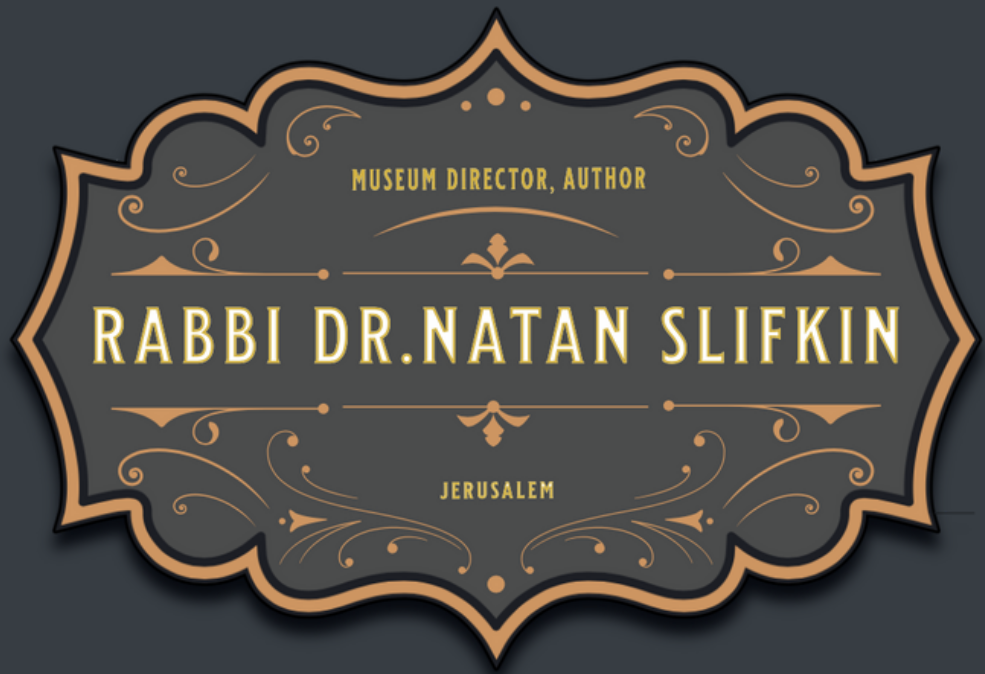




A prolific writer, **Rabbi Dr. Natan** (NAH-tahn) **Slifkin** is a distinguished scholar and educator, serving as the director of the Biblical Museum of Natural History in Beit Shemesh, Israel, which he founded ten years ago. Born in England, he moved to Israel in 1993, earning rabbinic ordination and a PhD in Jewish history from Bar-Ilan University, where his dissertation explored rabbinic encounters with zoology. A passionate bridge between Torah and nature, Rabbi Slifkin has authored books like ‘The Torah Encyclopedia of the Animal Kingdom’ and his latest, ‘The Lions of Zion’, challenging misconceptions about biblical animals and Israel’s ecological heritage. He leads educational safaris in Africa and lectures worldwide, using live exhibits—reptiles, birds and artifacts—to illuminate scriptural narratives. Residing in Beit Shemesh with his family, his lifelong fascination with wildlife and commitment to Israel shape his work, offering a unique lens on Jewish identity and divine wisdom.

CREDENTIALS

- A decade of experience directing a museum in Israel dedicated to the animal world of the Bible
- PhD in Jewish history from Bar-Ilan University
- Author of several books including:
 - [The Challenge of Creation: Judaism's Encounter with Science, Cosmology, and Evolution](#)
 - [Sacred Monsters – Mysterious and Mythical Creatures of Scripture, Talmud and Midrash](#)
 - [The Torah Encyclopedia of the Animal Kingdom](#)
 - [Perek Shirah: Nature's Song](#)
 - [Rationalism vs. Mysticism: Schisms in Traditional Jewish Thought](#)

ONLINE



“The Lions of Zion will add another fascinating layer to the existing discourse on the intersection of Jewish cultural heritage and the natural world. This important subject holds the potential not only to deepen attachment to the natural world for the many who hold the Land of Israel in great love, but also to broaden recognition of this dimension of the historic relationship between the Jewish People and the Land of Israel.”

Isaac Herzog
President of the State of Israel

EXPERTISE

- Wildlife and natural history
- Talmud studies
- Jewish history
- Reconciling science and Jewish thought

DOWNLOADS

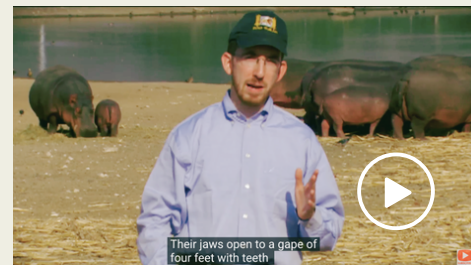
- [Headshot](#)
- [Book cover](#)
- [Manuscript](#)

AVAILABILITY

- Available Sunday-Friday, including evenings
- Israel Daylight Time (7 hrs ahead of Eastern time)
- Unavailable during Jewish festivals - Rosh HaShana (September 22-24), Yom Kippur (October 1-2), Sukkot (Oct 6-7, 13-14)

MEDIA

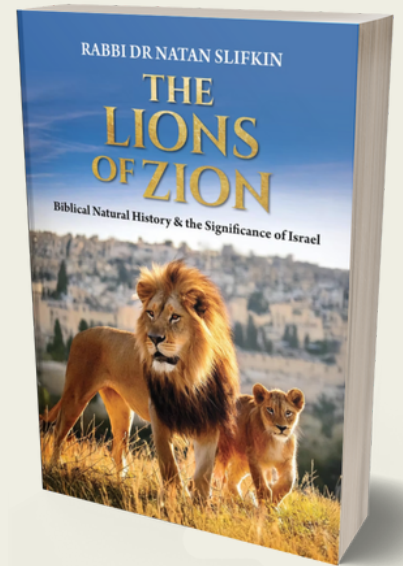
Click below to watch and listen as Rabbi Slifkin discusses the connection between the Torah, Israel, zoology and more in appearances on podcasts and popular programs such as *Talkline with Zev Brenner*, *Animal Planet* and the *Jerusalem Post Podcast* (joins at 20:00:00 mark).



TO BOOK AN INTERVIEW, CONTACT:
CURT HARDING
CURT@JONESLITERARY.COM



ABOUT THE BOOK



The Lions of Zion takes readers on an adventure through the wild animals, plants, and other natural phenomena of the Bible.

Rabbi Dr. Natan Slifkin, founder and director of Israel's unique Biblical Museum of Natural History, shows how the natural world of the Bible plays a central role in Jewish heritage and connects the Jewish People to the Land of Israel, from ancient times, through global dispersion, through to modern Israel. Highly engaging, *The Lions of Zion* not only provides a comprehensive overview of the natural world of the Bible and its significance in Jewish thought, but is also an overtly Zionist project. It aims to serve as an invaluable resource for understanding how to combat challenges to Israel's legitimacy.

PUBLISHING DATA

- **Publisher:** Biblical Museum of Natural History
- **Release date:** September, 2025
- **Format:** Hardcover, full color
- **Price:** \$39.95, (130.00 Shekels)
- **Length:** 380 pages
- **Where to get it:** The book is ONLY AVAILABLE at the museum's website, www.biblicalnaturalhistory.org. Proceeds will benefit the Biblical Museum of Natural History.

WHY IS IT RELEVANT?

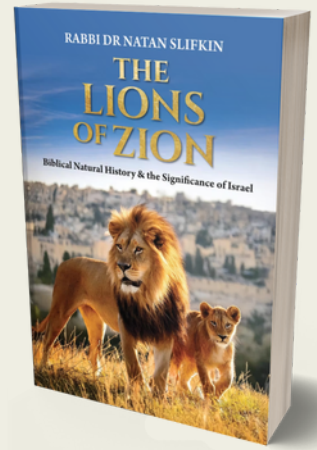
- Natural history has been co-opted or misinterpreted to create nationalistic myths, including in the United States.
- This book represents a modernized attempt to use natural history to justify a state's existence, akin to historical examples.
- Rabbi Slifkin comments on biblical, Jewish dispersion and British colonial periods of Israel to refute anti-Israel claims.
- A segment of Americans, including Christians, are reevaluating their relationship with Zionism and modern Israel in the midst of the current war.
- Human rights organizations and anti-zionist groups around the world are debating Israel's right to exist and historical claims on the Holy Land.
- Recent stories about the Smithsonian's deceptive displays and narratives re: American history have reminded us of the importance of maintaining accurate representation of a nation's history and heritage.

READERS WILL...

- Gain an appreciation of the Bible by understanding the significance of the animals and plants that it discusses.
- Be inspired by the miraculous restoration of Biblical fauna and flora from thousands of years ago.
- Learn how some modern academic criticisms of Israel are based on distortions about the role of animals and plants in Jewish and Palestinian culture.
- Discover the fascinating stories of everything from kosher grasshoppers to evacuating endangered species from Iran for reintroduction to the Holy Land.

TOPICS, QUESTIONS

- Why did the war launched by Hamas, Hezbollah and others on Israel motivate you to write this book?
- As President Trump's recent efforts to unravel deceptive historical narratives at the Smithsonian have revealed, maintaining accurate historical records regarding a nation is important. How does your book help do that for Israel?
- A rabbi obsessed with exotic animals? Why? What got you into this field?
- What's the most unexpected animal to appear in the Bible?
- So, you sell kosher grasshoppers at the museum? Why would anyone want to eat them?
- What are the most notable moments where animals appear in scripture?
- What would readers misunderstand about the Bible if they assumed an animal in the Bible was a similar species from a region other than Israel?
- How does recognizing that biblical animals like lions and hyenas are native to Israel change our understanding of Scripture and God's creation, especially for those studying the Old Testament?
- In your book, you tie the Bible's flora and fauna to the Jewish People's ancient connection to the Land of Israel—how does this refute contemporary anti-Israel narratives in academia and media?
- With your Biblical Museum of Natural History featuring everything from kosher grasshoppers to pythons, what surprising Bible mysteries have you solved through wildlife, and how can that inspire everyday faith?
- For those grappling with skepticism, how can exploring the natural world of the Bible foster a deeper appreciation for its timeless truths and the Holy Land's heritage?
- In an era of biblical illiteracy, can exploring the natural history of the Holy Land—through stories of kosher grasshoppers and endangered species—revive wonder and inspiration in young believers?
- As Christians seek to connect Old Testament prophecies with modern Israel, how does the book reveal the miraculous restoration of biblical wildlife as a sign of God's faithfulness?
- Amid rising anti-Israel narratives in academia, how can the Bible's flora and fauna prove the deep, millennia-old Jewish connection to the Land of Israel?
- Can understanding the animals of the Tanakh as native to Eretz Yisrael inspire pride and refute claims of "settler colonialism" in contemporary discourse?
- In the face of "woke" academic attacks on Israel as a colonial state, how do biblical animals and plants dismantle these distortions and affirm Israel's indigenous ties?
- As anti-Israel protests escalate on campuses, what role can wildlife history—from hyenas to olive trees—play in countering false narratives about Palestinian and Jewish culture?
- Amid global wildlife conservation efforts, how does a rabbi's museum in Israel blend Bible stories with animals like crocodiles and wolves to captivate families and nature lovers?
- In a time of heated Middle East debates, can tales of biblical plants and animals—from olive branches to hippos—offer a fresh, non-political lens on Israel's natural heritage?
- Regarding ancient wisdom and modern politics, how does Biblical natural history debunk anti-Israel myths while uncovering tales of hyenas and crocodiles in the Holy Land?



Olive trees have served as the backbone of Levantine Arab agriculture for several centuries. There are more than ten million of them in Gaza and the West Bank, and they create 70% of fruit production and contribute around 14% to the Palestinian economy today. Approximately 93% of the olive harvest is used for olive oil, and the remainder for table olives and soap.

As noted earlier, Israel has destroyed many hundreds of thousands of olive trees. This is a tragedy, just as the many thousands of human lives that have been lost is a tragedy. But, as noted earlier, this has nothing to do with deforestation per se, nor was it necessarily unjustified in every case. Olive trees are features of agriculture, and agriculture is caught up in human conflicts.

For example, the construction of the 712-kilometer Separation Barrier between Arab and Jewish neighborhoods resulted in the destruction of many olive trees and the separation of farmers from their orchards. But it also prevented suicide bombings of civilians, which is why it was built to begin with. The Separation Barrier was not about harming olive trees or even about harming Palestinians – it was about protecting the lives of Israeli civilians.

The Israeli government, the IDF, and individual Israelis have destroyed olive trees. Which of these acts were justified depends on both the specific case and one's perspective on the conflict in general. This mirrors how Palestinians and other Arabs have destroyed agricultural resources, burned forests, and vandalized archaeological sites – acts whose legitimacy depends on one's broader perspective on the conflict. But some claim that the destruction of olive trees is about more than just a random resource being a casualty of war. Many Palestinians write about how the olive tree possesses great symbolism for them:

“Olive trees carry more than an economic significance in the lives of Palestinians. They are not just like any other trees, they are symbolic of Palestinians' attachment to their land. Because the trees are drought-resistant and grow under poor soil conditions, they represent Palestinian resistance and resilience. The fact that olive trees live and bear fruit for thousands of years is parallel to Palestinian history and continuity on the land.”

“In the Bible, the dove brings an olive branch to Noah as a sign that the world has been restored to a peaceful state.”

Thus, in a speech to the United Nations General Assembly in 1974, Yasser Arafat claimed that “Zionist terrorism targeted the olive tree” because it “has been a proud symbol” and a “living reminder that the land is Palestinian.”

In fact, to the extent that Israel and Israelis have destroyed olive trees, it has been about urban expansion and resource warfare, as described above. It would not even occur to Israelis that olive trees might be a Palestinian symbol. Because for Israelis, the olive is a Jewish symbol!

The olive tree is the national tree of the State of Israel, selected after a national vote. As noted earlier, olives are one of the Seven Species listed in the Bible with which the Land is praised, and the olive was a unit of measurement in Jewish law. Olive trees were cultivated extensively by Jews in the Land of Israel in antiquity; the Mishnah has numerous laws regarding their use. Olive oil was used for cooking and for lighting lamps. But aside from the use of olive oil in daily life, it also had a ritual function. Olive oil was used to anoint kings and priests, and to light the menorah (Temple Candelabrum) every day.

The menorah is one of the most prominent symbols in Judaism; the Arch of Titus in Rome, constructed two thousand years ago after the destruction of Judaea, depicts the menorah being triumphantly carried away from the Temple. The emblem of the modern State of Israel depicts this menorah, surrounded by two olive branches.

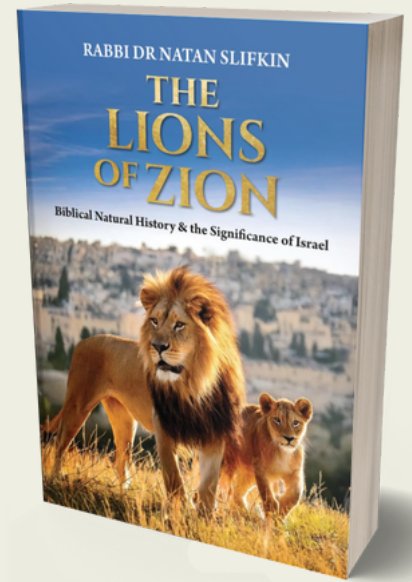
In the Bible, the dove brings an olive branch to Noah as a sign that the world has been restored to a peaceful state. And Jeremiah depicts the olive tree as a symbol for the nation of Israel: “God described you as a flourishing olive tree, fair, with choice fruit.”

Palestinians see the olive tree as symbolizing their people, but so do Jews. And as for claims about how the lifespan of olive trees for thousands of years is “parallel to Palestinian history and continuity on the land,” it is extremely difficult to talk about Palestinian history having lasted in the land for thousands of years. True, many Palestinian people are biologically descended from ancient Levantines, but their cultural heritage is largely a result of the 7th-century Islamic invasion from Arabia.

Meanwhile, Jews were cultivating olives in the Holy Land centuries before the Islamic invasion. There are olive trees in Israel today that are claimed by some to be thousands of years old; if this is true, then they may well have been planted by Jews as part of Jewish culture, and they were certainly not planted by Palestinians as part of any Palestinian culture.



ENDORSEMENTS



“*The Lions of Zion* will add another fascinating layer to the existing discourse on the intersection of Jewish cultural heritage and the natural world. This important subject holds the potential not only to deepen attachment to the natural world for the many who hold the Land of Israel in great love, but also to broaden recognition of this dimension of the historic relationship between the Jewish People and the Land of Israel.”

Isaac Herzog

President of the State of Israel

“Fascinating and enjoyable... it shows how the animals and plants with whom our ancestors lived shaped the way we used language and Biblical imagery throughout our millennia of exile, turning our culture into a living map of connections with our lost native land...”

Natan Sharansky

Human Rights Activist and former Minister of Interior for Israel

“...offers a fresh perspective on the Jewish connection to the Land of Israel... In an era where Israel and the Jewish connection to the Land of Israel face numerous challenges, this scholarly yet highly readable book serves as an invaluable source of inspiration.”

Dr. Simon Nemtsov

Head of International Relations, Israel Nature & Parks Authority

“The Lions of Zion is engaging, accessible, and upbeat. It is a page-turner for anyone with a love of our Land. Still, once the author has the reader hooked and smiling, he shows how knowledge of the Land can be a serious tool in fighting on a new front that has opened up in the war to delegitimize the Jewish State.”

Rabbi Yitzchak Adlerstein

Director of Interfaith Affairs, The Simon Wiesenthal Center