



The Jehoash/Joash Inscription

### Overview:

This inscription is carved into a rectangular Arkosic sandstone tablet, about 12 x 24 x 3 inches (30 x 61 x 8 cm). <sup>1</sup> It consists of 10 or 15 lines <sup>2</sup> of text in ancient Hebrew, written in ancient Phoenician script. The inscription discusses repairs to King Solomon's temple. If it had been authenticated as dating to the 9th century BCE, it would have been a unique piece of physical evidence which confirmed the accuracy of portions of 2 Kings in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). It would also have profound political implications. Jewish and Christian sources believe that the temple of Solomon was located on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem; Muslim sources deny that a Jewish temple was ever located near the Haram as-Sharif, (Noble Sanctuary) on the mount. *"The mosque compound is Islam's third-holiest site, while the adjacent Western Wall, the last remnant of the second Jewish Temple compound, is Judaism's holiest site. Most rabbis ban Jews from entering the Temple Mount for religious purity reasons."* <sup>3</sup> Rabbis are concerned that a visitor could inadvertently step on the location of the Holy of Holies; this would be considered a sacrilege by Jewish religious authorities.

As in the case of the recently found bone-box of James, the origin of the tablet is not known. Experts have concluded that both are very clever forgeries. One individual, Oded Golan first presented the inscription to the world and is the current owner of the bone box. He was arrested on 2003-JUL-22 by Israeli police and charged with forgery.

### The tablet itself:

The dark gray sandstone tablet is rectangular -- about one foot by two. A rumor was circulated that the object was found during renovations in the Haram as-Sharif Sanctuary. The director of the Islamic Trust which administers the Jerusalem mosque compound, Adnan Husseini, denied this.

The owner, who has remained anonymous, asked the Israeli Museum to authenticate the tablet. The Museum determined that they could not rule out the possibility that the stone was a forgery. The owner then asked Israel's Geological Institute (GSI) to authenticate it. Shimon Ilani, who tested the inscription, said: *"Our findings show that it is authentic."* <sup>4</sup>

The scientists found tiny flecks of gold burned into the outer layer of the tablet. The tablet had suffered fire damage. Both could have happened when the Babylonians, under King Nebuchadnezzar, destroyed the temple in 586 BCE. Gold objects in the temple may have been melted at the time.

Institute director, Amos Bean, commented: *"These specks of gold are not natural material, but a sign of human activity. They could be from gold-plated objects in the home of a very rich man, or a temple.... It's hard to believe that anyone would know how to do these things to make it look real."* <sup>4</sup>

Carbon-14 dating by the Geological Survey of Israel shows that the crust on the stone is 2,300 years old. That would be consistent with the stone being an actual relic from the 9th century BCE, which was allowed to corrode at about the start of the 3rd century BCE. <sup>10</sup>

### Biblical reference:

The tablet contains an inscription in ancient Hebrew that appears to refer to repairs to the temple made during the reign of King Jehoash Joash Ben Ahaziya). He was the dictator of Judea from 836-798 BCE. The inscription says in part: *"holy money ... to buy quarry stones and timber and copper and labor to carry out the duty with faith."* The last sentence promises that if the work is completed well, then *"the Lord will protect his people with blessing."* <sup>5</sup> The inscription seems to be related to two passages from 2 Kings:

#### 2 Kings 12:1-6 states, in part:

*"In the seventh year of Jehu Jehoash began to reign; and forty years reigned he in Jerusalem.... And Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him. But the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places. And Jehoash said to the priests, All the money of the dedicated things that is brought into the house of the LORD, even the money of every one that passeth the account, the money that every man is set at, and all the money that cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of the LORD, Let the priests take it to them, every man of his acquaintance: and let them repair the breaches of the house, wheresoever any breach shall be found. But it was so, that in the three and twentieth year of king Jehoash the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house."*

#### 2 Kings 12:11-16 states, in part:

*"And they gave the money, being told, into the hands of them that did the work, that had the oversight of the house of the LORD: and they laid it out to the carpenters and builders, that wrought upon the house of the LORD, And to masons, and hewers of stone, and to buy timber and hewed stone to repair the breaches of the house of the LORD, and for all that was laid out for the house to repair it. Howbeit there were not made for the house of the LORD bowls of silver, snuffers, basons, trumpets, any vessels of gold, or vessels of silver, of the money that was brought into the house of the LORD: But they gave that to the workmen, and repaired therewith the house of the LORD. Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed on workmen: for they dealt faithfully. The trespass money and sin money was not brought into the house of the LORD: it was the priests'."*

