

Ancient Hebrew Curse Reveals True Name of God

For Scott Stripling, one archaeologist's trash has become his treasure.

Through a process called wet sifting—a methodological revolution bringing to light small or hidden artifacts that were previously missed at many archaeological digs—Stripling and his team have made an incredible discovery on Mount Ebal in the mountains of Samaria that could very well be one of the most significant finds in biblical history.

Stripling, the Director of Excavations for the Associates for Biblical Research, and his team traveled to Mount Ebal, about 50 miles north of Jerusalem, for a dig at the altar described in Joshua 8:30: “Then Joshua built an altar to the Lord God of Israel on Mount Ebal, as Moses commanded the children of Israel.”

It was a site that Stripling said Israeli archaeologist Adam Zertal had excavated in the 1980s and had “done a very good job on it.” Stripling said he wanted to “check his dump pile there” to see if Zertal had missed anything of significance.

Through wet sifting, what Stripling and his team found in Zertal's “dump pile” was a lead folding tablet with writing on the inside estimated to be 3,400 years old. Stripling says it's the oldest Hebrew writing that has ever been found, in a proto-alphabetic script.

“That predates biblical Hebrew, or paleo-Hebrew, which is what we think of from the First Temple period, the earliest writings we had previously,” Stripling says.

The entire context of Stripling's team's findings can be found

here.

The inscription on the tablet included the name of Yahweh, the Hebrew name for God used in the Bible, twice.

Stripling said the tablet was about the “size of a business card folded in half.

“Think about the book of Job, for example, which is the oldest book in the Bible,” Stripling says. “And listen to what Job said in Job 19:23-24: ‘Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book! That they were engraved with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever!’”

 Stripling said hundreds of these types of tablets have been found in Israel, what they call death pixels or curse tablets. But all of them to this point, Stripling says, had writing with very “petty or stupid” curses on them.” But this one, he says, was a “very serious thing.”

“In this case, this is a judicial type of curse and it’s self-imprecatory (to invoke or call down evil or curses upon a person), which is exactly what they did at the end of Deuteronomy. They pronounced blessings from Mount Gerazim and self-imprecatory curses from Mount Ebal. And what did we find on Mount Ebal, on the altar, by the way, the one that Joshua built, but a table with a curse inscription on it.”

“All my life I’ve wanted to be known as a blessing, but as it turns out, what we found was a curse,” Stripling says. “And the curse is actually a blessing in disguise. Essentially, there are 48 very small letters and the curse reads like this: ‘Cursed, cursed, cursed, cursed are you by the God, Yahweh. Cursed you will surely die. Cursed you are by Yahweh, cursed, cursed, cursed.’ It has a literary structure to it what we call a chiasm. Some of the Psalms are written this way.

“It is a self-imprecatory curse the Israelites [used], just like Deuteronomy says: ‘We’re bringing upon themselves and it

may happen to us if we don't keep the terms of God's Covenant.'"

Stripling says that most scholars and places of higher learning have denied the literacy of Moses and Joshua, but this tablet proves otherwise.

"[Scholars assumed] The Bible couldn't have been written until 1000 years later because there was no alphabet with which they could write," Stripling says. "Well, now we know there was. They have said the Israelites were illiterate. Well, then why is God telling them to write, why was He telling the people to read. Why would people write things down if nobody could read it. And now we have proof of that literacy.

"So, the tablet is written and then laid on the altar. ... An innocent animal is slaughtered and the covers the curse. So, this starts way back in Genesis—the shedding of innocent blood to cover the guilty. And so, this blood covers the tablet and now the man who will come to the altar, in other words, repent and accept responsibility for his actions. Those curses are not going to come to him. It's only the man who will not repent, who will have those curses upon him.

"And the curse is a big problem because it doesn't say cursed you are by Satan. We could deal with that. This is cursed by Yahweh. That's checkmate, okay? There's no getting out of this curse, except through the blood. So, Leviticus 17:11 says that 'through the shedding of blood, there is forgiveness of sin.'"

Sound familiar? Does Jesus' crucifixion ring a bell?

While Stripling says the discovery was made in 2019, he and his team left Israel and thought the project was over. Everything that was found was put in storage, and Stripling assumed he would return to Israel a few months later to take the research project through the "normal protocols."

But then the COVID pandemic hit, and Stripling and his team

were “locked out” of Israel for two years. Once they returned and accessed the tablet again, they took it to a lab in Prague where they had formed a collaborative partnership with a company that had expertise in tomography and scanning through lead.

On his collaborative team, Stripling says two scientists, two experienced tomographers from Prague, were able to independently verify the tablet. Stripling said that the tablet they found was “several hundred years older than the earliest version that we have. And it includes the name of God.”

For more of this fascinating interview with Dr. Scott Stripling, please click here. {eoa}

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