

"Archaeological" fraud does not help the Bible or the Book of Mormon!

How You Can Tell the Ohio Moses Stone is Phony?



The *Ohio Decalogue Stone*, curved by compass at the top, and squarer at the bottom – in stereotypical *stone tablet* fashion. The characters are not standard Hebrew - but telltale substitution blunders reveal what the hoaxer didn't want you to perceive: that the source of the inscription is contemporary (e.g. from a Hebrew Bible).

Messages of foreboding ostensibly written in some form of ancient eastern writing are seen in Disneyland's thrilling attraction *"the Temple of the Forbidden Eye"*. How can you know the "Marabic" messages are foreboding? Because they are in English – with a decoder you can read them!

| THE DECALOGUE ALPHABET | | | |
|------------------------|--------|-----------------|--------------------|
| letter | name | Standard Hebrew | Decalogue Alphabet |
| • | aleph | א | א, א |
| B | beth | ב | ב |
| G | gimel | ג | ג |
| D | daleth | ד | ד |
| H | he | ה | ה |
| W | waw | ו | ו |
| Z | zayin | ז | ז |
| H | heth | ח | ח |
| T | teth | ט | (not used) |
| Y | yod | י | י |
| K | kaph | כ, ק | כ |
| L | lamed | ל | ל |
| M | mem | מ, מ | מ |
| N | nun | נ, נ | נ |
| S | samekh | ס | ס |
| • | ayin | ע | ע |
| P | pe | פ, פ | פ |
| Ts | sadhe | צ, צ | צ |
| Q | qoph | ק | ק |
| R | resh | ר | ר |
| Sh | shin | ש | ש, ש |
| T | taw | ת | ת, ת |

From *An Annotated Transcription of the Ohio Decalogue Stone*, J. Huston McCullough (August, 1992)

Above, on the extreme right, are the contrived (easier to carve) characters from the infamous *Ohio Decalogue Stone*. These letters are matched with the already established aleph-bet of today's Hebrew Bibles. The standard Hebrew aleph-bet has been in use since the return from Babylonian exile. See for instance the standard Hebrew letters accompanying Psalm 119 (King James Translation). These symbols are not the same as the ancient symbols that the psalmists David

and Asaph used. Standard Hebrew letters have replaced the Phoenician like letters that very ancient Hebrew texts were originally written in.

The Hebrew of Lehi's time was written with Phoenician-like letters - letters like those carved on the not so glamorous *Tennessee Mound Tablet*, also known as the *Bat Creek Stone*. Mormons especially, should pay attention to this fact! The standard Hebrew alphabet used in Bibles today is "post Lehi"! Standard Hebrew and the improvised writing on the *Ohio Decalogue Stone* would not have been familiar to the Book of Mormon patriarch!

The Decalogue of Lehi's day (and earlier) would certainly have been written in Phoenician like letters, letters which would have been much easier to engrave than post exilic Hebrew letters in use today.

Evidently, the fabricator of the *Ohio Decalogue* inscription was unfamiliar with the ancient and more original aleph-bet. Had he known ancient Hebrew (e.g. had he been a literate Israelite of yore) he would not have seen a need to make up a substitute alphabet (based on current Hebrew print). Memo to charlatans: If you're not going to make a stone inscription of the *Ten Commandments* in ancient Hebrew, your better off copying the text from a source like the Septuagint. Then at least you can make the plausible claim that the stone was carved by Hebrews from a later time period - e.g. Greek speaking Jews from Alexandria or maybe even Christians. (*Sarcasm*)

Indifferent to these facts you proceed to edit the biblical text of the *Ten Commandments*, keeping the main directives, and counting the number of letters in the string to be carved. Since your made-up letters conveniently occupy square spaces of about the same size, you can do a little figuring to determine the size of stone needed to accommodate the whole text - given the length of the string of letters and the standard sized space that you choose for each letter; adding in whatever else you want to put on the stone (i.e. a graven image of Moses). You want to use up all the available surface of the stone front, back and sides, so folks will be really impressed with the text's exact fit! (*Sarcasm*)

This brings up an important point: If you're going to plan things so that you use up all the available writing space on the stone, you'd better not leave out important Hebrew characters like "et" (אֵת) which indicates a verb's direct object, but which has no meaning or translation in English! Sure you can read the Bible in English, but if you leave out something seemingly "meaningless" like "et" (אֵת) it would be a noticeable mistake in Hebrew! If you plan all the letters to fit perfectly on the stone and you stupidly leave out "et" (אֵת) and other letters, someone who truly knows Hebrew will probably get suspicious of the inscription!

Actually the *Ohio Moses Stone* does ignore an "et" as well as other letters, and yes the text "all too cleverly" fits the stone's writing surface. Oops!

Next - since the improvised "square" alphabet is not standard Hebrew, what clue can you give the curious that will lead them to realize the stone is really inscribed with Hebrew verse (they may not recognize your substitute alphabet right away)? Hey, I have an idea: There could be a big cameo (graven image) of Moses centered on the stone's face, with his recognizable Hebrew name inscribed like rays above his head! You could even replace the hard to carve standard Hebrew letter "mem" (מ), beginning the Law givers name, with a character that looks a lot like a common Latin "m". See table above. Someone learned is sure to catch on that the stone is really inscribed with holy verse when they plainly discern the name of the Law giver! (*Sarcasm*)

In fact, why not make the name of Moses lead into the inscribed verse? Hmmm, there's a problem here! The Hebrew Bible verse does not begin by recognizing Moses, but by recognizing God! Well that's easy to fix! Even an amateur with some basic Hebrew / English resources like a dictionary, can eventually pick out the part that reads "I am the LORD your God" (Shemot (Exodus) 20:2). This part could be cut from the start of the verse and stuck at the end of the verse, so it flows into the very next verse! Yep, that works, even if it does seem rather Gentile minded to credit Moses with delivering Israel. (*Sarcasm*)

Here then is the real text behind the *Ohio Decalogue* inscription, rearranged and edited from available Hebrew Bible verses. [1] Understand that this is the text that the scribe tried to convert into the simplified, but contrived alphabet shown above. Don't expect the Hebrew to flow word for word in the same order as the English translation. The standard Hebrew in its authentic syntax is accompanied by fragments from the Authorized King James translation (KJV) on the right:

מֹשֶׁה Moses

2

| | |
|-------------|---------------------|
| אֲשֶׁר | which |
| הוֹצֵאתִיךָ | have brought thee |
| מֵאֶרֶץ | out of the land of |
| מִצְרַיִם | Egypt, |
| מִבֵּית | out of the house of |
| עֲבָדִים : | bondage. |
| אֲנִי | I |
| | <i>am</i> |

יְהוָה the LORD
אֱלֹהֶיךָ thy God,

OOPS! Commentary on the Ohio Decalogue transcription of verse 2: When it came to converting the Hebrew expression הוֹצֵאתִיךָ, which means “have brought thee”, the *Moses Stone* scribe mistook the letter ו for a ם. These Hebrew letters may look similar to some folk, but someone who actually reads and writes Hebrew would know the difference instantly. The real problem here is that the invented *Moses Stone* symbol that the scribe substituted for ם does not look at all like the substitute symbol for ו. See for yourself. Check out the table above for the comparison.

So if the substitute alphabet was really used as an archaic writing system, how could the writer possibly have confused the two letters, which were made to look so very different in the Ohio alphabet? Understand that these letters sound very different when spoken. The mess-up here leads to non-sense? This mistake isn't just a spelling error mind you! It is plain to see how the blunder took place: The scribe was actually trying to convert letters, albeit naively, from a standard Hebrew text (where they look similar) into a made-up alphabet where the corresponding letters were made to look different! Keep you eye out for this type of blunder – it happens again and again in the *Moses Stone* transcription. See source [2] for the transcription.

3

| | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| לֹא | no |
| יְהוָה-לְךָ | Thou shalt have |
| אֱלֹהִים | gods |
| אֲחֵרִים | other |
| עַל-פָּנָי : | before me. |

OOPS! Commentary on the Ohio Decalogue transcription of verse 3: The Hebrew word “elohim” (אֱלֹהִים) in verse 3 (KJV) is badly mutated on the *Moses Stone*. UNFORGIVABLE! The scribe

was apparently insensitive to this very important Hebrew word for “GOD” or “gods”. It is as if he saw in the Hebrew letters הַי in אֱלֹהִים a single Hebrew letter ה. Not only that, the scribe confused the Hebrew letter ה in אֱלֹהִים with the Hebrew letter ה. Oblivious to the word he was attempting to transcribe, the scribe made out “elmh” (אֶלְמַה) – which is nonsense! See source [2] for the transcription.

4

לֹא not
 תַּעֲשֶׂה־ Thou shalt make
 לְךָ unto thee
 פְּסֶל any graven image,
 וְכֹל־ or any
 ...

OOPS! Commentary on the Ohio Decalogue transcription of verse 4: Bad edit job here! The *Moses Stone* leaves the sentence incomplete, leaving off at וְכֹל־. If the intent of the scribe was to abbreviate this commandment, he should have left off at פְּסֶל. The scribe evidently did not understand everything he was copying. He may have gotten confused because the sequence of Hebrew words in the verse does not correspond one to one with the accompanying English translation. He may not have known for sure where to truncate the verse. See source [2] for the transcription.

5

לֹא־ not
 תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה Thou shalt bow down thyself
 לָהֶם to them,
 וְלֹא nor
 תַּעֲבֹדֵם serve them:
 ...

OOPS! Commentary on the Ohio Decalogue transcription of verse 5: Here the *Moses Stone* exhibits more confusion! The scribe

saw תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה as תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה, which makes no sense! The scribe clearly did not understand the meaning of the composite Hebrew expression that translates, “Thou shalt not bow down thyself” (לא־תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה) and made two wrong substitutions. The scribe also mistook the ת in תִּעֲבֹדֶם for a ה – more nonsense! See source [2] for the transcription.

6

...

7

לא not
תִּשָּׂא Thou shalt take
אֶת־
שְׁמִי the name of
יְהוָה the LORD
אֱלֹהֶיךָ thy God
לְשׁוֹן in vain;
...

OOPS! Commentary on the Ohio Decalogue transcription of verse 7: Verse 7 vainly puts a ך in place of the ך in the Tetragrammaton (the sacred ineffable name of Deity - *the Eternal*). Did the scribe mistake the divine name in verse 7 for a יהוה; like the one he correctly transcribed in verse 3? Hmmm! You might argue that Israelites in ancient America could have changed the spelling of the divine name. This proposition does not account for the fact that the divine name from verse 2 was correctly transcribed on the stone? The misspellings are not consistent on the stone! See source [2] for the transcription.

8

זְכוֹר Remember
אֶת־
יוֹם day,
הַשַּׁבָּת the sabbath

לְקַדְּשׁוֹ : to keep it holy.

OOPS! Commentary on the Ohio Decalogue transcription of verse 8: As with other verses, the *Moses Stone* transcription of verse 8 is definitely based on the Masorah (the available Hebrew text from which the KJV Old Testament was translated). Here the scribe labored to put a ה where there should be a ה in הַשַּׁבָּת, “the Shabbat”. The scribe apparently didn’t know that the attached letter “hey” (ה) means “the” (i.e. “the Shabbat”), whereas attaching a look-alike “het” (ה) to “Shabbat” (instead of a “hey” ה) adds no meaning at all! The scribe also leaves out the ק in לְקַדְּשׁוֹ. The fact that the misspelled and poorly edited text fits the stone’s surface isn’t so remarkable after all. See source [2] for the transcription.

9

שֵׁשֶׁת Six
יָמִים days
תַּעֲבֹד shalt thou labour,
וַעֲשִׂיתָ and do
כָּל- all
מְלַאכְתֶּךָ : thy work:

OOPS! Commentary on the Ohio Decalogue transcription of verse 9: The scribe failed to pluralize “day”. The *Moses Stone* reads, “Six day” See source [2] for the transcription.

10

...

11

...

12

כְּבוֹד Honour
אֶת-
אָבִיךָ thy father
וְאֶת- and

אִמְךָ thy mother:

...

OOPS! Commentary on the Ohio Decalogue transcription of verse 12: Here the dishonorable transcription leaves out the Hebrew *direct object indicator* “et” (־תָּ) in “Honor *et* thy father...” But wouldn’t you know, the transcription keeps the ׀תָּ in “...and *et* thy mother”. In this case there is an “and” (וְ) attached to the “et” like so: ׀תָּוְ. To the English speaking scribe “and” meant something! Maybe the scribe thought the whole ׀תָּוְ just indicated “and”. The scribe may have had a hard time understanding the significance of ׀תָּ in the first instance, and for that reason left it out. [3] See source [2] for the transcription.

13

לֹא not
תִּרְצַח Thou shalt kill.

OOPS! Commentary on the Ohio Decalogue transcription of verse 13: Here the *Moses Stone* transcription murders the language by confusing the standard Hebrew “tsadi” (צ) in תִּרְצַח for an “ayin” (ע). If the scribe had planned better (short of actually learning Hebrew), he could have also made these letters look similar in the phony alphabet – to cover up this kind of blunder! As it is, someone who knows Hebrew can tell that the scribe was transcribing from a standard Hebrew text, and that the he didn’t really know the letters very well much less the words. The transcriber also mistook the ח at the end of תִּרְצַח for a ת. The scribe had a hard time telling the difference between ח, ת, and ה, all of which make different sounds. If Disney Imagineers had made comparable transcription errors in “Marabic”, paying guests, passing the time in line, trying to keep entertained by reading the writing on the walls of the attraction, would have complained BIG TIME! See source [2] for the transcription.

14

לא not
תִּנְאַף Thou shalt commit adultery.

OOPS! Commentary on the Ohio Decalogue transcription of verse 14: Here the transcriber adulterated the transcription by confusing the “nun” (נ) in תִּנְאַף for a “lamed” (ל). See reference [2] for the transcription.

15

לא not
תִּגְנוֹב Thou shalt steal.

16

לא- not
תִּעֲנֶה Thou shalt bear
כִּרְעֶה against thy neighbour.
עֵד witness
שֶׁקֶר false

OOPS! Commentary on the Ohio Decalogue transcription of verse 16: The false inscription confuses the letters נה in תִּעֲנֶה for the letters לה. See source [2] for the transcription.

17

לא not
תִּחְמַד Thou shalt covet
בֵּית house,
רֵעֶה thy neighbour's
לא- not
תִּחְמַד thou shalt covet
אִשְׁתּוֹ wife,
רֵעֶה thy neighbour's
וְעַבְדּוֹ nor his manservant,
וְאִמָּתוֹ nor his maidservant,
וְשׁוֹרוֹ nor his ox,
וְחִמְרוֹ nor his ass,
וְכֹל nor any thing

אֲשֶׁר that
is
לְרֵעֶךָ thy neighbour's.

OOPS! Commentary on the Ohio Decalogue transcription of verse 17: Blundering his way to the end, the scribe mistook the ך in the first תְּהַמְלִךְ for a ך. It's easy to see how these standard Hebrew letters could get confused, but the specious *Moses Stone* replacements for these letters are very different looking! Which begs the old question, how could this possibly be a simple spelling error? It can't be!

The next תְּהַמְלִךְ appears to be transcribed correctly! At least there is the benefit of a doubt here, because the first and last letters are worn. The expression בֵּית רֵעֶךָ on the *Moses Stone* is unintelligible! The scribe inanely put בֵּיו וְעַךְ.

The scribe also mistook the “raysh” (ר) in “thy neighbor” (רֵעֶךָ) for a “vav” (ו). Again it is easy to see how someone who is looking at standard Hebrew could confuse these letters – not knowing the language! But the *Moses Stone* substitutions for these letters look so very different that the blunder cannot be chalked up to a simple writing error! The scribe isn't consistent in repeating his mistake! The same expression, “thy neighbor”, is correctly transcribed in the phony alphabet at the end of the verse (as also in verse 16) – proving that this is not some standard spelling change in an ancient language.

The 19th century inscription drops the ם in the middle of וְשׂוּרוֹ. This at last, is a forgivable oversight. Even so, the *Ohio Moses Stone* was definitely not crafted by a Hebrew speaking member of an ancient America tribe. See source [\[2\]](#) for the transcription.

We see that there are egregious, telltale transcription errors in almost every verse!

Conclusion: Having carefully analyzed the *Ohio Decalogue* transcription, I've come to see it for what it is – a glamorous hoax. It is not the work of a Hebrew speaking member of some lost tribe. But why on earth would anyone undertake to make such a fake? Actually, the creation of the stone fits all too well the American "Mound Builder" mythopoeic interests of the 19th Century. More than Mormons had a vested interest in "proving" to the world that the American Indians descended from lost tribes. Other hoaxes of this type were foisted on the American public! Regrettably, "archaeological" fraud plagues the study of the Bible and the Book of Mormon.

References:

- [1] *LDS Scriptures with Advanced Study Aids CD-ROM*, transliterate Hebrew / English of *Shemot (Ex.) 20:2 – 17*.
- [2] J. Huston McCullough, "An Annotated Transcription of the Ohio Decalogue Stone", August, 1992.
- [3] *Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon*, תַּא, 853-854, pp. 84-86.