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AN ANCIENT BOOK LED THEM TO TREASURE

I am going to share with you some amazing facts about an ancient Book.

For many years, debates have raged over its authenticity. Some have claimed it to be nothing more than a collection of myths... and that you cannot accept it as true history. Others have placed their faith in every word of it.

This ancient document contains what you might call a “treasure map” outlined in words - a map which identifies locations of hidden treasures.

Prospectors, explorers and scientists have been studying it more seriously of late. And from the clues it contains, some of the treasures described are actually being found.

In fact, would you believe, prospectors are discovering precious commodities - oil, copper and other riches – precisely where this ancient Book said they were!

The discoveries are being made in Israel and Egypt.

Nile Bitumen = Oil

When the president of the Standard Oil Company read the old story of a little boat on the Nile in which a Hebrew baby called Moses was set afloat, he suddenly stopped short.

What grabbed his attention was this: that the vessel was coated in pitch to make it watertight.

The oil man decided that where there was pitch (bitumen), there should be oil. His company went to Egypt and drilled. And right along the Nile Valley they discovered oil.

Check-list agreed with findings

Dr Yigal Yadin, former commander-in-chief of the Israeli army, had a similar experience. He was directing excavations at the biblical city of Hazor in northern Israel.

From the Bible description he made a list for the workmen who were itemizing objects. He told them, “Expect to find these items.”

To their amazement – but not to his – they found everything, including the city gate that the Bible says was there.

Water in the desert

Water is always a problem in a land that is more than half desert. That is why it is more than startling to suddenly drive up to a swimming pool, complete with diving board, in the middle of the barren Negev in southern Israel.

The swimming pool is the result of a search conducted near a modern settlement named Yotvata, after the biblical Jotbath.

What is the biblical clue that water was there? It was found in the story of the wandering of the children of Israel as told in Deuteronomy 10:7 –

“From thence they journeyed unto Gud-go-dah; and from Gud-godah to Jotbath, a land of rivers and waters.”

Since Israel was re-established in 1948, the nation has been going back to the Bible for practical assistance in modern living.

Researchers have gone to the Bible to find which areas had water in ancient times, enabling them to flourish. From the stories, they have been locating the old wells and cleaning them out to be used again.

Explained Mrs A. G. Rylah, the wife of an Israeli government Chief Secretary: “They know that when the Bible mentions a certain crop and where it grew, that it will grow there again if the area is given water.”

Israel: “Oil out of the flinty rock”

When the momentous news of the first oil strike in the history of Israel was flashed over the young nation’s radio in 1955, it was prefaced with the reading of a biblical passage from Deuteronomy 32:13. This tells how the Lord God brought Jacob out of the wilderness into a land where he could “suck... oil out of the flinty rock.”

The reading was highly appropriate, because it was the Bible that had inspired the Israelis to drill in the first place.

So when the British gave up as a bad job their own search for oil during the days when they held the mandate for the Holy Land, the Israelis patiently bided their time.

However, shortly after achieving their independence in 1948, they resumed drillings in an area called Heletz, near the troublesome Gaza Strip on the Egyptian border.

Their faith paid off in 1955 when the drill that was boring deep into earth suddenly exploded skywards, followed by the “oil out of the flinty rock”.

Asher: Iron

A remarkable story of faith in the prophetic words of the Bible was told by Dr Dov Joseph, Israel’s former Minister of Development.

Figuring in it is the prophecy by Moses to the tribes of Israel in Deuteronomy 33:24-25, in which Moses says to Asher: “thy shoes shall be iron.”

Inspecting a newly-discovered vein of iron ore in the hills of Galilee in northern Israel, Dr Joseph was approached by one of the mine workers, a stooped, white-haired old man who produced from his shirt front a rough map of biblical Israel showing that the new mine was in the land of Asher and his tribe.

“And here, sir,” the old man said, “we have found the iron Moses promised us!”

Solomon’s Mines

The biblical story of King Solomon’s court reads like a fairytale.

It seems that the writer must have had a rich imagination and a tendency to exaggerate. But the description of the reign of Solomon, though it reads like fiction, turns out to be FACT.

This was proved by two American archaeological expeditions in 1937.

In that year, packed with the latest equipment and accompanied by geologists, historians, architects, excavators and a photographer, a caravan of camels left Jerusalem for the Gulf of Aqaba.

Its leader was Dr Nelson Glueck, who, like others, was a member of the famous American School of Oriental research.

Their goal was a shapeless mound called Tell el-Khelei-feh.

Glueck, a world-famed archaeologist and biblical scholar, had spent 20 or more years tramping up and down the Negev, Israel’s vast and arid desert, in search of what the Bible told him was there.

This clue came from the book of Deuteronomy (chapter 8: 7 and 9):

“For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land... a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.”

Since brass is an alloy of copper and zinc, Dr Glueck felt that the word “brass” in the Bible was a mistranslation for “copper”.

After a journey by camel caravan and by foot that would provide an enviable script for a Hollywood epic, they reached Tell el-Khelei-feh. This lonely mound, which seemed no more than a pile of rubble, rises inland out of the shadeless plain.

They made camp and began to probe. Careful work produced unexpectedly quick results. Fish-hooks were found: Copper fish-hooks! Then tiles and remnants of walls were discovered. Everywhere around them the scientists noticed that the sandstone was a distinctive green color.

In his tent one evening Glueck reflected on the results of the work.

Interesting material had been found, but nothing really remarkable.

Looking through his notes, he stopped and pondered. Iron-ore and malachite in the Aqaba?

In that mound of debris in front of his tent, remains of walls, slag and copper fish-hooks? And all of it only 500 yards from of the Red Sea?

This all seemed somehow familiar.

Glueck, with mounting excitement, again searched out the passage in the Bible which mentions the Red Sea in connection with a great king:

“And king Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-Geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom” (2 Chronicles 8:17).

Glueck knew that in biblical times Edom came right down to the gulf of the Red Sea.

Now his mind was racing.

In the middle of the night he summoned his colleagues for a conference.

They decided to do a thorough investigation now.

Glueck was sure he now knew why they had found casting moulds and a vast quantity of copper slag in the middle of the scorching, pitilessly hot plain.

A blast furnace

His team worked furiously, but they had to withdraw before Glueck could prove his theory.

Another expedition in 1940 continued the excavations at Tell el-Kheleifeh and PROVED Glueck's feeling had been right.

In a square-walled enclosure the expedition uncovered an extensive building. The green discoloration on the walls left no doubt as to its purpose... it was a blast furnace.

The mud-brick walls had two rows and openings: they were flues. A skilful system of air passages was included in the construction.

The blast furnace was built in accordance with a principle that was resurrected in modern industry in the 19th century and called the Bessemer system.

Ezion-Geber was located on the King's Highway that ran from Egypt to Damascus, Syria.

Ten smelters used in refining copper have since been excavated here. They had modern-looking flues.

They not only faced north-west to receive the winds blowing southward from the north-west with great velocity, but were also located at the north-west corner of the town. The wind, by means of air channels, automatically served to give necessary draft to the furnace fires.

Here the copper and iron were not only refined, but made into ingots and finished products.

Ezion-Geber produced the metal for the ritual furnishings of Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem – for the “altar of brass”, the “sea”, as a great copper basin was called, for the “ten bases of brass”, for the “pots, shovels, basins” and for the great pillars “Jachin and Boaz” in the porch of the Temple.

King Solomon, described by Glueck as the “great copper-king”, must be reckoned among the greatest exporters of copper in the ancient world.

Solomon doubtless got much of his tremendous wealth from the production of metal implements, such as tools and weapons, and the sale of them to other nations.

It was here, at Ezion-Geber, that Solomon built ocean going ships. These sailed to the ends of the earth. Back through Ezion-Geber every three years came tropical products such as ivory and ebony, as well as exotic animals including apes (or marmosets) and peacocks (1 Kings 9:26; 2 Chronicles 8:17,18; 9:21).

The biblical record notes that gold, silver and copper were more plentiful during Solomon's reign than ever before or later (1 Kings 7:46,47; 2 Chronicles 4:17,18; 9:13,14,27).

Archaeology has in our day corroborated or illuminated all these facts.

The harbour and its installations have been smothered in sand.

Copper Mines

But Glueck found more of what he was looking for – the rich copper mines that had helped make King Solomon a wealthy monarch – and that had been lost to civilization for nearly 3,000 years.

These mines, in the Jordanian region known as the Arabah, to the north-east of Ezion-Geber, proved to be numerous in number. Copper ore from them was taken and smelted in furnaces near the mines. Huge heaps of slag left near those mines are witnesses of extensive mining operations. And broken pottery found within and near the mines dates most of the activity to Solomon's time.

Ruins of furnaces adjacent to the mines testify that the ore was processed as it was dug out of the ground. From there the crude metal was transported to Ezion-Geber to be refined.

As a result of Glueck's discovery, the stillness of the desert was soon being broken by the clatter of a booming, bustling mining and copper-smelting industry being built at Timna, the site of the biblical mines.

Retracing the steps to this discovery, one stands in the heart of the desert in front of two massive, wind-eroded, craggy stone columns that jut from the parched brown sand.

Iron mines

Later Glueck extended his explorations to the Negev, the dry desolate country in the south of today's Israel. There he discovered rich iron mines, which have since, like the copper mines, been again exploited, after lying dormant for 3,000 years.

"I have always gone on the assumption that the historical statements in the Bible are true," Dr Glueck said. "On that basis I have made some of my most important finds."

Ancient military strategy at Michmash

On February 13, 1918, in Palestine during the closing phases of World War 1, Viscount Allenby, the commander of the British army in the Middle East, was outlining to his officers a plan of frontal attack on the village of Michmash.

Michmash (Mukhmas) is 9 miles (14 kilometres) north of Jerusalem. It sits on a hill north of the narrow and deep Wadi es-Suweinit (the "pass of Michmash"), which leads from the tablelands of Ephraim down to Jericho.

Anyway, Allenby was planning a frontal attack on the Turkish-held village.

One of his officers, Major Petrie, felt sure that he had heard the name Michmash before, but could not remember where or when.

That night he could not sleep, for turning the word over in his mind.

Michmash... Michmash, he mused.

At last it occurred to him. Michmash was the name of a place mentioned in the Bible.

Igniting the lamp and fumbling for his copy of the Bible, Major Petrie began searching. To his relief and joy, he found the passage in 1 Samuel chapters 13 and 14.

The major rushed to his superior officer, roused him from sleep, and excitedly pointed out the verses describing a battle in that very place 3,000 years before.

The biblical account tells how King Saul's son Jonathan and his armorbearer – just two men alone - climbed up a steep path by two sharp rocks and overcame the Philistines in their rocky stronghold.

The general decided it was worth investigating. He sent out scouts at once to check on the accuracy of the Bible description. When the scouts located the sharp rocks and other landmarks, they reported their findings.

The commander and major studied the Bible account more carefully. As a result, that night they changed their plan of attack.

The next morning, a small detachment of British soldiers followed Jonathan's route, surprised the Turks, and routed them with ease.

Did you enjoy this report? Has this whetted your appetite for more ancient secrets?

This is just the tip of the iceberg. International explorer, archaeologist and lecturer Jonathan Gray has amassed an endless array of ancient mysteries, wonders and surprises for you.

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