

Israeli Company Discovers Oil Near Tel Aviv

✖ An oil exploration company has announced that it has found “significant quantities” of oil in Israel, buoying hopes that natural resources are prevalent in the Holy Land and could enable Israel to become energy independent.

An Israeli company, the Givot Olam Oil Exploration Limited Partnership, announced in December that it found oil at its drill site in Rosh Ha'Ayin, about 10 miles inland from the Tel Aviv coastline. Gas was also found during the drill.

It is unknown whether the well contains a commercially viable amount of oil, but the company will continue its exploration. The discovery of oil comes almost a year after Israel announced the finding of a rich natural gas field 55 miles west of the Haifa port. With initial estimates at \$15 billion, the gas field could meet Israel's natural gas demand for 15 years and reduce its dependence on imports. An oil reserve would do the same.

Some companies, both Christian- and Jewish-owned, believe the Bible points to vast amounts of petroleum deposits in Israel and use biblical prophecy to guide the location of their drill sites. In addition to geological research, Zion Oil and Gas, a Christian-owned company, determined drilling locations based on passages from Genesis and Deuteronomy that detail Jacob's blessing of certain tribes.

In Deuteronomy 33:18-19, Moses blessed the tribes of Issachar and Zebulun saying, “‘They will summon peoples to the mountain and there offer sacrifices of righteousness; they will feast on the abundance of the seas, on the treasures hidden in the sand.’” Also, in Deuteronomy 33:24, it is said of Asher “let him bathe his feet in oil.”

Taking that to be natural oil and not olive oil, and presuming that “treasures hidden in the sand” may indicate natural resources such as oil, Zion Oil and Gas secured two onshore exploration licenses covering about 162,000 acres between Tel Aviv and Haifa and a permit to explore 165,000 acres to the east. These regions of Israel include the land allotted to the tribes of Asher, Menashe, Issachar and Zebulun.

If Israel strikes oil, the discovery could drastically change the geopolitical dynamic in the Middle East, making Israel, which does not have official relations with surrounding Arab oil-rich nations, energy independent. Joel Rosenberg, in his novel *The Last Jihad*, fictionalizes a possible outcome of an oil discovery in Israel, which in his book becomes the impetus for a peace treaty between Israel and the Palestinians.

The quest for oil based on biblical prophecy is not new. In 1972, James Spillman wrote *The Great Treasure Hunt* before there was any geologic proof that oil or gas sat beneath the Holy Land. In his later book, *Breaking the Treasure Code: The Hunt for Israel's Oil*, Spillman details the ancient tribal boundaries to pinpoint the location of a vast oil reserve.

Nevertheless, critics maintain that the Hebrew word for oil used in the verse about Asher is *shemen*, which generally indicates olive oil, and never petroleum oil. Rabbinic writings interpret it to mean olive oil as well.

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