



The Caller

A Weekly Newsletter of the Elizabethtown church of Christ
Vol. XXXXV June 2, 2019 No. 21

Confidence Corner

John F. Board

The Hebrew Bible is often challenged as to its credibility. Some of the challenges are based upon faulty assumptions that the Hebrews did not have a writing system developed until the seventh century BC. But epigraphic (the study of

inscriptions or epigraphs as writing) evidence from excavations as well as conclusions drawn from studies of contemporary culture would indicate that the Hebrews had an intricate writing system in place well before the time of Moses. Writings on items that exist because of their durability (pottery, stone walls) indicate the production of much larger texts that would have been written on *perishable* papyrus or even leather.

Truly when one studies the Hebrew Bible as a piece of literature, it is unrivaled as a collection of books from any other single culture in ancient Near Eastern studies. Only the Hebrews are known in the ANE (ancient Near East) for recording a continuous historical narrative with a unified account of the nations beginning. The lengthy compilations of the prophetic pronouncements and psalms (hymns of a nation) are unfounded in any other ANE cultures. In addition, though far advanced from other ANE cultures, the writings of the Hebrews would show similar forms and patterns which were prevalent in other ANE documents (this also attests to credibility).

That writing was found in the Hebrew culture is also attested to by the text of the Hebrew Bible as well. Various books are mentioned (some of which are included in the Hebrew Scriptures) like Moses' record of the defeat of the Amalekites (Ex. 17:14), the Book of the Law (Josh. 1:7-8), the Book of Jashar (2 Sam. 1:18), and the books of the chronicles of the kings of Israel and of Judah (1 Kgs. 14:19, 29). It is not surprising to find references to writing and books as the Hebrews had an inherited alphabet as well as an abundance of writing materials (papyrus rolls and leather).

Some try to use the lack of earlier copies to argue against the credibility of the Hebrew Bible. Interestingly enough, about the only thing that is not credible with any certainty from the lack of earlier manuscripts, are the various theories men have devised to discover sources and literary forms in the Hebrew Bible (i.e. Documentary Hypothesis, JEPD-without "docs" what is studied?).

The Hebrew Bible, though attacked for its lack of credibility, when studied closely, actually attests to its own credibility. What a wonderful document we have from God—the Bible as a whole. The Hebrew Bible is trustworthy for many things of importance to man—origin and purpose of man and the information man needs from his originator, God. May we study and be blessed.

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ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

John F. Board

Perhaps the earliest reference to the biblical king David is thought to be found in the tenth-century B.C. Egyptian inscription on the walls of the Temple of Amun in Karnak. Shoshenq/Sheshonq I (biblical Shishak) is thought to be the last

Egyptian ruler to follow the practice initiated by a 15th century Pharaoh Thutmose III of carving the names of the territories he conquered and claimed dominion over on the walls of the temple in Karnak.

Kenneth Kitchen argues that "Heights of David" is the most likely reading of one name in a hieroglyphic list carved on the exterior south wall of the temple in Karnak. One of the place names in toponyms (a word meaning "place names") 105 and 106 in Shishak's list is *h(y)dbt dwt*. According to most all who have examined the hieroglyphic list the first word *h(y)dbt* is to be read as "highland" or "heights." It is the second word that has been debated by those familiar with the reading of hieroglyphs.

Hershel Shanks provides the following analysis of the second word *dwt*: "The first letter is clear: d. At least in principle, the second letter, w, the equivalent of the Hebrew letter *waw*, can be read as a vowel, o, or as a consonant, v. Both uses are found in the Shishak list (and in Hebrew generally). The third letter is clearly a t. Thus the word could theoretically be read as *dot* or *davit*. Neither, however, makes any sense as far as we know."

So could the second word *dwt* be read as David? According to Kenneth Kitchen, he has found evidence that such is the case. Kitchen has found a sixth century Ethiopic inscription from South Arabia that is unmistakably a reference to King David of the Bible. In the Ethiopic ruler's victory inscription, he cites two psalms (19 and 65) and used David's name in connection with the psalms. In this inscription David is spelled exactly as in the Shishak list. In the same section (second section) that "heights of David" occurs, in the same row is found a reference to "the Terrain of Tilwan;" this seems to show that the list follows a similar pattern in referencing geographical areas. Though Kitchen does not claim certainty, he feels there is a "high degree of probability that the second word is to be read "David."

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Sunday's Sermons:

**A.M. — When God is in Control!
Exodus 6:1**

P.M. — Kirk Brothers to speak

Importance Given to Reading

In our *Confidence Corner* this week the focus was upon the credibility of the Hebrew Bible. God's revelation to man should be of utmost importance. The fact that we can know it is credible is a blessing to our lives. The true blessing though comes only if we give attention to God's revelation to us—the Bible.

The NT indicates a need to study God's Word. In 2 Timothy 2:15 the Christian is encouraged to give diligence (ASV...put forth every effort) to show ourselves approved unto God. Paul wrote to the Romans instructing them to allow their faith to grow through a study of God's Word. Romans 10:17 instructs the Christians "So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." One could hardly argue to any degree of success that God does not expect us to read and practice His Word in our lives today. This is not surprising to those who have read the OT or Hebrew Scriptures as they are referred to as well. Consider the following from the OT.

When Moses was given the Law from God, he was not to keep it to himself. Rather we read that there was a public reading of the Law that took place while the people were still at Mt. Sinai. Study Exodus 24: 3, 4, and 7 as well as Exodus 34:32 to see the emphasis given to this early public reading of the Law.

In addition, after Israel had settled in the land, God had made provision for the reading of the Law. According to Deuteronomy 31:9-13, The Law was to be read publicly every seven years.

9 So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel. 10 And Moses commanded them, saying: "At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, 11 when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. 12 Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, 13 and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess."

Even in a time when God's Word was not readily available to man, a public reading provided all a reminder of God's message numerous times in their lives. Other passages such as Deuteronomy 27:1-8; Joshua 8:32-35; 2 Kings 23:2; 2 Chronicles 17:9; and Nehemiah 8 also show the emphasis placed upon the Word of God.

When times were tough in Israel (Judah) Jeremiah's prophecies were read to leaders and the people in the temple (Jeremiah 36:10, 13-15). During this time the book of the Law was read to Josiah (2 Kings. 22:10). Jeremiah's prophecies were also read to Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 36:21-24). This was all in addition to what the kings were instructed to do from the Law—have his own copy of the Law and read it to himself (Deuteronomy 17:18-19).

From more public reading of God's message in the OT, to the leader's need to study the Law, the importance God placed in the OT on the reading of His message is clear. For Christians today, the responsibility seems "amped" up to where individuals are now commanded to give attention to the reading of God's message. Each one of us needs to examine ourselves.

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