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### OVERLOOK

One of the idiosyncrasies of language is that sometimes the *same* word can have *different* meanings. In some cases almost *opposite* meanings! Along a highway there may be an elevated scenic **OVERLOOK**. From there we can *see* something. But if we **OVERLOOK** something, we do *not see* it.

While many things mentioned in the Scriptures are well-known, there are other things that are commonly *overlooked*. Often these things are not of great significance, but are, nevertheless, of interest to students of the Bible.

**Moses** is especially remembered as the *lawgiver*. It is not as well-known that he was a singer and song writer. “Then sang Moses...this song...saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously...the LORD is my strength and song and he has become my salvation” (Exod. 15:1, 2). And later, just before his death, “Moses wrote this song...and taught it to the children of Israel” (Deut. 31:22). The words are found in Deuteronomy 32 (cf. Rev. 15:3).

But there is another song-composer who is mentioned in the Bible, one who wrote over a thousand songs—more songs than Moses or anyone else! Who was he? **Solomon**. “...his songs were *one thousand and five*” (1 Kings 4:32).

The longest song attributed to him is a book of the Bible, *The Song of Solomon*, which abounds in erotic metaphors and oriental imagery.

The Bible says Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kings 11:3). This is not an endorsement of polygamy. To the contrary, one of the laws for an Israelite king was this: “Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away” (Deut. 17:17-20).

According to the *Guinness World Records*, Ismail Ibn Sharif (1645-1727), the monarch of Morocco, with a harem of 500 women (*half* that of Solomon), set a record for fathering the most children—**1,042** or more. We do not know how many children Solomon had, but only *three* are mentioned in the Bible: a son, **Rehoboam**; and two daughters: **Taphath** and **Basmath** (1 Kings 4:11, 15; 11:43). These two daughters of Solomon are commonly overlooked.

We are not told how many daughters Abraham had. His two *sons*, Ishmael and Isaac, however, are well-known (Gal. 4:22). But he was also the father of six other sons that tend to go unnoticed: Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah (Gen. 25:1, 2).

The Temple Solomon constructed in Jerusalem was 90 feet long, 30 feet wide, and forty-five feet high (figuring a cubit as 18 inches). It took 7 years to build (1 Kings 6:2, 38). But *his* own house was much larger: 150 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high and took 13 years to build (1 Kings 7:1, 2). His house was over four times the cubic capacity of the Temple.

That Solomon built the Temple is well-known and it is commonly referred to as “Solomon’s Temple.” But it is not as well-known that he also built places around Jerusalem for the worship of pagan gods:

King Solomon loved many foreign women...When he was old, his wives turned his heart after other gods...for Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites...Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab on the hill east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods (1 Kings 11:1-8).

A less-known name for Solomon was JEDIDIAH (2 Sam. 12:25). Some other names of well-known people in the Bible, along with their less-known names, are these:

Joseph (son of Jacob) was called ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH (Gen. 41:45). Joshua was called OSHEA (Num. 13:16; 11:28). Gideon was called JERUBBAAL (Judges 8:35). Daniel was called BELTESHAZZAR (Dan. 1:7). Esther was called HADASSAH (Esther 2:7).

Jesus said to his apostles: “Whatsoever you shall **BIND** on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever you shall **LOOSE** on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 18:18). To bind and loose was a common Hebrew idiom meaning *to prohibit and to permit*.

This has sometimes been taken to mean that whatever these apostles (or by extension church leaders even centuries later)

decided to prohibit or permit, the same would then be done in heaven. But as noted Bible translator J. B. Phillips has pointed out, the *tenses* of the words used here, show otherwise.

Their mission was not to come up with a bunch of rules of their own making, and then assume that heaven would back them up. Instead, being led by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13), they would set forth that which heaven (God) had *already* ordained as truth.

Even Jesus said, “I have not spoken *on my own*, but the Father who sent me has commanded me what to say” (John 12:49). If this was the case about what Jesus taught, *how much more* would this be required of those he called to preach the gospel! *The Amplified Bible* (among several other translations) provides clarification on this point:

“Whatever you bind [forbid, declare to be improper and unlawful] on earth shall have [**already**] been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose [permit, declare lawful] on earth shall have [**already**] been loosed in heaven.”

In other words, they would be used of God to convey heaven’s message—not their own ideas.

Later in this chapter about binding and loosing, Peter asked how many times forgiveness should be granted (Matt. 18:21, 22). A Jewish belief held it should be *three* times. But Peter suggested *seven*. According to the *King James Version*, Jesus told him *not* seven times only, but “**seventy times seven.**” The *New International Version* and several other translations say “**seventy-seven times.**” Seventy *times* seven would be 490, a different number than 77. But the point about forgiveness is made either way.

According to the *King James Version*, Jesus said: “Which of you with taking thought can add to his *stature* one **cubit**? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is *least*, why take ye thought for the rest?” (Luke 12:25). A cubit is usually figured at about 18 inches. Would anyone but a *very* short person want to be 18 inches taller? In what sense could this tremendous growth in height be considered “least”?

The point Jesus was making was that even a simple thing cannot be changed by worry. Some of the more recent translations, such as the *New International Version*, word it this way: “Who of you by worrying can add a single **hour** to his life?” This wording is preferred. *Vincent’s Word Studies* shows that the word translated “stature” is also translated “age” (John 9:21, etc.) and a measure of length can be used to describe one’s age (Psa. 39:4, 5).

In the wording of the *King James Version*, Jesus said: “It is easier for a **camel** to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Matt. 19:24). The Lamsa translation says: “It is easier for a **rope** to go through the eye of a needle.” In the Greek, “camel” and “cable” (rope) are almost alike. Some old manuscripts have it one way, some the other.

Whether the small gate into a city (used when the main gates were shut) was called “The eye of a needle” at the time of Jesus has been questioned. Also, for a camel to enter through this small opening, while difficult, was not impossible. For these reasons, some feel that putting a **rope** through the eye of a

needle—a needle in its literal sense—may have been the original analogy used by Jesus. I only mention this as something that may be of interest to Bible students. Again, the basic point is made either way.

The type style known as *italic* (slanted lettering) was developed in **Italy** from which it takes its name. Today italic type is used for emphasis. But centuries ago when the translators of the *King James Version* used it, it had a different purpose. It was used to show they *added* a word in order to convey what they believed to be the proper sense in English.

Notice the word “him” in the following verse: “And he spoke to his sons, saying, Saddle me the ass. And they saddled *him*” (1 Kings 13:27). “Him” was added by the translators, meaning, of course, that they saddled the animal. But by today’s use of italics—used for *emphasis*—this would have a humorous twist: instead of the sons saddling the animal for their father, they saddled HIM!

A word that was considered a normal word at one time, may later acquire a different or, sometimes, vulgar meaning. The *King James Version* used the word “ass” or “asses” a total of 150 times. Newer translations, quite appropriately, use the word donkey.

In the *King James Version*, those who know and serve the Lord are called “a PECULIAR people” (Deut. 14:2; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9). In 1611, “peculiar” meant “belonging to one person.” In our time, over 400 years later, it has come to mean “strange.” I have actually heard people say—having done something goofy or oddball—“The Bible says God’s people are a PECULIAR people!” Newer translations have wording like “God’s own possession” which is the intended meaning.

The original Hebrew manuscripts were written without vowels. Depending on how vowels are added, there can be a difference in word meaning. This is true even in English. The word “spoon,” for example, without vowels is *spn*. By adding vowels, *spn* could form spoon, spin, span, spun, or spine! Generally speaking, the context would indicate which word would be correct, but not always.

In the familiar wording of the *King James Version*, we read that “**ravens** brought [Elijah] bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening” (1 Kings 17:2-6).

The Hebrew word translated “ravens,” without vowels, is *rbm*. Noted biblical commentator Adam Clarke (1762-1831), wrote that if we take *rbm* to mean ravens, “we shall find any interpretation on this ground to be clogged with difficulties,” among them the fact that the raven was an unclean bird (Lev. 11:13-15) and its normal food is carrion. If God chose to use ravens, we have no problem with this, of course, but there are other possibilities.

The letters *rbm* could mean “merchants.” Some believe that merchants who traveled and traded through those parts could have been used of God to provide food for the prophet. The short form of the word is translated “merchandise” in Ezekiel 27:9, 27.

Another possibility for *rbm* is “Arabians”—that people from Arab colonies in that area fed Elijah. They could have been inhabitants of a town named “Orbo,” a view expressed in the Arabic Version. Jerome, who lived in the fourth century and was familiar with this place, wrote: “The Orbim, inhabitants of a town in the confines of the Arabs, gave nourishment to Elijah.”

Long-held ideas are not quickly discarded, nor would we insist that any give up the idea of ravens. I have simply pointed this out as an example of how a Hebrew word can sometimes be capable of different meanings

At the time of Elisha, the sons of the prophets were cutting down trees by the Jordan River. “But as one was cutting down a tree, the iron ax head fell into the water; and he cried out, Alas, master! For it was *borrowed*” (2 Kings 6:5; cf. Exod. 22:14).

Elisha then asked, “Where did it fall?” The Jordan River is not known for having clear water (cf. 2 Kings 5:12), so the ax head was not visible. Had this been the case, someone could have simply dived in and retrieved it. “And he showed Elisha the place. So he cut off a stick, and threw it in there; and he made the iron float” (verses 6, 7).

According to George M. Lamsa, the iron ax head was retrieved because Elisha, by divine guidance, shoved the stick into the muddy water and it went right into the hole of the ax head! So, from the Aramaic text, Lamsa translated: “And he cut off a stick and thrust it in there; *and it stuck in the hole of the ax head.*”

If this is a correct account of what happened, it provides a good explanation as to why a stick was used. Had God intended the iron to simply float to the surface, as commonly believed, why would any stick be required? The miraculous element may have involved WHERE more than WHAT.

This brings to mind a story—no doubt a made-up story to make a point—that was told to me by a pastor friend back in the 1970s. The huge printing presses of the Dallas Newspaper suddenly stopped. Under pressure to get the morning paper out, nothing they tried solved the problem. A man who was considered an expert was quickly brought in. He went around and looked at all the machinery. After a few minutes, he took a hammer and hit a certain place. Immediately the printing presses started up. When he presented his bill, it was for \$5,000. The newspaper manager was furious at the price and demanded an itemized account of the bill, which read:

Hitting with the hammer: **\$5.**

Knowing WHERE to hit with the hammer: **\$4,995.**

Many names of countries mentioned in the Bible are well-known. But two well-known countries are commonly overlooked as being mentioned in the Bible: **Spain** and **India** (Rom. 15:24; Esther 1:1).

Names of people who were considered important for one reason or another, have long provided names for places. Clear back in the book of Genesis, we read that Cain named a town

Enoch in honor of his son (Gen. 4:17). The capital of the United States, Washington DC, of course, was named after George Washington, the nation’s first president.

There were times in Israel’s history when nearly the entire population was given over to Baal worship (1 Kings 18:22). This is reflected in the naming of various places in honor of Baal:

Bamoth-*baal* (Josh. 13:17), *Baalath-beer* (Josh. 19:8), *Baal-hagor* (2 Sam. 13:23), *Baal-hamon* (Song 8:11), *Baal-hermon* (Judges 3:3), *Baal-meon* (Ezek. 25:9), *Baal-perazim* (2 Sam. 5:20), *Baal-shalisha* (2 Kings 4:42), *Baal-zephon* (Num. 33:7), *Baal-Tamar* (Judges 20:33), etc.

Indian tribes, scattered here and there, had long inhabited what is now known as the State of California. Beginning in the 16th century, Spanish explorers arrived and eventually claimed the land for Spain. Later it became part of Mexico until 1848 when California became a possession of the United States.

The Roman Catholic background of the people of Spain and Mexico may be seen in the names they gave to various California cities. Keep in mind that the word “San” in Spanish means **saint**:

SAN ANDREAS—Saint Andrew.

SAN BERNARDINO—St. Bernard (of Siena).

SAN CLEMENTE—Saint Clement (of Rome).

SAN FRANCISCO—Saint Francis (of Assisi).

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO—Saint John (of Capistrano).

SAN LUIS OBISPO—Saint Luis the Bishop (of Toulouse).

SAN MATEO—Saint Matthew.

SAN MARCOS—Saint Mark.

SAN PEDRO—Saint Peter.

SAN PABLO—Saint Paul.

SANTA BARBARA—Saint Barbara, a Christian martyr.

SANTA MONICA—Saint Monica, mother of Augustine.

SAN JACINTO—Saint Hyacinth—is the town in which I was born (though soon after that my parents moved to Riverside). When I started Jr. High School, a form had to be filled out which included place of birth. I did not know how to spell “San Jacinto.” A teacher told me I would be writing this the rest of my life. She made me write “San Jacinto” so many times, I never forgot! Some of these California “San” (Saint) names are linked with **Mary**, the mother of Jesus:

SAN JOSE—Saint Joseph, *husband* of Mary.

SAN JOAQUIN—Saint Joachim, Mary’s *father* (tradition).

SANTA ANA—Saint Anne, *mother* of Mary (tradition).

LOS ANGELES, the second largest city in the United States (figured by population), also has a link with Mary. The name means “The Angels.” That is the shortened form. When it was founded in 1781, it was called *El Pueblo de La Reina de Los Angeles* or “The Town of the *Queen* of the Angels.”

MERCED, meaning “mercy,” is the name of a city in California. The name is derived from the Merced River, the original name being *El Rio de Nuestra Senora de la Merced* (River of *Our Lady* of Mercy).

SACRAMENTO, State Capital of California, signifies “Sacrament” or “Lord’s Supper.”

CORPUS CHRISTI, a large city in Texas, means “the body of Christ” referring, specifically, to the Roman Catholic belief in transubstantiation.

LAS CRUCES, New Mexico, is Spanish for “the crosses.” The use of three crosses (cf. Luke 23:33) as a symbol of the city has been opposed by some, citing issues about separation of church and state.

SANTA CRUZ, California, means “Holy Cross.”

ST AUGUSTINE [Florida], named for Saint Augustine (of Hippo), was founded in 1565 and is designated as the *oldest* city in the United States. Second oldest, SANTA FE [New Mexico] was founded around 1607. Santa Fe means “Holy Faith.”

In 1719, SANGRE DE CRISTO, meaning “Blood of Christ,” was the name a Spanish explorer gave to a mountain range in what is now Colorado.

In the 1960s a (false) teaching circulated that an earthquake along the San Andreas Fault would *soon* cause a large portion of the West Coast to slide into the ocean. Back at the time I visited with some people who had belonged to a group that taught this. Their leader and quite a few of the people fled to Colorado to be near the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. There, it was believed, they would be protected by the blood of Christ!

The Christian people with whom I visited were told if they did not move, they would no longer be in the body of Christ! Thankfully, they came to understand how deceptive and false the whole thing was. They did not move. It would have been very difficult for them to do so. They owned a farm, they provided care for the woman’s elderly mother who lived on the property, etc.

Many towns or cities in the USA have a name that is mentioned in the Bible:

ABILENE, ANTIOCH, ATHENS, BABYLON, BETHANY, BETHLEHEM, CARMEL, CYPRUS, LEBANON, MEMPHIS, MOAB, PALESTINE, PARADISE, PHILADELPHIA, ROME, SALEM, SYRACUSE, ZION, etc.

A few others with biblical names, though very small, include: Egypt (Arkansas), Goshen (California), Mount Herman (California), Nimrod (Arkansas), Nineveh (New York), Ophir (Colorado), Patmos (Arkansas) and Hell (California).

The tiny town of **Hell** was located in the desert between Palm Springs and the Arizona line. According to an internet article, it “was consigned to oblivion when the California State Highway Department bought it, rather than make an interchange for it, thus making it impossible for anyone to go to Hell in Riverside County.” The buildings in Hell, including a service station and beer tavern, were demolished and burned in 1964 to make way for what is now Interstate 10.

Almost always it is warmer in the desert than Los Angeles. So on October 17, 1958—when it was 104 degrees in Los Angeles and only 97 in Hell—it made a headline in *The Los Angeles Times*: L.A.’s HOTTER THAN HELL.

In the late 1950s my long-time friend, Bob Magby, was pastoring a church in Flagstaff, Arizona. He also worked for the local newspaper which rewarded the boys who delivered the paper with a trip to Disneyland. Bob was asked to go along as a chaperone. The bus broke down in the middle of the desert—at Hell. In reporting on this trip, the newspaper ran a catchy headline something like this: FLAGSTAFF NEWSPAPER BOYS SPEND 8 HOURS IN HELL.

This brings us to a catchy *Bible*-related question:

In the Bible, what prophet likened **hell** to a woman with a big mouth? **Isaiah**. The passage, as given in the *King James Version*, is this: “Hell hath enlarged HERSELF, and opened HER mouth without measure” (Isa. 5:14).

This was not intended as a put down about women. In old English (as in the *King James Version*), “his” and “her” were used about things that were not *literally* male or female. It was simply a manner of speaking:

A fruit tree was called “his” (Gen. 1:11); a city gate was called “his” (Acts 12:10); a seed was called “his” (1 Cor. 15:38); the Ark of the Covenant was called “his” (1 Sam. 5:11). The earth was called “her” (Gen. 4:11,12); a fig tree was called “her” (Joel 2:22); cities and towns were called “her” (Joshua 21); the moon was called “her” (Isa. 13:10).

Because the *King James Version* was translated over 400 years ago, some words it uses (in places) are spelled different today. A few interesting examples are listed here:

Gen. 32:15: **milch** [milk]; Exod. 21:28: **quit** [acquit]; Num. 11:5: **garlick** [garlic]; Deut. 28:27: **emerods** [hemorrhoids]; Ruth 2:3: **hap** [happened]; 1 Sam. 30:13: **agone** [ago]; Job 41:18: **neesings** [sneezing]; Isaiah 28:25: **rie** [rye]; Ecc. 2:8: **gat** [got]; Jer. 2:22: **sope** [soap]; Ezek. 35:6: **sith** [since]; Matt. 1:19: **publick** [public]; Luke 15:24: **musick** [music]; 1 Tim. 2:9: **broided** [braided]; etc.

In this article I have shared a number of things I have learned along the way, some of which are commonly overlooked. Some are technical points which may be of interest only to those who dig deeper into the Scriptures. With all the chaos in the world, I want to close on a positive and uplifting note. I realize the words of Jesus recorded in John 16:33 were addressed to his disciples about things they would face back then. But the *principle*, at least, can certainly apply today:

**“In the world you shall have *tribulation*: but *be of good cheer*; I have overcome the world”!**

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