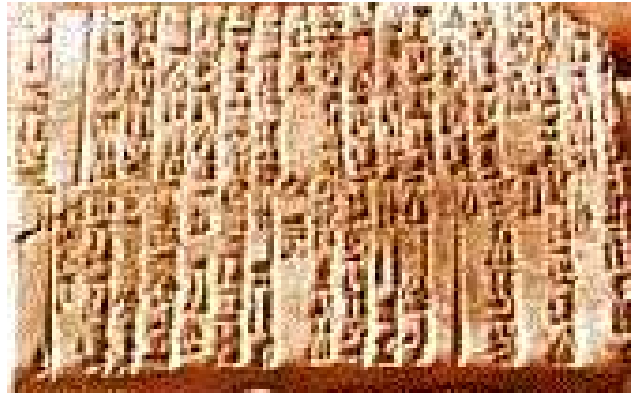


Archaeological Spotlight: The Ebla Tablets:

The Ebla Tablets. In 1964, Italian archaeologists directed by Paolo Matthiae of the University of Rome excavated a mound in northern Syria known as Tell Mardikh. In 1968, Matthiae and his team uncovered ancient Akkadian inscriptions of King Ibbi-Lim. In this text the king identified himself as the ruler of Ebla. During excavations in 1974 and 1975, public and royal archives containing over 20,000 clay tablets came to light. The Eblaite scribes recorded information on clay tablets, inscribed in cuneiform, as developed by the Sumerians, which was found in the ruins of the royal palace in 1974 A.D.



A Clay Tablet taken from “Ebla (Tell Mardikh)” an ancient city that flourished between 2,700 and 2,200 B.C. in what is now northern Syria.

The people of Ebla were Semites, and spoke a Semitic language that resembled ancient Hebrew. These 20,000 clay tablets are one of the most important archaeological discoveries in our times, yet they have not even been deciphered, translated or published complete due to various political/religious boundary issues. The most likely date of these archives is about 2,500 - 2,250 B.C.

Significance of the Find: The Ebla Tablets contain extensive trade records, and also include the oldest reference to Jerusalem dating before Abraham. (The reference is to Salem). Sodom, Gomorrah and several other cities of the plains are also mentioned by name, including all five cities found in **Genesis 14:2**, and in the same order (Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar). This is significant because at one time many critics of the Bible scoffed at the existence of Sodom and Gomorrah as being little more than fables. The Ebla Tablets offer stunning proof of their existence – and this from a time period that predates Abraham himself! The tablets also include the use of several personal names, which shows that they were common in around 2,300 B.C., including: Abraham, Ishmael, David, Israel, Esau and Saul.

Included in the Ebla Tablets is a record of the tribute the king of Mari gave to Ebla after a military defeat. The tribute included 11,000 pounds of silver and 880 pounds of gold. What makes this finding important is that it relates to the seemingly huge amounts of gold mentioned in such passages as **1 Kings 10:14** and **2 Chronicles 9:13**. These Scriptures report the annual tribute from the entire empire of Solomon, including over ten tons of gold. Some have scoffed at this amount of gold coming into the treasury of Solomon. The record from Ebla of almost half a ton of gold as tribute from just one city makes the size of the annual tribute of the entire empire of Solomon seem quite reasonable.

Previously, many historians had said that Moses could not have written the law – it was too sophisticated. Ebla contains a tablet containing a law against rape that looks a lot like that found in the Decalogue. Also, many had said that there was no writing in the days of Moses; the discovery and translation of the Hammurabi Code and the Ebla Tablets show that both writing and extensive law codes existed in Moses' time.

Historians had also asserted that the two names of God found in **Genesis** show that there were two sources, J and E, which were used to produce the Pentateuch. The Ebla Tablets show that many gods in those days had two or more names. Some also asserted that the creation story had also been edited into the Bible by Ezra around 400 B.C., yet there is a creation tablet in Ebla that is as close to the Creation Account in **Genesis, Chapter I** as any that has ever been discovered:

“There was no heaven, Lugo formed it. There was no earth, Lugo formed it. There was no sun, Lugo formed it. There was no moon, Lugo formed it.” (Lugo means “the big one,” “the great one”).

The Ebla tablets also speak of the city of Ur, from which Terah, Abram (who was later called Abraham) and Lot were called, as being in the territory of Haran. This later reference to Haran concerns the city in northern Mesopotamia where Abram and his father Terah lived for a long time (**Genesis 11:31-32, Genesis 12:4-5**). These early tablets thus help confirm the existence of these most notable places, the latter of which almost certainly drew its name from Haran, the brother of Abram (and father of Lot), who died in Ur even before the passing of Abraham's father Terah (**Genesis 11:28**).

Coming Next Issue: The Epitaph of King Uzziah