

A Brief History of Reality Programming

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Lorna Harkonnen, director of the Red Sea Scroll division of Strang Research Center, announced the discovery of a several new scrolls in Cave 4 at Qumran at a press conference. According to Harkonnen, the find establishes that the current fascination with reality television is anything but a modern occurrence.

"These newly translated texts," Harkonnen said, "show that interest in reality programming is as old as the ancient Hebrews themselves. They chronicle centuries of project development, though very few actual success stories.

"For instance," she continues, "an early version of *Big Brother*—around 1930 B.C.—was cancelled when 'little brother' Jacob stole the show."

An analysis of the scrolls produced the following Reality Programming Timeline*:

2085 B.C.—*Survivor, Sodom*: Abundance of nude contestants drives censors batty. Tragedy in final episode proves too much for audience to take.

1920 B.C.—*The Bachelor (Jacob Edition)*: Producers try to build show around the

"real star" of the failed *Big Brother*. Scandal rocks the finale. Despite retooling and a seven-year hiatus, the once-bitten/twice-shy audience fails to tune in to the comeback series.

Date unknown—*Survivorman (Job Edition)*: Lacks adequate *schadenfreude*; audience tops out at three.

1445 B.C.—*Fear Factor, Egypt*: Drinking blood, eating locusts and frogs, enduring boils and meteor showers ... all OK. Advertisers depart when lose-your-first-born series climax is revealed.

***The Amazing Race, Sinai*:** Red Sea pilot episode wows audiences, but ratings plummet in the fourth year when it seems to become just aimless wandering. Matters aren't helped by the presence of hundreds of thousands of competitors. Eventually, even the sweeps week man-eating earthquakes fail to draw numbers. Cancelled in the eighth year of a projected 40-year run.

No one tells the contestants.

1435 B.C.—*Iron Chef*: Countless manna recipes stop drawing crowds. When quail is added to the ingredients list—and audience members start dying—the FDA pulls the plug amid bird flu and *E. coli* concerns.

1405 B.C.—*Jackass*: No one tunes in to watch a talking mule. Ancient host Donald O'Connor blames the lack of catchy theme song.

1100 B.C.—*The Apprentice*: In the pilot episode, intern Samuel wakes up his boss several times in one night, yet doesn't get fired. Focus group finds Eli too soft. No further episodes ordered.


1015 B.C.—*The Contender*: When underdog David wins a stunning victory in the opening seconds, the pay-per-view crowd demands a full refund.

970 B.C.—*The Bachelor (Solomon Edition)*: After saying good-bye to the first dozen hopefuls, King Solomon marries the remaining 700 contestants.

750 B.C.—*The Bachelor (Hosea Edition)*: Winning bachelorette is revealed to have previously been a hooker. Producers pull the plug before the first episode airs.

600 B.C.—*Babylonian Idol*: Project doomed when three contestants refuse to play along.

550 B.C.—*Survivorman (Daniel Edition)*: Nothing happens in the lions' den; audience yawns.

*All dates are approximate. 

FOUR THAT WORKED

1040 B.C.—*Antiques Roadshow*: Third time lucky for this spin-off from *The Amazing Race*—itself a *Fear Factor* spin-off. The Israelites exhibit many of the heirloom-quality parting gifts they "liberated" when they left Egypt.

965 B.C.—*Extreme Makeover: Lord's Home Edition*: See what a team of artisans can do to the simple threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite ...

950 B.C.—*The People's Court*: King Solomon's *Bachelor* days over, he returns to offer sound judgment to parties who decide not to take the law into their own hands. Infant vivisection episode becomes an instant classic.

475 B.C.—*Extreme Makeover (Esther Edition)*: From Hadassah to Uppa'classah—say no more.

Why doesn't the hair on your arms grow as fast as the hair on your head?