

The Serpent Rock

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Numbers 21: 4-9

4) And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom, and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way

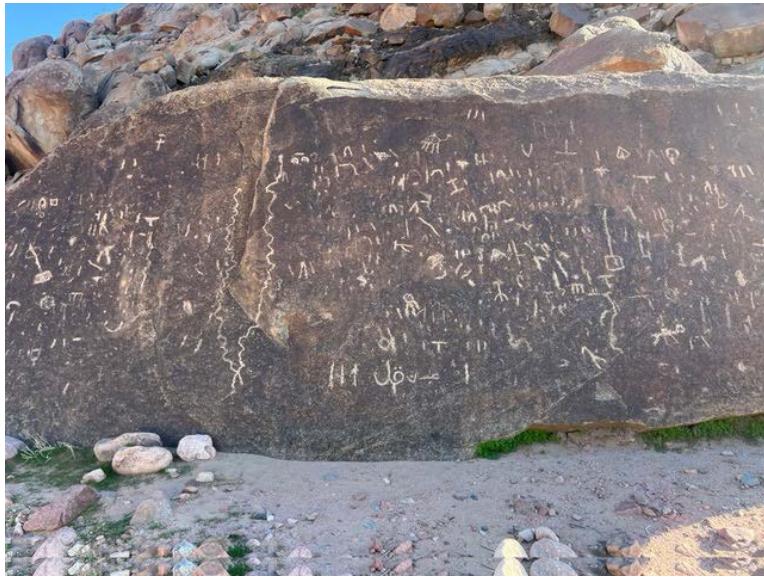
5) And the people spake against God and against Moses, “Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread neither is there any water and our souls loathe this light bread.”

6) And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people and much people of Israel died.

7) Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against thee, pray unto the LORD that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

8) And the LORD said unto Moses, “Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass that everyone that is bitten when he looks upon it shall live.”

9) And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived.



Located 28°45'25" N 35°15'47" E slightly northwest of what is known as the split rock of Horeb in Saudi Arabia lies a granite rock broken from the base of a rocky hill overlooking a massive desert plane. The rock is covered with ancient scripts of different ages up to and including modern Arabic. Measuring approximately 10 meters in width and 3 meters high the rock stands as an "ancient billboard" of inscription history.

The rock is stationed exactly where it should be and in compliance with the biblical narrative in verse 4 of Numbers 21. According to scripture, the Israelites traveled north of Mt. Hor (Mt. Horeb) by the way of the Red Sea. To avoid Edom (modern day southern Jordan) they journeyed east to go around Edom. After a short distance the complaints against God and Moses grew resulting in the events described in Numbers 21.

Upon initial examination of the rock, serpents dominate the petroglyphs along with variations of Sebian and Thamudic scripts. (later scripts) There appears to be no linear orientation of letters which is common for inscriptions in northern Arabia. Letters are placed randomly and in no particular order. Without linear orientation of letters, (letters in an organized line) Inscriptions are impossible to read.

In ancient hebraic thought, each letter of the Hebrew alphabet represents a complete thought. For example, the letter "bet" represents the sound of our modern day english "B" in addition to representing the thought of a house or tent. In Arabia, many inscriptions use just a single letter to form a complete thought just as modern language has adopted the use of emojis. This concept is blatantly clear in areas in northern Arabia. A perfect example is the use of the

Hebrew letter Kaph beside a set of footprints. The example below is found near the city of Tabuk.(Figure 1)

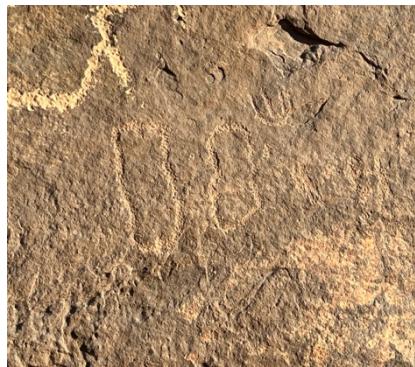


Figure 1

Without linear orientation of letters on the serpent rock, the observer is forced to use the concept of complete thought for each letter. There are however, some basic Hebraic principles that are still true. Right to left “reading/observation” still holds true even for ancient letters.

Utilizing the right to left concept of reading Hebrew, the team decided to start at the narrow right side of the stone making observations from right to left.

On the right side of the stone one observes 4 hash marks. These hash marks are not one letter but TWO letters. The first hash mark is faded but legible. This is the Hebrew letter nun which is interpreted as serpent. The second letter is THREE hash marks and represents the Hebrew letter Kaph which means to cover. The grouping of these two letters would therefore be interpreted as “the serpents that cover.” This letter sequence presents several times throughout the rock. (Figure 2)



Figure 2

Moving across the surface of the rock, the observer encounters a human form with arms outstretched and fingers separated in what appears to be an expression of pain. (Figure 3) This is not a worship pose of the figure but one of trauma unlike worship petroglyphs which usually display arms lifted in praise. Next to the figure is the Hebrew letter gimel. The meaning of gimel is foot or path.

Figure 3



At the center of the rock near the top is a small triangle shape. This triangle shape is common for the Hebrew letter dalet. The ancient dalet is shaped as a tent flap and is used to represent the concept of door. Inside the dalet is a small snake going through the tent flap. (Figure 4)

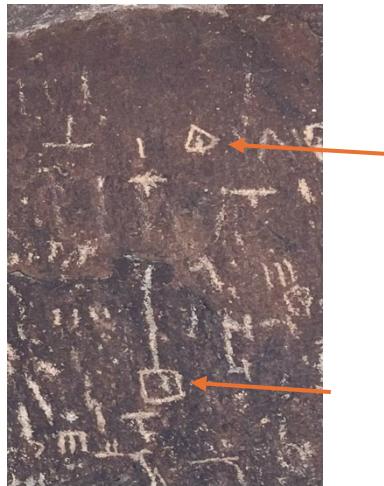


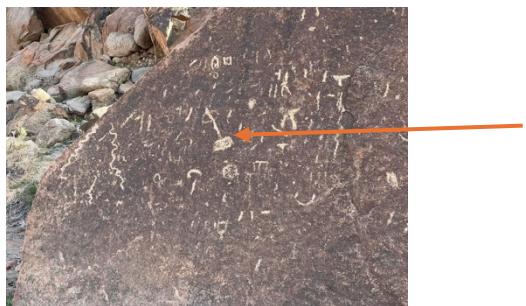
Figure 4

Below the Hebrew letter dalet, (Figure 4 bottom arrow) is a square shape box which is common for the Hebrew letter "bet". The letter bet mentioned above holds the meaning of house. This

example of “bet” demonstrates a serpent going into the house with the head of the serpent clearly visible inside of the house. On the left side of this petroglyph are the series of 4 hash marks again noting the chronological events of this story.

Moving further to the left end of the rock there appears a pole with a stand and an object moving around the top of the pole. This base of the pole does not represent any letter. The brass serpent on the pole built by Moses as told in the biblical narrative one could argue the meaning of this particular petroglyph and its sequence with the Numbers 21 story. (Figure 5) The exact order of these petroglyphs and letters make this rock the probable account of Numbers 21.

Figure 5



Further research of the later alphabet scripts displayed on this rock needs further study. The sequence of the above petroglyphs and Hebrews letters cannot be denied . The biblical narrative matches perfectly with the events on the rock.