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Published approximately every six weeks by THE UNIVERSITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. The purpose of the Newsletter is to disseminate knowledge of recent archaeological discoveries bearing on the Latter-day Saint scriptures; also of the archaeological activities and viewpoints of the Society and its members. Subscription by membership in the Society: three dollars per year; or Life Membership, fifty dollars. (Membership also includes subscription to other publications of the Society and of the BYU Department of Archaeology.)

78.0 HISTORICITY OF ABRAHAM. Review of William F. Albright, "Abram the Hebrew; a New Archaeological Interpretation," Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, No. 163 (October, 1961) pp. 36-54. By James R. Clark, Associate Professor of Religious Instruction, BYU.

During the visit last summer to the BYU campus, Dr. Albright announced the forthcoming publication of this intensely interesting article as one of the main turning-points of his thought on certain problems of Old Testament archaeology. He intimated that for years the date and time of Abram-Abraham had been a major archaeological problem to him, but that recent excavations and surveys by two eminent Israeli archaeologists, Nelson Glueck and Beno Rothenberg, had provided convincing new evidence on the life and times of Abraham.

Confirming this oral announcement, Dr. Albright writes in the article: "The writer had not succeeded in finding a satisfactory approach before this summer, but the conclusive evidence for intensive donkey caravan trade in the Negeb which we owe to Glueck and Rothenberg changes the entire picture. In the first place, we can now understand for the first time why the towns and places of residence attributed to Abraham in Genesis were key points for large-scale donkey caravans. The movement between Ur and Haran becomes easy to understand when we recall that Ur was the greatest commercial capital that the world has yet seen. . . . Haran on the Balikh was probably the northern base of operations for this trade, as well as for commerce between Assyria and Iran on the east and Syria-Egypt to the west. . . ."

"Hebrew tradition makes Abraham leave the Ur-Harran axis and spend the rest of his life between Damascus and Egypt, where the fast developing caravan trade must have become exceedingly profitable." (Pp. 44-46ff.)

Dr. Albright's article was written as a direct result of his study of Rothenberg's volume God's Wilder-

ness: Discoveries in Sinai (London, Thames & Hudson, 1961), of Glueck's collection of Middle Bronze I pottery and artifacts examined "at leisure" during his stay at Hebrew Union College (January-June, 1961), and of Glueck's volume, Rivers in the Desert; a History of the Negev (New York, Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1959).

Dr. Albright, if we read him correctly, pictures Abraham not as a semi-nomad but as a "resident alien," a merchant prince maintaining house and family successively at Haran, Shechem, Gerar, Hebron, and perhaps other caravan centers "while he was down in Sinai leading caravans."

Abraham's time, according to Dr. Albright, would correspond to the range of Middle Bronze I deposits in the Negeb and Sinai, and in Palestine with a maximum range extending from 2000 B.C. to about 1800 B.C. This would place Abraham as a merchant prince over much if not all of the Fertile Crescent roughly coeval with the third Dynasty of Ur, the Twelfth Dynasty of Egypt, Hama J 1-8 in Syria, and other Middle Bronze I sites. Shechem, Bethel, Hebron, and Gerar were all occupied and prosperous caravan centers in Middle Bronze I. Only Hebron remains archaeologically unknown although it is likely buried deep under the modern village of el-Khalil.

"The mention of Melchizedek, the reference in /Gen./ 14:14 to Abraham's 318 retainers (with an Egyptian word used in the 20th century and later for the retainers of Asiatic chieftains), and the Hittite address to Abraham as 'prince of God' (Gen. 23:6) all illustrate the high rank of Abraham in the world of that day as reflected in Hebrew tradition. These and other data which we have presented are meaningless unless we take them at their face value and recognize in the hoary figure of 'Abram the Hebrew' a caravaneer of high repute in his time, the chief traditional representative of the original donkey caravaneers of the 19th century B.C., when this profession reached the climax of its history. It is not surprising that the Hebrew prose tradition of Israelite times no longer understood Abraham's

place in society, but it faithfully preserved many incidents and phrases which make the original situation clear." (Albright, Bulletin, No. 163 /19617, p. 52.)

As is characteristic of all of Dr. Albright's work, the article is interestingly written and extensively documented with philological and archaeological evidence in support of his viewpoint.

Several points in the article will be of particular interest to LDS scholars. Investigators who accept Joseph Smith's translation of the papyrus scrolls that came into his hands in 1835 from Egypt will find Dr. Albright's whole article and thesis a confirmation of Joseph Smith's translation of Facsimile No. 3 in the Book of Abraham, wherein Abraham is shown sitting upon the throne of Egypt, "by the politeness of the king." Abraham is said to be "reasoning upon the principles of astronomy, in the king's court." It is doubtful if a semi-nomad as many have pictured Abraham to be would have been accorded such honor, being an Asiatic, in the proud court of the Egyptians, but it is perfectly logical that the "merchant prince" the "prince of God" of Dr. Albright's article could have been accorded such honors. Abraham's "place in society" which Dr. Albright maintains was "no longer understood" in later Israelite times is further clarified by both the Albright article and the acceptance of Joseph Smith's translations of what he maintained were original records of Abraham, now found in the Pearl of Great Price and an unpublished manuscript in the LDS Historian's office in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Indeed until the military events of Genesis 14, the whole period of Abraham has been characterized by Glueck (Rivers in the Desert, p. 76ff.) as the "Pax Abrahamitica" or "Abraham's Peace." Glueck writes: "The peaceful journeys of Abraham from Canaan to Egypt and back again... alone suffice to emphasize the importance of the Negev between the end of the third and the first part of the second millennium B.C....."

"The picture commonly evoked by the account of Abraham's stay in the Negev is one of Bedouins and camels and billowing sands, of tent encampments and simple tribal life. Imaginative tales and romantic drawings and simple lack of knowledge have contributed to the prevailing misconceptions... The Age of Abraham was a flourishing period of peace and of cultural expansion, of energetic and seemingly undisturbed cultivation of the soil for about three hundred years, of growing population which pushed even into marginal lands such as the Negev... It was an age made lustrous by the experiences and insights of the 'Father of a Multitude of Nations,' as Abraham was called in the Bible."

For students of Abraham and his times, Dr. Albright's article provides a new approach and should,

along with the work of Glueck and Rothenberg, open many new avenues of re-appraisal of the whole second millennium B.C. For LDS students of the Book of Abraham the work of these three men should continue to provide confirmation of the accuracy of the whole cultural milieu across the Fertile Crescent reflected in Abraham's own writings as translated by Joseph Smith.

78.1 NEW PICTORIAL COMMENTARY ON THE OLD TESTAMENT. Review of the Biblical World (Jerusalem: The International Publishing Co., Ltd., 1960-4 vols.). By Ellis T. Rasmussen, Chairman, Department of Biblical Languages, BYU.

The editors of this beautiful work have "carefully chosen illustrations for their authenticity and their value as visual aids to the understanding of the Biblical text," as they indicate in the Introduction. They have done their work well. Dr. W. F. Albright, of Johns Hopkins in Maryland, said of the work, 'Views of the Biblical World,... will enable the reader to visualize the world of the Hebrew Bible as never before.... The names of the editors and advisers ensure accurate scholarship.... This is a superb project, magnificently conceived!' (Quotation on inside of jacket.)

The title of the work is really inadequate; it is a pictorial commentary on the whole Old Testament, and one in which "one good look is worth a thousand words." Most of the pictures are excellent color photographs of ancient images, carvings, casts, paintings, and inscriptions, thereby giving the reader opportunity to see things as the ancients saw them. This has certain advantages over seeing only modern reconstructions based upon word-pictures, although these also are supplied and are helpful when the other materials are inadequate or unavailable.

The concise and meaningful comments provided on each page, telling about the objects pictured, their origins, sources, and uses, and the relationship of the things shown to the text which they illustrate, add much to the value of this four-volume work as a commentary on the Bible. Since the authors and compilers are themselves "Hebrews," they possess a familiarity with things Biblical that is possible only to one born in that heritage and habitation; most Western scholars hardly achieve it. They who are familiar with the manner of speaking among the Jews can tell the subtle meaning of many words and phrases in the Bible's idioms, and perceive their innuendo and imagery where the uninitiated are totally lost. The Prophet Joseph Smith himself once said of the value of knowing the language (at least) of the Bible writers: "Our latitude

and longitude can be determined in the original Hebrew with far greater accuracy than in the English version. There is a grand distinction between the actual meaning of the prophets and the present translation." (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith, pp. 290-291.) Beside their interpretive value, these running comments with each picture constitute a quite continuous historical review of the history within the Old Testament.

Moreover, the total impact of all the pictures is to give one a feeling of familiarity with the industry, the customs, the fauna and flora, and the institutions and establishments of Bible times. The effect is to make one feel that Biblical people and events were real.

In the excellent maps, pictures, and incisive commentary, we have here at last an elucidation of the Bible text by people who live in Bible lands and are descendants and heirs in a very real sense to the Bible writers themselves.

The four-volume work is distributed in this area by Wheelwright Publishers, Inc., 971 West Temple Street, Salt Lake City 1, Utah.

78.2 QUETZALOCATL AMONG THE AZTECS. Review of Laurette Séjourné, Burning Water: Thought and Religion in Ancient Mexico (Grove Press: New York, 1960; Evergreen paperback, 1192 pp., 22 plates, 82 figures; \$1.95). By Dee F. Green.

The author's central theme in this book is the religion of Quetzalcoatl among the Aztec Indians of the Valley of Mexico. After a brief review of the Conquest, Miss Séjourné reviews Aztec culture and the downfall of the empire. She then discusses Aztec religion and the Nahuatl "symbolic language," and in the final part reviews the characteristics of five of the Aztec gods.

The book is very well illustrated with photographs and excellent line drawings. The author's greatest service, however, is her attempt to make Aztec religion meaningful to the Western mind. This leads into some pitfalls, but generally the careful lay reader will benefit from her often subjective approach. Her defense of Aztec human sacrifice as a political weapon rather than a purely religious practice is long overdue.

On the other hand, her projection of the Toltec Quetzalcoatl cult into Aztec culture is somewhat fuzzy. This is due perhaps, to the fact that more is known about Aztec religion than about the earlier Toltec worship.

The author relies heavily on Sahagún and her own excavations at Teotihuacán to support her view that the

Toltec culture and Quetzalcoatl religion began at that center. But some will not agree that Teotihuacán represents the ancient Toltec capital city Tollán, at least not until further excavations are carried out at this and other sites. Objections to the author's continual use of "archaeological proofs" without citing them, could also be raised, as well as her speculative interpretations of the meanings of various glyphs and glyph elements.

Her conclusions based on these rather subjective criteria are somewhat suspect. Nevertheless, the volume presents interesting points of view that should be considered as research progresses.

78.3 SOCIETY GETS NEW ADDRESS. All mail intended for the University Archaeological Society or the BYU Department of Archaeology should be sent to: 139 Maeser Building, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Postal authorities state that deliveries can be speeded up considerably if the address includes the building and room number.

This change is occasioned by the removal of the Department and the Society last September to their new headquarters on the ground floor of the historic Karl G. Maeser Memorial Building (Newsletter, 77.3). This classic-style edifice was erected in 1910 in honor of the founder of BYU. For many years it housed the administrative offices of the University.

78.4 NEW PRACTICE BEGUN WITH RENEWAL NOTICES. Beginning with 1962, renewal notices will be sent to UAS members only at the end of each year, according to Dr. Ross T. Christensen, general secretary-treasurer.

Heretofore, renewal notices have been mailed twice a year. Since 1956, all new memberships have been dated either to July 1 or January 1 (Newsletter, 33.3). The present change involves simply the elimination of the mid-year renewal notice.

All memberships which were to have terminated last July 1 have been extended automatically for six months to January 1, 1962. Many members, however, have already returned their fees for the coming year; such memberships will be in force until January 1, 1963.

According to Dr. Christensen, the elimination of the mid-year mailing was made necessary by the large membership and the use of IBM equipment. It is hoped that the present action will streamline the keeping of Society records.

Renewal notices, under the new plan, were mailed on November 29. Members are urged to return their fees promptly.

78.5 RECALLED TO ACTIVE DUTY. Lawrence O. Anderson was suddenly recalled to active service with the U.S. Army, December 5, 1961. Mr. Anderson served as assistant and associate editor of the Newsletter during 1961 and participated in the 1961 BYU expedition to Aguacatal. (Newsletter, 75.0). He reports that he may be released from his Fort Lewis, Washington, assignment in June, 1962.

78.6 TRIALS OF SCIENCE PUBLISHING. Publication of the magazine Science of Man has been temporarily suspended by its financial backers, the GEMAC Corp. The editor, Joseph E. Vincent, who is also a general officer of the UAS, indicates that the magazine was well accepted by readers and professionals but that certain publication policies established by GEMAC Corp., and increased cost of publication, caused a financial failure.

Mr. Vincent states that the magazine may continue under a different financial backer in the near future. He also says that renewals and new subscriptions for Science of Man will continue to be received and held in trust until the new publisher takes over. "Subscriptions should therefore continue to be sent to GEMAC Corp., Box 808, Mentone, California."

78.7 GOLD PLATES FROM MEXICO. News of a set of small gold plates, purportedly found in an ancient grave in southern Mexico, and inscribed with characters resembling the Demotic Egyptian-like characters in the Anthon Transcript from the plates of the Book of Mormon(!), has come from several sources. Photographs of these plates and drawings of their inscriptions have also been received by the BYU Department of Archaeology.

The set apparently consists of two small and three very small plates (the latter measure only about two cm. in length and one cm. in width, and are very thin). The three smaller ones have been made into a bracelet, by means of clips attached to one edge. All five are inscribed on each side with five lines of mixed Anthon Transcript and Maya-like characters, with the exception of one side of one of the larger plates, which bears only a few such characters, distributed around a complex of symbols which Dr. M. Wells Jakeman of the BYU archaeology department has identified as definitely Aztec-- four purely Aztec day-name symbols, a tree pictograph, and a cross-shaped symbol.

Dr. Jakeman, as well as Dr. Ross T. Christensen also of the archaeology department, feel that these plates are not of ancient origin, because of the mixing, in the inscriptions, of symbols from at least two different writing systems widely separated in time. They note, however, that this argument is not conclusive, since the

particular Maya symbols seemingly represented by some of the characters may well have originated in the Nephite "reformed Egyptian" writing illustrated by the Anthon Transcript, and since the Aztec symbols could have been added by an Aztec priest who had inherited or discovered these plates of more ancient date.

But even stronger indication that the plates are not of ancient origin or authentic, is the near-certainty that the Aztec symbols were copied from one of the two surviving Aztec hieroglyphic manuscripts. Variable Aztec symbols, such as pictographs of trees, are not exactly the same in any two renderings. They differ with the scribes who painted them, and changed in style over a period of time. The chances of finding two such symbols exactly alike in independently authentic manuscripts or inscriptions are practically nil. And yet, as pointed out by Dr. Jakeman, the mentioned Aztec tree pictograph on one of the plates in question is identical, in both its form and all its elements and markings, to a tree pictograph in the surviving Aztec manuscript called the Codex Borbonicus [a pictured tree comprising the main part of a symbol recording the name of the ancient legendary city of Tamoanchan]. There can be little doubt, therefore, that it was copied from the tree pictograph in that manuscript-- and that consequently, in turn, the four Aztec day-name symbols on the same plate were also copied from symbols in that or another Aztec manuscript.

From a preliminary investigation, then, it would appear that these gold plates from Mexico are forgeries, and that a serious fraud has been committed, since the plates are reported to have been sold for a large sum of money, on the testimony of the "discoverer" that they are of ancient origin.

Dr. Christensen points out that even if these plates should prove to be authentic, their removal from an ancient burial by a person without government license to engage in archaeological excavation-- as evidently in the present case-- and their subsequent sale and exportation from Mexico, would constitute illegal activities that in view of the importance of the find might result in serious consequences for the parties involved. There are laws in Mexico, as in most other countries, severely prohibiting the extraction, sale, and exportation of antiquities without a government permit.