

NEWS AND VIEWS FOR WOMEN READERS



Oh! ROMAN MEAL MUFFINS—Splendid. Yes, Yes, steaming hot! They always agree with me—and I love them.

Keeps the family fit



A VISIT TO ABRAHAM'S TOMB

The International Sunday School Lesson for October 7th is, "Abraham a Blessing to the Whole World."— Gen. 12:1-4; 18:17, 18; 22:15-18.

By William T. Ellis.

More than a dozen years ago, after a rather comprehensive tour of Mesopotamia, I wrote in these Lessons that any young man with money, and a taste for the Bible and for archaeology, could have the finest of adventures, and win fame for himself, by digging on the site of the first home of Abraham, Ur or the Chaldees. That opportunity is now lost, for the University of Pennsylvania and the British Museum have jointly carried out this excavation, and the discoveries made last Winter have stirred the whole world of cultured folk. The little cuneiform tablet from Ur which I got from an Arab while travelling there, dated in Abraham's era, seemed to make the father of faith near and real; but now the whole life of this city and time is being uncovered; and no discovery is too startling to expect.

This seems to be Abraham's day. By many lines, interest is converging upon the founder of Monotheism, the first interpreter of Jehovah, the one and supreme God. New Giggings are to be started this Autumn in old Jerusalem, where once he offered up Isaac as a proof of his loyalty to Jehovah; and these will assuredly result in revelations that will arrest the attention of civilization. The finding of the tombs of the kings on Ophel, the original Mount Zion, seems almost a certainty. In Egypt, Prof. F. H. Peters has unearthed new evidence of an ancient Israelite settlement. At Belson, Prof. F. H. Peters is finding illuminating inscriptions. Aleppo, which embarks traditions of Abraham in its name, may give up to French scientists the secrets that lie hidden beneath its great castle. Hebron, with its rich memories of the patriarchs, is now accessible to a few properly accredited visitors.

A Trip to Old Hebron.

I have just come from a visit to Hebron, and the graves of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca and Jacob and Leah. The experience is a moving one. Many secret steels leave me cold; and I am inclined to be sceptical about shrines in general. Not so with Hebron. The Genesis record is explicit that there in the cave of Machpelah, bought for four hundred shekels of silver by Abraham from Ephron the Hittite, the patriarchs and their wives were buried. The place is carefully located; the whole transaction of the purchase of the real estate is as vivid as an oriental experience of yesterday; and the unbroken tradition of the centuries points to this very cave as the tomb of the family of Abraham. Machpelah is one of the undisputed sites of the Holy

Land. Over the cave, which is now sealed up exactly as was recorded in the eleventh century, there is an ancient church, which has been turned into a mosque. There are two holes leading into the cave; one an aperture in the side, by the stairs, at a point beyond which no Jews are allowed to pass, where as I saw, Jewish women go to pray for sons at the tomb of Sarah, dropping written prayers the while into the cave. The other hole is in the top of the cave, opening into the interior of the mosque, and through this a small boy is lowered at infrequent intervals to gather up the papers that have accumulated. Aside from the cenotaphs, covered with gold-embroidered green cloths, which commemorate all of the bodies below, there is no display or ostentation about the tombs. Moslems maintain shrines in far greater simplicity and dignity and solemnity than do the Christian churches in the Orient.

Real reverence fills one who has the high and rare privilege of visiting these tombs where, for four thousand years, these men of faith have rested, according to the ancient Book of Genesis. The flesh-and-blood reality of Abraham impresses one at Hebron. What king's grave has so certainly been kept for a period of this length? The much pre-arranged tomb of Tut-Ankh-Amen is not so old as that of Abraham, and he himself was comparatively a nonentity. As I went out to the oak of Mamre, and to the vineyard of Eschol, where the grapes were flourishing in abundance, I somehow had the feeling that, in a way yet to be revealed, the personality and message of Abraham are soon to mean more to mankind than ever before.

A Hero of Three Religions.

Jews, Christians, and Moslems all do reverence to this first hero of faith, to whose abode civilization and scholarship are nowadays penetrating with new interest. Perhaps a return to Abraham may mean a revival of the religion of the reality and unity of God. That was his message, even as it later was Mohammed's. It is not the full truth about Jehovah, who revealed himself completely only in his Son, our Saviour. Nevertheless, in a period when we have overlaid Christianity with refinements of ritual and dogma and ecclesiasticism; and when the minutiae of procedure and practice are stressed by many as the first requirements of faith; it is wholesome to be called back by Abraham to the majestic and essential first truth that God exists, and that he is one God, supreme in character and in sovereignty.

Religion is not a matter of the fashion of one's dress, or the meetings one attends or the organization to which one belongs; it is before all else, a recognition of the Godship of Jehovah, and of humble obedience to Him. This was the tremendous truth, which, in an idolatrous age, made a "come-outer" of Abraham, and set him forth upon the supreme adventure of the ages.

The Audacity of a Dreamer.

All the East is full of tales of Abraham: I wish there were space to tell the characteristic one which I heard at Urfa, and of Abraham's traditional sojourn there. This man, who wandered far and slowly over our day's most troubled area of the Near East, was so great a personality that his memory has outlived all the major empires of antiquity. From far down below Bagdad, where once the city-state of Ur flourished, along with others over which the sands of the centuries have also drifted, he journeyed northward and eastward, in obedience to a Divine vision.

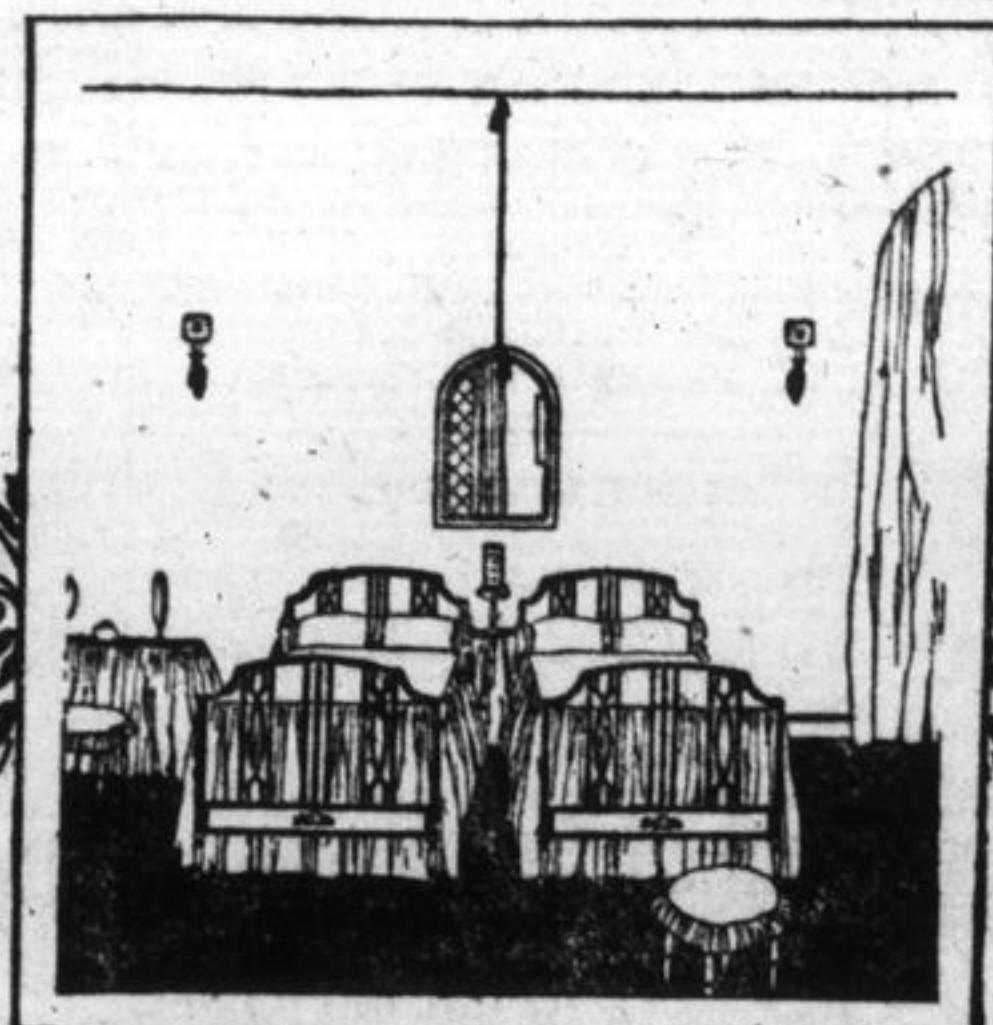
No mere tent-dwelling Bedouin was he, rude and unlettered, but a city man of learning, force and substance. What a flood of light the recent excavations have shed upon the assumption that even Moses, who lived five centuries later, could not read or write! With riches and a retinue, Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees and after sojourn in Haran, in upper Mesopotamia, he followed his Divine leading to southern Canaan, which thereby became a homeland of faith, and today one of the world's most vexed political issues.

We need not become enmeshed in spiritual subtleties as we study Abraham's life. The big, outstanding truth is that he risked everything for the sake of his gleam. He had a perception of God that was in advance of his age. A revelation had rewarded his reverent, questing spirit in an idolatrous place and time; and he was obedient to his heavenly vision. That is the big fact about Abraham, or any other man. So long as even a small proportion of the people will stake their personal interests upon the pursuit of a sacred summons, then the future of the race is safe. Our peril lies not in the dreamers but in the prudent, safe-

ty-seeking, material-minded men and women who will risk nothing for an ideal or a vision. It is the men who dare to be different, and who are not afraid to stand or walk alone, who are best blessed by a becoming a blessing to their fellows.

Life on Lofty Levels.

How often have I heard in the past six months, from a wide diversity of persons, what a British staff officer said to me last night with something like anguish in his voice: "There is not a single light on the horizon; there is no star in the sky. We are left without any leadership. Our supported great ones have betrayed the world. I tell you our people are depressed beyond words by the plight into which we have been put." Against this dark modern background we see the bril-



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