

Moabite Stone (Mesha Inscription)

Byron Holtsclaw

Last March my wife and daughter were fortunate to be able to view the Moabite Stone while enjoying the Louvre in Paris. This basalt stone was first seen by an Anglican Missionary from Prussia named Fredrick Kline while he was visiting Bedouins camped in the ancient land of Moab in 1868. James King, who was in Jerusalem at the time of Kline's discovery sent men get a squeeze of the ancient inscription but a struggle with the Bedouins ensued. Later the Bedouins heated up the stone with fire and poured cold water on it; fracturing it into many pieces. James King was able to purchase most of the stone fragments and get those fragments that were not for sale the inscription was squeezed. King was able to piece the stone together and the linguist successfully translated the inscription. The inscribed stone is a stele from the 9th Century B.C. from Mesha, king of Moab. This is the king of Moab identified in a battle story in the third chapter of II Kings during the life of Elisha the prophet. The Mesha Inscription identifies 12 names listed in the Old Testament such as Kings of Israel and Judah as well as locations in the Levant.

Anthropologists and theologians recognize the Moabite Stone as one of the greatest discoveries in archeology to date; once again providing contemporary proof as to the authenticity of the events described in the Old Testament. I was shocked that after the Bedouins destroyed the Moabite Stone that James King was able to locate all the pieces and successfully translate the inscription. Both the German Museum and the British Museum wanted the stone in addition to the Louvre in Paris. The fact that the Louvre has this once destroyed stele on display and in tact is remarkable to say the least. Sadly, few people today realize just how fortunate we are to have this ancient inscription as well as have it in tact. Many participants at the Louvre stand in line for hours to catch a glimpse of much more modern art and architecture, but the faithful take a few moments to appreciate a stele substantiating chapters of the Bible from thousands of years ago.