

Glass In The Biblical Literature

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As far back as Genesis 4, 22 there is the statement: "And Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain (eighth man after Adam), and instructor (whether) of every artificer in brass and iron." If brass and iron were produced, slags necessarily formed. Slags are crude glasses.

While the references to glass are rather limited, a search of the biblical literature was rewarding in an auxiliary fashion. Especially in the Apocrypha were legends discovered which the authors had not previously encountered. They were interesting and sometimes very beautiful.

Glass, as it is known in the world today, is taken for granted. Few realize that it played an important role in biblical times. Evidence of its use was found in the following excerpts from the old and new Testaments.

Job 7, 18: "Hast thou with him spread out the sky which is strong and as a molten looking glass?"

Job 28, 12-7: "Where shall wisdom be found and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith—it is not in me; the sea saith,

it is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with precious onyx or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it, and the exchange shall not be for jewels of fine gold." The term "crystal" has been interpreted as glass by biblical scholars.

Psalm 56, 8: "Thou tellest of my wonderings; put thou my tears into thy bottle." Tear bottles were unearthed in Jerusalem. They were employed in Egypt in ancient times, as tears were considered sacred.

Psalm 119, 83: "For I am become like a bottle in the smoke, yet I do not forget thy statutes. Although many bottles in those days were made of skins, this evidently referred to glass.

Isaiah 3, 18-23, concerning the punishment of women for their false pride: "In that day, the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet and around tires like the moon, the chains and bracelets and the mufflers, the bonnets and the ornaments of the legs, and the head bands and tablets and the earrings, the rings and the nose jewels, the

changeable suits of apparel and the mantles and the wimples and the crisping pins, the glasses and the fine linen, and the hoods and the veils."

1 Corinthians 13, 12: "For now we see through a glass darkly but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am known."

2 Corinthians 3, 18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the spirit of the Lord."

General Epistle of James 1, 23: "For if any be hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass, for he beholdeth his way and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."

Revelation 4, 6: "And before the throne, there was a sea of glass like unto crystal and in the midst of the throne and about the throne were four beasts full of eyes before and behind."

Revelation 15, 2: "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast and over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name stand on the sea of glass having the harps of the Lord."

Revelation 21, 18: "And the building of the wall of it was of jasper and the city was pure gold like unto clear glass."

Revelation 21, 21: "And twelve gates were twelve pearls, every several gate was of one pearl and the street of the city was pure gold as it were transparent glass."

The Apocrypha. 2 Ecclesiasticus 12: "Though he humble himself and go crouching, yet take good heed and beware of him and thou shalt be unto him as if thou hast

wiped a looking glass and thou shalt know that his rust hath not been altogether wiped away."

The Talmud. 3 One reference mentions the fact that the walls of Paradise are of glass.

Another reference: "When Moses assigned the land to the twelve tribes, he assigned to Zebulun the sea coast whose prosperity would come not only in commerce, but which might yield them costly fish and the purple shell and the sand of whose shores might furnish them the material for glass."

Another reference: "Among the wonders of King Solomon's realm which the Queen of Sheba saw, was a house which he had built of glass."

Although few references to glass are found in the Talmud, the Jewish Encyclopedia published by Funk and Wagnalls in 1916 contains the following: "By Talmudic times, the Jews seem to have acquired the art of glass blowing. It is referred to as being practiced by them near Belus known for its sand. White glass was very dear; it is even stated that its manufacture ceased after the destruction of the second temple. The poorer classes used colored glass. A remarkable number of articles were made wholly or partly of glass; e. g., tables, bowls, drinking vessels, bottles, heads, lamps, beds, weights, knives, cradles. Those were sold by weight. Mirrors were usually of metal but glass ones are referred to."

And so we see that in the scheme of living in biblical times, glass played a significant role, side by side with gold, silver, brass, and the precious stones.

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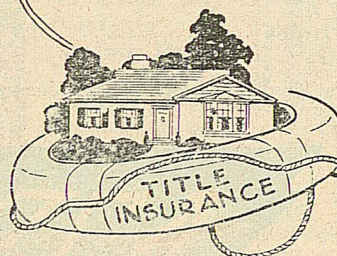
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