

GENESIS ACCEPTED



NUMBER 20

January 2011

Who was Abraham's Father?	1
Caves and Cavemen	4
By Design: Snowshoe Rabbits and The Amazing Tree Pump	9

Who Was Abraham's Father?

I'm going to begin by asking you a penetratingly difficult question: 'What does Acts 7:4 mean?' Now I know that reading this article are good Bible students and that Acts 7:4 trips off the tongue just as Mark 16:16 does, or Acts 2:38, or John 3:16. I mean, who doesn't know Acts 7:4? Well, I didn't, at least not as a memory verse etched indelibly into my spiritually subconscious mind. So let us look at it now, just to remind ourselves: "Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living."

Okay, so I was pulling your leg about not knowing it, though I think we should have known of it. It's Stephen speaking here in his defence just before he was stoned to death. He is reviewing some Jewish history to show the leaders that God is not located in one country, or one city, and definitely not in one building in that country and that city – the Temple in Jerusalem – but called His servants in all sorts of different countries and locations. He can be found anywhere, and some of His most important 'callings' have been far away from Palestine in amongst pagan people. In this verse he has reached the call of Abraham who was living in Babylonia, Ur of the Chaldees, with his father Terah, his wife Sarah, and his dead brother Haran's son – his nephew – Lot. So Stephen points out that one of God's greatest and most momentous calls, to any human being, came in Chaldea in a city called Ur, which was dedicated to the moon god Sin. Godly Abraham listened and responded in faith and



Stephen stoned after making his defence

they all moved north west to the city of Haran, where they settled for a while, and we learn that Terah died there aged 205 (Gen. 11:32).

The Problem

So what's the problem? The Bible says what it means and means what it says and Acts 7:4 is as plain a verse as you'll find anywhere in the narrative sections. Wrong! Very wrong and herein lies the difficulty. I'll let the famous commentator Barnes supply the explanation of the problem:-

'This passage has given rise to no small difficulty in the interpretation. The difficulty is this: From Gen. 11:26, it would seem that Abraham was born when Terah was 70 years of age. And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.' From Gen. 12:4, it seems that Abraham was 75 years of age when he departed from Haran to Canaan. The age of Terah was therefore but 145 years. Yet in Gen. 11:32, it is said that Terah was 205 years old when he died, thus leaving 60 years of Terah's life beyond the time when Abraham left Haran.'

(from Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft)

Some attempts at solving the problem

So there is the answer, and there is the problem. There's a complete mess regarding the dates of things and it's hard to reconcile them. Several models have been suggested, and I'll just deal very briefly with a couple so as not to leave you hanging in the air completely, so to speak:

- 1) Stephen, who was not inspired as he was talking, simply got some details mixed up though he made his point quite clearly. Acts records accurately what he said but that does not thereby authenticate its historical accuracy.
- 2) Genesis records that Terah began to have children at 70, not that he had all three lads at the same time. Abraham, though always listed first, does not have to be the oldest. He's listed first because of his importance to the Jews and the narrative but he could have been significantly younger than the firstborn – very significantly indeed would be necessary to bring some sense to the data.

Both of these explanations are perfectly possible, and would work biblically speaking, without doing violence to



Portrait of my Dad, aged 50, painted from a black-and-white photograph

the concept of inspiration. However, I came across another explanation which I found both plausible and exciting because it led me into all sorts of consistent thoughts and explained some more of the puzzling things I find at this end of the Bible in Genesis. They make sense of some enigmas. So come along with me.

The character of Terah

If it wasn't for the Book of Joshua, I doubt I'd have any problems at all with the character of Abraham's dad, Terah. But Joshua throws a monumental spanner into the works. Without it, you just think that he is in the list of the genealogy of Seth and Shem, down to Jesus and that this is the faithful line with an unbroken link. This is the kind of holy bias which we bring to such characters if we've no further evidence.

But there's absolutely no need for us to believe that all these patriarchs, listed in the genealogies as being in the godly line, were themselves, necessarily and by definition, godly. They are simply the ones who sired a link in the chain which ultimately led to godly men like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David and, of course, the Lord Himself. You don't have to have a godly father in order to be godly yourself, though it helps and gives you a wonderful start. I had a godly Dad, but though Mum's side of my family have a wonderful pedigree of faithfulness – now sadly almost gone, apart from me and my immediate family – my Dad did not, and does not, come from a godly line at all. He was the only one I am aware of who loved and followed the Lord as a Christian. O, yes, they were what the people of the world

would call ‘moral, good-living men and women’ and there’s a massive affinity amongst them to the upholding of law and order – all my paternal uncles were policemen, as were my granddad and his dad, my great granddad. None, however, were religious and sought out the Lord’s will and the Lord’s way, save for my Dad. So godly men can have ungodly parents.

Joshua’s ‘spanner’

So what does the Book of Joshua say to cast doubts on the spiritual integrity of Terah? Well, in chapter 24:2 we read of Joshua speaking to the people about faithfulness and the need to serve God. He goes into history: *‘And Joshua said to all the people, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods.’*” So we learn that Terah was an idolater.

Tradition from ‘Jubilees’

Jewish tradition confirms this and it seems to hint that Terah actually made these gods for the people. Indeed *the Book of Jubilees* tells us:

‘And it came to pass in the sixth week, in the seventh year thereof that Abram said to Terah his father, saying, “Father!”

And he said, “Behold, here am I, my son.”

And he said, “What help and profit have we from those idols which thou dost worship, and before which thou dost bow thyself? For there is no spirit in them, for they are dumb forms, and a misleading of the heart. Worship them not: worship the God of heaven who causes the rain and the dew to descend on the earth and does everything by His word, and all life is from His face.

Why do ye worship things that have no spirit in them? For they are the work of (men’s) hands. And on your shoulders do ye bear them, and ye have no help from them,

But they are a great cause of shame to those who make them, and a misleading of

the heart to those who worship them: Worship them not.”

So Abraham castigates his dad for his idolatry. Terah then explains: *‘... “I also know it, my son, but what shall I do with a people who have made me serve before them? And if I tell them the truth, they will slay me; for their soul cleaves to them to worship them and honour them. Keep silent, my son, lest they slay thee.”’*

So Terah excuses himself by saying if he didn’t serve them this way – and I assume by this he indicates that he actually made the gods for them – they would kill him. He advises Abraham to keep his mouth shut too if he wants to live to a ripe old age.

Are there any other clues?

Now is there any other clue that idolatry was present in the family of Terah? Well, yes there is, albeit a generation or two down. Remember when Jacob finally fled the clutches of his cunning father-in-law, Laban, taking his beloved Rachel, and poor old despised Leah, with him? Rachel stole the family gods and then sat on them when her father came chasing after them, ostensibly looking for the gods, claiming that she couldn’t move to assist his search because she was in her monthly menstrual condition? We read of this in Genesis 31 (see also *Genesis Accepted* Number 12, ‘Rachel’s Gods’). Laban actually accosted Jacob with these words: *“...you have gone away because you longed greatly for your father’s house, but why did you steal my gods?”* (Gen. 31:30). Laban was the son of Bethuel, who was the son of Nahor, who was Abraham’s brother and, of course, the son of Terah. Laban was Terah’s great grandson and he openly had household gods in his possession, which his daughter stole as she left home with Jacob. Idolatry had certainly been passed down through this line of Terah’s descendents.

Out of Ur

They did not stay in Ur of the Chaldees when the call came but they moved up the Fertile Crescent and settled in the city of Haran, and Terah was there when he died. They’d linked up again with Abraham’s brother, Nahor, and it was from here that Abraham went down into Canaan taking Lot with him but leaving the others behind. What is very interesting about this is that the cities of Haran and Ur were closely linked by trade and by the gods they served. Both had the moon god Sin as their major deity, and if anything Haran was more importantly dedicated to the god Sin than was Ur. Terah did not move up the valley to get away from idolatry. He moved slap bang into a bigger centre for the worship of the god Sin than he left. No matter what sort of a gloss we might want to put on it, Terah was deeply into idolatry and he passed it on to his children, or one of them at least for certain.

How did Abraham become godly?

The question then must be asked, if Terah was spiritually unreliable at best and a complete idolater at worst, how come his son Abraham was so godly? I mean from whence did he learn faithfulness and the desire to love and serve the Lord? Today someone like Abraham could read the Bible and come to an understanding of spiritual things by so doing, but Abraham had no Bible to refer to. He needed to be taught, so, if his father Terah wasn’t doing it, who was? Who was his spiritual mentor and how did he learn godliness? This is a puzzle but Acts 7:4 might well supply a vital clue to the answer.

Who was Abraham’s ‘father’ in Acts 7:4?

Did you notice anything odd about what Stephen said? His words were: *“And after his father died, God removed him from there...”* So what’s odd about that? Well, maybe Stephen was not getting his facts mixed up at all and nor was he suggesting that Abraham was much younger than we usually think, but rather he was using the word ‘father’ in a different sense than we would normally read it. The plain word ‘father’ automatically means ‘Terah’, his biological father, to us but that’s not the only use of that term in the scriptures. We know in the Matthew genealogy of Jesus in chapter 1 that the term ‘was the father of...’ cannot be literal in every instance for when we read the detailed historical accounts of these people elsewhere in scripture quite a few links are deliberately missing. There’s no attempt to fool us here for we can easily fill in the gaps and Matthew was doing something formally structured and which was quite normal and quite acceptable. The literal understanding of those words is not necessary nor invited by the narrative.

Then we have the passages in John 8 for example. Jesus was berating the Jews for not being true children of Abraham. They took offence at this and, *“They answered him,*



‘Rachel hides the idols’ by Venetian painter Tiespolo (1696-1770)

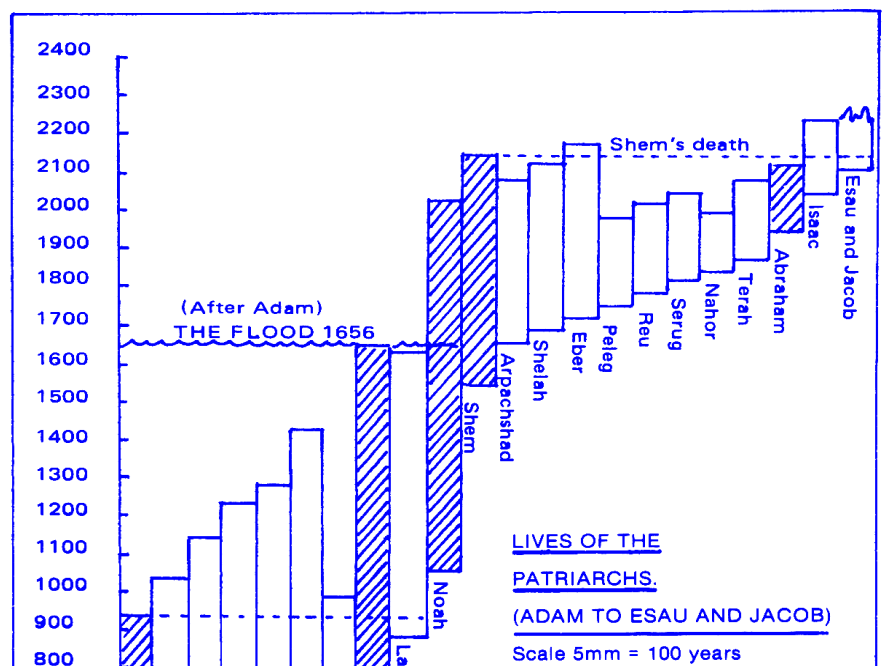
Abraham is our father. "Jesus said to them, If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did..." (Jn 8:39). The Jews were quite happy to say 'Abraham is our father', not, 'is our ancestor', and we all know what they meant. Indeed in our reading from Acts 7:2, Stephen also refers to 'Our father Abraham'. They could happily claim also that Jacob is their father, or whoever is their tribal chief like Simeon, or Dan, Gad or Asher, etc. Could Stephen have been using the term 'father' in Acts 7:4 in reference to an ancestor of Abraham whom he looked to as his 'father' in faith but who was not literally his immediate biological father, but who was several generations back in his ancestry? This 'father' was definitely in his biological line but was also his spiritual mentor, who taught his godly-inclined 'son' to love the true God and remain loyal and faithful even when others of his more immediate family had neglected the Lord and turned astray into idolatry? This 'father' would be completely upright and godly, who knew how to walk with God and who could even be a counter to the great sin going on both in Ur and later Haran, one to whom Abraham would bow the knee and listen to in rapt attention and awe? Could this man be the 'father' who died and on whose death Abraham was moved by God to go into Canaan? Now that he was dead wouldn't it make sense to move Abraham away from the idolatrous influences both of the city of Haran and of his biological father, Terah?

Who could he have been?

Well, take a look at the chart of the 'Lives of the Patriarchs' again, which we have seen in previous issues of *Genesis Accepted* (3 and 18), and see if it makes sense, and who it could be? The section of the chart shown is still not on a big enough scale for absolute accuracy. However, there were quite a few of them, from the Flood forward, who died in Abraham's lifetime, and one or two who even outlived him! So who are the candidates? Well, there's Arpachshad, Peleg, Reu, Serug and Nahor - his granddad. But who was the biggest player in this category; one we all know very well? **NOAH!**

Questions about Noah after the Flood

Where did Noah live out his 349 years after the Flood? What was he doing, apart from farming? The Bible simply lets him virtually drop off the map in the narrative, but he lived through Babel and Nimrod's apostasy and rebellion (see *Genesis Accepted* Number 18, 'Noah: 949 largely unknown years'). The Haran region of the Fertile Crescent isn't massively distant from Ararat and we know all peoples apparently migrated to Shinar where the Tower of Babel was constructed. Where did Noah finally settle? In previous issues of *Genesis Accepted* (Numbers 1 and 3) we considered the case that Shem settled in the Jerusalem (Salem) region and was, in fact, none other than Melchizedek, to whom even the great Abraham bowed the knee. I suggest to you now that



Noah was the 'father' being referenced in Acts 7, for Shem outlived Abraham.

There is a legend that Terah was actually a fearsome general under Nimrod and that it was Nimrod who led the huge rebellion and built the Tower of Babel. Be that as it may, we can take it or leave it, but having a 'father' in Noah would account for so much in Abraham's background and why, despite having an idolater for a biological father, he was true, loyal and faithful, and a worthy successor of the faithfulness and righteousness which came through Noah, continued in Shem, but drifted apart with others, and then came back into line with him.

The consistent picture

So we are looking for a consistent picture which hangs together and requires no leaps of faith, or glossing over the facts in the hope that they are not quite what they seem. After all which Jew would be pleased that their great ancestor Abraham had an idolater for an earthly father? Noah must have watched the disintegration of his family in dismay, from godliness, immediately after the Flood, to the spiritual shambles at Babel. He would not have been able to communicate with many, if not most, of them once God confused their speech, so would naturally have settled where they spoke his language. Thus we should not be too surprised if we find Noah and Shem not living too far apart, and linked by trade routes and ready communication. Shem in Jerusalem, Noah near Haran and Abraham down in Ur makes a comfortable language group and supplies the spiritual power input into Abraham's youthful mind, irrespective of the kind of person Terah was.

This answers the enigma of Acts 7:4

This explanation of who it was who died just before Abraham moved off, al-

lows Terah to dwell in Haran a great deal longer after Abraham had left to go south. It allows Abraham to have been his firstborn and not his last born. It means that Stephen didn't have a memory lapse when making his defence. Above all it explains how Abraham learned to love God to the great depth which he did. Terah couldn't teach him such devotion, because he definitely gave in to the pressures of living in a pagan city. Noah most certainly could! He knew all about keeping the faith and keeping faithful when the world around him was going to pot. It was Abraham who was to be the inheritor of the great flag of faithfulness from Noah: Shem served faithfully as king/priest of Salem (Jerusalem) but, just as Noah was the herald of righteousness before the Flood, so that mantle was to fall on to Abraham's shoulders after the Flood. There's really only a small, pivotal line of faith from Creation to Noah to Abraham - Noah was the tenth generation from Creation and Abraham was the tenth from Noah - thence to Moses, David and down to Jesus, but the key link is not their biological ancestry but rather their spiritual ancestry.

Conclusion

You don't, of course, have to accept this analysis but if you don't, you're stuck with explaining what Acts 7:4 means and how to reconcile it to the Genesis narrative; how to explain Abraham's great faith, and what the implications of the aside concerning Terah idolatry in Joshua 24:2 really indicates. I'm sure none of you will lose any sleep over pondering these things. I find such things fascinating and very faith-building. They make the Bible come to life, and ensure consistency in understanding this part of the Genesis narrative, which strengthens my faith in the total reliability of the whole of scripture.

Caves and Cavemen

When I was in the Sixth form at school, we had a Chemistry teacher who was very much into caving and potholing - or speleology, as it is technically called. He was, in fact, a member of the Burnley Caving Club and also a 'permanently-on-call' member of the Craven Cave Rescue Organisation, an association he still maintains though he now doesn't go underground, being in his mid 70s. I was privileged to go on, I think it was, three caving trips with him, each of a week's duration, in the late 1950s. By then I was on my A-level way to going to university as a Geographer, so had more than just a passing interest in Carboniferous limestone formations which produce cave systems. Those caving trips were akin to geographical fieldwork and I came to love the Craven area with its many caves such as Lower Long Churn, swallow holes like Alum Pot and Gaping Gill, gorges

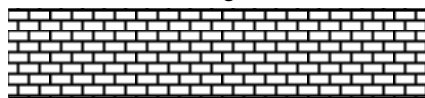


Malham Cove

like Gordale Scar, and unique features such as Malham Cove. In my opinion, and that of the great walker and chronicler of the Lake District, Alfred Wainwright, the most beautiful four-and-a-half-mile walk in the whole north of England is the Ingleton Falls Walk of North Yorkshire. He said it was close to paradise!

Geological features

Carboniferous limestone is interesting. It is pervious, not porous like chalk, which means that it doesn't soak up water like a sponge but rather lets it percolate down through joints in the otherwise impermeable rock structure. In diagrams it is usual to



Conventional depiction of Carboniferous limestone on diagrams

show Carboniferous limestone shaded like a brick wall, which is how it behaves. The water can filter down the cracks - vertically or horizontally - which would be the mortar part of such a wall. As it does so, it forms a weak acid solution which eats away at the rock, widening the joints until a slab of the limestone looks like the picture below taken from the top of Malham Cove. Such eroded

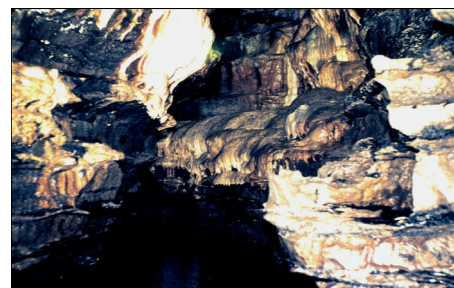


Limestone pavement of clints (blocks) and grikes (enlarged cracks) at Malham above the Cove.

outcrops are called limestone pavements, and you can easily see the effect of the acid on the rock in the photograph above, as it has dissolved the limestone. (Incidentally, it is called 'Carboniferous limestone' because it is thought by geologists to date from the Carboniferous geological era when the great coal seams were laid down. Though we don't accept their dating of this era as lasting for 80 million years, from 350 million to 270 million years ago, it is a useful name to differentiate it from other types of limestone which don't share the same characteristics.)

Clints and grikes (as seen above) form as the water filters downwards but when it can no longer go down any further it moves horizontally until it finally emerges as a spring. Sometimes the passageways along which it flows are widened to form caves and many are large enough for humans to explore and sometimes live in. Very large caves are frequently turned into tourist attractions where the public can enter without boots or wellingtons, or even lights, because pathways and lighting have been installed. Dripping water from the cave roofs create stalactites, which hang down from the ceiling, and stalagmites,

which grow up from the ground, and are often given fanciful names. The picture (immediately below) shows the stream passage in the White Scar Show Cave (Ingleton, North Yorkshire), with stalactite and flowstone formations beyond the boundary of the public section. I was privileged to be taken there by my teacher friend. As a cave rescuer he was well-known to the cave management who allowed him to do this for us. There are three underground lakes and several miles of passages beyond the show section but we only got to the first lake.



Cave passageway with its stream and stalactite formations in White Scar Show Cave (Ingleton) beyond the public section.

The cave environment

Most of us will have visited a show cave at some point in our lives. We will no doubt have an impression of what the cave environment is like, though most show caves have engaged in excavations and laying pathways, walkways and barriers so the public can appreciate them in safety and relative comfort. Cavers see them in the raw, as it were, and they are certainly no better! It's just that you have the amazing sense of adventure when exploring a mysterious underworld, often wading in waist-high and very cold water, or crawling along a low passage in mud on your hands and knees.



White Scars and Ingleborough mountain. Wonderful country!

Picture from: AboutBritain.com

They are just as dark, dank, cold and wet for cavers as they are for visitors. Indeed they are rather miserable, hostile places save for the challenge they present to all who don't suffer from claustrophobia.

Turning off your lights inside a cave and experiencing what total darkness truly means is almost frightening. The temperature is always steady all year round underground, at 52°F (11°C). You are never freezing but always cold. Natural light, of course, can only penetrate a few hundred feet even under the best of circumstances so without a source of artificial lighting humans cannot penetrate very far, which is why speleology is a relatively young sport.

Peter's confession and caves

The ancients therefore viewed caves as places of mystery, awe and superstition. Naturally they were seen as the gateway to the Hadean world 'below' in some instances, but in others were worshipped as places which give life because streams of pure, fresh water, flow forth from their interiors. The headwaters of the River Jordan flow out of caves just north of Caesarea Philippi and the area was sacred to the god Pan. It was here, amidst the trappings of paganism, that Jesus challenged His disciples with the question: *'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?'* *And they said, Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'* *He said to them, But who do you say that I am?'* *Simon Peter replied, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'* (Mt 16:13-16). People who are unaware of the physical setting to this wonderful declaration of the lordship of Christ by Peter, miss some its significance as a result. Jesus did not pick His spot to do this randomly, and once He had the assurance that such an understanding was present amongst His closest followers, *'He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem'* (Luke 9:51, AV), or, as Matthew explains it: *'From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.'* (Mt 16:21). Jesus must have been both elated and thoroughly downcast by this confession: elated because the job of educating them concerning His reality as the Son of God was done, but downcast because it presaged the horrors of the Cross.

A necessary interlude

Before looking further into caves and cavemen, let us pause just to clarify a point. We are here considering caves formed by running water acting on Carboniferous limestone. These are the caves supposedly inhabited by cavemen.

There are other types of cave and they are not restricted to limestone rock. The best-known and most obvious are those eroded by the sea in cliff faces, beloved of smugglers and adventure stories where boats, and some-

times submarines, glide in and out at low tide, usually for nefarious purposes! One of the best known is Fingal's Cave on the isle of Staffa, made famous by Felix Mendelssohn's overture of the same name, carved out of basaltic columns from an ancient lava flow. The weather conditions have to be calm to land on the uninhabited island but I have been privileged to manage it twice, and it is an awesome experience. It is no wonder it inspired Mendelssohn.

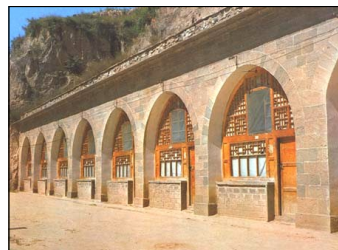


Fingal's Cave, Staffa

Other caves can be found under glaciers and, of course, those deliberately carved out of the rocks by humans wishing to live in them either cheaply or for protection. In the soft but compacted loess (wind-blown dust) cliffs of China's Shaanxi Province, some 40 million peasants have carved out dwellings for themselves, and the swifts who sometimes build in their roofs provide the ingredients for the fa-



Loessal terrain in southern Shaanxi



Cave dwellings faced with stone

Pictures from Web under 'Cave Dwellings'

mous Chinese delicacy of 'bird's-nest soup'! The Pueblo Indians of New Mexico sometimes lived in caves and, of course the Edomite town of Petra, set in the cleft of the rock, has dwellings and other buildings carved out of the rocks.

Interesting though these all are, they are not the subject of the caves in this article for obvious reasons.

Caves in the Bible

The first mention of a cave in the Bible is when Lot and his two daughters took refuge in one after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:30-38). This sojourn covered none of them in glory, being one of the more unsavoury episodes in the narrative. They were scared to live under God's care in Zoar, so fled to the

hills. How long they were there is not revealed, but, considering how they fled from Sodom in such haste and yet managed to carry sufficient wine for Lot to be made drunk on two consecutive nights, requires some thought.

The most famous cave in the Genesis narrative is the cave near Hebron, on the western side of the Dead Sea, where Abraham bought a field from a Hittite called Ephron, for 400 shekels of silver, with a cave in it to bury Sarah (Gen. 23). The cave is called Machpelah and the field with its



The mosque over the Cave of Machpelah

cave was the only property he ever owned in the land God promised to give to his descendants. Unlike many sites in the Holy Land, this one is well attested and genuine. Unfortunately there is now a mosque over it, which still houses the remains of the six Genesis worthies buried there: Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Leah and Jacob. Despite its being of interest mainly to Jews, Muslims consider Abraham to be their father too so they jealously guard it and forbid entry to the real cave, which is deep under the floor of the mosque.

There are other instances of caves being used in the Old Testament: as tombs, refuges and hiding places. The best known after Machpelah was Adullam's cave where David hid while being chased by Saul (1 Sam. 22) and up to 400 men were there with him. It seems more likely that this was not just one cave but a cave system with many caves in the region of Adullam, but the site believed to be the one today is highly speculative and the subject of debate. The only ref-

erence to a cave in the New Testament comes in John's Gospel as a reference to the tomb of Lazarus in John 11:38.

The origin of caves from a biblical perspective

When you visit a show cave, you will be told that the rock is around 300,000,000 years old, and the caves also have countless millions of years of history behind them as their streams slowly dissolved the rock and carried it away. Stalagmites and stalactites are given thousands, and tens of thousands, of years on their CVs and we are meant to be impressed - which we would be if it were true. These dates are based on the old geological chestnut that 'the present is the key to the past'. This assumes that erosion and deposition rates have been constant and at the speeds we measure today. This patently cannot be the case. If I were to present you with



the kettle (pictured), which my parents and I encountered in Norfolk on a holiday in 1971, and asked you, 'How long did it take to get furred up like this?', you could not answer until you had a lot more information. Questions such as: 'How chalky is the water?', 'How often is it boiled and how quickly is it switched off once it boiled?', 'When was it purchased and first used?', and so on, spring immediately to mind. You could not begin to answer until you knew a good deal more about the kettle and its history. Yet this is what geologists attempt when estimating ages for caves, and the formations in them, such as we are considering!

We believe that the world was created around 6,000 years ago, so where does the Carboniferous limestone fit into that time-scale and when, and how, were the caves formed? We have already established that there probably wasn't any rain until after the Flood - the Earth being watered by mists and springs, with mild temperatures over the one ocean and the one land mass. Limestone is a sedimentary rock and contains plenty of fossils. Fossils are evidence of the Flood, which occurred some 1656 years after Creation or *circa* 4,500 years ago. These limestones were the product of the Flood, so caves are maximally no older than 4,500 years no matter what erosion rates are like today, and stalactites and stalagmites are even younger!

Flood and post-Flood conditions

The Flood rains stopped after 40 days but the waters continued to rise for 150 days.



Photo from Wikipedia

Exploring in Mammoth Cave

Volcanoes were spewing out gases and vapour, tsunamis were sluicing around a violently reforming crust, with mountains rising, ocean trenches deepening, and storms and tempests raging as never before or since. The world was awash and water was swilling around in torrents all over the place. The newly formed rocks were soft and pliable, and could very easily be eroded rapidly. Some caves and cave systems are enormous, big enough to house cathedrals in their massive chambers, which would have had to have eroded rapidly not slowly. The Mammoth Cave system, in Kentucky, USA, is 367 miles long, and



Photo from Wikipedia

Staircase Tower, Mammoth Cave

possibly longer as exploration continues! This was when most caves were formed in the limestone: during the latter part of the Flood year and the immediate post-Flood world. This is not just idle speculation because limestone caves are found all over the world, even in arid and semi-arid regions today. Palestine, for example, is mainly covered in limestone rocks and there are many caves in the desert areas which have been dry for millennia - the caves at Qumran, for example, which wonderfully preserved the Dead Sea Scrolls. The very existence of caves in these places is indicative that they were once much wetter than today - a factor to which we will return when considering cavemen.

The cave as a dwelling place

As mentioned above, caves are cold, dank, hostile places - at least they are in this country and other high latitudes. Move equator-wards and they become much more pleasant, unless, of course, streams still occupy their passageways. For them really to be used as dwelling places, they have to be dry, at least at their entrances. The fact that many were used, and that painting on the walls still survives, indicates that these caves at least were indeed friendly enough for human habitation. It also indicates that the



Photo from Wikipedia

An amazing bison from the Altamira cave some 20 miles west of Santander, in Cantabria, Spain.

people who did the paintings were far from primitive, contrary to the given, popular image! The many dry caves in semi-arid and arid regions, such as Palestine, is indicative that the climate was once much wetter and the water table in the rocks much higher. It would have been, we know, at the end of the Flood and during the Ice Age, which came later and probably lasted for about 500 years.

Caves, of course, were rarely used as permanent homes in these post-Flood, and mainly post-Babel times. They served as shelter from storm and darkness and as temporary stopovers while people were on hunting expeditions, for most people lived in primitive huts in semi-permanent villages when not hunting. They also served as burial grounds for the dead and were popularly used as such, even in this country, as in Wales, at Bone Cave, between Brecon and Swansea in the Brecon National Park, on the limestone of the Black Mountain. This is



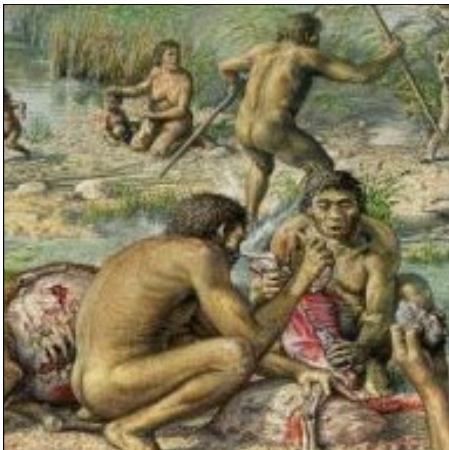
Photo from Wikipedia

Bone Cave on the Black Mountain, Brecon National Park, at Craig-y-nos, between Swansea and Brecon on the A4067.

hardly surprising, with their easy association as gateways to the underworld. Burying the dead there gave them a head start on their journey!

The caveman myth

Let us illustrate this comfortably with an actual example from the *Daily Mail* of 8th July 2010. On that day, on page 33 of the paper, we were greeted with the headline: 'Norfolk Man, most ancient of the Britons'. There was an under-heading of: 'Primitive humans settled in East Anglia'. Naturally there was an artist's impression of what he



Butchers: How the primitive humans of Happisburgh might have looked

looked like. This, above, is the picture we saw, but it was actually only the bottom right-hand corner of a much larger picture which was posted on the *Mail* Web site (pictured top right), and may well be a backdrop for display purposes wherever the artefacts are on view to the public. (I am told that 'Happisburgh' is actually pronounced 'Hazebury', and as such is one of the complex vagaries of the English language which drives foreigners crazy!)

Creating an impression

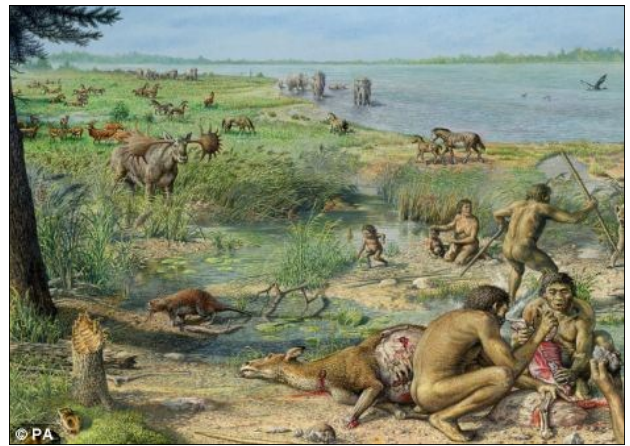
I suppose the majority will look at the picture, see the heading 'Norfolk Man', think, 'Oh yes, another find of our ancestors,' and we all know what they looked like, just like we all can recognize a picture of Jesus, because we've seen one many a time so don't need to ask questions about it, and then move on without really reading the article. The caption calls them 'Butchers', which reinforces the evolutionary belief that these people were brutish, because they are just one stage up from our ape-man ancestors. If we read the article we would have seen mention of the fact that they could have been cannibals. We are told that the newspaper item comes from a detailed item in the journal *Nature*, which gives it an air of proper science, and emphasis is laid on the fact that they were not ape-men but fully human, dating from around 950,000 years ago. The job's done. The impression has been made and reinforced, and the biblical view that people were not originally brutish but some degenerated into this condition has been

neatly marginalised. Yet this cave-man view is largely a myth. Most readers will see no need to question it carefully, especially as it has been authored in the paper by Fiona MacRae who is their, or one of their, Science Reporters. And we all know that Science Reporters are objective and unbiased, always dealing with truth, as are the sources from which they quote, don't we?

A closer look

So, let us look a little closer at the article. Notice that it incorrectly calls them 'Butchers' to create an impression: 'Hunters' would have been closer to the truth but 'Butchers' is more dramatic, especially with the suggestion of cannibalism in the text. It correctly captions the rest of the picture as being 'what they might have looked like'. Well, they might, but equally well they might not; they might have looked just like you and me. So on what evidence do they reach their conclusions? Here's where we need to examine the text with some care, and when I first read it I nearly fell off my chair and just had to write to the *Daily Mail* about it. They did not print my letter, which hardly surprised me, but then somebody had to read it in order to reject it, so it wasn't an entirely wasted effort.

I will quote from the article: '*Norfolk is the cradle of British civilisation, according to a landmark study. Primitive humans landed in East Anglia up to 950,000 years ago and settled near what is today the village of Happisburgh. There were several thousand of them – characterised by low foreheads, heavy brows and possibly cannibalistic tendencies – hunting fish, mammoths, giant elk and deer.*' Let's pause

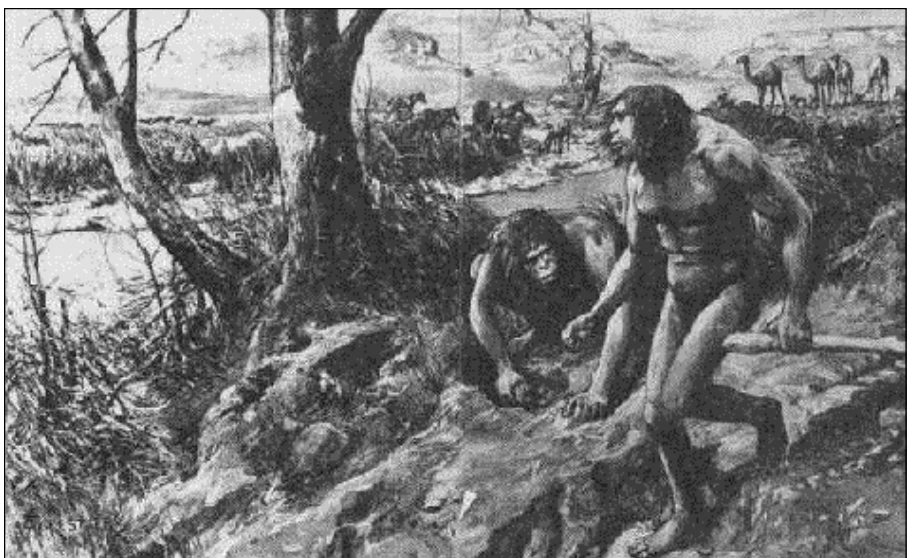


The full picture taken from the Web

here and note the description of these people: low foreheads and heavy brows. There's no 'maybe' in the description of their physical characteristics, but note the reference to cannibalism is tentatively put as '*possible cannibalistic tendencies*' – we'll return to that in a short while.

Now let us carry on the quotation which deals with the evidence for these assertions. '*Archaeologists are basing the findings on a treasure trove of flint tools and animal and plant remains discovered near the coastal village... Fossilized remains of 'Norfolk Man' have yet to be unearthed.*' These people are characterized by low foreheads and heavy brows all of which has been gleaned from flint tools and animal and plant remains. WOW. That's real science! The facts lead directly to those conclusion, don't they? We 'know' they were like this despite the fact that not one single bone has been found.

In the 1922 there was a famous picture published in the *Illustrated London News* of Nebraska Man. He looked remarkably like Norfolk Man in our picture. This picture was used in evidence in the famous Scopes trial of 1925, which managed to ridicule those who believe in the Genesis account of Creation. We won't go into details here but it was



Nebraska Man

a *cause celebre*. The artist there did at least have a bone, well a tooth actually, to go on from which he could exercise his fertile imagination. Norfolk Man hasn't even got that, but we have his picture. Mind you Nebraska Man might just as well have been drawn entirely from the imagination because the celebrated tooth was later found to be that of an extinct pig – but the damage was done and the media never made a serious retraction to put the mistake right in the people's minds, because they had their agenda and this didn't fit.

Now, what about his being a cannibal? Well it's just as good. This unknown Man, of whom not one single bone has been found, had this said of him by way of analysis: *'But scientists said it is likely he was related to Pioneer Man – hailed as Europe's oldest inhabitant when his remains were uncovered in northern Spain in 1994. Pioneer Man, or Homo antecessor, is rumoured to have had a taste for human flesh. But in many other ways he was rather like us.'* They've no bones for comparison but he is 'likely' to have been related to a Spanish find. This Spanish find 'is rumoured to have had a taste for human flesh.' Rumoured? Who started the rumour? Is it based on solid fact or somebody's fanciful imagination based on what they believe our evolutionary ancestors were like? There is not one single shred of evidence for any of this beyond some flint implements and some evidence of the animals they hunted and the food they ate. This is science, cutting-edge science. The science which laughs at those who believe in the Bible, but nevertheless it's the science which undermines the faith of believers, prevents many youngsters from considering the scriptures and turns some away from the love they once had for the Lord.

There is nothing wrong with good science; it is wonderful. The dig in Norfolk has no doubt uncovered some amazing things but it's what they do with the data which has to be questioned. This was a ludicrous article and it was so easy to spot the holes in it.

In the popular mind, cavemen form the link between ape-men and modern man, hence the kind of imaginative illustrations we see from artists who try to depict them. They are stepping stones on the assumed upward evolutionary path from animal to human. Consequently they are rising upwards socially, morally and in every other way. We all had ancestors like them for somewhere in our past they must appear on our ancestral tree, if we could document it - but of course, we can't because, though they could draw, they couldn't write.

What then is the biblical view of them? Where do they fit into the biblical story? Are they known or mentioned in the Bible? Let's see what we can unearth.

Cavemen and the Bible

We have already established that caves did not exist before the Flood because Carboniferous limestone is a Flood deposit. It was during the recession of the Flood-waters that most caves were formed, and also in the immediate post-Flood aftermath when the limestone was not as consolidated as it is today and there was much more water around, with higher water tables and cooler climates, leading on to the Ice Age.

Eight people came out of the Ark. They brought with them knowledge, probably written, from the now vanished antediluvian world they had inhabited only just over a year previous. They were not primitive hunters and didn't have to live in caves. They knew how to build - later even towers reaching up to heaven! - and sail the world, exploring the newly formed continents and oceans, and mapping lands like Antarctica before it was covered in ice (see *Genesis Accepted* Number 12, the Piri Re'is Map, in 'Before Babel'). Noah became a farmer, grew grapes and knew how to make wine (Genesis 9:20-21). Building and farming were not the occupations of primitive hunter gatherers. They would naturally have passed their knowledge and skills on to their children. So what happened? Where did the cavemen come from and how did they get to be like this?

Babel

It all happened at Babel! It is hard to imagine what it must have been like immediately after God confused their language, and friends and possibly family could no longer communicate with one another. It is more than likely that Shem, Ham and Japheth could only converse with their immediate linear descendents but not laterally with each other. Noah and his wife, no doubt, were locked into the language of the tribe of Shem, for he no doubt had an influence on Abraham (see the article in this issue entitled 'Who was Abraham's Father?'), but lost touch with the Hamites and Japhethites as a result. They spread out and were scattered leaving the Shemites (Semites) largely occupying the originally settled lands focusing on the Fertile Crescent.

By splitting up the people like this, some groups drew the short straw and did not have the knowledge and skills' base of the others. Those with certain knowledge and skill were able to found the great nations of the past coming, as it were, almost from nowhere, a fact which has puzzled ancient historians for many years. They discount the biblical account of Babel so leave themselves with no base from which to consider the genesis of these civilisations - so they have to invent long, mysterious dark ages in their historical schemes for these peoples.

Those people groups who lacked the knowledge and skills to flourish in the

immediate aftermath of Babel were reduced instantly to fending for themselves without the sophisticated equipment necessary and so fell down to more primitive life, which included primitive tools, weapons and forms of occupation. They became hunter-gatherers out of necessity, not choice and it was a backwards step for them. It only takes one generation to turn sophisticates into savages. Hippy colonies in Australia, in our time, were where some dropped out and raised their children in the outback, and in only one generation the children became wild and savage. It's not hard to do. So cavemen were the outcasts who came out as bottom of the heap, as it were, after Babel. But, of course, they didn't lose all of their skills and knowledge, so some were still able to produce wonderful paintings on the cave walls.

It is most unlikely that they lived permanently in caves in most instances. They would use them as temporary shelter while on hunting expeditions. They would bury their dead in them, as we've already noted, and, yes, some might well have degenerated so much that they indulged in cannibalism and human sacrifice from time to time.

Cavemen in the Bible

Logically the one Book we can turn to in this quest is probably the oldest Book of all: Job. It is not part of this discussion to decide when it was actually written but it certainly deals with a time between the end of the Flood and before Moses. Job must have lived reasonably close to Abraham's time, probably just a little later. He was not in the godly line through Shem but he certainly was a godly man, no doubt worshipping after the order of Melchizedek - as they all must have done at least until Sinai and the giving of the Law. (Moses father-in-law, Jethro, was one such priest: Exodus 3:1 and chapter 18.)

It is our belief that cavemen were degenerate groups of people after Babel who, for various reasons, did not carry the necessary knowledge and skills' bases to maintain a sophisticated life style. Whatever their genesis, they could not compete successfully and eventually died out. However, just as in our day there are very primitive societies and groups living alongside great advanced cultures simultaneously, so the same thing occurred then. The whole world was not living as cavemen and women as the most advanced stage in the process of an evolutionary upwards march. When they were living on the fringes of society in caves, having degenerated from a more advanced level, there were magnificent civilisations extant in Egypt and Babylon and the Indus valley. This is the biblical picture of events.

The Book of Job

So, in Job, there are possibly two references to these people. The first comes in chapter 12, verses 24-25. Job is talking

about the might and power of God, and in verses 13 and 14 he says :

'With God are wisdom and might; he has counsel and understanding. If he tears down, none can rebuild; if he shuts a man in, none can open,' thus establishing the sovereignty of the Lord. Then in 24-25 he declares that: *'He takes away understanding from the chiefs of the people of the earth and makes them wander in a pathless waste. They grope in the dark without light, and he makes them stagger like a drunken man.'*

Whilst not a strong and direct reference to cavemen, the notion of people who had their understanding taken away and now they wander in 'pathless wastes', groping 'in the dark without light', is definitely evocative of such people and their type of existence.

Over in chapter 30, however, there is a much stronger reference to such people. We begin the quotation from the last verse of the previous chapter, where Job is talking about people he once knew and who have become degenerate outcasts, and that now even they have heard of his plight and mock him as the lowest of the low. Here's what he said (we chose this translation for its graphic description and the use of the word 'caves', which are rendered 'holes in the ground' in other modern versions):

'I told them what they should do and presided over them as their chief. I lived as a king among his troops and as one who comforts

those who mourn. But now I am mocked by those who are younger than I, by young men whose fathers are not worthy to run with my sheepdogs. A lot of good they are to me--those worn-out wretches! They are gaunt with hunger and flee to the deserts and the wastelands, desolate and gloomy. They eat coarse leaves, and they burn the roots of shrubs for heat. They are driven from civilization, and people shout after them as if they were thieves. So now they live in frightening ravines and in caves and among the rocks. They sound like animals as they howl among the bushes; they huddle together for shelter beneath the nettles. They are nameless fools, outcasts of civilization.' (Job 29:25-30:8. New Living Translation, NLT). If these aren't cavemen, what are they?

The Maths of population statistics

The article on 'Norfolk Man' declares that there were several thousand such people living around 950,000 years ago in East Anglia. The people who write such articles never do the Maths; so I did.

If there were only two humans, a male and female, on Earth 1,000,000 years ago and they only had three children – the minimum for population growth – and they only lived for 35 years, which is just for one generation, the population should now be in the order of 10^{5000} and that's allowing for plague, wars and other nasty culls. If you don't fully grasp the significance of

that figure it is 1 plus 5,000 noughts. You can't begin to explain a number like that but let's give it a try. Scientists estimate, so I'm informed, that there are only 10^{80} electrons in the whole universe: that's 1 plus 80 noughts. That means there should be over 60x more people on Earth than there are electrons in the whole universe! If you do the Maths for population growth properly, you'll find that the number of people we have today points to an origin some 4,000 years ago which, oddly enough, happens to be about the time of the Flood. Strange isn't it? (Data for this paragraph is from *The Creation-Evolution Controversy*, by R.L. Wysong, 1976, pages 168-169)

Conclusion

So there we have it: a picture of the place of caves and cavemen inside a biblical framework. Maximally they date from around 4,300 years ago. They did exist but were not advancing humans at all, rather they were degenerate groups probably forced out into the fringe areas by circumstances which originated at Babel. They were either assimilated back into society at a later date or died out from disease, or malnutrition, or even by genocidal wars. They were not ignorant primitives of low intelligence, but were fully human and as clever in their day as our populations are in ours - some brighter than others, and some very talented indeed. It is therefore not unreasonable to assume that many alive today are carrying some of their genes!

By Design

This is to be a new feature to take the place of 'Creation Matters', which was a regular item in all the previous issues. As we told you last time, that was actually taken from the text of a Creation correspondence course of 20 lessons but the last lesson was just a general summation of the course and an encouragement to lead the student to further study—hence it stopped after issue Number 19. 'By Design' is given this heading because it is the Bible's own pointer to the existence of God. In Romans 1:20 we read: *'...his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.'*

We want to look at the evidence of design to demonstrate quite pointedly that the world, indeed the universe, was designed and could not have been created by the forces of mindless chance. It may not feature in every issue—that will depend on available space—but it will be a regular feature in future issues - Ed.

THE SNOWSHOE RABBIT

The snowshoe rabbit is in fact a hare. It is exclusive to North America, particularly Canada, and lives mainly in forested areas or high up in the mountains. Its technical name is *Lepus Americanus*, for obvious reasons, and though it lives in harsh climatic areas, it does not hibernate. Its name seems to come from the special design of its feet where they have fur on the soles, which keeps them warm in severe conditions and also provides them with good traction in snow. Its feet are rather large and its toes spread out to act like snowshoes. It is larger than normal rabbits, weighing three to four pounds and growing to about fifteen to twenty inches as an adult. It is very agile and can jump about



The Snowshoe Rabbit

Photo Susan Teel



Map: Wikipedia Commons

Distribution of the Snowshoe Rabbit

10 feet in one hop, run at speeds of up to 27 mph and can quickly change direction, especially when being hunted. It can even swim in order to escape its enemies. In summer it is a rusty, greyish brown but in winter it turns snow white, apart from the tips of its ears and eyelids, which obviously helps it hide from predators.

Snowshoe rabbits can have three or four litters a year, with between two to eight leverets per litter, and, interesting though the

details presented so far are, it is in the design of this species's reproduction mechanisms that the real evidence of a Creator's hand is seen best.

During extreme drought or harsh winters, the stress of finding food triggers a chemical process in the pregnant female that stops an embryo's growth. Her body then responds to this condition of physical weakness with a process called reabsorption. What this means is that the mother completely reabsorbs the growing embryo, which allows her to survive by replenishing her own strength. When favourable conditions return she can easily become pregnant once more, and, in fact, she can actually get pregnant again with a further litter before the one she is carrying is born.

Just try to imagine how many chemical and physical changes are required for a rabbit to reverse a pregnancy. There is absolutely no evolutionary, or scientific, explanation of how such a thing could come about. Only the Creator could think up something like this to enable one of His smaller creatures to survive.

THE AMAZING TREE PUMP

It's easy to take trees for granted. We see them all around us. Some are memorable and resplendent in their foliage and shape, standing almost like eternal sentinels overseeing the affairs of men, but most are just, sort of, there. The lane where I lived in Liverpool until I was 41 was lined with them, tall and splendid, yet only deemed worthy of comment when they shed their leaves which annoyed householders who had to clear up the mess in the autumn. Until one day they were all cut down. Then they were missed, and didn't the moaners want them back again! The lane was destroyed as a scenic wonder, which was actually nobody's fault. You see, the trees were elms and it was the dreaded Dutch Elm Disease which laid them waste. I'd gotten married and left the lane by then, and that made it easier for me to take and removed any last hankering I might have had to return there to live.

They were tall by British standards but they were not in the same league as



Giant redwoods in Sequoia National Park, California (USA)

Photo : weurbanist.com

the giant redwoods of California in Sequoia National Park. Here, in the mild moist air which blows inland off the Pacific and washes them in mist, they attain heights of over 200ft. The largest, General Sherman, is just under 275ft with a diameter of 36ft 6ins (11.1m) at its base. As we can see above, some have had roads driven through their bases and these features are now tourist attractions, though this may well weaken them for many have fallen and only a few now remain.

So how does 'nature' sustain any trees, let alone ones as massive as these? Obviously there has to be an adequate supply of water but getting it up the tree to the top-most branches is an amazing feat of engineering—Divine engineering, of course!

On a hot summer's day one large tree can pump over a thousand gallons—that's four tons—of water to its leaves. As we know, the water is collected from the soil through its roots but the real work of pumping tons of water well over 100 feet into the air, occurs at the top of the tree. It is suctioned towards the tree top by three remarkable and efficient mechanisms: capillary flow, osmosis, and vacuum pres-

sure. Osmosis and capillary action act in concert to move the water partway to the top of the tree, but the real driving force is a pressure differential created by the leaves within the vessels of the tree. This pressure differential is a result of water evaporating from the leaves of the tree, creating a suction throughout the vessels. This suction (measured as low as 1/20th of atmospheric pressure) helps to draw water from the roots all the way to the top of the tree. If you were to cut one of these vessels you could actually hear a hissing sound as air rushed back in.

In engineering terms this is a far from simple pumping system which efficiently delivers moisture to the very top of even the General Sherman, the tallest tree in the world. Yet 'nature' seems to have managed it without our help. Maybe it wasn't 'nature' but the One who made and controls nature for our benefit. This amazing tree pump is a silent witness to the reality of design in the world and is evidence of His existence too. It is the fool who says in his heart 'There is no God'. (Ps. 14:1).

[The basis for these articles is, and will be, *A Closer Look at the Evidence*, by Richard and Tina Kleiss, Search for the Truth Publications, 3275 Monroe Road, Midland, MI 48642, USA.]

Genesis Accepted is published three times a year. All correspondence and cheques to:

Graham A. Fisher,
5 Portway, North Marston, Buckingham, MK18 3PL, (UK).
☎ (01296) 670568. Email: gafisher888@aol.com



Subscription: £5.00 per year. (£1.70 per copy)

All quotations are from the *English Standard Version* of the Bible (Anglicized version, 2002), unless otherwise indicated.

