

## **3,500-year-old stone is inscribed with curse on Jerusalem governor, claims professor**

Expert claims to decipher ancient script on tablet he believes was used in voodoo ceremony; Antiquities Authority awaits further 'scientific research and publication'

By [MICHAEL HOROVITZ](#)

A professor at the University of Haifa claimed on Wednesday that he had deciphered a 3,500-year-old stone tablet discovered in Jerusalem more than a decade ago, contending that the artifact's inscription was a curse against the city's governor at the time.

If the finding is confirmed, it is among the earliest inscriptions discovered to date in Jerusalem.

The stone was used in a voodoo ceremony, according to Prof. Gershon Galil, head of the Institute for Biblical Studies and Ancient History at the university, that was likely carried out by priests or other important figures in the city who were feuding with the city's highest-level official, a statement released by the institute stated.

In a departure from academic norms, the inscription is being published in mass media prior to its appearance in a peer-reviewed journal. "It will be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal soon and will be published within a few months," Galil told The Times of Israel. He added that the article has been accepted into "an important scientific journal," but in the meantime his conclusions and images are being released to the public.

The stone tablet is inscribed with the repeated phrase, "cursed, cursed, you will surely die," and singles out the "governor of the city," according to Galil's translation.

The inscription contains 20 words and 63 letters in the Proto-Canaanite script, an early Semitic alphabet, and a predecessor to modern alphabets used in the region. The stone was discovered in 2010 by archaeologist Eli Shukron in an ancient compound called the Pillar Temple in the City of David, near the Gihon Spring. While the excavations were conducted under Shukron while he was working with the Israel Antiquities Authority, the current research was conducted independently of the IAA.

Shukron said the findings help researchers date their excavations at the site to the Middle Bronze Age.

Addressing his findings, Galil said his translation “proves that Jerusalem was not only a fortified city, but also a very important cultural and cultic center,” and concluded that the dating of the artifact meant it influenced other writers and priests in the region later on.



Galil’s assertions are called cautiously “interesting” by the IAA. However, as the artifact was not yet inspected by the IAA, it could not respond to Galil’s hypotheses.

“The Israel Antiquities Authority believes that the conclusions should be based on scientific research and publication, as is customary in academia,” the IAA statement cautioned.

The University of Haifa reasoned that the findings fit with existing material from the time period, noting that ancient Egyptian curses have been found carved onto pottery or figurines from the Bronze Age. It also points to multiple sources which indicate conflicts between city residents and governors, both in the Bible and in Neo-Assyrian records.

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