

similar flight of fancy to suggest that the “behe-moth” of Job 40:15 was a plant-eating dinosaur when it is more likely to be a description of a hippopotamus. This is the kind of thing that can bring the Truth into disrepute in the eyes of our contemporaries.

However, there is a much bigger bone to pick. In the foreword, “Framed by the Word of God”, by Brother David Burges, and in the article “Calibrated radiocarbon dating” by Brother John Watts, it is suggested that God created the world with an appearance of age. Are these two brethren really saying that God is a deceiver, and that He has fooled us into thinking that the earth is millions of years old when in reality He created it 6,000 years ago? This smacks of the notion put about when I was a boy, that God put fossils with the appearance of great age into the earth to test the faith of believers.

I would have thought that it was quite scientific, in the true sense of the word, to suppose that the earth and the fossils in it are of a vast age, certainly more than 6,000 years, as is proposed by some of your contributors.

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The story of Jonah and the Yanush legend

I enjoyed Sister Spencer’s article of the above title (Jun. 2001, p. 258). As well as her more general expositional points in relation to the book, I was particularly intrigued by the similarities between the Yanush legend and Jonah’s experience in the belly of a great fish. There seems every reason to suppose that this legend was still a powerful influence in Nineveh in spite of the passage of so many years. We have a hint, perhaps, of how enduring and influential such legends can be when we realise that excavations at Nineveh in modern times have been hampered by the reluctance of locals to allow digging in a mound that they believe is the burial place of Jonah.

Given the well-known brutality of the Assyrians, it does seem strange that Jonah, a prophet from a nation that must have been despised by Assyria, was able to meet with such success when he preached. The unintended (on Jonah’s part) link with the Yanush legend certainly seems likely to have played a part in his acceptance by the Ninevites.

There is another feature relating to the origins and culture of Nineveh that might have added to the authority that Jonah’s preaching carried when finally he delivered God’s message to the city. The French archaeologist André Parrot, in his book *Nineveh and the Old Testament*, discusses the ancient origins of the city and draws attention to the remarkable fact that “Nineveh is mentioned in a cuneiform text (twenty-first century B.C.) inscribed on a clay tablet and the name is given in an ideogram: a fish drawn in the middle of a city, an obvious allusion to the goddess Nina whose emblem it was” (pp. 24,26).

So Jonah was a man who had been in the middle of a fish preaching to a city that had been represented as a city with a fish in the middle. In conjunction with the Yanush legend this might have conspired to give Jonah an authority that he could not otherwise have expected. The remarkable conjunction of so many apparently unrelated symbols would seem to be yet another example of what Blunt described as ‘undesigned coincidences’.

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The sojourn of Israel in Egypt

The proposition put forward by Sister Debbie Hurn ([Jun. 2001, p. 254](#)) for a revised calculation of the period that the children of Israel were in Egypt (down to 195 years) is ingeniously constructed. It has as its basis (as does the article by Brother Ralph Green on which she is commenting) the idea that the 430 years of Exodus 12:40 and Galatians 3:17 began in the time of Abraham, and not with the coming down into Egypt of Jacob and his sons. However, this view does not take into account a number of very important facts.

1 The evidence supporting a sojourn by the children of Israel in Egypt for a full 430 years is much stronger than that for a sojourn of 215 years (the figure used by Brother Green) or 195 years. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch in their *Commentary on the Old Testament: The Second Book of Moses* state:

“The sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt had lasted 430 years. This number is not critically doubtful; nor are the 430 years to be reduced to 215 by an arbitrary interpolation such as we find in the LXX. (Exodus 12:40: ‘And the sojourning of the children

of Israel, while they sojourned in the land of Egypt and the land of Chanaan, was four hundred and thirty years'.) This chronological statement is placed beyond all doubt by Onkelos, the Syriac, Vulgate and other versions".

Only the Samaritan Version supports this "arbitrary interpolation", rendering the verse: "The abode that the children of Israel and their fathers made in the land of Canaan and in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years". A long list of other versions render the verse as in the AV.¹ In addition, the Jewish Bible (the Tanakh), published in 1985, and the more recent Stone edition of the Hebrew Bible, published in 1996, do not follow the Septuagint and the Samaritan versions. The Stone edition renders the verse: "The habitation of the children of Israel during which they dwelled in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years".

- 2 Exodus 12:41 reads: "And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD *went out* from the land of Egypt". It follows that if they went out at the end of 430 years they went in at the start of the 430 years.
- 3 Genesis 15:13 reads: "Know of a surety that *thy seed* shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs"; and Exodus 12:40: "Now the sojourning of the *children of Israel*, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years". Abraham and Isaac were not "children of Israel", they were the founders of the nation, and so their time in Canaan cannot be included in the sojourn of Israel and his descendants.
- 4 The genealogies completely rule out a reduction of the period of the sojourn from 430 years to 215, or less as in Sister Hurn's calculations. Ancient Near Eastern genealogies were often selective and not continuous. This feature is noted in Egyptian records as well as those of Israel. Thus before a genealogy can be used to prove a point it must first be proven that it is in fact continuous.

The statement that "Amram took him Jochebed . . . and she bare him Aaron and Moses" (Ex. 6:20) does not prove immediate descent. Exodus 6:16-20 is not a full genealogy, but gives only the tribe (Levi), the clan (Kohath) and the family group (Amram) to which Moses and Aaron belonged. This state-

ment can be tested by a consideration of Numbers 3:27,28, according to which the Kohathites were divided in Moses' time into four branches: Amramites, Izharites, Hebronites and Uzzielites. Together these four branches numbered 8,600 men and boys, women and girls not being included. Of this number about one fourth, or 2,150, would have belonged to the Amramites.

Now according to Exodus 18:3,4 Moses himself had only two sons. Consequently, if Amram was the actual father of Moses, then Moses must have had 2,147 brothers and brother's sons. Since this is impossible then it must be granted that Amram was not the father of Moses, and that an unknown number of generations has been omitted between Amram and Moses.

Other genealogies of the same period support this. Bezaleel of the tribe of Judah, who was involved in the construction of the tabernacle (Ex. 35:30), was the seventh generation from Jacob (1 Chron. 2:1,4,5,9,18-21). Elishama, the leader of the tribe of Ephraim at the time of the Exodus (Num. 1:10), was the ninth generation from Jacob and the grandfather of Joshua (1 Chron. 7:20-27). These genealogies confirm that the genealogy given for Moses must be incomplete. This leads on to the thought that ten generations from Joseph to Joshua can hardly be reconciled with a mere 215 years for the sojourn in Egypt, and even less with 195 years, especially considering the longer life spans then, but fits comfortably with a period of 430 years.

- 6 The increase of the children of Israel from the seventy in the family of Jacob at the time of the immigration into Egypt (Gen. 46:27) to a nation of more than two million militates against a mere 215 (or 195) years for the sojourn in Egypt, but in a period of 430 years the necessary multiplication could have been achieved. Keil and Delitzsch (*ibid.*) have calculated that the figure of two million would be achieved if there was an average of three sons and three daughters to each couple for six generations, then an average of two sons and two daughters for a further four genera-

1. For fuller details see my letter "The ancient genealogies and the sojourn in Egypt", *The Testimony*, July 1991, p. 223. This followed considerable correspondence arising from publication of my article of the same title (Nov. 1990, p. 446).

tions. At this rate there would be 472,224 sons above twenty in the tenth generation by the four hundredth year of the sojourn, whilst 124,326 males of military age would still be left over from the ninth generation. These together would total 603,550 men at arms, see Numbers 1:46.

- 7 Regarding the fact that Galatians 3:17 seems to indicate that the 430 years runs from the giving of the promises to Abraham, the period of the giving of the promises began with the call of Abraham from Ur into Canaan and

ended on the last night of his grandson Jacob's sojourn in Canaan, the land of promise. On the day following the last repetition of the promises, at Beer-sheba (Gen. 46:1-4), Israel passed into Egypt. It is from the end, not the beginning, of the dispensation of the giving of the promises that the 430 years to the giving of the Law is to be counted, the period of bondage corresponding to the fact that the Law "gendereth to bondage".

Bill Form
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From the Editor's postbag

Comments on items received from readers

The previous 'Editor's Postbag' was in April, and consequently some of the items considered this time are rather outdated. Nevertheless, I hope something of interest will emerge from them.

Russia's control of gas supplies

Fuel supplies are the lifeblood of our advanced technological societies, and major suppliers are in a strong position. Saudi Arabia with its oil supplies is a prime example; another very significant one is Russia, as a supplier of natural gas to much of Europe. *The Times* of 26 March had an article about Gazprom, the company which extracts and markets Russia's immense supplies of gas. The article is entitled, "Secrecy and blackmail: The sinister company behind Russia's invasion of Europe", and is written by Roger Boyes, who is researching a book on the company. The summary at the head of the article says: "As a new Cold War threatens, what is the truth about the secretive Moscow gas company which controls much of Eastern Europe by threatening to switch off the gas supply—and which be-

fore long may be supplying energy to the West?"

Gazprom is enormous. It owns 150,000 kilometres of pipeline and employs 350,000 people. It alone produces twenty-five per cent of the world's natural gas, having a monopoly of production and supply in Russia. It contributes eight per cent to Russia's gross domestic product, and controls twenty-four newspapers and fourteen radio and television stations. It is forty-per-cent owned by the state, and is effectively the most important arm of President Putin's foreign policy.

The article, after drawing attention to the demise of the various institutions of the old Communist Soviet Union, states: "What remains is the Russian drive, under a strong, centralising ruler, to preserve or restore its imperial reach. Its chosen tool is not the Red Army (which has all but lost its foreign policy role in Europe), nor the withered arm of the KGB, but the strange organisation that goes by the name Gazprom". It also quotes a Polish journalist as saying: "Gazprom has become the most important instrument of Russian foreign policy. It provides the

missing divisions, the clout of an army".

Russia, through Gazprom, is already dominant in energy supply in Eastern Europe. It is becoming an increasingly important supplier to the West. One German politician has expressed her concern at the way things are going as follows: "Forty per cent of EU gas imports come from Russia and the trend is rising steeply. The government knows that the situation in Russia is not always stable and it knows very well how Russia has used its position as an energy supplier to create political dependencies". Britain, of course, at present has its own supplies of natural gas, and therefore, unlike many other European countries, is not reliant on Russian imports.

Scenarios for destruction

In an undated supplement to the magazine *New Scientist*, passed on by a reader, three scenarios of doom for our planet, arising from environmental factors, are graphically presented. According to the introduction, "Acid rain and global warming show that we hold immense power over life on Earth, yet we wield it