

NELSON GLUECK

(Eulogy said at a memorial meeting, Hebrew Union College, 9.3.1971)

It is difficult to get used to the fact that we have to speak of Glueck in the past tense. He always seemed young to us, and it was only recently, when we celebrated his seventieth birthday, that we were made to realize that he was no longer a youngster. Maybe God has dealt kindly with him for we shall forever think of him as being young, erect, fresh and active.

In recent years we have tended to speak about the institutions which Glueck has set up in the United States as well as in Jerusalem. Today, however, I wish to speak about Glueck as an institution.

Of all Glueck's scientific projects the survey which he carried out in Transjordan and in the Negev over a period of close on thirty years will remain not merely as a massive foundation for the study of these regions, but also as a monumental undertaking carried out by a single person who, in addition 'made an epoch' as regards his methods. He proved that it is possible to make pottery fragments give up their secrets not only by means of expensive excavations, but by collecting them on the surface, and with the help of tens of thousands of inanimate potsherds produce a complete historical picture of sites and regions.

In his survey of Transjordan Glueck used a magic key with which he opened up "terra incognita," and for the first time some archaeological basis was available for the study of the Biblical problems connected with the Exodus from Egypt and the Conquest of the Land of Israel — by proving in what periods this part of the country was inhabited and when it was uninhabited and what had been the character of the settlement. No longer can a scholar come up with this or that chronological suggestion unless it ties up with Glueck's conclusions, which can be found in the four monumental volumes in BASOR (Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research). Neither have the latest discoveries made through accidental or systematic excavations shaken his principal statements, though, obviously, they demand re-examining and adjustment of some of his earlier conclusions. In fact, Glueck himself did this brilliantly in one of his last articles on Transjordan in the 1967 Jubilee Volume of the Old Testament Society. As regards everything connected with the period of the Patriarchs in Transjordan, he opened a door to understanding the pe-

riod of the Exodus from Egypt; it was here that he wanted to find the chronological-archeological basis for the period of the Patriarchs. The historical aspect obliged him to start in the Negev and from there continue to Transjordan.

Glueck was guided by the Guardian Angel of modern history without his realizing it! And here we are witnesses to an unusual phenomenon in the history of scholarship: Glueck, who throughout his life and right down to his last day remained the admiring pupil of his teacher Albright, literally sat at his feet and learnt from him, merited that his teacher became his pupil who accepted an historical theory from him and developed it. Occassionally the greatness of a scholar does not necessarily depend on the solution which he offers, but on the revolutionary idea which he uncovers and the chain reaction which is the spur and finally solves the problem. Glueck did not live to see one of the latest discoveries from Ein Samya of which we have just been informed, the silver goblet with Sumerian engraving which, perhaps more than any other findings connects the finds of this period with the Patriarchs' country of origin, and places obstacles in the way of other scholars who saw the origin of this civilization in different countries.

Like many Biblical archeologists, Glueck was haunted by Biblical figures and at the same time he was on their trail. His studies in Transjordan brought him face to face with King Solomon, with the problems of Ezion-geber.

Glueck, the man of surveys, who numerous times resisted the temptation to excavate, twice succumbed to the magic of excavations: one of these was his dig in Tell el-Kheleifeh. This excavation convinced him that he had, in fact, discovered Solomon's Ezion-geber with all its magic. His surveys and the discoveries of the copper mines in the vicinity actually gave him the idea that the building which he had discovered from this period was none other than a copper smelting works from the days of Solomon. And this is where Glueck's greatness as a scholar — rivalled by few — revealed itself. When he realized, to his deep regret, as the result of the criticism of several Israeli scholars, that this building was not a smelting works, but Solomon's fortress, in an article, not long ago, he was able to summon the strength to cruelly rescind his life-long theory.

Glueck was a Biblical archeologist, but his second love and perhaps his second great undertaking was the study of Nabatean ruins. And here he succumbed a second time to the excavator's spade when he

excavated the Nabatean sanctuary at Khirbet et-Tannur, also in Trans-jordan. His last book, "Gods and Dolphins," is more than a description of the excavations in this locality; it is one of the most comprehensive and basic studies of the Nabatean ruins, and it can be said that from the scientific aspect Glueck, more than any other scholar, brought this unknown people to life. Glueck engaged in research on both sides of the Jordan and no less on the Jordan itself, round the axis of which he turned all his life as though bewitched.

Glueck did not belong to those who only walk along a well trodden path. He would beat the path and turn it into a highway. Occasionally, we are amazed by chance archeological finds discovered in a dig, which the archeologist neither expected nor looked for. Glueck did not search for either antiquities or discoveries; he looked for solutions to problems. He went to the problems, to their homeground, be it ever so remote, where he tracked them down, grappled with them and overcome them. Glueck was a Victorian Jewish type. Strange and unique. Somewhat romantic and childlike, who was enchanted by the magic of his people's past, he was driven by his faith in the God of his fathers, by the history of his nation. He wandered in the deserts, though not like Lawrence who was dazzled by the oriental charm of the Beduins — even though, like him, he liked to wear a Kaffia — but as one for whom they were some Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who this very day walk about on this earth.

Glueck came to archeology through his faith in the religion of his fathers, and from archeology he returned to his people purified and enthusiastic. He was one of the most glowing Zionists; the Negev was his field of research; the Patriarchs his incentive. However, during his last years he moved from his forefathers to their descendants. Had he been British and been knighted — I have no doubt that he would have chosen the title "Lord Glueck of the Negev." That is where all his world was concentrated.

May his memory be blessed.

Yigael Yadin

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