the author of the idea referred to by Bar Droma), who maintained that Mount Sinai was a volcano. At the occasion of a small social gathering at the home of Dr. Paul Federn, the renowned psychologist, I put the question before a visitor, an Egyptologist from Vienna, and before Dr. Walter Federn, also an Egyptologist, the son of Paul Federn. The former asked the latter—where is the reference about the Nile turning to blood? (I did not wish to disclose my thesis and was all ears). Walter Federn referred me to a book by Junker (under whom he studied) and Delaporte. The next day in the library on Forty-second Street I read the passage: it referred to words of one Ipuwer. Next I needed to find who Ipuwer was and locate the complete text.

At the Metropolitan Museum of Art I asked the help of Dr. W. C. Hayes. For over an hour he searched in the staff library room and, finally, I myself found on the shelves the text and translation of a papyrus stored in Leyden, Holland, since the early nineteenth century, published by Alan H. Gardiner in 1909 under the title “Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage.” Studying the text, I became convinced that I had before me not just a story of a social revolution, but the Egyptian version of the plagues described by an eyewitness, and it was surprising to me that Gardiner had not observed these similarities between the Ipuwer text and the Biblical account of the plagues accompanying the Exodus. Even the wording is similar in both texts—later, in *Ages in Chaos,* I published a detailed comparison of the two sources. This was about April 20, 1940. But the true advance came a few weeks later when I realized that the Amu, who were described as having invaded Egypt while the country lay prostrate, were the Amalekites, met by the Israelites moving out of Egypt, as narrated in the Scriptures. A book on the Amalekites by Noeldeke[(2)](http://www.varchive.org/ce/concepts.htm" \l "f_2) was not in the Forty-second Street Library (one of the greatest in the world) and I went for the first time to the Columbia University Library. From Noeldeke I learned that the Arab authors of the Golden Age of Arab literature claimed that the Amalekites, coming from Mecca, had invaded Egypt and ruled over the country for several centuries at some ancient time. Noeldeke disbelieved this persistent tradition, but for me it was a strong support to what I considered a breakthrough.

This was in June 1940, and in a few days the entire plan of *Ages in Chaos* was born in my mind. I am myself surprised when looking through my one-line notes made in the excitement of the discovery, that in a couple of days I had already concluded not only that the Eighteenth Dynasty in Egypt must be contemporary with the kings of David’s Dynasty, but arrived even to such a detail as that Haremhab, assumed to be the last of the Eighteenth Dynasty, was actually an appointee of King Sennacherib, the Assyrian king—a difference of over six hundred years between the accepted chronology and my new time table.

I knew of course of the el-Amarna tablets, found in King Akhnaton’s short-lived capital, that contain the royal correspondence of the late Eighteenth Dynasty,[(3)](http://www.varchive.org/ce/concepts.htm" \l "f_3) but I had never read the text of the tablets. I remember going to the library of the Metropolitan Museum of Art with the expectation of finding in those tablets letters of king Jehoshaphat of Jerusalem, of king Ahab of Samaria, and of the kings Ben-Hadad and Hazael of Damascus—and I found them there. Similarly I went to the library on Forty-second Street, and Elisheva, my wife, who participated with me in my searches, brought from the shelves the description of the “Punt” expedition of Queen Hatshepshowe (Hatshepsut) who, according to my calculations, must have been the Biblical Queen [of] Sheba. The historian Josephus Flavius described her as the queen “of Egypt and Ethiopia.” I expected to see in the reliefs reproduced in that book how the Israelites of the time of Solomon looked, and almost with trepidation I opened the volume. Next I expected to see the treasures of Solomon’s temple as the booty of Thutmose III, who followed Hatshepsut on the throne, and in the historical atlas of Egyptian archaeology by Wreszinski I saw pictures of the sacred furniture and utensils of Solomon’s temple, even in the same numbers as described in the Scriptures. All these finds were made by me in a matter of days in June 1940. At that time I thought to call the book “From Exodus to Exile” since the reconstruction at that time reached the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile. But I had already realized that the “Forgotten Empire” of the Hittites was but the story of the Chaldean kingdom. I thought that I would finish the book in a matter of a few months.

Early in the fall of 1940 we moved to 525 Riverside Drive to a small apartment on the twelfth floor, overlooking the Hudson.

There on about October 20, in the afternoon, sitting at the window of the kitchenette, I read in the book of Joshuah. I was struck by the fact that the verse in which the sun and moon are described as disrupted in their motion was preceded by a verse telling of great stones falling from the sky. In the library of Columbia University, which I visited several times each day for the next ten or twelve years, I made a list of books on Chinese and Mexican lore—east and west—to find out whether a disruption in the motion of the sun is mentioned there. From the long list made, one of the first books chosen was by Etienne Brasseur de Bourbourg, a missionary of the last century, and the first decipherer of a few Mayan hieroglyphics.[(4)](http://www.varchive.org/ce/concepts.htm" \l "f_4) A passage in the book attracted my special attention—it told that St. Augustine wrote that Varro (a learned Roman of Caesar’s time whose books are not extant) referred to two authorities who claimed that in the time of Ogyges Venus changed its form and orbit. It was not more than two weeks, probably less, from the time that I realized that the catastrophes of the times of Moses and Joshua must have been not local but global, that I also realized that Venus must have played a decisive role in the events: I already understood that Ogyges was the Biblical Agog, the king of the Amalekites, mentioned in the blessing of Israel by Balaam in the days of the conquest by Joshuah. For the next ten years I worked simultaneously on *Ages in Chaos* (a reconstruction of ancient political and cultural history) and *Worlds in Collision* (a reconstruction of natural events).

Early in my work I became convinced that not only is the cosmology of the solar system very different from what is thought, but also the celestial mechanics that claims that only inertia and gravitation participate in the spheres above will need re-examination and so also the Darwinian evolution based on the principle of uniformitarianism or gradualism.

Soon I became aware that I had precursors—one was William Whiston, successor to Newton at Cambridge, who at the end of the 17th century claimed that the Deluge had been caused by a comet that was seen in 1680. The “miracle of Joshuah” however, Whiston dismissed as a worthless piece of folk fantasy. He considered that prior to the Deluge the Earth’s axis of rotation had been perpendicular to the ecliptic, and therefore there were no seasons and that the year had exactly 360 days. Ignatius Donnelly, a member of the House of Representatives, in the later part of the 19th century wrote a book, *Ragnarok,* in which he claimed that in prehistoric times a comet had passed near the Earth and showered till over that part of the globe that happened to be turned toward it. A. Olrik, a Scandinavian author, wrote another book under the same title. Neither one of these two gave any indication of being aware of the work of Whiston. Georges Cuvier, the famous paleontologist, claimed catastrophic interruptions in the history of the globe but made sarcastic remarks about Whiston. Dr. Walter Federn drew my attention to the work of the Viennese engineer Hoerbiger who claimed that thin ice pervades the universe, causes shifts in orbits, the repeated captures of successive moons, and their disintegration millions of years later.[(5)](http://www.varchive.org/ce/concepts.htm" \l "f_5)

With Whiston I agreed as to the Deluge having been caused by a comet; but I had much more to say: Saturn was disrupted by the close approach of Jupiter, and exploded; the explosion of Saturn engulfed the Earth and other planets. This is the story of Tammuz of the Babylonians and of Osiris of the Egyptians, and of Kronos of the Greeks. Centuries later Venus was born by the fission of Jupiter, which collected much of the material dispersed by Saturn. I concluded that Saturn must be made up largely of hydrogen, a fact I soon found confirmed. From Donnelly and from Bellamy, a follower of Hoerbiger, I used a few literary references to the age of darkness and gave credit in each case.

*Ages in Chaos* occupied most of my time: soon I revised the chronology of ancient history up to the time of Alexander of Macedon’s arrival in Egypt. For a year and a half I did not tell Walter Federn of my thesis. I showed it to Dr. Schwartz of the Oriental Department of the Public Library, Forty-second Street, and he thought me wrong; besides, he advised me to write in some language I knew well, rather than in my ferocious English. I discussed my work with Ralph Marcus, translator of Josephus Flavius, in his office at Columbia University, and he, though very friendly, advised me, too, to return to my profession and leave history alone. I corresponded with Prof. Harry Wolfson of Harvard and sent to him an early version of *Ages in Chaos* and he gave it to Prof. Robert Pfeiffer. Next I came to see both, and Pfeiffer discussed with me my history and found me knowledgeable, yet reserved judgment.

One winter night, I think it was in January 1942, I told Walter Federn of my reconstruction, and from that time on he was of great assistance to me with his knowledge of the immense literature on Egyptology. He opposed me consistently but never refused information. I had no similar help from any scholar in cuneiform, though Prof. I. J. Gelb of the Chicago Oriental Institute wrote answers to occasional inquiries.

One morning in 1942 I typed (in erroneous English) a number of pages, and went to Washington D.C. There I had a discussion with Prof. F. R. Moulton, co-author with T. C. Chamberlin of the tidal theory of origin of the solar system, and at the National Academy I tried in vain to persuade the Secretary of the Academy to accept my essay for safekeeping. Returning home I had my essay notarized, and in the court downtown had the court clerk authenticate the notary’s signature.[(6)](http://www.varchive.org/ce/concepts.htm" \l "f_6)

I also devised an experiment to find whether the velocity of light would be influenced by the motion of the illuminating or of the illuminated body. I sent it to Prof. Paul Epstein of the California Institute of Technology, but he assured me, though he did not persuade me, that the issue is settled without an experiment.

Occasionally I would find that some other author had already come to one of the aspects of my theory. Once, I remember, in the library on Forty-second Street, I read the book of an author who advanced the idea that the Pyramids were built to serve as shelters against natural catastrophes, an idea I had already put into writing several years earlier.

In 1945 I put together *Theses for the Reconstruction of Ancient History* and gave it that summer to a printer in Canaan, Connecticut. I published it as a monograph in *Scripta Academica,* a series I started with the funds of my father while still in Palestine and to which Chaim Weizmann and E. Bergmann contributed the first monograph and Prof. A. Fodor, of the Hebrew University, the second. Of the 284 statements in the “Theses,” I would today correct only a very few.

Nine publishers rejected *Ages in Chaos* though Prof. Pfeiffer tried to help. Eight publishers rejected *Worlds in Collision,* mostly because of the many footnotes, believing that the book should be brought out by some subsidized academic (University) press. It was contracted by Macmillan in 1947 and published in 1950. The history of its reception is not dealt with here and is partly known.[(7)](http://www.varchive.org/ce/concepts.htm" \l "f_7)

**References**

1. *Mount Sinai, a Volcano* (1873).
2. T. Nöldeke, *Über die Amalekiter* (Göttingen, 1864).
3. I edited and published in 1923 *Scripta Universitatis,* that served as the beginning of the Hebrew University, and there was a scholarly article by Mahler of Vienna on the chronology of the el-Amarna period.
4. The book has the title *S’il existe les sources de l’histoire . . .*
5. See I. Velikovsky, “Precursors,” *Kronos* VII.1, 48-55.
6. See I. Velikovsky, “[Affidavit.](http://www.varchive.org/ce/affidavit.htm)”
7. See I. Velikovsky, *Stargazers and Gravediggers* (William Morrow Co.: New York, 1983).