

FOR RELEASE AFTER 11:00 AM CST

Contact: Allison Taylor
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Press Conference: Lanier Theological Library, Houston, Texas
Details: Thursday, March 24th, 10:00 AM
Link for non-local media participation:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89949471488?pwd=Z1J3cEhKWGV1aUNSRLc0d0dwK3o3Zz09>



Ancient Curse Inscription Deciphered from Tablet Discovered During Archaeological Wet Sift on Mt. Ebal

Live Press Conference in Houston, TX to Share Details of the
Discovery. High-Tech Scans Reveal Ancient Hebrew Script,
Centuries Older than any Other Known Tablets.



Folded Lead Tablet. Photograph by Michael C. Luddeni.

Houston, TX. March 24, 2022 - Today, the Associates for Biblical Research (ABR) announced the discovery of a formulaic curse recovered on a small, folded lead tablet. The defixio came to light in December 2019 when archaeologist Scott Stripling, Director of the Archaeological Studies Institute at The Bible Seminary in Katy, Texas, led an ABR team to wet sift the discarded material from Adam Zertal's excavations (1982–1989) on Mt. Ebal.

A press conference will be held both virtually, as well as in person on March 24.

The ancient Hebrew inscription consists of 40 letters and is centuries older than any known Hebrew inscription from ancient Israel. Stripling formed a collaboration with four scientists

from the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and two epigraphers (specialists in deciphering ancient texts): Pieter Gert van der Veen of Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz and Gershon Galil of the University of Haifa. The scientists employed advanced tomographic scans to recover the hidden text. In collaboration with Stripling, Galil and van der Veen deciphered the proto-alphabetic inscription, which reads as follows:

Cursed, cursed, cursed - cursed by the God **YHW**.

You will die cursed.

Cursed you will surely die.

Cursed by **YHW** – cursed, cursed, cursed.

According to Stripling, “These types of amulets are well known in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, but Zertal’s excavated pottery dated to the Iron Age I and Late Bronze Age, so logically the tablet derived from one of these earlier periods. **Even so, our discovery of a Late Bronze Age inscription stunned me.**”

Almost immediately Galil recognized the formulaic literary structure of the inscription: “From the symmetry, I could tell that it was written as a chiasmic parallelism.” Reading the concealed letters proved tedious, according to van der Veen, “but each day we recovered new letters and words written in a very ancient script.”

Daniel Vavrik and his colleagues from Prague ensured the accuracy of the raw data which the team interpreted. According to Deuteronomy 27 and Joshua 8, Mt. Ebal was the mountain of the curse. Joshua 8:30 indicates that Joshua built an altar on Mt. Ebal. The defixio derived from previously excavated and discarded material from a structure Zertal believed was Joshua’s altar.

An academic, peer-reviewed article is in process and will be published later in 2022. The collaborative team consists of Scott Stripling, Gershon Galil, Ivana Kumpova, Jaroslav Valach, Pieter Gert van der Veen, Daniel Vavrik, and Michal Vopalensky.

Press Conference details: Lanier Theological Library at 10:00 AM on Thursday, March 24. For details contact Allison Taylor at allison.taylor@thebibleseminary.edu or 281-300-6702.

After the press conference, media should contact the collaborative partners as follows:

Czech – Daniel Vavrik (vavtik@itam.cas.cz)

English – Scott Stripling (scott.stripling@thebibleseminary.edu)

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