A1128-ME-LANG-Moabite-Limestone-c 850 BCE

 

Fig. 1. Moabite inscription fragment, c 850 BCE

**Case no.: 2**

**Accession Number: A1128**

**Formal Label:** Moabite writing fragment, c 850 BCE

**Display Description:** Moabite writing fragment, ca 850 BCE

**Moabite** culture (fl. c 850 BCE, Genesis 19:30–38), was the same W Semitic ethnicity as the Israelites (now west-central Jordanknown linguistically from the inscription on the Moabite Stone. Moab, a son of Lot, was a nephew of Abraham and their god-protector was [Chemosh](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chemosh), a counterpart to Yahweh of the Israelites. Israelite King [Saul](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saul-king-of-Israel) of Israel c 1050 BCE fought the Moabites (1 Samuel 14:47), but he granted asylum to a young rebel the future king [David](https://www.britannica.com/biography/David) (1 Samuel 22:3–4). David fought the Moabites (2 Samuel 8:2), but David’s great-grandmother, Ruth, was a Moabite (Ruth 4:17–22), and his son [Solomon](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Solomon), as a sign of his authority, obtained Moabite princesses for his harem (1 Kings 11:1–8) and erected near Jerusalem a shrine dedicated to Chemosh.

**LC Classification: PJ4149.I5**

**Date or Time Horizon:** Iron Age II, 850 BCE

**Geographical Area:** **between Wadi Mujib and Wadi Hasa.**

**Map, GPS coordinates: 31.29778 35.88937; 31º17'52" N 35º53'21.73" E**

 

Fig. 2. Map of area of Bani Hamidah clan in 1895 and find spot. From http://latitude.to/lat/31.29778/lng/35.88937

**Cultural Affiliation:** Moabite

**Medium:** limestone

**Dimensions:** H 62.32 mm/ 3.95 in; W 30.13 mm/ 2.68 in

**Weight: 168.9 gm/ 5.96 oz**

**Condition: original**

**Provenance:** Bani Hamidah Bedouin clan

**Discussion:**

This fragment contains an Iron Age II Moabite inscription dating to ca 850 BCE. Moabite is an extinct Canaanite language, written in the Phoenician alphabet and spoken in Moab (central-western Jordan) ca 1000-500 BCE. It was found ca. 1900 CE in the region between Wadi Mujib and Wadi Hasa, which the Bani Hamida clan controlled before the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan. Frederick Jones Bliss an Amherst College graduate (1880), who had trained under Flinders Petrie in Egypt and then had worked as an archaeologist at the site of Tell el-Hesi in 1891-1892, was in the area when he camped at Mount Zion in March 1895 and visited "the sheikhs of the Hamideh” e of the Dead Sea and noted that they “were very civil and anxious to show us all the *torn stones,* which is their phrase covering inscriptions and ornamentation" (Palestine Exploration Fund 1895: 214). This specimen is one of the “torn stones” referred to and is primary evidence for the Moabite language.

This fragment depends for its transcription and translation on the only known extensive Moabite tex,t the Moabite stone or Mesha Stele (ca 850 BCE). The Mesha stele is the most extensive inscription ever recovered that refers to the kingdom of Israel (the "House of Omri"); the earliest certain extra-biblical reference to the Israelite god Yahweh; and the earliest mention of the "House of David" (i.e., the kingdom of Judah) (Lemaire 1994). King Mesha of Moab related how Chemosh, the Moab god, was angry with his people and had allowed them to be subjugated to Israel but relented and assisted in throwing off the yoke of Israel.

Although the stele was intact when discovered by Frederick Augustus Klein, an Anglican missionary, at the site of ancient Dibon (now Dhiban, Jordan), in August 1868, it was smashed by local villagers in 1869 during a dispute over its ownership. A papier-mâché impression had been obtained by a local Arab on behalf of Charles Simon Clermont-Ganneau, and fragments containing most of the inscription (613 letters out of about a thousand) were later recovered and pieced together. The reassembled stele is now in the Louvre Museum (Lemaire 1994).



Fig. 3. “Explorers’ camp” of F. J. Bliss and A. C. Dickie on the slopes of Mount Zion, Jerusalem, from a negative taken by Rev. A. E. Beckton. Published in Bliss and Dickie 1898: 352. From <http://www.flickr.com/photos/palestineexplorationfund/5226264921/>

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Hieroglyph** | **Proto-Sinaitic** | [**IPA**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IPA)**value** | **reconstructed name** | [**Phoenician**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenician_alphabet) | [**Paleo-Hebrew**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paleo-Hebrew_alphabet) | [**Aramaic**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aramaic_alphabet) | [**Hebrew**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_Hebrew) | [Archaic Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archaic_Greek_alphabets), [Modern Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_alphabet), [Etruscan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Italic_script#Etruscan_alphabet), and [Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_alphabet) |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | F1 | | | [Aleph](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Proto-Canaanite_-_aleph.png) | /ʔ/ | [ʾalp](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%CA%BEalp) "ox" | [Aleph](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Phoenician_aleph.svg) | [Aleph](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Early_Aramaic_character_-_Alaph.png) | [Aleph.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aleph.svg) | א | [Greek Alpha 03.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Greek_Alpha_03.svg) [Α](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alpha_(letter)) [𐌀 A](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A) |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | O1 | | | [Bet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Proto-Canaanite_-_bet.png) | /b/ | [bet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bet_(letter)) "house" | [Beth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Phoenician_beth.svg) | [Bet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Early_Aramaic_character_-_Beth.png) | [Beth.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Beth.svg) | ב | [Greek Beta 16.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Greek_Beta_16.svg) [Β](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beta_(letter)) [𐌁 B](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B) |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | A28 | | | [Heh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Proto-Canaanite_-_heh.png) | /h/ | *hll* "jubilation" > *he* "window" | [He](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Phoenician_he.svg) | [Heh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Early_Aramaic_character_-_heh.png) | [He0.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:He0.svg) | ה | [Greek Epsilon archaic.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Greek_Epsilon_archaic.svg) [Ε](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%CE%95) [𐌄 E](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E) |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | D46 | | | [Khof](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Proto-Canaanite_-_khof.png) | /k/ | [kaf](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaph) "palm of hand" | [Kaph](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Phoenician_kaph.svg) | [Khof](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Early_Aramaic_character_-_khof.png) | [Kaph.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kaph.svg) | כ, ך | [Greek Kappa normal.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Greek_Kappa_normal.svg) [Κ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kappa) [𐌊 K](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K) |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | N35 | | | [Mem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Proto-Canaanite_-_mem.png) | /m/ | [mayim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mayim) "water" | [Mem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Phoenician_mem.svg) | [Mem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Early_Aramaic_character_-_mem.png) | [Mem.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mem.svg) | מ, ם | [Greek Mu 04.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Greek_Mu_04.svg) [Μ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mu_(letter)) [𐌌 M](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M) |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | I10 | | | [Nun](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Proto-Canaanite_-_nun.png) | /n/ | *naḥš* "snake" > [*nun*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nun_(letter)) "fish" | [Nun](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Phoenician_nun.svg) | [Nun](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Early_Aramaic_character_-_nun.png) | [Nun.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Nun.svg) | נ, ן | [Greek Nu 01.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Greek_Nu_01.svg) [Ν](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%CE%9D) [𐌍 N](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N) |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | D4 | | | [Ayin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Proto-Canaanite_-_ayin.png) | /ʕ/ | [ʿen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%CA%BFen) "eye" | [Ayin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Phoenician_ayin.svg) | [Ayin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Early_Aramaic_character_-_ayin.png) | [Ayin.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ayin.svg) | ע | [Greek Omicron 04.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Greek_Omicron_04.svg) [Ο](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omicron) [𐌏 O](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/O) |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | D1 | | | |  | | --- | | D19 | | | | [Resh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Proto-Canaanite_-_resh.png) | /r/ | [roʾš](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resh) "head" | [Res](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Phoenician_res.svg) | [Resh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Early_Aramaic_character_-_resh.png) | [Resh.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Resh.svg) | ר | [Greek Rho pointed.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Greek_Rho_pointed.svg) [Greek Rho 03.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Greek_Rho_03.svg) [Ρ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rho_(letter)) [𐌓 R](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R) |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | Aa32 | | | [Shin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Proto-Canaanite_-_shin.png) | /ʃ/ | *šimš* "[sun](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apep)" > *šin* "tooth" | [Sin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Phoenician_sin.svg) | [Shin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Early_Aramaic_character_-_shin.png) | [Shin.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shin.svg) | ש | [Greek Sigma normal.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Greek_Sigma_normal.svg) [Greek Sigma 18.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Greek_Sigma_18.svg) [Σ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigma) [𐌔 S](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S) |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | Z9 | | | [Tof](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Proto-Canaanite_-_tof.png) | /t/ | *tāw* "mark" | [Taw](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Phoenician_taw.svg) | [Tof](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Early_Aramaic_character_-_tof.png) | [Taw.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Taw.svg) | ת | [Greek Tau 02.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Greek_Tau_02.svg) [Τ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%CE%A4) [𐌕 T](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T) |

Fig. Collation of ancient scripts from