

Ancient History of Jordan escorted Small Group tour

Reading List

Nineveh: The History and Legacy of the Ancient Assyrian Capital

by Charles River Editors

"I captured 46 towns...by consolidating ramps to bring up battering rams, by infantry attacks, mines, breaches and siege engines." - Sennacherib

When scholars study the history of the ancient Near East, several wars that had extremely brutal consequences (at least by modern standards) often stand out. Forced removal of entire populations, sieges that decimated entire cities, and wanton destruction of property were all tactics used by the various peoples of the ancient Near East against each other, but the Assyrians were the first people to make war a science. When the Assyrians are mentioned, images of war and brutality are among the first that come to mind, despite the fact that their culture prospered for nearly 2,000 years. Like a number of ancient individuals and empires in that region, the negative perception of ancient Assyrian culture was passed down through Biblical accounts, and regardless of the accuracy of the Bible's depiction of certain events, the Assyrians clearly played the role of adversary for the Israelites. Indeed, Assyria (Biblical Shinar) and the Assyrian people played an important role in many books of the Old Testament and are first mentioned in the book of Genesis: "And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech, and Akkad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. Out of that land went forth Ashur and built Nineveh and the city Rehoboth and Kallah." (Gen. 10:10-11). Although the Biblical accounts of the Assyrians are among the most interesting and are often corroborated with other historical sources, the Assyrians were much more than just the enemies of the Israelites and brutal thugs. Among all the cities that thrived in the ancient Near East, few can match the opulence and ostentatiousness of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire for much of the seventh century BCE. During that time it became known for its mighty citadels, grand palaces, beautiful gardens, and even its zoos. In fact, the beauty of Nineveh, especially its gardens, impressed later writers so much that they assigned its gardens as one of the original Seven Wonders of the World, except unfortunately for Nineveh's memory, the

location was placed in Babylon. The confusion that assigned one of the Wonders of the World to Babylon instead of Nineveh is in fact a large part of Nineveh's history – it was a great city during its time, but incessant warfare brought the metropolis to oblivion and eventually its history was forgotten or distorted. An examination of Nineveh demonstrates that in many ways it was the victim of the people who built it. When Nineveh was at its height, they controlled an empire that encompassed Egypt, Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and parts of Iran. Eventually, the Assyrians overextended themselves and their enemies overthrew them and destroyed much of their cities. Nineveh became lost for centuries, only mentioned in fragments by classical Greek historians, but modern archaeological methods were able to bring the lost city back to life in the nineteenth century. Today, through a combination of archaeological reports, classical Greek accounts, and ancient cuneiform inscriptions, the chronology of Nineveh can be reconstructed. An examination reveals that Nineveh played a vital role in the religious and political history of the ancient Near East and despite suffering immense damage at the hands of the Assyrians' enemies, continued to function as an important city for several centuries after the Assyrian Empire collapsed. *Nineveh: The History and Legacy of the Ancient Assyrian Capital* traces the history and legacy of one of the most influential cities of antiquity.

Petra: The History of the Rose City, One of the New Seven Wonders of the World

by Charles River Editors

"Petra, O Leeds, is the most wonderful place in the world, not for the sake of its ruins, which are quite a secondary affair, but for the colour of its rocks, all red and black and gray with streaks of green and blue, in little wriggly lines...and for the shape of its cliffs and crags and pinnacles, and for the wonderful gorge it has, always running deep in spring-water, full of oleanders, and ivy and ferns, and only just wide enough for a camel at a time, and a couple of miles long. But I have read hosts of the most beautifully written accounts of it, and they give one no idea of it at all...so you will never know what Petra is like, unless you come out here... Only be assured that till you have seen it you have not had the glimmering of an idea how beautiful a place can be." - A letter from T.E. Lawrence ("Lawrence of Arabia") to his childhood friend E.T. Leeds in February, 1914. When the European armies of the Third Crusade were defeated at the Battle of Hattin in

1187 CE, the region of what is today southern Jordan was overrun by Saladin's armies, and over the following five centuries knowledge of Petra's existence was lost to the people of Europe. The ancient city and center of civilization hidden in the desert became a myth, drawn largely upon Biblical accounts of the people and places in the Holy Land. However, during the Enlightenment of the early 18th century, interesting new theories emerged, and there grew a desire to rediscover the rose-red city. It was within this context that the Swiss-born explorer and orientalist Johann Ludwig Burckhardt became the known as the first European to "discover" Petra. Disguised as an Arab, he convinced a local guide to navigate him through the innumerable dangers of the Wadi Araba desert in pursuit of the rumored tomb of Aaron and a timeless city hidden in the hills. On Saturday, August 22nd, 1812, he ascended the high hills of southern Jordan and was led down a deep ravine, which twisted and turned through until a splendid sight was revealed before him: a secret valley filled with ruins and the dark holes of rock-cut tombs. Although his disguise had brought him that far, it also prevented him from being able to fully study the ruins or make copies of what he saw there. After spending only a day exploring the valley, his guide had grown suspicious, so he was forced to move on across the Sinai Peninsula, eventually arriving at Cairo on September 4th. This expedition marked the beginnings of everything that is known about this ancient and mysterious site. Further expeditions and archaeological investigations over the following two centuries have considerably broadened knowledge about Petra's past, and the ruined Rose City is now an archaeological landscape that has been made famous as a UNESCO World Heritage site, a "new" wonder of the world, and as the repository of the Holy Grail in Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade. Yet, despite its fame, many people do not know about the religious beliefs, artistic creativity, technological innovation, commerce, and politics of the numerous peoples that resided there. *Petra: The History of the Rose City, One of the New Seven Wonders of the World* looks at the history of Petra from prehistoric times to the end of the Crusades, as well as the city's "rediscovery" in the 19th century and how it has entered the world's imagination since then. Along with pictures depicting important people, places, and events, you will learn about Petra like never before.

Petra: A Brief History

by David Tschanz

Petra: A Brief History is an easy to read, popular history of Petra, "the rose red city, half as old as time" and the mysterious Nabataeans who carved into from the living rock. The author, with a dramatic flair, explains how geography and geology made the eventual site of Petra the most attractive real estate in the Middle East. He then tells the story of how the Nabataeans, coming from Arabia, moved into the region and established their capital there in the fifth century BCE. Within a few decades, Petra was the headquarters of vast commercial empire that controlled the East-West trade in incense, myrrh, spices, and silk, from borderland between Syria and Arabia, and the Euphrates to the Red Sea. Incredibly wealthy they were best known to their contemporaries for their hydraulic engineering, pottery and monumental buildings. Looking to guard their fortunes they foiled Antony and Cleopatra's escape, opposed the Herods and built a southern capital, Madain Salih, in Saudi Arabia. How they came to be, what they achieved and what happened to them, is a tale worth reading. Petra: A Brief History is not another guidebook. It is a journey to understanding the whys, wherefores and hows of these fabled people based on present day scholarship. This new title is published during the 200th anniversary "rediscovery" of Petra by the Swiss traveler Johann Ludwig Burckhardt" It is unique because it provides popular account of the two major Nabataean sites: Petra in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as well as its important sister city of Madain Salih in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Both are UNESCO World Heritage sites the author, who has spent 23 years in the Middle East, knows intimately.

A Pilgrim's Guide to The Holy Land: Israel and Jordan (Pilgrim's Guides)

by Raymond Goodburn

This is the third edition of this popular guide book to the biblical sites in both Israel and Jordan. It has been revised and rewritten, with new pictures, illustrations, maps, and plans. The Pilgrim Books team has conducted or accompanied more than seventy pilgrimage groups to the Holy Land and have produced a book that is concise and informative. It contains a mine of practical information on both countries and is profusely illustrated, so that it becomes a colorful souvenir, the stimulant to a host of happy memories for years after your return.
