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Yariv Hacham

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# Biblical characters mentioned in extra biblical inscription: *Balaam son of Beor*

YARIV H

2019

*The article presents the Tel Deir Alla inscription, that has been found in the Ancient ruins of Sukkot, the inscription bore the name of the biblical enchanter Mentioned in the Book of Numbers - Balaam bar Beor*

## **Balaam the son of Beor - בלעם בר / בן בעור**

A biblical enchanter from Aram who was hired by the king of Moab to curse the Israelites in the plains of Moab. **Balaam** was a well known influential sorcerer in the Levant, perhaps a sort of the \*Merlin of his time, he seemed to be famous for his magical abilities among the peoples in various Semitic tribes.

Numbers 22:5 *And he sent messengers unto **Balaam the son of Beor**, to Pethor, which is by the River, to the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying: 'Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt; behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me.*

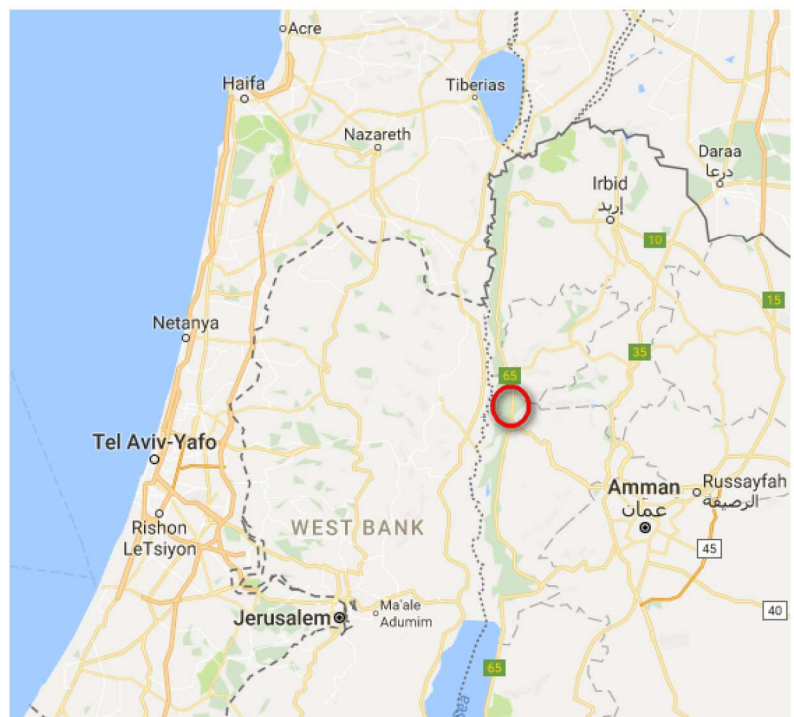
במדבר כב ה. וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְאָכִים אֶל-בִּלְעָם בֶּן-בְּעוֹר פֶּתוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַנָּהָר אֲרֶץ בְּנֵי-עַמּוֹ לְקַרְא-לוֹ לְאָמַר הִנֵּה עַם יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם הִנֵּה כָסָה אֶת-עֵינֵי הָאָרֶץ וְהוּא יֵשֵׁב מִמְּלִי."

The name is a combination of the two words, **בל** - **Bel** : a Babylonian god, **עם** – **Aam**: people, **Balaam** – [belonging to the] people of the god Bel.

\*Merlin - a sorcerer with a powerful witchcraft and magic that mentions in King Arthur's legends.

## **Balaam the son of Beor in external biblical sources**

In 1967, a Dutch excavation team revealed an inscription on a plastered wall in Tel Deir Alla, which is known as the Biblical settlement Sukkot in the Jordan valley.



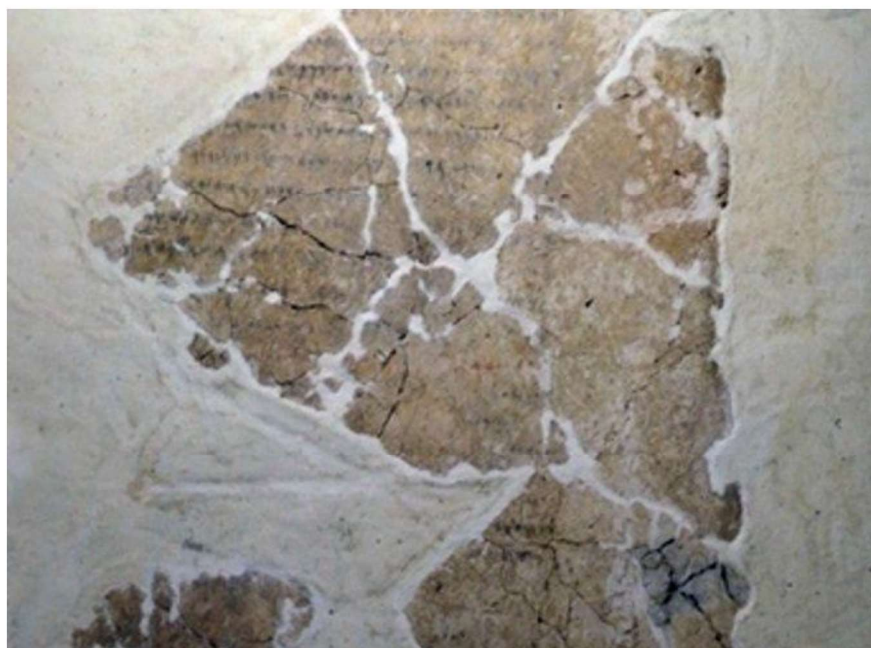




The site is located 8 km east of the *Jordan* River and North to the *Jabokk* River. The plastered fragments and on them the writings in ink, were found on the floor on one of the building. After the defragmentation of the plastered fragments, it became clear that there were two major texts written on the wall. More fragments were found, but they were too small and could not be defragmented to a logical meaning. Surprisingly it turned out that the name ***Balaam \*bar Beor***, which is ***Balaam, son of Beor***, returned several times in the first text.

This is the oldest source mentioning the name ***Balaam bar Beor***, outside the Bible that has been found until now. The appearance of that name in the East of the Jordan River is of great interest for Biblical scholars and ancient epigraphys.

\*"***bar***" in Aramaic is *son*, the Hebrew word for *son* is "***ben***".





## The inscription



*Facsimile of the inscription*

## Translation of the Inscription

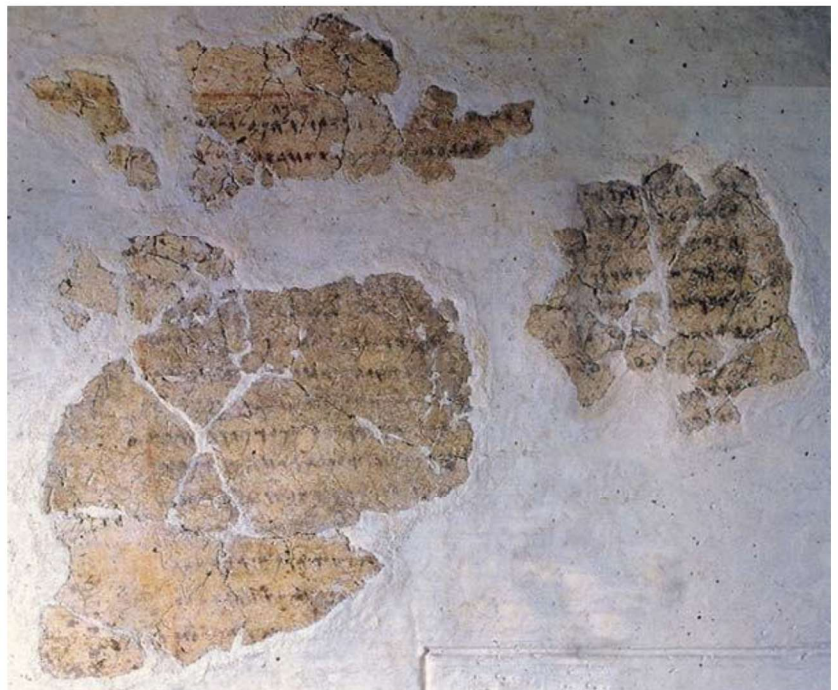
1. The torments of the Book of **Balaam son of Beor**, a seer of the gods is he, the gods came to him at night, and he saw a vision.
2. The words of them to **Balaam son of Beor**, "So will it be done by gods at the end, no man has seen what you've heard".
3. Balaam arose in the morning, and he mourned many days over the word of the gods to him, he did not eat, he fasted and wept.
4. And the people went up to him, and said to him "Why are you fasting and why are you crying?"
5. And he told them "Sit brothers, and see what the demons have done, go and see the acts of the gods, the gods have gathered.
6. The demons are standing now, and saying to the sun: -Sow and close the sky with cloud, put darkness.
7. And you will not shine ever, and you will be enclosed and be sealed in a dark cloud which will never be removed forever, because the crane [\*sisagur] curses the eagle.

8. *Curse the vulture and the voice of carrion-vulture will call as the stork, a son of [\*natsats] and misfortune of the young chicken of the egret and the passer and the vulture.*
9. *A dove and all the birds of the sky a stick that drives the sheep will lead them as a staff and rabbit will eat.*
10. *A wolf .....and the hyenas drink wine and will hear the moral of (.....).*
11. *And a fox (.....) to the smart will take and the poor will pour ... myrrh and a priest.*
12. *To the carrier of belt made from web and the important will now. import others more important than themselves.*
13. *And the deaf could hear from a distance.*
14. *And the fools have envisioned the misfortunate Shagar and Ashtar.*
15. *Tiger and a piglet will do like a chicken.*

*\* Unknown kinds of birds*

There is no doubt in the mind of the scholars that the inscription is talking about the biblical ***Blaam son of Beor***.

From the two sources (the bible and the inscription) comes the strong Aramaic connection of ***Blaam son of Beor***. In addition, it reflects that he was seen as a great prophet among the people in this general area. Therefore, it is no wonder that this ***Blaam*** was the subject of legends and stories even much later than his own time.





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