

ISRAEL MUSEUM

For the serious Bible student, a trip to Israel is incomplete without visiting the Israel Museum. This museum, which first opened in 1965, now has a 20-acre campus. While also containing several art galleries, there are three important parts of the museum that significantly aid in our understanding of the Scriptures.

First, the Jerusalem Model replicates the holy city during the Second Temple period. This detailed scale model (1:50) covers about one acre and replicates the architecture and topography of Jerusalem prior to its destruction in A.D. 70. Originally, this model was built at the Holyland Hotel in the 1960s. It was restored and transferred to the Israel Museum in 2006. (See the *Herod's Temple* section.)

Second, the Shrine of the Book houses some of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other items discovered from the Qumran area. These include the oldest biblical manuscripts known to man, as well as texts from the Essene community. (See the *Qumran* section.)

Third, the Bronfman Archaeology Wing is a treasure trove of artifacts from the Old and New Testament periods. Many of these finds have been incorporated into the sections relating to cities in Israel or to special topics. Selected remaining photos have been included in this section.



Ostrich Eggs. The term “ostrich” appears in the NIV at Job 39:13 and Lamentations 4:3. The NASB has the term in several other texts (Lev. 11:16; Deut. 14:15; Job 30:29; Is. 13:21; 34:13; 43:20; Jer. 50:39; Mic. 1:8). The NIV typically uses the term “owl” in those passages.



A Calf and Its Shrine. The shrine is made from pottery, and the calf is from bronze. The calf was a symbol of the storm god. These objects were found in a temple at Ashkelon and date from the sixteenth century B.C.



Bronze and Gold Serpents. In Numbers 21:8-9, God instructed Moses to make a bronze snake on a pole so that the people, who had been bitten by poisonous serpents, would look upon it and be made whole. Later in Israel's history, the bronze serpent (known as "Nehushtan") had become an idol. It was ultimately destroyed (2 Kings 18:4).



Bronze Mirrors. Bronze mirrors, such as these dating from the fourteenth or thirteenth century B.C., were commonly used in the ancient world. In Exodus 38:8, bronze mirrors were donated by the Israelite women and used as construction material for the bronze basin (used for priestly washing in front of the tabernacle). In 1 Corinthians 13:12, Paul said that “we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror.” The polished mirrors did not reflect clear images like our modern mirrors. The apostle was contrasting the partial knowledge of God that Christians have now with the full knowledge of God that faithful believers will enjoy in heaven (where “we shall see face to face”).



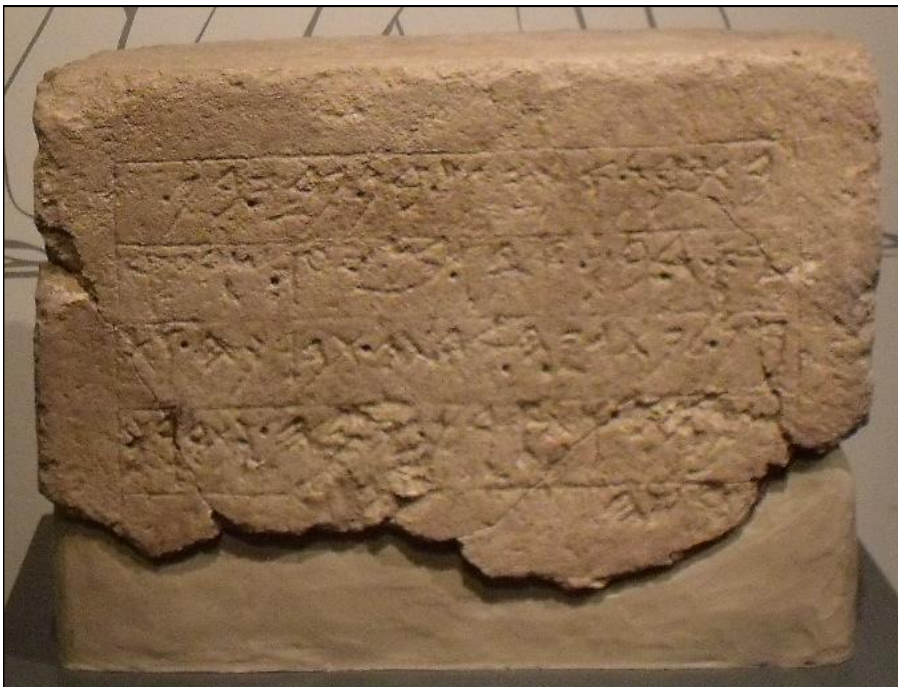
Ornamented Horn Flask. Something like this would have been used by Samuel to anoint David as king of Israel (1 Sam. 16:1, 13).



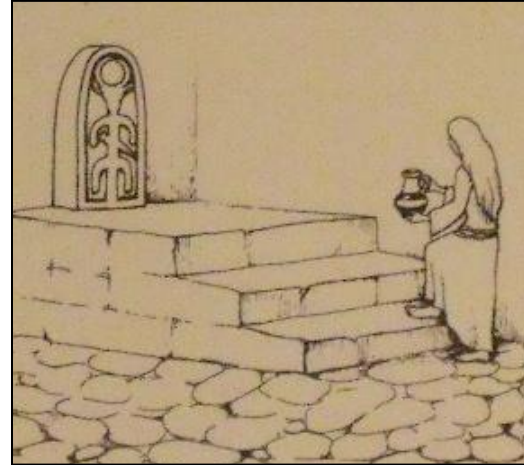
Ammonite Deity. The Israelites often worshiped the gods of surrounding nations, including the Ammonites (Judg. 10:6). The Ammonites' chief deity was Molech. Solomon worshiped Molech, as well as other gods, resulting in the division of the kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 11:5, 29-33).



Royal Moabite Inscription. This basalt stone, which dates from the eighth century B.C., records victories of the Moabites. Their king boasted of building projects and victory over the Ammonites: “I built [. . . and I took] many captives. And I built [the citadel of the royal-house. And I bui]lt Beth-harosh. And with the captives of the Ammonites [I built for the] reservoir a mighty gate. And the small cattle and the cattle [. . . I carried] there. And the Ammonites saw that they were weakened in every [. . . .]”

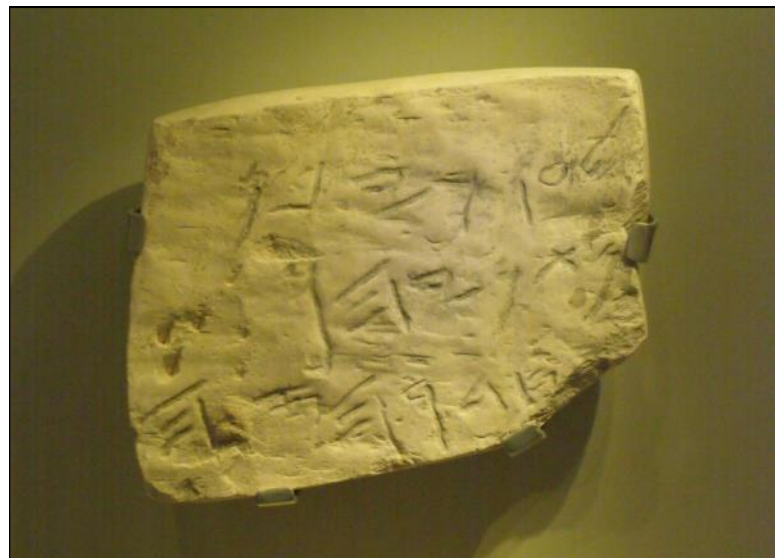


Philistine Dedicatory Inscription. This stone inscription was found in Ekron and has been dated to the seventh century B.C. It reveals that Achish, the ruler of Ekron, dedicated a temple to his patron goddess. The end of the inscription reads, “May she bless him, and protect him, and prolong his days, and bless his land.”



Aramean Cultic Stela. The carved stone slab was discovered at Bethsaida and dates to the ninth or eighth century B.C. The bull-headed figure wearing a sword may have symbolized Aram's chief god Hadad or the moon god.

Limestone Burial Inscription. This inscription was found at Khirbet el-Qom and dates to the eighth century B.C. It reads: "Uriyahu the prince wrote it: Blessed be Uriyahu by Yahweh and his Asherah, for from his enemies, he [Yahweh] has saved him." This illustrates the syncretism practiced in Israel, which is warned against in Deuteronomy 16:21: "Do not set up any wooden Asherah pole beside the altar you build to the LORD your God."





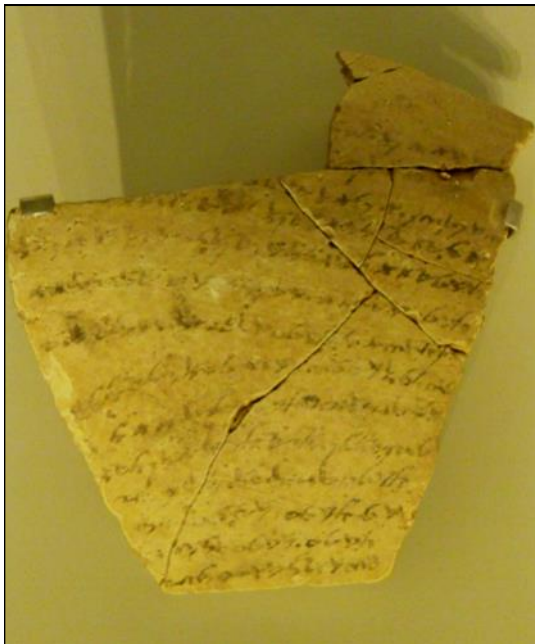
Prismoïd Cylinder of Sargon. This clay cylinder is from Khorsabad, Iraq, and dates to the eighth century B.C. Such cylinders were often buried in the foundations of walls and public buildings. They recorded the military victories of the king, as well as his construction of cities and palaces. According to Assyrian records (*ANET*, 284), Sargon II was responsible for the destruction of Samaria in 722 B.C. The siege was apparently begun by Shalmaneser V (2 Kings 17:3-6) and then finished by Sargon II.



Barrel Cylinder of Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon, reigned 605-562 B.C. He was responsible for establishing the Neo-Babylonian Empire as well as taking Judah into exile. The Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C.



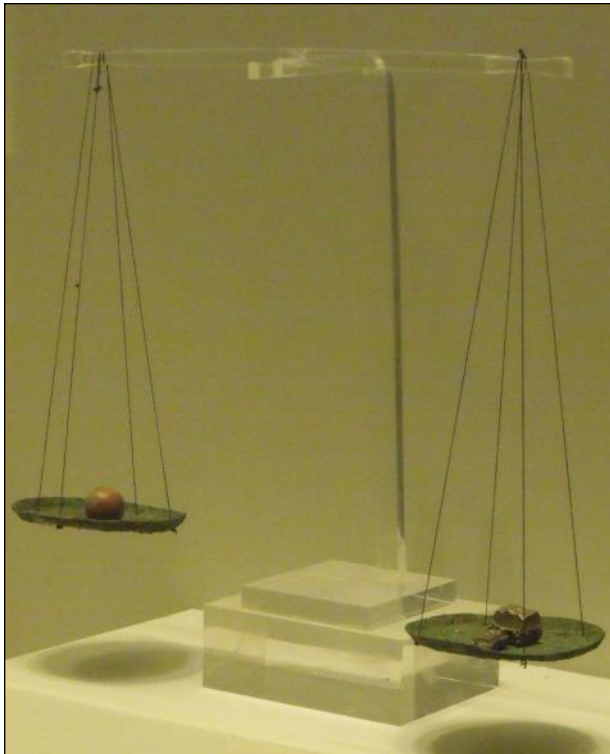
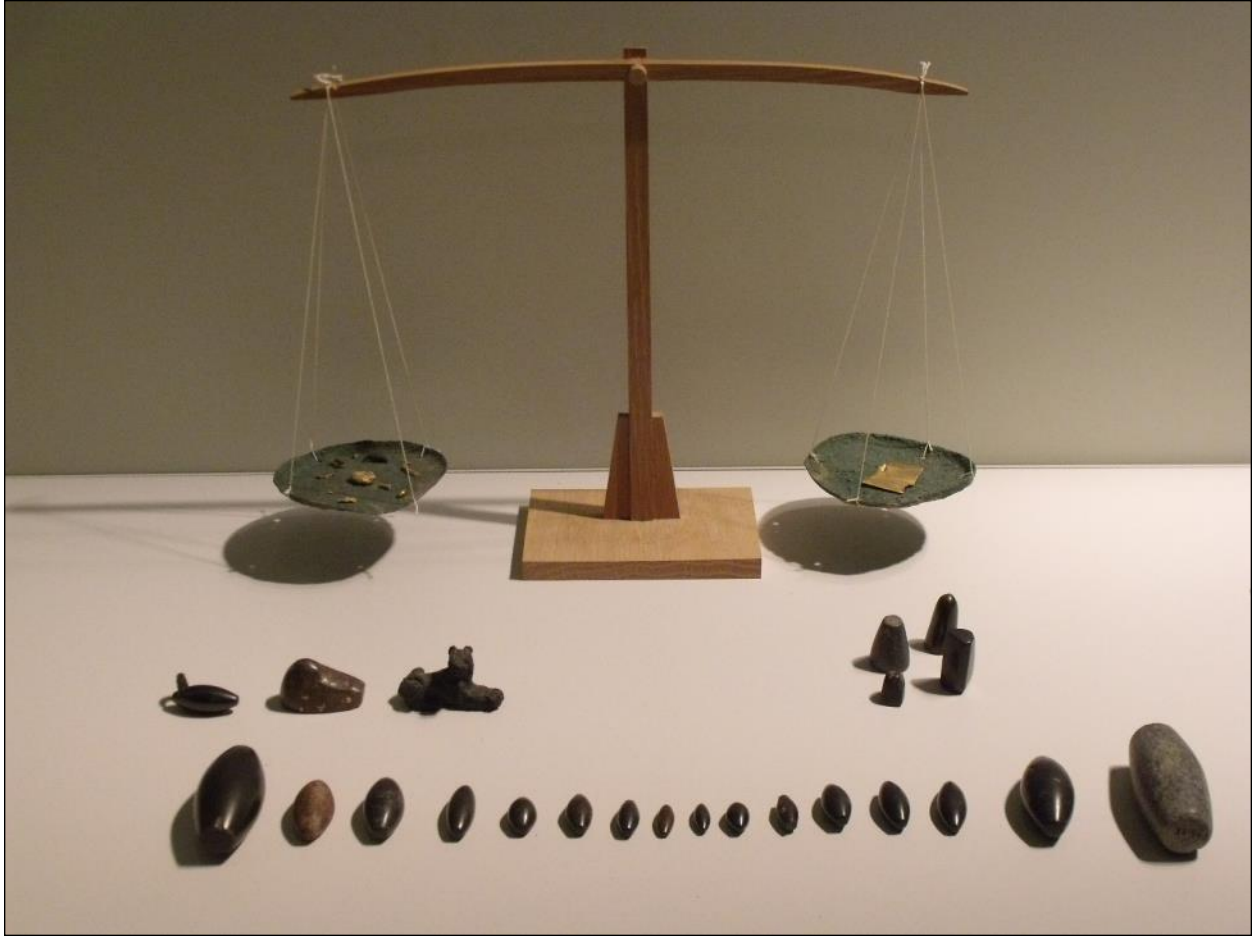
Hebrew Inscription on the Wall of a Burial Cave. This limestone inscription from the Judean hills dates from the sixth century B.C. While difficult to make out because of the rough surface, scholars have translated the Hebrew writing in these words: “Yahweh [is] the God of the whole earth; the mountains of Judah belong to him, to the God of Jerusalem.”



The Mezar Hashavyahu Inscription (A Reaper’s Plea). This writing, which is ink on pottery, dates from the seventh or sixth century B.C. It is the complaint of a harvester who had been unfairly treated:

“May the official, my lord, hear the plea of his servant. Your servant is working in the harvest; your servant was at Hasar-Asam (when the following incident occurred). Your servant did his reaping, finished, and stored (the grain) a few days ago before stopping (work). When your servant had finished (his) reaping and had stored it a few days ago. Hoshayahu ben Shabay came and took your servant’s garment. When I had finished my reaping, at that time, a few days ago, he took your servant’s garment. All my companions will vouch for me, all who were reaping with me in the heat of the sun; my companions will vouch for me (that) truly I am guiltless of any in-[fraction]. [So please return] my garment. If the official does not consider it an obligation to return [your servant’s garment, then have] pity upon him [and return] your servant’s [garment] from that motivation. You must not remain silent [when your servant is without his garment].”

Exodus 22:16 says, “If you take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, return it to him by sunset.” One’s “cloak” or “[outer] garment” was also used for a blanket at night.



Balance Scales. The trays, weights, and silver are original. The practice of using differing weights for the same value to cheat customers was prevalent in the ancient Near East. God often admonished his people to “use honest scales and honest weights” (Lev. 19:36). Proverbs 16:11 says, “Honest scales and balances are from the LORD, all the weights in the bag are of his making.”



Official Weights from Judah. These limestone weights, dating between the eighth and sixth centuries B.C., include the following: (starting with the lower right) 2 gerah, 3 gerah, 4 gerah, 6 gerah, 8 gerah, and 10 gerah; (starting with the lower left) 1 shekel, 2 shekel, 4 shekel, 8 shekel, 40 shekel, and 400 shekel.



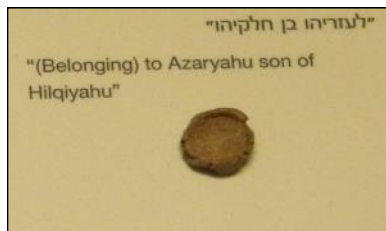
Official Weights from Judah. These limestone weights, dating from the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., include the *beqa*, *pim*, and *netseph*. The Hebrew word *pim* appears in 1 Samuel 13:21, where the NIV translates it as “two thirds of a shekel.” This was the price (likely in silver) that the Philistines—who controlled the blacksmith trade—charged the Israelites to sharpen their farming implements. (These weights are actually smaller than the 1 shekel weight in the lower left of the photo above.)



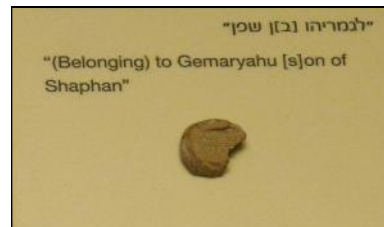
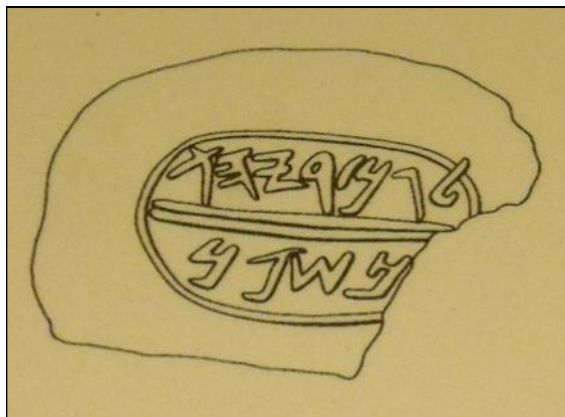
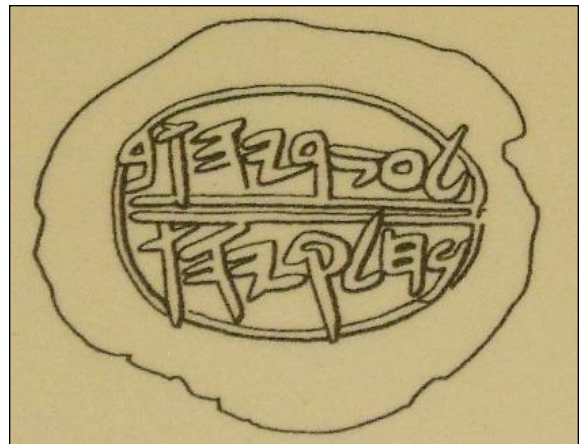
Royal Seals (Above) and Bullae (Below). After writing a letter, the paper would be folded and tied with a string. A lump of clay was placed on the string and then stamped with a seal. If the clay seal was broken upon delivery, the recipient would think that the contents of the letter had been altered. The stamped lump of clay was called a *bullā* (plural *bullae*).



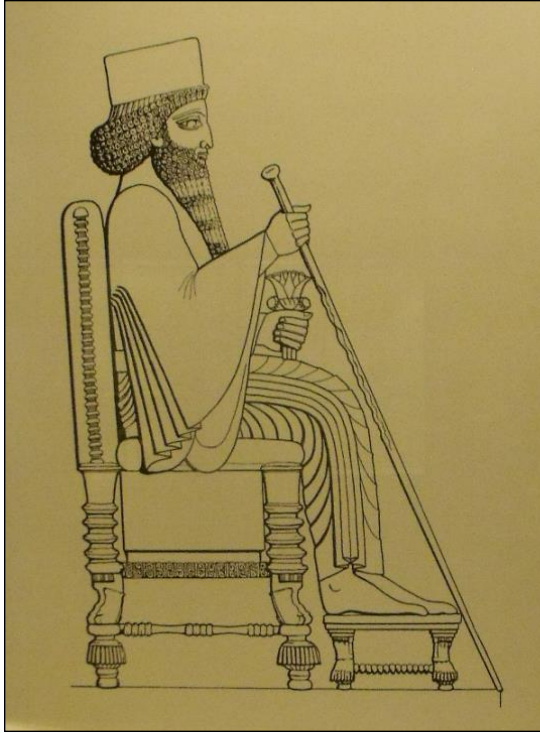
Hezekiah Seal Impression. This impression, from the eighth century B.C., reads, “(Belonging) to Hezekiah (son of) Ahaz king of Judah.” Many scholars believe that Hezekiah was coregent with his father Ahaz (729-715 B.C.) and then reigned for 29 years (715-686 B.C.) (2 Kings 18:1-2).



Azariah Seal Impression. Azariah was the son of Hilkiah, the high priest who had found the lost Book of the Law in the temple during Josiah's administration (2 Kings 22:8; 1 Chron. 6:13; 9:11). Ezra the priest descended from these men (Ezra 7:1).

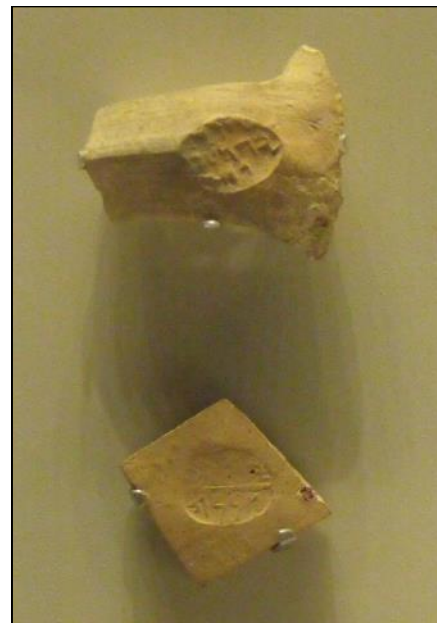


Gemariah Seal Impression. Gemariah was the son of Shaphan the secretary (2 Kings 22:8; Jer. 36:10). From Gemariah's room, Baruch read to the people gathered at the temple the words of the scroll that Jeremiah had dictated.



Legs from a Persian Throne. The Medo-Persian Empire (539-332 B.C.) began with overtaking Babylon and ended with the conquest of Alexander the Great. The Persian king Cyrus allowed exiled Jews to return to Judah in 538 B.C. and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Kings in the ancient Near East, including those of Israel, would often sit on a throne with their feet resting on a footstool (2 Chron. 9:18). The Lord described heaven as his throne and earth as his footstool (Is. 66:1; see Acts 7:49). The imagery is also applied to the Lord's Christ: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet" (Ps. 110:1; see Lk. 20:42-43; Acts 2:34-35; Heb. 1:13; 10:13). Some ancient footstools had the images of conquered enemies carved into their tops; kings literally put their feet on top of their enemies' images.

Stamp Impressions of Yehud. These Aramaic impressions, from Ramat Rahel and Jerusalem, date to the fifth or fourth century B.C. They are official stamps from the province of *Yehud* (Judah) of the Persian Empire. (In addition to the name *Yehud*, some impressions contain the name of the governor or another official.) The impressions were made on jar handles to guarantee the standard quantity. The jars would have held wine or oil.

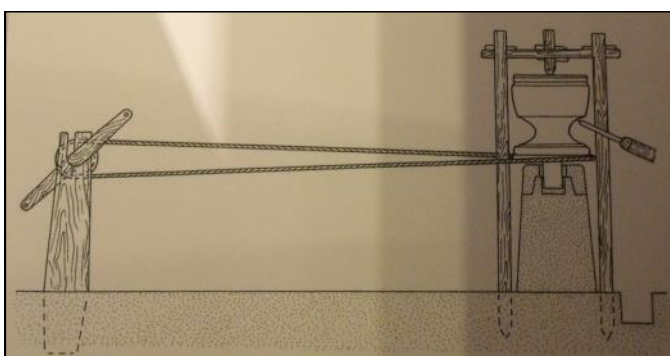




Samaritan Mezuzah. This mezuzah comes from Kefar Bilu near Ekron and dates to the sixth or seventh century A.D. The stone features excerpts from the Ten Commandments: “In the beginning God created; I the Lord am your God; You shall have no other gods; You shall not make for yourself [an idol]; You shall not take [the LORD’s name] in vain; You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear [false testimony]; You shall not covet.” Today, Jewish homes commonly have mezuzahs by the front door. These are decorative boxes with Scriptures inside of them (Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21). This practice reflects a literal interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:9 and 11:20, where God instructed the Israelites to “write [his commands] on the doorframes of [their] houses and on [their] gates.”

The Samaritan people resulted from the intermarriage of poor Israelites left in the land at the time of the Assyrian exile (722 B.C.) and the foreign peoples who were imported to Israel by the king of Assyria (2 Kings 17:24-41). The Samaritans troubled the Jews who returned from Babylonian captivity, hindering them from rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 4:1-5). Even though the Samaritans were initially polytheistic, they came to worship the Lord alone. Nevertheless, they did not get along with the Jews, having many conflicts in the Intertestamental period. This animosity serves as the background for Jesus’ interaction with the woman at the well (Jn. 4:9, 20).

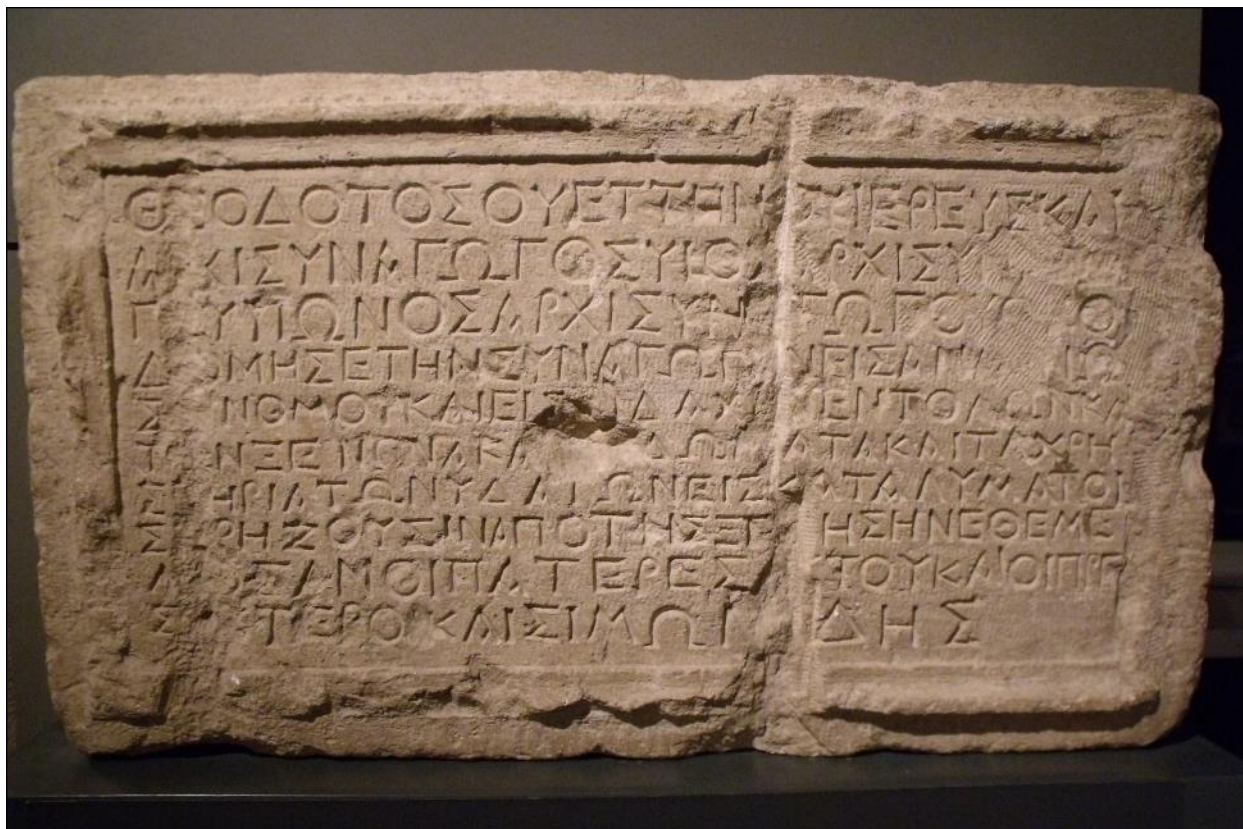
Cups. These containers, made of soft limestone, were found in Jerusalem and date to the first century A.D. They were made by hand with a chisel. Some think that they were used as measuring cups, whereas others believe that they were used for ritual hand-washing. Both would intersect with Jesus' teaching. In different contexts, he said, "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Mk. 4:24; Lk. 6:38). He also said that "eating with unwashed hands does not make [a man] unclean" (Mt. 15:20). By not washing their hands before eating, Jesus' disciples broke "the tradition of the elders" (Mt. 15:2). The Pharisees had a complex ritual for washing their hands (Mishnah *Yadaim* 2.3).



עבוד האבן בעזרת מחרטה אפשר לייצר כלים במהירות ובדיוקנות. את גוש האבן הגולמי תפסו בשני קצותיו במחרטה. בעת סיבובו בעזרת רצועת הנעה הכיש אליו האומן סכין או מפסלת, ואלה ברעו ממנו חומר בתנועה אחידה ומתמשכת, וכך עוצבה צורת הכלי.

The lathe allowed fast and accurate vessel production. Blocks of stone were set on the lathe and held in place at both ends. While the block was turned by means of a strap, the craftsman would hold a knife or chisel to it, using the tool to carve the stone in a smooth, continuous manner, giving the vessel its shape.





Theodotos' Synagogue Inscription. This building inscription illustrates the fact that synagogues existed in Jerusalem prior to the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. Although they existed, they had not yet become a substitute for the temple and its sacrificial rituals. Later Rabbinic traditions report that there were hundreds of synagogues in the holy city before the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70: One says that there were 394 (Talmud *Kethuboth* 105a), and another states there were 480 (Jerusalem Talmud *Megillah* 3.1). The Book of Acts notes in particular “the Synagogue of the Freedmen,” which was composed of “Jews from Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia.” It was members of this synagogue who seized Stephen—the first Christian martyr—and took him before the Sanhedrin (Acts 6:8-14). The limestone dedicatory inscription, written in Greek, points to another one: Theodotos’ Synagogue. The inscription was found in Jerusalem near the temple mount and dates to the first century B.C. It reads,

Theodotos, son of Vettenos, priest and head of the synagogue, son of the head of the synagogue, who was also the son of the head of the synagogue, built the synagogue for the reading of the Law and for the study of the precepts, as well as the hospice and the chambers and the bathing-establishment, for lodging those who need them, from abroad; it [the synagogue] was founded by his ancestors and the elders and Simonides.

These words point to the fact that the baton of spiritual leadership is often handed down from generation to generation; effective leaders often train their own offspring to be future leaders. Further, the language also demonstrates that synagogues were multi-functional. Not only were they used for prayer and study of the Scriptures, these buildings also served as hotels. The extra room for guests at synagogues would especially be needed for the many pilgrims coming to Jerusalem during the feast days—Passover and Unleavened Bread, Weeks (Pentecost), and Tabernacles. Synagogues were also used for courts and schools (Mt. 10:17; Talmud *Kethuboth* 105a).



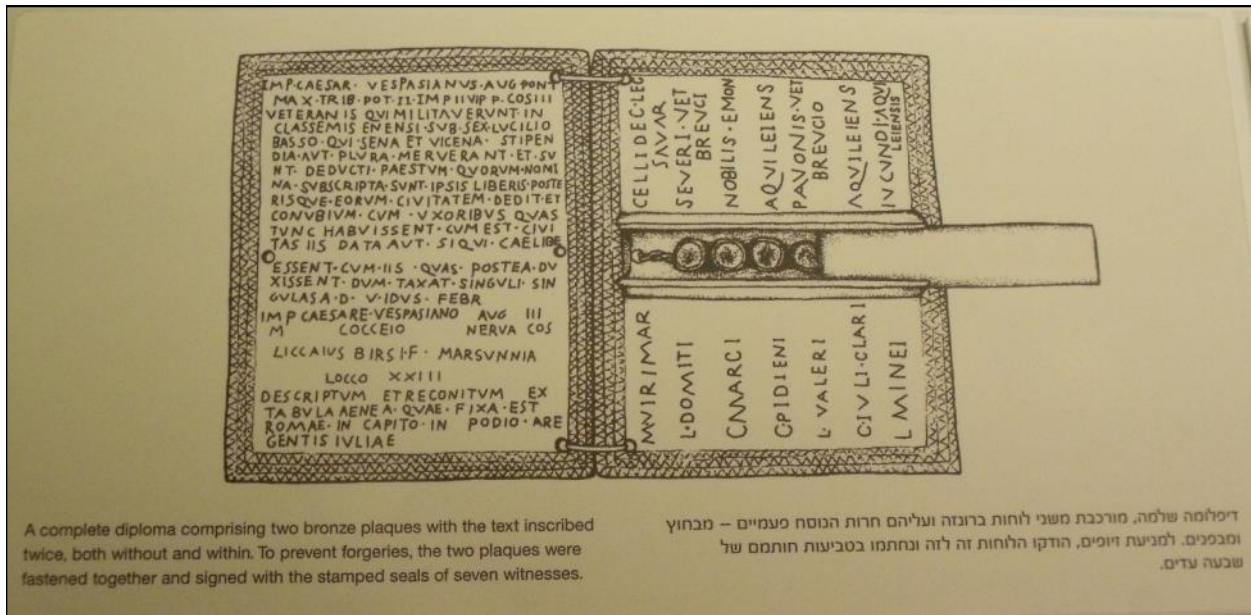
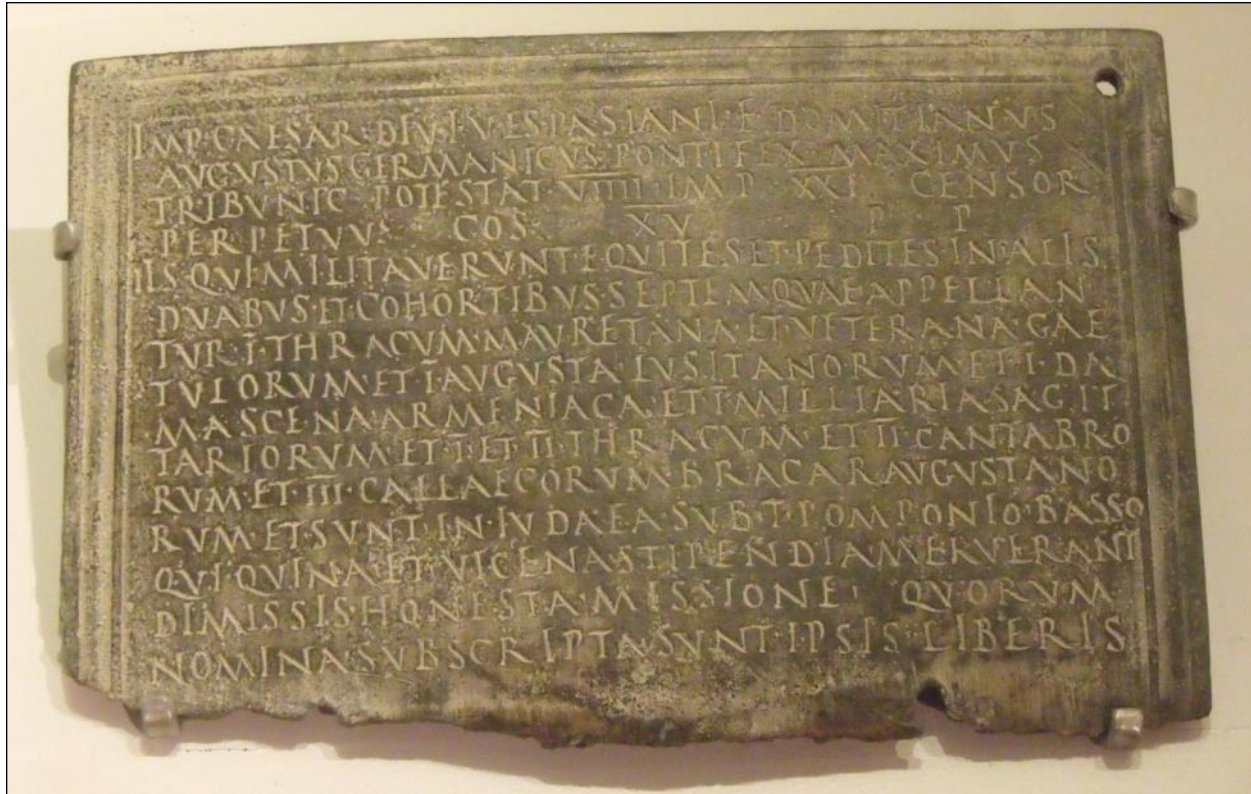
Hermes (Above). The Greek god Hermes—equivalent to the Roman Mercury—was considered the messenger of the gods. Note the wings on his feet to speed him along. At Lystra, the pagan people mistakenly worshiped Paul as “Hermes because he was the chief speaker” (Acts 14:12).

Artemis (Below). The statue below, missing the head, represents the goddess Artemis. She is equated with the Roman Diana. Artemis was the patron goddess of Ephesus. The city was the guardian of a huge temple dedicated to her (Acts 19:35), considered to be one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Paul’s preaching against idolatry at Ephesus resulted in a riot; a mob gathered in the theater and shouted for about two hours, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” (Acts 19:34).



Athena (Above). Associated with wisdom and war, Athena was the patron goddess of Athens. Considered to be a virgin, she inhabited the great temple on the acropolis of Athens, the Parthenon. (*Parthenos* is the Greek word for “virgin.”) Paul spoke in Athens to the Areopagus with only limited response (Acts 17:16-34).





Proof of Citizenship. Paul sometimes appealed to his citizenship to protect his life and advance the gospel. The apostle had been “born a citizen” (Acts 22:28). Perhaps his Jewish father had done something extraordinary for the Romans and was granted citizenship. Because Paul was a citizen, he had the right to “appeal to Caesar” (Acts 25:11).



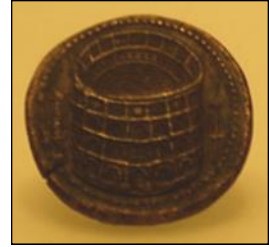
Stone Anchors. The story of Paul's shipwreck mentions anchors several times. The crew "weighed anchor," "lowered the sea anchor," "dropped four anchors," and "[cut] loose the anchors" (Acts 27:13, 17, 29, 40). Our hope in Jesus Christ is "an anchor for the soul" (Heb. 6:19).



Bronze Helmet and Scaled Armor. Such items are mentioned in the story of David and Goliath. King Saul offered the shepherd boy David his “coat of armor” and “bronze helmet” to protect him in the fight against Goliath (1 Sam. 17:38). However, these items were too heavy for him. Paul used the helmet in the metaphor “the helmet of salvation” (Eph. 6:17; see Is. 59:17).



Colosseum Coin. This bronze coin was minted at Rome in A.D. 80 or 81. It commemorates the dedication of the Colosseum, the largest and most extravagant amphitheater in Rome. While the obverse (heads) portrays the Colosseum, which held the notorious gladiatorial contests, the reverse (tails) portrays the emperor Titus. The building was funded by the spoils of war that he seized from Jerusalem in A.D. 70.



Seven Seal Impressions (Bullae). These seven clay impressions, dating from the fourth century B.C., sealed one Aramaic papyrus document. The image of “a scroll . . . sealed with seven seals” is used in Revelation 5:1. Only “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” was worthy to open this scroll (Rev. 5:5).



Door Keys to Judean Homes. During the Second Jewish Revolt (A.D. 132-135), many Jews took their prized possessions and hid in caves, trying to escape from the Romans. They even took their door keys with them, in hopes of returning later to their homes. A key was a symbol of authority. In his revelation to John, Jesus said, “I hold the key to death and Hades” (Rev. 1:18). Christ was saying that he possesses power even over death. This authority is evident because of his own resurrection from the dead.



Coin of Bar Kochba. During the Second Jewish Revolt (A.D. 132-135), thousands of coins were issued by Simon Bar Kochba. Most of these coins were struck over Roman coins in defiance. Sometimes the coins bear the title “Prince of Israel,” a reference to Bar Kochba. Other times they have the phrases “for the freedom of Jerusalem” or “for the redemption of Jerusalem,” as well as the

year of the revolt. The image on the obverse (heads) is the façade of the temple apparently with the ark of the covenant inside. There is a rising star above the temple, which ties in with the nickname Bar Kochba, meaning “Son of a Star.” This was a messianic designation given to Simon Bar Kosiba based on Numbers 24:17: “A star will come out of Jacob.” The image on the reverse (tails) is a lulav—that is, a palm frond associated with the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:40).



Christian Baptistry. The conversion of pagans and Jews to Christianity involved a teaching process that culminated in baptism (*baptisma* means “immersion”). This was the new birth of water and Spirit taught by Jesus (Jn. 3:5; see Tit. 3:5). In biblical baptism, the penitent believer dies to sin. He is buried and raised with Christ to live a new life (Rom. 6:1-4). In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded baptism (Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:16), and his followers practiced it throughout the book of Acts (2:38; 8:12-13; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16). Baptism was done to receive the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), for which Jesus shed his blood (Mt. 26:28).

The Lord’s Table. The early church—those who had come to believe in Jesus and had been baptized—met on the first day of each week (the Lord’s Day or Sunday) in order to partake of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20; 16:2). Jesus had instituted this memorial feast in the context of the Jewish Passover, prior to his arrest, trial, and crucifixion. He gave new meaning to the bread and wine, using them as symbols for his disciples to remember his body and blood (Mt. 26:26-28; 1 Cor. 11:23-26). After the first century A.D., it was frequently called the “Eucharist,” from the Greek word *eucharistia*, meaning “Thanksgiving.”



A Reliquary. In later centuries, a box would often be put under the Lord’s Table in a special niche in the floor. It contained “sacred” relics—often bones that supposedly came from some distinguished Christian. Miraculous powers were erroneously attributed to these objects.