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As researchers prove the Red Sea really could have parted... How science backs the Bible's best stories

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One of the most dramatic stories in the Old Testament, the parting of the Red Sea, may actually have happened, according to new research.

Scientists believe the phenomenon may have been caused by freak weather conditions, and computer analysis shows that a storm could have divided the 6ft deep sea, just as the story is told in the Bible – allowing Moses and the Israelites to escape the pursuing Egyptians and enter the wilderness.

How many other Biblical tales could have a basis in science?



Noah's Flood

In the book of Genesis, God despairs of human corruption and decides to flood the Earth, instructing Noah to build an ark to save himself, his family and a pair of each animal species.

Could such a flood actually have happened?

Researchers have suggested that, during a warming period in the cycle of the Earth's temperature around 5600BC, melting glaciers caused an onrush of seawater from the Mediterranean.

This cascaded through Turkey's Straits of Bosphorus – dry land at the time – to the Black Sea, transforming it from a freshwater lake into a vast saltwater inlet.

In 1997, drawing on archaeological and anthropological evidence, Columbia University geologists William Ryan and Walter Pitman claimed that 'ten cubic miles of water poured through each day', and that the deluge continued for at least 300 days.

More than 60,000 square miles of land were flooded, and the lake's level rose by hundreds of feet after merging with the Mediterranean, triggering mass animal migrations across Europe.

The researchers, whose findings have been backed up by carbon dating and sonar imaging, claim that the story of Noah's flood had its origin in this cataclysmic event.



The Ten Plagues

Scientists believe that the Ten Plagues – the ten calamities inflicted in Exodus upon the Egyptians for their treatment of the Jews – could have been caused by a massive volcanic eruption in the 16th century BC, either on the Greek island of Santorini or on the Aegean island of Thera.

The plagues were total darkness, the Nile turning to blood, fiery hailstorms, a fatal cattle plague, plagues of boils, of frogs, of lice, of flies, of locusts and finally, the death of all the firstborn children.

And in his book *The Moses Legacy*, author Graham Phillips claims they could all have stemmed from the volcano's ash cloud blocking the sun over the Nile Delta.

He bases his argument on an examination of the eruption of the volcano of Mount St Helens in the U.S. state of Washington in 1980.

After it blew its top, the massive cloud of ash obscured the sun for hours for 500 miles around. Hot volcanic debris fell like hailstones, flattening crops far and wide. As a result of the acidic dust permeating everything, hundreds of people were afflicted with skin sores, and cattle perished.

Fish were found floating dead in the water which had to be purified before it could be drunk – as in the Bible’s description of ancient Egypt where ‘the fish died, the river stank and the Egyptians could not drink of the river’.

But why frogs, lice and flies? Shortly after the Mount St Helens eruption, there was a plague of frogs in Washington State.

So many covered the roads that driving over the squelchy swarms became dangerous. They clogged waterways and infested houses and gardens.

The reason was that the volcanic ash had killed off fish but not submerged frogspawn. Tadpoles hatched and multiplied in unprecedented numbers because they were not eaten by predators.

As for insects, they reproduce at an alarming rate in vast numbers so swarms searching for food ahead of the ash-layer are a common aftermath of volcanic eruptions.

The survivors of a volcanic eruption on Martinique in 1901 were attacked by swarms of flying ants that consumed everything that was still growing, just like locusts.



The Resurrection of Lazarus

In the New Testament account, Lazarus was raised from the dead by Jesus.

In fact, returning from the dead is a well-documented phenomenon.

Known in medical books as ‘Lazarus syndrome’, it is the spontaneous restarting of the heart after failed attempts at resuscitation.

Its occurrence has been noted by doctors at least 25 times since 1982.

Its causes are not well understood: one theory is that the relaxation of pressure after resuscitation efforts have ended allows the heart to expand and triggers electrical impulses that cause it to resume beating.

In 2008 the heart of an American woman, Velma Thomas, stopped beating three times and she was clinically brain dead for 17 hours.

Her son had left the hospital to make funeral arrangements.

But ten minutes after her life-support system was shut down and doctors were preparing to take her organs for donation, the 59-year-old woke up.

The Walls of Jericho

The Fall of Jericho, as told in Joshua, is one of the most graphic Old Testament stories. In it, the Israelites defeat the city of Jericho when they entered the Promised Land after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years.

They marched around the city for six days, and on the seventh day, they encircled the city seven times.

On the seventh round, the priests blew trumpets, the people shouted, and the walls came tumbling down. Could it be true?

Excavations in the southern Jordan valley of Palestine produce tantalizing evidence. British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon excavated the area in the Fifties, and found piles of collapsed mud bricks at the site.

What caused the walls to collapse? The most likely explanation is an earthquake, as the ancient city is located on a fault line extending from the Red Sea.



The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

Did God destroy these two ancient cities because of the sins of their inhabitants?

Genesis reports that ‘the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire out of the Heaven ...’

Two years ago, an ancient clay tablet was identified as a witness account of an asteroid believed to have crushed Sodom and Gomorrah, cities which existed between what are now Israel and Jordan.

The tablet was found in the 19th century by Victorian explorer Henry Layard in the remains of the library in the royal place at Nineveh – the ancient capital of the Assyrian empire, near what is now the city of Mosul in Iraq.

Its significance remained a mystery until researchers decoded its symbols and suggested it was a 700BC copy of notes made by a Sumerian astronomer observing the asteroid.

Using computers to recreate the night sky thousands of years ago, scientists have pinpointed his sighting to shortly before dawn on June 29 in the year 3123BC.



Adam and Eve

In his book *River Out Of Eden*, the zoologist and atheist Richard Dawkins set out to take us back to one common ancestor – a black woman who lived in Africa a quarter of a million years ago.

He used a complicated mathematical model to work backwards through our DNA genealogy, saying:

‘There has to be a woman of whom this claim can be made. The only argument is over whether she lived here rather than there, at this time rather than at that time.

‘The fact that she did live, in some place and at some time, is certain.’

So to the extent that Eve is our common ancestor, even the Godless believe she existed.

The Burning Bush

This is a pivotal moment in the Passover story, in which God speaks to Moses from a burning bush and tells him: ‘I am come down to deliver [the Israelites] out of the hand of the Egyptians.’ Scientists believe the bush was either growing over a natural gas vent, or could have

spontaneously combusted because of local volcanic action. Norwegian physicist Dag Kristian Dysthe has studied the subsurface combustion of organic material in Mali, West Africa, and concludes such events do happen in the natural world.

As for the voice of God, Hebrew University psychology professor Benny Shannon proposes that Moses was taking a local hallucinogenic substance derived from leaves of the ayahuasca plant found in the Negev and Sinai deserts.

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-1314725/As-researchers-prove-Red-Sea-really-parted--How-science-backs-Bibles-best-stories.html?ito=feeds-newsxml#ixzz10PKAqZlr>