

Sinai 351 and 360 as “Exodus Inscriptions”

Par Excellence

A critical, fresh approach provides dramatic confirmation for the Exodus context of P-S inscriptions at Serabit el-Khadim

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ABSTRACT: After applying the same fresh, robust approach to P-S inscriptions Sinai 351 and 360 that I applied to the P-S inscriptions found at Serabit el-Khadim, its message is revealed to clade together with the inscriptions that I propose to have been written in an Exodus context: Sinai 353, 349, 357, and 361. That is based on the palaeography of the letters, the same polemical message countering the cult of Ba`alat/Hathor, and the additional dimension brought by an image resembling Ptah, the Egyptian variant of Yah. It will be explained just how, besides the wording, the inclusion of this image confirms the Exodus context of this clade.



Dedication and Acknowledgements

Dedicated in loving memory of my dear Torah teachers whose souls were taken from the world two weeks from one another, during the final weeks of this project:

Mori Shelomo ben Avraham of *Mechon Mamre* ז"ל

HaRav Reuven LevTov ז"ל

I miss them dearly.

I ever dedicate my work to my precious family, students, friends and followers around the world who have loyally remained by my side through the years, throughout my journey of unrelenting pursuit of truth and wisdom.

I hereby express **my deep and heartfelt gratitude** to the generational scholar David Rohl, my mentor, colleague and dear friend who introduced me to Proto-Sinaitic, these inscriptions, and taught me so much, to Dr. Peter Van der Veen, my brilliant academic supervisor and good-hearted, patient friend, whose vision, counsel, support and belief in me serve as the foundation of this work.

I also thank Professor Dr. Henrik Ullrich and board members of the *Studiengemeinschaft Wort und Wissen e.V.* (the *Arbeitsgruppe für biblische Archäology*) for their financial grant and patience with my progress.

Above all I thank my dear wife and children, who bear with and encourage me as they do.

Above all, to *El Elohei Yisrael, HaShem*, for bringing me to a Place where I can say "יש לי כל", "I have plenty". (*Gen. 33:11*)

I can only pray I not be judged harshly for my efforts to present a convincing academic argument that restores our ancient traditions from myth to history, despite the critical, secular tone that may necessarily involve.

INTRODUCTION

In the draft-paper posted to Academia.edu last year,¹ detailing the larger picture of the P-S (Proto-Sinaitic) inscriptions we've dubbed the "Exodus Inscriptions", it becomes clear just how my position could be falsified, if it were wrong:

Apart from the readings and biblical connections I propose, let alone the issue of reading P-S inscriptions in the Hebrew of the early biblical writings (addressed in this paper), it cannot be denied that my analysis of the inscriptions of Sinai 353, 349, and 357, all found at Mine L of Serabit el-Khadim in the Sinai Desert, suggests a common composer and scribe behind them all. At the least they reveal distinct, common handwriting and use of language.

That paper should ideally be read before this one.

Clearly, if an "Exodus Inscriptions-type" inscription – sharing the same hand and distinct phrasings found in those stone tablets, especially if it were found at Mine L – were found, bearing a *worshipful* message, one that *lauds* Ba`alat, the Golden Cow deity (see Appendix I), this would reveal my hypothesis to be an illusion.

At first glance, that is precisely what I initially thought to be the case with Sinai 351:

Also found at Mine L, it is written in the same distinct hand as our Mine L clade. (Accordingly, the paleography fits our "middle stage" of the script's development. Clearly older than the Iron I/MB II inscriptions found in Canaan, yet younger than those dating to the period of Pharaoh Amenemhat III [namely those at Wadi el-Hol]). It thereby fits in with the late-13th Dynasty date for the Exodus to which we subscribe. (See Appendix I and II) It even has the same columnar text orientation seen in Sinai 353 and 357. Considering how it even shares the many wordings it does with the others, it cannot be the work of another scribe.

And yet, our author, whose other inscriptions suggest a Moses-like personage, has inscribed a message here that seems to bear the phrase *מאהב בעלת* – *mahb b³alt* "beloved Ba`alat". This is the understanding of most scholars. It is strengthened by the reading on Sinai 345, the red sandstone sphinx found by Sir Flinders Petrie at Serabit el-Khadim. A clear votive to Hathor/Ba`alat, it bears on the base by its right side, the clear wording *מאהב בעלת* – *mahb b³alt* "beloved Ba`alat".²



Moreover, just like the sphinx votive, a cursory glance at the large divine image on Sinai 351 might seem to suggest an *additional* deity foreign to classical Israelite faith, suggesting polytheism. We would assume these elements to have been anathema to an Exodus-era Moses.

However, the clearly distinct handwriting (with the “eyes” in the א-aleph and ב-beth) on Sinai 345, is likely to be an older stage of Proto-Sinaitic. Like that of the votive 346 (with a distinct, “open-house” style of ב-beth),³ such worshipful inscriptions, including Sinai 274, were created by clearly distinct scribes from that/those of our “Exodus” clade. This will be made abundantly clear in my next paper, to be published in February 2023.

Moreover, a deeper study, however, involving the work of my predecessors on Sinai 351– including Brian Colless, Douglas Petrovich, and Ludwig Morenz – enabled me to identify the letters more precisely, suggesting a very different reading:

The מ-mem of the left column, rather than serving as the first letter in the phrase “beloved Ba`alat”, reads well as the preposition “from”. This completes a clear, strong polemical message *contra* Ba`alat. It clades perfectly with Sinai 353, 345 and 353.

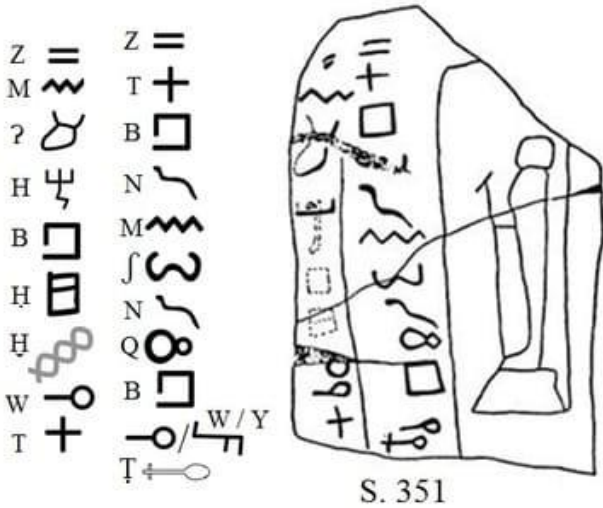
Finally, the work of other scholars revealed how, Ptaḥ, the deity that seems to be depicted here, was a deity with a very distinct cult from that of Hathor/Ba`alat. It is none other than an Egyptian version of Yah/YHWH. (This would be pre-Theophany, before the prohibition of graven images. That being said, it could be a step in that direction, being essentially an outline and without a beard – a key feature of Ptaḥ.)

A “stoic” deity that represented authority over the other deities (see below), Ptaḥ’s portrayal would serve well to convey the reading presented here: a powerful *warning against* “loving the Lady”. Accordingly, rather than a blow to my hypothesis, Sinai 351 lends it significant strength.

By comparison to the others, Sinai 360, a P-S inscription found at Mine K, seems to be the simplest of case of all, being just a single column, all but one character being uncontested. It fits into the clade as simply as could be hoped for. My analysis of 360 is presented below, following that of Sinai 351.

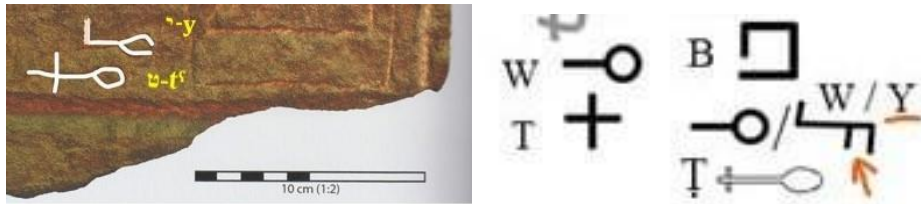
SINAI 351, READING THE STONE

The following are the different images of the stone I used:



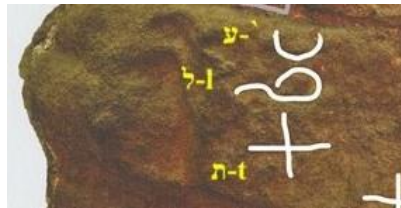
Letter Clarifications

- Why י'-yod, and not י-wau towards the bottom of Right Column?

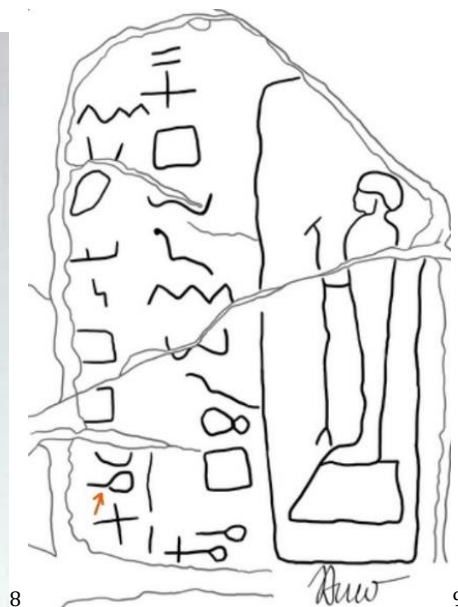


The loop definitely seems *closed* in the images above. I traced it as an open hand to only to emphasize my letter identification. By itself, this shape would be an unmistakable י-wau. However, it most clearly has an upwards-turning *vertical stem* at the back, forming a right angle. That vertical line is deliberate, being neat, straight, and finite. This suggests the scribe intended a י'-yod, but closed the loop, perhaps by mistake. Although we disagree on other points, Charles Krahmalkov⁷ sees the same. It is one of the options of Brian Colless,⁶ and I think it is right.

- Why ל-lamed, and not י-wau towards the bottom of Left Column?



Colless can be understood for seeing a י-wau here, as the loop can seem closed. However, as seen below in the trace images of Sir Flinders Petrie and by A. Wilson-Write, others see an incomplete loop, giving us the word בעלת-Ba'alat, as seen in a number of these inscriptions.



Reading column by column, left to right, with equivalent English and modern Hebrew characters. *Matres lectionis* (letter-vowels) are added within brackets []:


(left to right) 

right column, top to bottom:

z(o)t b(u)sh(ah) n(i)m(o)sh(u) n(i)q b(u) y(e)t^f(u)

(Option 2) **s(o) b(u) n(i)m(o)sh(u) n(i)q b(u) y(e)t^f(u)**

left column, top to bottom: **m(e)-(e)h(o)b b(a) ʕ(a)l(a)t**

 (right to left)

right column, top to bottom: **ז(א)ת ב(ו)ש(ה) נמ(ו)ש(ו) נקב(ו) יט(ו)**

(Option 2) **ס(ו)ב(ו) נמ(ו)ש(ו) נקב(ו) יט(ו)**

left column, top to bottom: **מ(א)ה(ו)ב בעלת**

Hebrew sentence division with English translation:

This is shameful!

זאת בושה!

-- (Option 2) Turn away!

-- סובו!

Remove yourselves!

נמושו!

Curse!

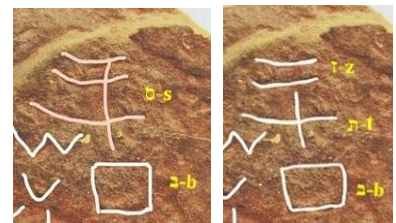
נקבו!

Turn aside from loving Ba`alat.

יטו מאהוב בעלת

Regarding Option 2 (סב):

That the first characters may be a single 𐤓-*samekh* is the opinion of Douglas Petrovich.¹⁰ Whereas he is a lone opinion in that regard, and neither my mentors nor I see a bisecting line above the third line down (forming what is probably a 𐤓-t), there is a possibility that he is right. It, too, would yield a reading what would flow well with this interpretation.



THE MEANING AND BIBLICAL HEBREW CONTEXT OF EACH WORD AND PHRASE

ז(א)ת ב(ו)ש(ה) - This is shameful

Throughout Scripture, too many sources to mention, *bushah*-בושה means “shame”, “ashamed”, or “for shame”. Revealing a context similar to our own in the inscription, we find in Jeremiah 50,12:

יב בושָה אִמְכֶם מְאֹד, חֲפָרָה יוֹלְדֹתֵיכֶם; הִנֵּה אַחֲרֵית גּוֹיִם, מִדְּבָר צִיָּה וְעָרְבָה. 12 Your mother shall be very **ashamed**, she that bore you shall be confounded, behold the last of the nations shall be a wilderness, a dry land and a desert.¹¹

For the less likely possibility that this reads as ט(ו)ב(ו) - “Turn away!”, see *A Second Option* below.

נקב(ו) - Curse!

nqb-נקב is the verb for “curse” or “blaspheme”. The shortened form of this command is found in Num. 22,11:

יֵא הִנֵּה הָעָם הַיֵּצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם, וַיִּכֹּס אֶת-עֵינֵי הָאָרֶץ; עֲתָה לָכֶּה קִבָּה לִּי אֹתוֹ – אוּלַי אוּכַל לְהִלָּחֵם בּוֹ וְגִרְשָׁתִּיו. 11 Behold the people that has come out of Egypt, it covers the face of the earth; so now go **curse** it for me – perhaps I will be able to wage war against it and drive it out.

It is also found in Lev. 24,11:

יֵא וַיִּקְבּוּ בֶן הָאִשָּׁה הַיִּשְׂרָאֵלִית אֶת הַשֵּׁם וַיִּקְלֵל, וַיְבִיאוּ אוֹתוֹ אֶל מֹשֶׁה... 11 And the son of the Israelite woman **blasphemed** the Name [of the Lord] and cursed, and they brought him to Moses...

The antiquity of the term is evinced by its use in the Book of Job 5,3:

ג אֲנִי רָאִיתִי, אֹוִיל מְשֻׁרֵשׁ; וַאֲקֻבּ נִהוּ פְתָאִם. 3 I have seen the foolish taking root, but suddenly I beheld his habitation **cursed**.

Regarding the question of how appropriate is it to propose a command form conjugated in a full *plene* form, there are plenty of other examples in TaNaKh of command forms of tri-radical פ"נ verbs beginning with the נ-nun. These include Exodus 19,12 (וַיִּנָּע), Numbers 31,2 (נָקֵם), Psalm 34,14 (נִצֵּר) and Psalm 58,7 (נִתַּץ).

Moreover, seeing a verbs (see the following term as well) conjugated in its fullest tri-radical form, rather than in the shortened form found in TaNa"Kh (with a fallen נ-nun, as in the above examples) can stand in support of this as an archaic Hebrew inscription, answering those who would stigmatize my readings as “classical Hebrew”.

נמ(ה)ש(ה) - Remove yourselves!

In several places in the Pentateuch we find the verb מ-*msh*, with its consistent meaning “remove” or “depart”:

Ex. 13,22

כב לא יִמֹש עַמּוּד הָעָנָן יוֹמָם 22 the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by
וְעַמּוּד הָאֵשׁ לַיְלָה לִפְנֵי הָעָם. night departed not from before the people.

Num. 14,44

מִדּ וַיַּעֲפְלוּ לָעֻלּוֹת אֶל רֹאשׁ הַהָר 44 But they presumed to go up to the top of the
וְאַרְוֹן בְּרִית יְהוָה וּמֹשֶׁה לֹא מָשׁוּ mountain, nevertheless the ark of the covenant of
מִקֶּרֶב הַמַּחֲנֶה. YHWH and Moses departed not out of the camp.

No clearer an example need be brought as the verse describing, from a Hebrew perspective, why משה-Moshe (Moses) was given that name:

Ex. 2,10

י וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד, וַתְּבֹאֶהוּ לְבַת- 10 And the child grew, and she brought him unto
פַּרְעֹה, וַיְהִי-לָהּ, לְבֵן; וַתִּקְרָא Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she
שְׁמוֹ, מֹשֶׁה, וַתֹּאמֶר, כִּי מֵן- called his name Moses, and said: 'Because I drew him
הַמַּיִם מִשֵּׁיתָהוּ. out of the water.'

I am suggesting that here we have an archaic form of this verb conjugated in a *plene* tri-radical form, like the term נקב-*nqb*, discussed above.

Greatly significant to our contention that all these were written by the same scribe is that this verb is common to three of these four inscriptions: Sinai 353, 349, and 361.

יט(ה) - Turn aside from...

The verb יט-*yt*^f is the masculine future tense of נטה-*nt^h* in *qal* (the simplest stem form of the verb) conveying the meaning “he should turn away”. (That the root נטה is double-weak (*the phenomenon in tri-radical verbs, in which a consonant is lost when the verb is conjugated*) – here in יט, two have been lost) makes verbs of this root difficult to parse.)

The prefix מ-m in the subsequent word is plainly the preposition “from”.

We have a perfect example of this phrase in the following verse:

יט וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, 19 And the children of Israel said to him: 'We will
בְּמַסְלָה נַעֲלֶה, וְאִם-מִימֶיךָ נִשְׁתָּה ascend along the highway; and if we drink of thy
אֲנִי וּמִקְנִי, וְנָתַתִּי מְכָרָם; רַק אִין- water, I and my cattle, then I will pay their price;
דָּבָר, בְּרַגְלִי אֶעֱבְרָה. only let me pass by foot; there is no harm done.'

כ וַיֹּאמֶר, לֹא תַעֲבֹר; וַיֵּצֵא אֲדֹמ לְקִרְאָתוֹ, בְּעַם כָּבֵד וּבְגִד חֲזָקָה. 20 And he said: 'You shall not pass through.' And Edom came forth against him with a heavy force of men and great might.

כא וַיִּמָּאן אֲדֹמ, וְנָתַן אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל, עָבַר, בְּגִבְלוֹ; וַיֵּט יִשְׂרָאֵל, מֵעָלָיו. 21 Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage within his border, so Israel turned away from him.

from loving Ba`alat - מ(א)ה(ו)ב בעלת

In light of biblical context (see above), this phrase has a remarkably straightforward reading. Again, the verb *yt^f* is the masculine future tense of *nt^h*, meaning “he should turn away”.

Lack of a feminine suffix in *ahb* suggests it to be a gerund, perhaps the *pi`el* form ‘to love passionately’ *אהוב*, but spelled *defectivo* meaning ‘loving passionately’.

In sum, this verse should be translated “one should turn away from [passionately] loving Ba`alat”.

A defense of this approach to the language against claims of anachronism is follows my analysis of Sinai 360.

THE CULTIC SIGNIFICANCE OF PTAḤ AS A ROUGH, EGYPTIAN VARIANT OF יָה-YAH, GOD OF MOSES

What might seem to challenge the notion of Mosaic authorship for this clade of inscriptions – certainly a Moses of the traditional view, as the leader and aggressive reformer of a mass of fleeing Semite refugees to the worship of Yah (YHWH) – seems to be *one of its strongest points of support*.

By this I refer to the large image that resembles Ptaḥ, as though the contents were written in the name of the supreme Creator-Deity.

With all respect to:

- (a) the position put forth by Tony L. Shetter, that Genesis is portraying YHWH-Elohim as a distinct deity superior to the gods of Egypt¹² (I see the Law of Moses as a rejection of what was seen as corrupt in the cult of Ptaḥ, but there is too much of the same essential concept of the Deity),
- (b) and that of Charles Krahmalkov ⁷ (whose reading of Sinai 351 and readings of Moses’ name in Sinaitic inscriptions are very unlikely ¹³), that the deity is actually *Yah* Himself – *I see no contradiction*.

To his credit, we might note that the image seems very undetailed, almost an abstract outline. It not only has no beard, but unlike other images of the deity, it is not labelled. The name “Ptah” is absent.

Ptah seems to have been an actual, early Egyptian traditional variant of Yah Himself. Flowing with biblical tradition – that the God of Abraham and Moses was worshipped by the early forebears of the Hebrews – Ptah seems to be rooted in a source tradition of Yah hailing back to ancient Mesopotamia of the 4th millennium BCE. It can be traced to Pre-Dynastic Egyptian culture, which was clearly brought to Egypt from ancient Sumer.^{14,15} As Joshua J. Mark notes about the deity:

One of the oldest Egyptian gods who appears in the First Dynastic Period (c. 3150-2613 BCE) but most likely dates from the Predynastic Period (c. 6000-3150 BCE). Ptah was the great god of Memphis, creator of the world, lord of truth, and chief god of the city of Memphis and its surrounding area c. 3000 BCE.¹⁶

In his seminal paper, Nissim Amzallag of Ben Gurion University not only describes the Ptah - (Israelite) Yah equation, but links the deity to its deeply ancient root as Ea / Enki.¹⁷ This takes the God of Abraham and Moses back to the Ubaid period, prior to the traditions of the Deluge.

Whereas the material left behind by the cults of Enki/Ea in ancient Sumer and Akkad suggests an anthropomorphized deity in a polytheistic context, the cuneiform literature yield the inescapable conclusion: they stem from worship of the root Deity of Israelite tradition. Mesopotamian Ea (Yah)/Enki is the “begetter of the gods”, all other powers, creator of the world, of life-giving water, of mankind, protector of man, god of wisdom. Let alone of the root traditions of Eden, Adam, Eve, Noah and the Flood.

Amzallag focuses on a shared attribute of Yah/Ptah/Ea that ties its worship strongly to the Hebrew laborers slaving at the copper mines of Serabit el-Khadim: his connection with metallurgy and smelting, *particularly of copper*. He notes:

An essential link between Yahweh and copper is suggested in the Book of Zechariah where the dwelling of the God of Israel is symbolized by two mountains of copper (Zech. 6:1-6). In his prophecies, Ezekiel describes a divine being as ‘a man was there, whose appearance shone like copper’ (Ezek. 40:3), and in another part of this book, Yahweh is even explicitly mentioned as being a smelter (Ezek. 22:20). In Isaiah 54:16, Yahweh is explicitly mentioned as the creator of both the copperworker and his work...Such an involvement of Yahweh is never mentioned elsewhere for other crafts or human activities.

Ptah, was considered the Egyptian god of metallurgy *ibid.*, besides being worshipped particularly by craftsmen and skilled laborers, including metal workers.¹⁸

First we must establish that Semites/Hebrews were indeed worshipping Yah in Egypt. That they were, and as far back as the Israelite Period – the 12th through 13th Dynasty,¹⁹ – is understood from a three-sided hieroglyphic inscription S 163 (= BM 693) on an obelisk.

Ludwig Morenz understands the relic to date back to the Middle Kingdom period in Egypt / MB I-II in Canaan.²⁰ More narrowly, he refers to the duck-bill axe (typical of MB I-II, not III) and the mushroom hairstyle of the persons depicted on the obelisk, which squarely suggests a 12th and/or 13th dynasty context. So based on such style cues, the obelisk indeed belongs to the Israelite Period.

That is profound, as it appears to bear Israelite/proto-Israelite names, reading as follows:

Side 1: **Yashi**, chief of Retenu (an ancient Egyptian term for Canaan and Syria).

This is the name of the father on the obelisk. It seems to be the equivalent of *Yishai*. The name of the father of King David, it seems to have meant, “gift (שׁי) of Yah (י).”

Side 2: **Yahna’am**, son of the chief of Retenu

The reading *Yahna’am* = “utterance of Yah” was first suggested by Egyptologist Professor Thomas Schneider.²¹

Side 3: **Qyn** (Qenite), son of the chief of Retenu



Ibid.

Shneider writes (ibid. translated from German²²):

We would classify the following interpretation of the name *יהנאם as yhn'm "Yah(we) has murmured, spoken" only as a mere hypothesis, as one would expect the initial yod to have been written as a double reed and while נאם ne'um "murmur (Yahweh)" is only attested in Hebrew as a congealed verbal noun. This interpretation would, of course, be significant in terms of religious studies because of the age of the evidence.

Hebrews worshipped Him as Yah/Ea; the native Egyptians using the name Ptah – although that name, too, would enter Israelite tradition. All is explained below, together with a full chart of the many points of comparison.

The Ptaḥ-esque Image as Moses' Strategy to Counter the Cult of Ba`alat

Ptaḥ was considered the patron deity and protector of the city of Memphis, *ibid.* the cultic center of Pharaoh Khaneferre Sobekhotep IV. This is the pharaoh whom we identify as the adopted father-in-law of Moses, as explained in my broad paper.¹

Egyptologist David Rohl writes:

The young prince of Israelite parentage would have spent much of his childhood in the various palace nurseries... following the marriage alliance [with his first step-father in Avaris], at Memphis or Ishetawy.²³

With the education of an Egyptian prince, Moses would have been well familiar with Ptaḥ, as he would the Mesopotamian deities. Rejecting their elements of corruption according to his vision, he would devote, per tradition, the remaining decades of his life to restoring among his people what would be revealed to him as the purest form of that faith.

Nonetheless, to get the initial message across to the Egyptianized Hebrews that now worshipped the “Golden Lady”, an Ptaḥ like image of Yah – invoking what the Egyptians associated with the stern, *stoic* (see below) father of all other powers, including Ba`alat – would have been just the image to wean them from that cult.

As noted in last year's paper, to my understanding, Serabit el-Khadim makes good sense as a work site where the group of Egyptianized Semite slaves the Torah calls the עַרְבֵי רַב, or “mixed multitude”, were stranded from mainland Egypt on account of the Plagues. Per tradition, it is they who brought about the “Golden Calf/Heifer” incident in Exodus chapter 32 (Ex. 12:38, 32:7 see Rashi ad loc.).

This set of what I've dubbed “Exodus Inscriptions” appear to be remnants of the Israelite purge of the cult of the Ba`alat/Hathor – again, identified as the “Golden Calf”, as retold in the Exodus narrative (see Appendix I). Tokens of the efforts by the journeying Israelites not only to absorb the group into their midst, but to stamp out their sex cult and reform them to the mores of the patriarchal faith rejuvenated by Moses.

Accordingly, this *Ptaḥ-esque* image for the Creator (Yah) at the side of what is a particularly strong message warning Hebrews against the cult, could have served as a strategy for reaching out to such Semites who were deeply immersed in Egyptian culture, or simply non-Israelites to begin with.

Does this picture suggest a Moses in the 13th Dynasty or 18th Dynasty?

It is actually possible to understand in the Law of Moses a rebellion against what he saw as corrupt in the cult of Ptah, such as the concept of an *urban*, central cult. What Stefan Schorch sees as a unique aspect of Samaritan-Israelite tradition – a “Mountain Sanctuary” vis-a-vis the “Holy City” concept of Southern Judah – makes greater sense to me as a unique aspect of Moses’ teaching in response to the urban cult of Ptah in Memphis, where he was educated, if not raised.²⁴ (Clear references to this Mountain, among others more subtle, include Gen. 22,2, Ex. 15,17, Deut. 3,25.) Among other reforms.

Certain aspects of this picture may seem to suggest a Moses contemporary with the New Kingdom ruler Ramesses II. Points such as Ramesses the Great being the one to have built the unprecedentedly massive temple for the cult of Ptah in Memphis.



Temple of Ptah, artist's reconstruction of ancient Memphis at the time of Ramesses II ¹⁸

On the contrary, the cult goes back to pre-Dynastic times. It is most telling that the Teachings of Ptah-hotep, a source of such unique points of synchrony between the two cults as noted in the graph below, is believed by some scholars to have been written during the 12th Dynasty.²⁵

According to a broad set of multidisciplinary evidence, the realm of world-class chronologists the likes of Peter Van der Veen and David Rohl, the Ramesside Period of New Kingdom Egypt was concurrent with Israel's Early Monarchy.^{26,27}

This is suggested in the sudden emergence of the parallel concept in Solomon's Jerusalem, which was actually quite revolutionary *vis-a-vis* the Law of Moses. This is quite clear from II Samuel 7,5-7 and the sweeping legal and aggadic passages in the Book of Exodus (25,1-31,11; 35,4-36,3; 36,3-39,32), which command the erection and maintenance of a Tent-Tabernacle. It is a clear defiance of the stone sanctuary concept, let alone one of such clear Egyptian and Canaanite influence as seen in the Temple of Solomon. This is accentuated by the commandments forbidding Egyptian and Canaanite cultic customs (Lev. 18,3 and 20,23 and Deut. 12:30).

This would suggest a Moses that rejected the Memphite temple concept, and its injection into the now-settled people of Moses, precisely at a time when her monarch was now joined in marriage to a powerful Egyptian pharaoh.

The broad set of connections between the 18th Dynasty and the Israel's Early Monarchy warrant their own book. It pushes the time of Moses to centuries earlier, making our connections with the end of the 13th Dynasty all the more significant.

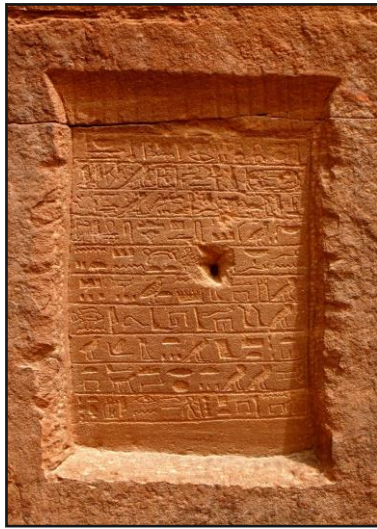
A forgotten Hebrew tradition found in names

We can see the fair equivalence between Ptaḥ and Yah in none other than Israelite tradition itself. The very word פתח-*Pth* means "open". To the Semite, the name "Ptaḥ" would signify the **"Opener of Creation"**. Consider now two names:

פתחיה-Petaḥiah, a short form of פתחיהו-*Petaḥyahu*, meaning "Ptaḥ is Yah", or YHW is Petaḥ. It is the name of a prominent Levite mentioned in Ezra 10,23 and Nehemiah 9,5. Having served in the Second Temple restored by Ezra, his duties are explained in the Mishnah (*tr. Sheqalim ch. 5 Mishnah 1*).

יפתח-Yiftaḥ, meaning not only "opened", but being a short form of "Yah is Ptaḥ". With all respect to the name of the Israelite Judge יפתח-Yiftaḥ being an eponymous title recalling what the chieftain was most remembered for (he "opened [פתח-*Pth*]" his mouth to swear an oath he could not rescind), that does not negate that an actual name was likely being used.

Theophoric names with Ptaḥ among ancient Semites residing in Egypt go as far back as the reign of Pharaoh Amenemhat III; again, ruling at time or the early Sojourn.¹⁹ Below is a stela that refers to a prominent Hebrew named **Ptahwer**:



"The rock-stela of the Great Overseer of the Treasury Cabinet, Ptahwer, dated to Year 45 of Amenemhat III at Serabit el-Khadim. The stela is located at C on the satellite view (see Fig. 105 later in this chapter). Ptahwer was a Semite. On another stela in the Shrine of Kings in the Hathor temple, dated to Year 23, he is referred to as 'Aam (the Asiatic), whose good name is Ptahwer'."

28



Whereas the etymology contains more layers, it is most telling is that, traditionally, the meaning of the full Name YHWH, combines past (HYH – "was"), present (HWH – "is") and future (YHYH – "will be") is meant to connote His eternal aspect. On title of Ptaḥ is "eternal king", "lord of eternity". *Ibid.*

Another most significant parallel for our case is #18, the final one on the list. It reveals how the cult of Ptaḥ preached a similar stoic attitude as that of YHWH in regards to **forbidding adultery and lust**. We can now understand how a message the likes of what is understood here in Sinai 351, delivered in the name of Ptaḥ (Egyptian *Yah*) would have been an effective means to countering the wayward cult of Ba`alat, with its raucous orgies – the "dances through the marshes".

Whereas the comparisons are far beyond a paper such as this, on the following page is a visual graph of key parallels between Ptaḥ and Yah, besides those noted above. Unless given another citation, all points listed in the left-hand column were taken from the article by Kristopher Henke.¹⁸



A late bas-relief image of Ptah (4th to 4rd century bce). Like in Sinai 351, he holds a staff bearing the combined image of *ankh*, symbolizing life, and *djed*, representing death (the spine), symbolizing the afterlife. Like Yah, he is Lord over this life and the life of the world to come.

 <p><i>Ptah</i></p>	 <p><i>Yah (YHWH)</i></p>
<p><i>1. The Primal Being</i></p> <p>“the only unbegotten begetter in the heaven and on the earth...the god who made himself to be god, who exists by himself, the double being, the begetter of the first beginning.”</p> <hr/> <p><i>2. Creator and Sovereign over all Other Powers</i></p> <p>“father of the fathers of the gods”,</p> <hr/> <p><i>3. Ruler over Both Worlds</i></p> <p>“the king of both worlds,”</p> <hr/> <p><i>4. He Created All through Speech</i></p> <p>“He willed the world into existence with the power of his mind, like a great conjuror of celestial proportions. Not satisfied there, he uses his speech (literally “word”) to give life to his creation. In Memphite texts, the present tense is used, indicating the ongoing act of sustaining life.”</p> <p>– <i>The precise equivalent</i> is found in the first blessing before morning <i>Shema</i> Prayer, in the Jewish siddur (blessings that were, per tradition, composed in the early Second Temple era):</p> <p style="text-align: right;">המחדש בכל יום מעשה בראשית</p> <p><i>“Who each day renews the work of Creation”</i></p>	<p><i>1. The Primal Being</i></p> <p>“The foundation of all foundations and the pillar of wisdom is to know that there is a Primary Being who brought into being all existence. All the beings of the heavens, the earth, and what is between them came into existence only from the truth of His being.”</p> <p>– <i>Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Foundations of Torah 1,1</i></p> <p>“He is not found within time, so that He would possess a beginning, an end, or age.” (<i>Ibid. 1,11</i>)</p> <hr/> <p><i>2. Creator and Sovereign over all Other Powers</i></p> <p>“For YHWH your God, He is God of gods, and Lord of lords” – <i>Deut. 10,17</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>3. Ruler over Both Worlds</i></p> <p>“Trust in YHWH forever, for Yah, YHWH, is an everlasting Rock/Founder of Worlds.” – <i>Is. 26,4</i></p> <p>“These are two worlds that the Holy One Blessed Be He created, one with the letter ה, and one with the letter ו.” – <i>Bab. Talmud tr. Menaḥoth 29a</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>4. He Created All through Speech</i></p> <p>In Ten Statements over Six Days, the Heaven, Earth, Sea and all their creatures are Created.</p> <p>– <i>Genesis Chapter 1 cf. Mishnah tr. Avoth 5:1</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. And God said: 'Let there be light'... 2. And God said: 'Let there be a firmament... 3. And God said: 'Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together... 4. And God said: 'Let the earth put forth grass... 5. And God said: 'Let there be lights in the firmament... 6. And God said: 'Let the waters swarm 7. And God said: 'Let the earth bring forth the living creatures... 8. And God said: 'Let us make man in our image... 9. God said unto them: 'Be fruitful, and multiply... 10. And God said: 'Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed...

<p>5. <i>Creator of Heaven and Earth</i></p> <p>“the creator in heaven and earth, who has made all things, the lord of all that is and is not,”</p> <p>6. <i>Master of Heaven</i></p> <p>“the ruler of the sky”</p> <p>7. <i>Creator of Light</i></p> <p>“the god of light which shows everything in its true form”</p> <p>8. <i>Creator of Humanity in His Image</i></p> <p>“The ka-souls of all the living were created in the image of Ptah. All formed in his heart and by his tongue.” ²⁹</p> <p>– <i>The Hymn to Ptah</i>, 19th Dynasty (cf. <i>Genesis 3,20</i>, where <i>Eve</i> is called “mother of all the living”)</p> <p>9. <i>Rested and satisfied after Creation</i></p> <p>“Having done all these things, Ptah rested and was content with his work.” – <i>The Hymn to Ptah</i> ^{ibid.}</p> <p>10. <i>God of Truth and Order</i></p> <p>“lord of truth”</p> <p>Ptah is has the aspect of “Lord of Ma’at”, included in his symbols. Ma’at is universal order, as opposed to “Isfet”, chaos. Ma’at seems to have been equivalent to the Israelite of אמת – Emet (pronounced “Amat” in early Hebrew dialects), meaning “truth”.</p> <p>This creates points of connections with the sources in Jewish tradition on “truth” as the “seal of HaShem”. ³⁰</p>	<p>5. <i>Creator of Heaven and Earth</i></p> <p>“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” – Gen 1,1</p> <p>“And he blessed him, and said: 'Blessed be Abram of YHWH Most High, Maker of heaven and earth...' – <i>Gen. 14,19</i></p> <p>6. <i>Master of Heaven</i></p> <p>“There is none like unto God, O Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven as thy help, and in His excellency on the skies.” – <i>Deut. 33,26</i></p> <p>7. <i>Creator of Light</i></p> <p>And God said: 'Let there be light.' And there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.</p> <p>8. <i>Creator of Humanity in His Image</i></p> <p>“So God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them.” – <i>Genesis 1,27</i></p> <p>9. <i>Rested and satisfied after Creation</i></p> <p>God saw all that he had made, and it was very good... By the seventh day God had finished... so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.” – <i>Genesis 1,31-2</i></p> <p>10. <i>God of Truth and Order</i></p> <p>“But YHWH God is truth [אמת-amat]” – Jer. 10,10</p> <p>“For His mercy is great toward us; and the truth of YHWH endureth for ever.” – Ps. 117,2</p> <p>“Ye shall not steal; neither shall ye deal falsely, nor lie one to another.” – Lev. 19,11</p> <p>“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.” – Ex. 20,12</p>
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<p><i>11. God who Hears Prayer</i></p> <p>"He who listens to prayers"</p> <hr/> <p><i>12. The Loving God</i></p> <p>"great with love"</p> <hr/> <p><i>13. Striking with Blindness</i></p> <p>"He smites with blindness..."</p> <hr/> <p><i>14. Zealous for His Name</i></p> <p>"...and punishes those who take His name in vain"</p> <p>"The abuse of the name of Yahwe finds its correspondence in the sanction of blinding, which Ptah according to an inscription (in the British Museum) has imposed on the vain use of his name. See Erman, SB AW, 1911, p. 1098 f." ³¹</p> <hr/> <p><i>15. Forbids Gossip-Mongering</i></p> <p>"Do not gossip in your neighbourhood, because people respect the silent."</p> <p>– <i>"Teachings of Ptah-Hotep, quotations from Christian Jacq"</i> ³²</p> <hr/>	<p><i>11. God who Hears Prayer</i></p> <p>"Blessed art Thou YHWH who hears prayer" – 14th <i>blessing of the `Amidah prayer</i></p> <p>"and when we cried to YHWH, He heard our voice, and sent an angel, and brought us forth out of Egypt" – <i>Num. 20,16</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>12. The Loving God</i></p> <p>"YHWH did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people--for you were the fewest of all peoples -- but because YHWH loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, that YHWH has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the bastion of slavery..." – <i>Ex. 7,7-8</i></p> <p>"With a great love you have loved us, YHWH our God"</p> <p>– 2nd <i>blessing of Shema` Prayer, siddur</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>13. Striking with Blindness</i></p> <p>"And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great; so that they wearied themselves to find the door."</p> <p>– <i>Gen. 19,11</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>14. Zealous for His Name</i></p> <p>"Thou shalt not take the Name of YHWH your God in vain; for YHWH will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." – <i>Ex. 20,6</i></p> <p>Concerning the love of His Name, see Psalms 5,11; 69,36; 119,132.</p> <hr/> <p><i>15. Forbids Gossip-Mongering</i></p> <p>"You shall not go gossip-mongering among your people..." – <i>Lev. 19,16</i></p> <hr/>
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<p>16. <i>Champions Listening/Hearkening Above All Else</i></p> <p>"To listen is better than anything, thus is born perfect love."</p> <p>"God loves him who listens. He hates those who do not listen." <i>Ibid.</i></p> <hr/> <p>17. <i>Commands Man's Fidelity to His Wife</i></p> <p>"Love your wife with passion." <i>Ibid.</i></p> <hr/> <p>18. <i>Warns against adultery and lusting after beautiful women</i></p> <p>"Stay away from the women of another's house. Keep your mind on business, your eyes off pretty faces. Foolish dreamers become causalities of unwise actions. Succumb to love sickness and lust, and nothing you do will succeed."</p> <p>– "Teachings of Ptah-Hotep, (2575 – 2134 BCE)" ²⁹</p> <hr/> <p>19. <i>Commands the teaching of tradition to children</i></p> <p>"As for you, teach your disciple the words of tradition. May he act as a model for the children of the great, that they may find in him the understanding and justice of every heart that speaks to him, since man is not born wise." ³²</p> <hr/>	<p>16. <i>Champions Listening/Hearkening Above All Else</i></p> <p>"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." – <i>I Sam. 15,22</i></p> <hr/> <p>17. <i>Commands Man's Fidelity to His Wife</i></p> <p>"Let thy fountain be blessed; and have joy of the wife of thy youth. A lovely hind and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; with her love be thou ravished always."</p> <p>– <i>Proverbs 5,18-19</i></p> <hr/> <p>18. <i>Warns against adultery and lusting after beautiful women</i></p> <p>And it shall be a fringe for you, that you may see it and remember... and not explore after your heart and after your eyes after which you stray. – <i>Num. 15,39</i></p> <p>"This teaching is a light...keeping you from your neighbor's wife, from the smooth talk of a wayward woman. Do not lust in your heart after her beauty." – <i>Proverbs 6: 23, 24–25</i></p> <hr/> <p>19. <i>Commands the teaching of tradition to children</i></p> <p>"and you shall teach them diligently to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your home, and when you walk along the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up." – <i>Deuteronomy 6,7</i></p> <p>"The sages learned [in <i>Sifri</i>] that 'your children', these are your disciples, and thus you find in every place that students are called sons..." – <i>Bab. Talmud tr. Sanhedrin 19b</i></p> <hr/>
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<p><i>20. Man's Plans are for Naught, What Comes About is the Will of Ptaḥ</i></p> <p>"The human race never accomplishes anything. It's what God commands that gets done." Ibid.</p>	<p><i>20. Man's Plans are for Naught, What Comes About is the Will of YHWH</i></p> <p>"There are many ideas in a man's heart, but it is the counsel of YHWH that shall stand." – <i>Proverbs. 19,21</i></p> <p>"Take counsel together, and it shall be brought to naught; speak a command, and it shall not stand; for God is with us." – <i>Isaiah 8,10</i></p>
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With this graph ends the discussion here on Sinai 351, and we continue on to the second inscription treated in this paper, Sinai 360.

SINAI 360: THE STONE

In view of all the others in my proposed “Exodus Inscriptions” clade, this was the simplest. Found at Mine K, not far from Mine L, Sinai 360 is a clear, single-column string of characters, all but one being uncontested. Its almost startlingly straightforward read as biblical Hebrew gives it a natural place within our clade.

The photographic image of the stone’s surface below, a photo by Wilson-Wright, is the best available. To the right are his letter identifications, which I agree with.³

Sinai 360, Serabit el-Khadim

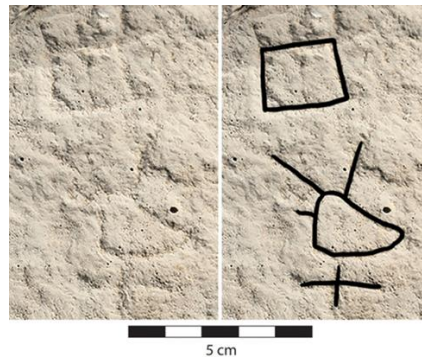


© Michael S. Bar-Ron
Base Image from photo by Aren M. Wilson-Wright

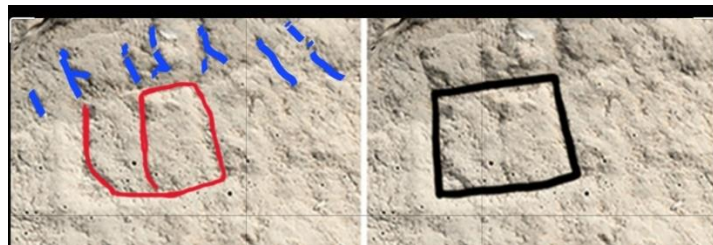
The third glyph down: כ-beth or כ-kaph?

In order to read כבשן-*kbšn*, metallurgical furnace, Brian Colless³³ sees the letter כ-kaph, the hand-palm. This would be attractive, considering the context of Serabit el-Khadim as a mining site, and in how the Wadi Nasb inscription (very close to the Serabit temple area), translated by William Shea,³⁴ mentions כור-*kur*, another term for furnace. Nonetheless, I think Wilson-Wright⁵ is correct to ignore the features that might suggest a hand-palm. That is because only three prongs are visible, whereas every other instance of כ-kaph has at least four. The would-be “extensions” of those prongs (which would ruin a square shape) seem to be associated with others that seem to be erosion. Finally, the line that faintly seems to bisect the square, or rectangle, could well be a feature of a snail-house כ-beth, as possibly seen in the the כ-beth below.

Image with tracing by Wilson-Wright,^{ibid} directly from his paper:



I think a “snail-house” כ-beth might be more likely. At such a close-up view, the would-be “extensions” that would give us finger-prongs for כ-kaph (hand-palm) do not seem significant. Accordingly, Wilson-Wright seems correct to ignore such features, relating to the squareness of the glyph, suggesting כ-beth. (The tracings in red and blue are of my own.)



Glyph 8, an unambiguous כ-beth, might actually have an extension, giving it a snail-house shape. (My tracing in red)



INTERPRETATION, AND ANALYSIS

Reading column by column, left to right, with equivalent English and modern Hebrew characters. *Matres lectionis* (letter-vowels) are added within brackets []:

(left to right) ➡

right column, top to bottom:

z(eh) sh(e)-b a t(a) z(o)t b(u)sh(ah) n(e)m(o)sh
 ז(ה) ש(ה)ב(א)ת ז(ה) ש(ה)ב(א)ת נ(ה)מ(ה)ש

⬅ (right to left)

Hebrew sentence division with English translation:

(In) that you came,

זֶה שְׁבַאת

This is shameful!

זֹאת בּוֹשָׁה!

Remove yourself!

נִמוּשׁ!

Like other inscriptions in our clade, Sinai 360 appears to be a posted sign warning journeying Hebrew wayfarers to stay away from the cult of Ba`alat, the Golden Cow deity Hathor, whose temple stood there, to remove themselves from there. This message is warning individuals from the very premises, going so far as to say that a given Hebrew's act of even *approaching* the temple is something to be ashamed of.

It truly befits the mindset seen in Deuteronomy Chapter 12, equivalent to Exodus 34,13:

ב אַבְד תִּאבְדוּן אֶת כָּל הַמְקוֹמוֹת אֲשֶׁר
 עֲבָדוּ שֵׁם הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם יֹרְשִׁים אֹתָם
 אֶת אֱלֹהֵיהֶם, עַל הַהָרִים הַרְּמִים וְעַל
 הַגְּבָעוֹת וְתַחַת כָּל עֵץ רֹעֵן.
 2 You shall surely destroy all the places
 where the nations that you are to
 dispossess served their gods, upon the
 high mountains and upon the hills, and
 under every leafy tree.

ג ונתצתם את מזבחתם ושברתם את מצבתם ואשריהם תשרפון באש, ופסילי אלהיהם תגדעו, ואבדתם את שמם, מן המקום ההוא. 3 And you shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire, and you shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and you shall destroy their name out of that place.

In Deut. 12,30-31:

ל השמר לך פן תנקש אחריהם, אחרי השמדם מפניך; ופן תדרש לאלהיהם לאמר, 'איכה יעבדו הגוים האלה את אלהיהם? ואעשה כן גם אני'. 30 be careful that you not be ensnared into following them, after that they are destroyed from before you; and that you not seek out their gods, saying: 'How did these nations used to serve their gods? I myself will I do so likewise.'

לא לא תעשה כן ליהוה אלהיך, כי כל תועבת יהוה אשר שנא עשו לאלהיהם - כי גם את בניהם ואת בנותיהם ישרפו באש לאלהיהם. 31 You shall not do thus to YHWH your God; for every abomination to YHWH that He hates they have done for their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they burn in fire to their gods.

ז(ה) שבת that you came

The biblical Hebrew reader may have expected a phrase such as יען אשר, as we find in Gen. 22,16 or I Kings 3,11. However, those carry the meaning of “because” or “since”. There is no connotation here of Divine promise or recompense based on someone’s action. On the contrary, the pronoun זה-this/that is standing for an action.

Rather, it stands for הדבר אשר – “this thing” (Ex. 18,17), a short form of הדבר הזה – “**this** thing”, referring to an action, as see seen in Gen. 22,10 and 11.

While it might be assumed that the prefix ש-she... as a shortened form of אשר-*asher* (who..., which...) is only an advent from later Hebrew, it is found at least as far back as Psalms and Ecclesiastes, and may be far older.

Psalms 146,3

ג אל תבטחו בנדיבים, בבן-אדם ש אין לו תשועה. 3 Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man **in whom** there is no help.

Ecclesiastes 1,9

ט מה שהיה הוא שיהיה, ומה שנעשה הוא שיעשה, ואין כל חדש תחת השמש. 9 That **which** hath been is that **which** shall be, and that **which** hath been done is that **which** shall be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.

Per my proposal, these inscriptions were not written as literature, in which we would expect full phrasing, *but as messages of terse rebuke to be read easily by passers-by.*

The past-tense use of the verb בא as “came or arrived” is well-based, as seen in Ex. 12,9:

ט כי לא באתם עד עתה אל המנוחה ואל הנחלה אשר יהוה אלהיך נתן לך. 9 for you have not come to the [place of] rest and inheritance that YHWH your God is giving thee.

ז(א)ת - ב(ו)ש(ה) - This is shameful!

Here an identical phrase to that seen in Sinai 353, which I interpret to be a curse-out of Ba`alat and warning to journeying Hebrews against her cult (“The Exodus Inscriptions”¹ p.12). It is a similar that is found in Sinai 349 (Ibid. p. 19):

ענו לאחינו – ‘בשת’ / Give answer to our brothers – ‘For shame’

Throughout Scripture, too many sources to mention, בושה-*bushah* means “shame”, “ashamed”, or “for shame”. Revealing a context similar to our own in the inscription, we find in Jeremiah 50:12:

יב בושה אמכם מאד, חפרה יולדתכם; הנה אחרית גוים, מדבר ציה וערבה. 12 Your mother shall be very **ashamed**, she that bore you shall be confounded, behold the last of the nations shall be a wilderness, a dry land and a desert.

נמ(ו)ש! - Remove yourself!

Greatly significant to our contention that all these were written by the same scribe is that this verb is common to three other inscriptions in our clade: Sinai 353, 349, and 361.¹ In Sinai 353, we find it’s most perfect parallel, a command form to passers-by to “remove themselves from Ba`alat”. Sinai 360 is communicating this same directive, the same warning:

נמושו מהבעלת / Remove yourselves from Ba`alat

The verb form is also used in Sinai 349, where we read:

נמש ערך מלבעלת / Gone [Removed] is the value of those for [belonging to] Ba`alat

In Sinai 361:

זה שחבש נמש / The one bound [in captivity] was removed

In light of our reading of Sinai 360, we could understand this line as “in that he bound [in captivity], he was removed”.

As explained in that paper, in several places in the Pentateuch we find the verb *מ-ש* *msh*, with its consistent meaning “remove” or “depart”:

Ex. 13:22

כב לא למיש עמוד הענן יומם 22 the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by
ועמוד האש לילה לפני העם. night departed not from before the people.

Num. 14:44

מד ויעפלו לעלות אל ראש ההר 44 But they presumed to go up to the top of the
וארון ברית יהוה ומשה לא משו mountain, nevertheless the ark of the covenant of
מקרב המחנה. YHWH and Moses departed not out of the camp.

No clearer an example need be brought as the verse describing, from a Hebrew perspective, why משה-Moshe (Moses) was given that name:

Ex. 2:10

ויגדל הילד, ותבאהו לבת- 10 And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's
פרעה, ויהי-לה, לבן; ותקרא daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name
שמו, משה, ותאמר, כי מן- Moses, and said: 'Because I drew him out of the water.'
המים משיתחו.

IS READING IN THIS METHOD ANACHRONISTIC?

The predominant view of Semitic studies scholarship

It might be intuitive to the lay person that the greatest victory for our claim would be if we could read in these inscriptions a message in biblical Hebrew. However, that outlook is not shared by top linguists of ancient Semitic languages. In their defense, it must be said that, contrary to what the common misconception by those with only a parochial perspective on biblical Hebrew (as the “language of Adam”), this perspective is not owed to any contempt for TaNaKh or Israelite religion (as is commonly assumed).

On the contrary, it is on account of logical, widely agreed-upon assumptions as to how Hebrew developed in light of cognate Semitic languages, such as Akkadian and Aramaic. It is also informed by the overwhelming evidence that even the Pentateuch itself has clearly been *redacted* (edited) by a priestly scribe, writing circa 8th century BCE.

The slippery slope into minimalist, circular thinking

However, the minimalist outlook is a slippery slope when theorizing how consolidated, how unique the early Israelite form of Semitic was by the time of

Moses. Although there are good arguments, without actual Hebrew texts that we can say are confidently early-*Israelite*, it is matter of assumption as to how much the Israelite Hebrew of Exodus-era Hebrew resembled ancient cognate tongues vis-a-vis that found in the Hebrew of older books of TaNaKh, and older layers in the texts.

Assumptions are based on a handful of early Semitic texts, none of which can be identified as Israelite. These include the Deir Alla Inscription, or material in Ugaritic or Samalian. These are cousin languages, and delegitimizing a wording based on a hypothetical state of Hebrew for the time, based on such texts, is circular logic.

On the basis of just such a false premise – misjudging an artifact later understood to be valid, based on criteria too narrow, owed to insufficient evidence – several scholars decried the Dead Sea Scrolls to be fakes, when they were first discovered. As Dr. Tony Burke explains:

“Some scholars at first believed that they had to be fakes precisely because they were so much like the Shapira fragments.” Concerning the latter, he explains:

“Critics at the time could not believe that the parchment could survive in that climate. But the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the 1950s and 1960s shows that they certainly could.”^{35,36}

An oft-ignored cultural factor: the conservative priestly outlook

It is also a view that ignores an anthropological approach: what can be safely derived about the Israelites’ cultural belief about the immutability of their language.

The fact that the Hebrews believed that the names of animals in their Hebrew were given by none other than Adam himself (Genesis 2:18-19) is significant. It shows the belief in and high value for the preservation of even *non*-sacred terms (names of animals). Concerning the language of sacred writ, *a fortiori*: This can be garnered from Ex. 32,16 – how the wording of the Ten Commandments was considered “מעשה אלהים” and the script “מכתב אלהים”: a Divine work with a Divine script.

This outlook concerning the sanctity and immutability of the “Holy Tongue” cannot be divorced from the conservative Israelite mindset in which adding and unlawful innovation in regards to the sacred was taboo:

By this I refer to the culture that birthed the context of verses Deut. 4,2 and 4,32 (prohibiting adding of novel legislation to the Law), Lev. 10,1-7 (the prohibition of innovating in the priestly service) and Lev. 2,13 (the concept of a “covenant of salt”, preserving things as they ever were).

Moreover, until the 7th century bce, biblical textual traditions seem not to have been maintained by the public, but in closed, priestly circles. (In that context, scribes were maintained in early times among peers, not mere laity.)

Evidence of this includes not only the “reforms” of King Josiah (II Kings 23,1-13 and 21-22, Nehemiah 8:13-18) upon the discovery of the Deuteronomic text, which was considered genuine but unknown to them, but statements in the Books of Judges and Samuel that suggest ignorance of biblical text outside the priestly leadership (I Samuel 1,8 cf. Deut. 17,16, II Samuel 6,3 cf. Num. 7,9, etc.).

An alternative to saying that such tradition was only created later on, is a model I find more convincing: the proposal by Stefan Schorch,³⁷ building on the work of Johannes Renz,³⁸ that Deuteronomy was likely maintained among the priestly scribes of the North and only brought by them to the South by refugees of the Northern Kingdom fleeing the Assyrian invasion.

Such cultural factors would serve as “brakes” on the pace of change.

Not to ignore clear developments in Hebrew

To be clear: in hindsight, we most clearly recognize the origins of the script in Egyptian hieroglyphs and how it clearly evolved, as did the text and language itself.

For example, if we were challenged by an inscription in which an apparent reading would require us to employ a loan-word from what appears to be a later exilic period, or to translate *אָ-at(ah)* as “you”, we would need to be highly skeptical. (The time of Moses, it is not unlikely that the word for “you” would have been no different than the form *אָ-ant*, found in both Aramaic and Arabic.)

Other shifts in language might include the conjugation of the verb tenses: the “future-past” form is clearly an older form, but tense seems to have been more fluid.

Again, however language evolved, the biblical redactor would have been under pressure to remain conservative in regards to his original wordings (*to the degree that would not undermine the purpose of the redaction*), just as he would be about preserving the original story or law being further detailed or explained. He would have made every effort to convey the text – orally and/or in writing – in its authentic, classical form.

His priestly cultural view and environment would have slowed down the evolution of sacred writ. This must play a factor when considering what is possible in terms of how well the biblical text may reflect the early Hebrew of Moses’ time.

Considering the general understanding of minimalist scholarship, that Pentateuchal text was transmitted orally before it was written down,³⁹ the discipline cannot have it both ways: if the text is Hebrew, transmitted in Hebrew within a pious, conservative cultural context by Israelite-Hebrew kohen-priests, then it would be a decent reflection of the dialect of its origin.

How this applies to our late-Middle Kingdom material

As much as have been careful to avoid for such undeniable anachronisms, it just so happens to be that our texts yield very natural messages with no need to resort to undeniable anachronisms. The P-S glyphs on Sinai 351, as in the other published to date, happen to lend themselves to be read *simply* – not in a forced way – as early biblical Hebrew.

Whatever the prior assumptions had by scholars about Israelite-Hebrew of this time period, so long as the readings avoid obvious cases of the above-mentioned types of error, the likelihood of their veracity should be judged based on their internal logic, and consistency. That includes how consistent we have been in regards to the epigraphy (who we interpret the lettering) and the consistency of the parallel words and phrases across the five inscriptions of this type that I have translated – all within the much larger, historical context proposed by biblical chronologists.

CONCLUSION

In light of my larger work on the Exodus Inscriptions¹, it should be clear that Sinai 351 and 360 deserve to join the Sinai 353, 349, and 357 and others I will include in this clade of inscriptions at Serabit el-Khadim that may well have been authored, if not inscribed, by the entourage of a historical Moses.

Here, too, the stage of the script in both inscriptions is earlier than Iron I/MB II inscriptions, Yet later than those dating to the period of Pharaoh Amenemhat III (see Appendix II). Like the other Hebrew-inscribed stone tablets in the clade, this fits our preferred time slot of the latter-13th Dynasty. Besides being written in columns like Sinai 353 and 357, the script is in the same, distinct hand, with phrasings in common with the others.

The proposed wordings do not seem to involve any obvious anachronisms. They yield simple, intuitive readings, with letter-identifications, phrasing and a message that are fairly straightforward.

Distinct from pagan inscriptions found at Serabit el-Khadim, the inscriptions do not laud the Golden Calf deity, nor mention her in reverence. On the contrary, they direct Hebrews (those who could read this script), using strong action verbs, **to turn away from her, curse her, and remove themselves from the premises of the temple, or the the love of Ba`alat/Hathor**. The readings thus bear the same distinct biblical theme and same aggressive polemical thrust. One that befits the Israelite worldview and prophetic flare we associate with the biblical Moses.

Moreover, in Sinai 351, there is a further connection with Moses not found in the others, explained below: an image of single God, resembling Ptaḥ. Besides communicating the sovereignty of Yah, the Creator of earliest Semitic tradition, it suggests the very Memphite cult in which Prince Moses would have been trained in his youth.

The image – essentially a simple shape outline and without a beard – may actually represent a step towards the abstract; a step towards the distinctly Israelite prohibition of imaging the divine. Whether or not that is an effect of the ravages of time, we’ve demonstrated how an image of Ptaḥ would, in itself, have represented something close to the Israelite concept of Divinity – however that deity was changed and syncretized in the imagination of Egyptians, both native and Semite.

Being an actual name for Yah that remains within the etymology of two Hebrew names, Ptaḥ represented the single Creator Deity, Himself uncreated, whose Name mustn't be taken in vain, who brought all things into existence by His Word. The equivalent of Yah/Ea (יה), worshipped by Semites of the ancient Levant and Mesopotamia, Egyptian Semites saw him as the eternal Creator of Heaven and Earth", "the God of light", "Master of justice", "He who listens to prayers", "with great love", teaching self-control, a god of truth that punishes the wicked. A god particularly caring of humble builders and copper smelters as they. Perhaps the only divine authority in whose name it could be demanded that they leave the love of Ba`alat.

Considering the web of multiple lines of interconnection between all *six* members of the “Exodus Inscriptions” clade, the image on Sinai 351 serves to tie them all to a historical Moses-like personage, one with a career the likes of that portrayed in the biblical narrative.

A final leg for this thesis, a project for the coming year

The stage is now set for a final stage to complete my proposal. That is, a paper to present my readings of the inscriptions that provide the necessary contrast to the “Exodus Inscriptions” clade. These include the inscriptions that represent the earliest stage of Proto-Sinaitic from the time of Pharaoh Amenemhat III – those

found at Wadi el-Hol and Wadi Nasb – as well as votive inscriptions. These convey the worship of Hathor/Ba`alat: Sinai 345, 346 and 276.

The former, the Wadi el-Hol inscriptions, do not only provide crucial paleographical context; they bear messages that suggest the Egypt of the early Sojourn. What these inscriptions do for a historical Moses, they, together with a suite of other findings, do for a historical Joseph.



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Appendix I

Ba`alat/Hathor and the Golden Calf

A key to understanding these inscriptions, is (a) that *Ba`alat* (the deity named therein) is plainly the West Semitic name for Hathor, **the golden cow goddess of Egypt**, and (b) its identification with the very deity behind the Golden Calf incident. (I must thank David Rohl for this insight and the sources he provided over months of discussion on this issue.) Accordingly, the explicit mention of this golden bovine deity in our inscriptions clade lends provides historical context to the Torah's account. Some background:

Ba`alat, "The Lady", was the chief deity of Canaanite Byblos, and hence popular among pre-Exodus Semites/Hebrews (only a minority of whom were Israelites). According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica: ¹

Very little is known of Baalat, "the Lady [of Byblos]," but, because of the close ties between Byblos and Egypt, she was often represented with a typically Egyptian hairstyle, headdress, and costume, and by the 12th dynasty (1991–1786 BC) **she was equated with the Egyptian goddess Hathor**. [emphasis added]

Serabit el-Khadim, the larger site wherein Mines L,M, and N is found – the sites of our inscriptions clade – is the location of a major temple of Hathor. Frequent mentions of *Ba`alat* were found among its ruins, most notably a small sphinx found by Sir Flinders Petrie, bearing a Proto-Sinaitic dedication 'to Ba`alat', a reading confirmed by Sir Alan Gardiner. *This is the same name as that found in our inscription at Mine N*. The link between Ba`alat and Hathor couldn't be stronger.

Ba`alat as the "Golden Calf" Herself

Here is why it is quite likely that Ba`alat was plainly the deity behind the Israelites' sin, which would make the inscriptions analysed below in Section II, Sinai 353, 349 and 361, a strong confirmation of the Torah account:

The principal animal form for Hathor was that of a cow.² She was represented by a golden mask, and bore a symbol of the golden sun between its horns:



Icon of Hathor as a cow, with all her symbols including the sun disk.³



Ancient Egyptian Sheet gold relief mask of the goddess Hathor ⁴

Consider how similarly Ba'alat was represented:¹

Under Egyptian influence, Ba'alat is shown on a cylinder seal from Gubla in an Egyptian style—She is seated in a close-fitting dress whose straps cover Her breasts, Her hair dressed Egyptian-style, **bearing the sun-disk and cow-horn headdress of Hathor**, the Egyptian's Goddess of love and beauty. ... In one inscription She is labelled "Beloved of Hathor", and in time Ba'alat was completely assimilated to Hathor by the Egyptians.

When Moses descended Mt. Sinai, he not only encountered the golden bovine deity they'd made, but the Israelites *dancing*. Ex. 32:19:

יט 19 And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto
וַיַּחַד כְּאִשֶּׁר קָרַב אֶל הַמַּחֲנֶה, וַיֵּרָא אֶת הָעֵגֶל
וּמַחֲלֵת, וַיַּחַר אַף מֹשֶׁה וַיִּשְׁלֹךְ מִיָּדוֹ אֶת הַקְּלָחֹת
וַיִּשְׁבֵּר אֹתָם תַּחַת הָהָר. Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of
his hands, and broke them beneath the mount.

This matches what we find in an 18th-dynasty "Hymn to Hathor", translated by John Darnell (emphasis added):⁵

Hymn to Hathor – The Golden One

Come, oh Golden One, who eats of praise,
because the food of **her desire is dancing**,
who shines on the festival at the time of lighting,
who is content with the dancing at night.
'Come! The procession is in the place of inebriation,
that hall of travelling through the marshes.

The phrase 'traveling through the marshes' is, according to Betsy M. Bryan⁶, an ancient Egyptian euphemism for sexual intercourse. Accordingly, the 'hall of travelling through the marshes' is likely to refer to the place of an orgy that took place during this Festival of Drunkenness for Hathor. This is unsurprising, as she was the Egyptians' goddess of love. Consider now Ex. 32:6:⁷

ו 6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered
וַיָּקֻמוּ שְׂלָמִים, וַיִּשְׁבּוּ הָעָם לֶאֱכֹל
וַיִּשְׁתּוּ, וַיִּקְמוּ לְצַחֵק. burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings; and the
people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to make
merry.

Genesis 26:8 and 21:9 leave no doubt that the term *לְצַחֵק*-*l'saheq* (to "make merry") is a euphemism for sexual relations. What could better explain the outrage of Moses than his descending to find his people engaged in a drunken orgy in the service of the Egyptian love goddess?

However, doesn't the Torah use the term *עֵגֶל*-*eghel* –a male calf– no fewer than six times in the Torah account?

First, it is possible the Torah might not have intended to report the calf's gender, as *matres lectionis* (such as the final ה-*heh* that denote a female calf) would not enter the written Hebrew language for many centuries, a point made by Petrovich.⁸ Nonetheless, we do have other sources that can provide that detail:

In the Quran Surah 7:152, the Golden Calf is written العجل , which is pronounced *egelah*, as the Hebrew form for heifer, a female calf. This is testimony to whatever Jewish source from which it comes. Unlike the male form for calves used in the Masoretic text (I Kings ch. 12), the Septuagint and Josephus (Antiquities 8.8.226-228)⁹ speak of Jeroboam installing *heifers* –not male calves– as the "powers" that took Israel out of Egypt:

"It was a man that built the temple: I have also made two golden heifers, dedicated to the same God; and the one of them I have consecrated in the city Bethel, and the other in Dan..."

Strengthening this picture, Hosea ch.10 chastises Samaria and Bet El, mentioning female calves, employing the female form עֲגֻלוֹת *-`egloth*, heifers.

<p>ה לַעֲגֻלוֹת בֵּית אֵוֶן יִגְוֹרוּ שָׁכֵן שְׁמֵרוֹן, כִּי אֲבָל עָלָיו עֲמוֹ, וַיִּכְמְרוּ עָלָיו יִגְלוּ עַל כְּבוֹדוֹ, כִּי-נָלָה מִמֶּנּוּ.</p>	<p>5 The inhabitants of Samaria shall be in dread for the heifers of Beth-aven, for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof shall tremble for it for its glory, because it is departed from it.</p>
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Finally, there is the point brought in my book "Song of the Creator"¹⁰, that the ritual introduced by Moses of the *Parah Adumah* – the "Red Cow" (an adult female, and therefore a clearer representation of Ba`alat), was plainly a representation of the "Golden Calf":

The unblemished cow that never bore a yoke represents the *`eghel ha-zahav* – the Golden Calf the Israelites made in the desert.

Moshe pulverized the idol, poured its dust into the nearby stream, and made the Israelites drink the water – like the punishment of an adulteress (since the nation had 'committed harlotry' with a false god. [Num. 5:17-27]). When he reduces the cow to ash and mixes the ash in water, the Kohen, a descendent of Aharon (who made the Golden Calf in the first place) imitates Moshe. This is why the cow is *adumah* – earth-red: It reminds us of the waters mixed with earth from the Altar for the suspected adulteress to drink.

When he reduces the cow to ash, Aharon's descendant symbolically reduces our own evil impulses to ash. He mixes the ash with water and sprinkles it, *purifying the impure. The act that recalls the disgrace of Aharon, brings purity for all of Israel.* This is the reason why all priests involved in the process, even the one who merely carries the bucket, become impure in the process: *he 'carries' [bears] the guilt of Aharon, their ancestor. By ceremoniously bearing their ancestor's sin, the priests became the vessel of purification for the whole nation. ...*

One might ask: why would *HaShem* [God] designate the animal whose ashes would bring purity as a *parah adumah* (red cow), as opposed to an *`eghlah adumah* (red calf)? It implies that even in later generations (as the rite of the red heifer is an enduring Commandment for all time), when the nation should have reached maturity, *the same treacherous impulses that existed in the nation in its youth, standing at Sinai, would continue to persist even into much later times*. What was once an *`eghel* (calf) would later become a *parah* (cow). The lessons of the Golden Calf tragedy will remain relevant always.

Fittingly, on the *Shabboth* following the Purim holiday (*Shabboth Parah*), when Jews have the special *Maftir* Torah reading of the passage concerning the *parah adumah* (Numbers 19:1-22); on every non-leap Year, it will be the same *Shabboth* that Torah portion *Ki Thissa* (with the account of the Golden Calf) is read. (*M.T. Hilkhoth Tefillah [Laws of Prayer] 13:20*). This is according to *all* customs of the yearly cycle of Torah portions (Youmenite, Sefardic and Ashkenazic). In other words, **the Torah portion with the account of the Golden Calf is, on most Years, read when there is an ancient tradition to read the verses concerning the *parah adumah*** (outside of its own Torah portion, *parashath Hūqath*, which falls 3-4 months later). It is likely that the ancient Sages were aware of the connection I've revealed.

Not brought in the book is that, in the translation of Numbers 19,2 in the *Tafsīr*, the authoritative Arabic translation of the Pentateuch by the 9-10th century Torah giant Sa`adiah Gaon, the color of the "Red Cow" is translated as *safrd'*, a qur'anic word for saffron – a shade of gold.¹¹ If the *Parah Adumah*, representing the "Golden Calf" were saffron in color, the connection with Egypt's Golden Cow deity cannot be denied.



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Appendix II

DATING THE INSCRIPTIONS TO THE MOST APPROPRIATE TIME FOR THE EXODUS

A. How These Inscriptions Represent a Middle Stage, Older than Proto-Canaanite Inscriptions, Younger than Those at Wadi el-Hol

It is beyond the scope of this paper to present the overwhelming yet poorly-understood, multidisciplinary evidence for the 13th Dynasty as the best candidate for the “Israelite Period”, and the reign of Dudimose I/II as the time of the biblical Exodus. For that, I refer the reader to my recent paper, soon to be updated, *The Exodus Inscriptions at Serabit el-Khadim* (Part III Section C, pp. 58-72).

As noted there, that precise timeframe is not essential to our basic proposal. **These inscriptions could be argued to have been written at an *any of the accepted chronological timeframes for the Exodus*.** Whether that be the high date, early in the Second Intermediate Period, or a lower date in the early New Kingdom Period.

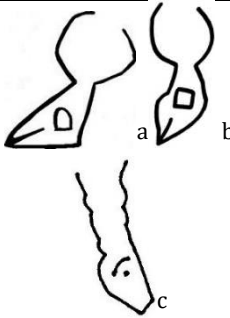

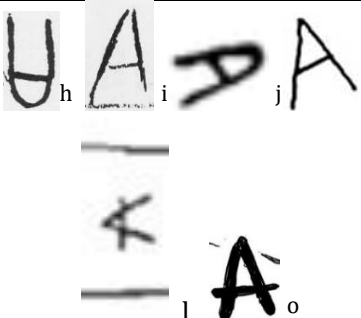
That is because what we derive plainly from analyzing the script is that it represents a clear, intermediary stage between the earliest stage of Proto-Sinaitic script, widely agreed to be during the reign of Pharaoh Amenemhat III and the later stages represented by the range of Semitic inscriptions of Late-Bronze Age Canaan.

That is a critical point to demonstrate.




The following graph delivers this picture in full detail, enabling us to see the clear development of 11 Hebrew letters across no fewer than 15 inscriptions, in three columns: In the left column, we have glyphs from the inscriptions dated to the early, Amenemhat III period: the Wadi el-Hol inscriptions and Gerster No. 1 (see Section V below). In the middle column, glyphs from the inscriptions under scrutiny: Sinai 353, 349, 357, 361. In the right column, we bring several examples of Proto-Canaanite and early Paleo-Hebrew writing from the Levant.

Analysed thus, we can clearly see that our “Exodus Inscriptions” appear to be at an *intermediary* stage of development between the two: Their letter-glyphs are slightly more highly evolved than those at the earliest stage, and seem to be en route to achieving the forms of the same letters in the Late-Bronze and early Iron Ages inscriptions. That period generally corresponds to the biblical era of the Judges, a few centuries after the Exodus from Egypt would most likely have taken place.


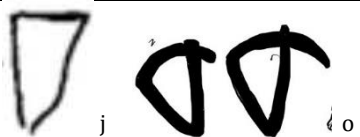
The Stage of Development to which Sinai 353, 349, 357 & 361 Belong


Letter Name	EARLY STAGE Wadi el-Hol, 12 th Dynasty	MIDDLE STAGE Sinai 353, 349, 357, 361	LATER STAGE Proto-Canaanite Inscriptions the Levant
𐤀-aleph ox head			

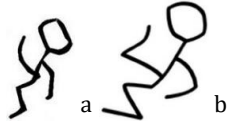
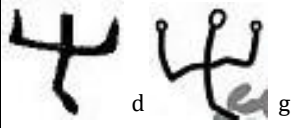
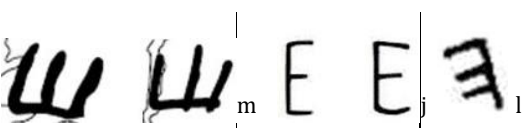
𐤀-aleph the bull, detailed at first, becomes ever more abstract. By its middle stage, it seems that some scribes still included the pupil as a dot, but the large pupil, mouth, and long, curved horns are lost. It is on its way to the late form found in early Proto-Canaanite/Paleo-Hebrew.

𐤁-gimmel throw-stick			
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Like the letter 𐤓-tau (below), it seems that 𐤁-gimme the throwstick began as a double-lined glyph, becoming a single line by the middle stage. It evolves into rounded forms by the late stage. (The Wadi el-Hol glyph could well be 𐤓-peh, the wall corner, a very similar glyph, leaving us without an early-stage 𐤁-gimme.)



𐤃-dag (daled) fish			
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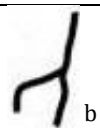

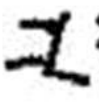

Although the Hebrew “D” sound came to be called *daled*, which means and represents a door, it is widely agreed that the original Proto-Sinaitic symbol was a fish, called *dag* in Hebrew. It begins as a more complex image of a fish with two sets of fins. It resembles the hieroglyph for a type of fish called *Petrocephalus bane*  Gardiner sign no. K5) ^p It becomes more simple over time, losing one set of fins by the middle period, and all fins by the Proto-Canaanite/Paleo-Hebrew stage.

𐤄-heh dancing/ rejoicing man			
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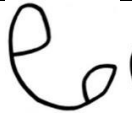






𐤄-heh the dancing man becomes ever more abstract. By its middle stage, the legs merge into one, both arms turn upwards, and together with the lost head, we see three upraised lines. By the latter stage, leg and torso are gone and scribes begin to write it in the upright E form.



n-<i>het</i> thread	 a	 d  e	 h  j  l	
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n-*het*, entwined thread (*hwt* in Hebrew), reduces in number of parts and complexity. Beginning with three *circular* enclosures, it reduces by the middle stage down to two. By the third stage – that of Proto-Canaanite/early Paleo-Hebrew – the circular spaces become squared, with straight side strokes that become pronounced, and elongated. This shift to a divided *rectangle* surely represents a merging with the Egyptian hieroglyph for wick  (“h”, Gardiner no. V28) with that for enclosure  (“h”, Gardiner sign no. 06)^p by the same name (*hwt*, but in Egyptian).

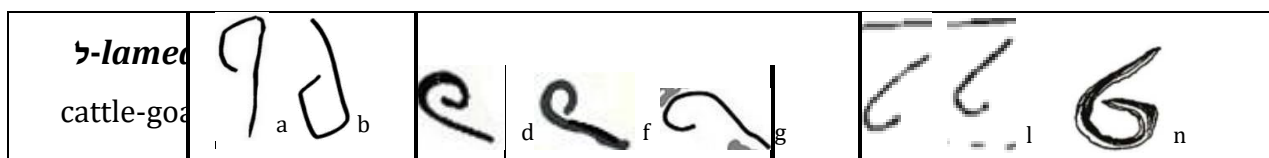
Letter name	EARLY Wadi el-Hol, 12 th Dynasty	MIDDLE Sinai 353, 349, 357, 361	LATE Proto-Canaanite Inscriptions from the Levant
y-yod arm with hand	 b	 d	 l  o

At its earliest, y-yod the arm begins as a single stroke (the stalk) opening into two: an open hand with thumb. By late stage it becomes the three-pronged glyph with a back-turned base. Our single example of the middle stage (from Sinai 353) may be atypical, extending another digit. However, while it is still a pictorial arm whose stalk points straight in the opposite direction from the digits, it is closer to the upright position of the later forms, and its open digits, too, are in the upper half.

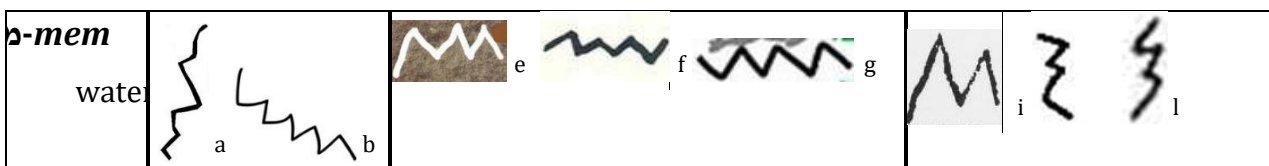
k-kaph hand-palm	 b  c	 e  f	 j  n  o
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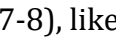
The early k-kaph of the Wadi el-Hol inscriptions seems to a distinct way of representing an upturned palm with raised fingers and opposing thumb,  q, closer to the Egyptian hieroglyph “hand with palm up”:  (Gardiner sign no. D47)^p. It may intend to portray a thumb opposing pinky finger curled inwards.

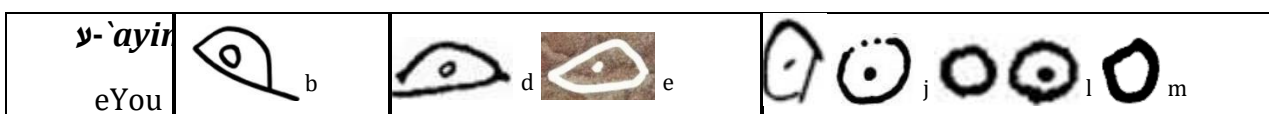
By its middle stage it has become the forward-facing, multi-digit hand. This form remains and evolves, simplifying by late stage into a three stroke image, en route to becoming K.





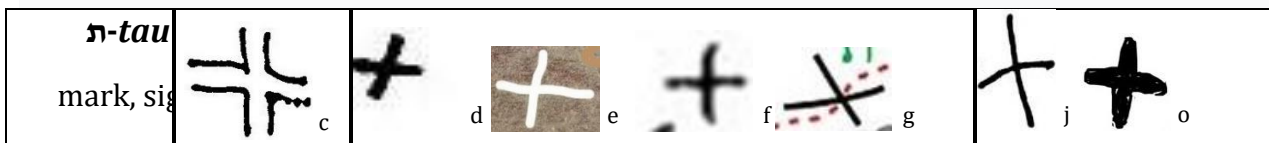
By the middle stage, the cattle-goad becomes a more circular swirl. By Proto-Canaanite/early Paleo-Hebrew, it becomes standard to draw it with the straight handle-end positioned upwards.




Here the number of pointy ripples over time become fewer over time. The Wadi-el-Hol glyphs have numerous angle points (7-8), like the hieroglyph  (Gardiner sign N35 P); most of the middle-stage inscriptions have no more than 5-6. By late stage it is down to 3-4 points, closer to letter M.



-ayin begins as a well-drawn eYou with large pupil and a prominent, extended lash or eYcner mark, as seen in the hieroglyphs  and  (Gardiner signs D7 and D10 respectively). By the middle stage, the pupil is reduced in size (and may be absent in some cases), and the extension of the eYou is all but gone. By the later Proto-Canaanite stage, it has been simplified to a simple circle with a dot within, or none at all.



Like *gimmel* above, it is clear, even from an image of the stone, that *tau* in Gerster No. 1 was originally *double-lined*. Although there is no noticeable evolution between the middle and later periods, the letter seems to have undergone a simple evolution to a single-lined cross early on. Although it was now adopted to signify a different sound for the Hebrew tongue, the double-lined cross may have been taken from the hieroglyph  (Gardiner sign Z11P).

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B. Mining and Literacy at Serabit el-Khadim in Dynasty XIII

Claiming that any particular inscription belongs to a particular point in time, let alone proposing a biblical context, requires good evidence.

Thus far we have only demonstrated how the readings of the inscriptions seem to strongly suggest an Exodus context, and their *relative* age – which could, in theory, fit an Exodus in several chronological schemes, for those who affirm that the Exodus tradition is historical.

For our case for an Exodus context (“Exodus Inscriptions”) to be considered by those unconvinced of a historical Exodus, we should be able to provide a strong case for linking the inscriptions to the timeframe where the strongest evidence for the Israelite Sojourn, Slavery, and Exodus is to be found: the 13th Dynasty. (We will then present several points of compelling, direct evidence for an Exodus at this time in Section III-C.)

The first stage is establishing that the inscriptions would have even been relevant for that time. How active were the mines of Serabit el-Khadim with Semite slave labor during that Dynasty? How literate were the Semites of that time? Would the common person have been able to read the inscriptions analysed above?

1. Hebrews Miners Active at Serabit el-Khadim in Dynasty XIII

We begin with the initial, foundational point that indeed, during the 13th Dynasty, *Serabit el-Khadim was busy with mining by Semitic/Hebrew slaves.*

In her research on ceramic remains retrieved during the French-Swiss Joint Expedition to Serabit el-Khadim in the 1990s (Universities of Charles de Gaulle Lille III and Geneva), Janine Bourriau concluded: not only were the ceramics produced locally, most likely by professional potters from the Memphite/Fayoum region, *they dated back the XIIth and early XIIIth Dynasty.* At that time, mining activity was increasing.¹ and the site was enlarged and embellished.² This view is supported by Valbelle & Bonnet in their work *Le sanctuaire d'Hathor, maitresse de la turquoise a Serabit el-Khadim au MoYoun Empire*, where they published their Serabit findings.³



A fragment of a pot-stand in Nile B (By: P. Degryse). Middle - A XII-XIII dynasty pot and pot-stand from a cemetery at Lisht North in the Memphite region (Catalogue Metropolitan Museum of Art nr. 15.3.1592). Right - Limestone model of a pot and potstand found in the Tomb of Nakht at Lisht North (Catalogue Metropolitan Museum of Art nr. 15.3.98) ⁴

2. Hebrew Slaves of the Time of Dynasty XIII Could Read and Write

Another point important to our thesis, lest we wonder if the average Hebrew could even read these inscriptions, is that there was a strong literacy rate among Semites/Hebrews of our target timeframe. Besides what is suggested by the very Wadi el-Hol inscriptions themselves, beyond the pale of this paper, Dr. Kerry Muhlestein cites considerable evidence for this in the 13th Dynasty:⁵

As suggested by the tutor mentioned in the Brooklyn Papyrus, some Egyptian elite may even have been educated by Semitic slaves. Furthermore, as some Asiatics were working in the temple, they undoubtedly had regular contact with literate priests. Hence, there was more than ample opportunity for a cultural influence on an intellectual level to have taken place. This idea is strengthened when we realize that among the Asiatics, “certain strong personalities had already ascended to the office of kingship by early Dynasty 13.”^{117[6]} This idea is augmented when it is realized that Hetepibra, a king of the early 13th dynasty, carried the epithet ‘Son of the Asiatic.’^{118[7]}

(For more on the Brooklyn Papyrus and its significance in locating the Israelite Period, see Section III-C below.)

The greatest example of this, and one that suggests that the early Israelites could indeed have produced and benefited from literature such as that recorded in the Pentateuch, is a story that may be the highest literary achievement of the Middle Kingdom period: “The Shipwrecked Sailor”. Muhlestein and others believe it bears Levantine influence – one factor that could explain many of its odd features, which he describes. For example:

Robert Alter writes of word-for-word narrative repetition in Semitic sources that ‘every instruction, every prediction, every reported action had to be repeated word for word in an inexorable literalism as it was obeyed, fulfilled, or reported to another party.’^{130[8]} This repetition almost always took place in a command/ fulfillment, prophecy/fulfillment, or command/report formula. These formats consisted of a prophecy of an event, or a command to execute an event, and then the narrative telling of the fulfillment of the command or prophecy couched in very similar, largely identical language. Canaanite,^{131[9]} Mesopotamian^{132[10]} and Biblical^{133[11]} literature abound with examples of this device (see below). As common as this literary device was with her Near Eastern neighbors, Egyptian literature from this era is largely bereft of the technique.



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