



ERICHT LESSING

anywhere in the world, experiencing the intuitive connection between an artifact and the geographical context where it was found provides additional data to the scholar and an authentic experience of the artifact to tourists. One might even find something in the sights, sounds (and smells?) of the society and culture that first created it, if their descendants live in or have returned to the region.

It is a by-product of colonial thought that says conquest of an artifact determines its rightful home, in the same way that the victors in a military conquest have traditionally determined the borders of a country—an issue in the news every day here in Jerusalem. But I think we are living in a post-colonial world with borders disappearing. Nevertheless, the human desire persists to find one's national, ethnic, religious or cultural identity. Placing artifacts into their original contexts provides the opportunity to experience one's own cultural history where it happened, as well as for all others to get an authentic taste of ancient civilizations in the geographic context where they once existed.

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## QUERIES

### Writing God's Name

You report that the jars from Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Hershel Shanks, "Egypt's Chief Archaeologist Defends His Rights (and Wrongs)," May/June 2011) are inscribed "Yahweh and his Asherah." Are you sure? The reason I'm asking

is it's been my understanding that in ancient times God's name [Yahweh] could not be inscribed on anything; therefore scribes would write "lord" instead of "Yahweh."

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**Gary A. Rendsburg, Blanche and Irving Laurie Chair in Jewish History at Rutgers University, responds:**

*A number of ancient Hebrew inscriptions include the word YHWH, written with the four Hebrew letters yod-he-waw-he (with a reconstructed pronunciation Yahweh). These include the two silver amulets from Ketef Hinnom in Jerusalem,\* the Lachish letters\*\* and the Arad letters.† Inscriptions from both Khirbet el-Qom in southern Judah and Kuntillet 'Ajrud‡ in the Sinai famously include the expression "Yahweh and his Asherah," with the name of the God of Israel again spelled with these four letters. In addition, the Mesha Stele written in Moabite refers*

\*Gabriel Barkay, "The Riches of Ketef Hinnom," *BAR*, July/August/September/October 2009; and Gabriel Barkay, "News from the Field: The Divine Name Found in Jerusalem," *BAR*, March/April 1983.

\*\*Oded Borowski, "Yadin Presents New Interpretation of the famous Lachish Letters," *BAR*, March/April 1984; and David Ussishkin, "Answers at Lachish," *BAR*, November/December 1979.

†Anson F. Rainey, "The Saga of Eliashib: Office Files Found of Commander of Fort at Arad," *BAR*, March/April 1987; and "Letter from a Hebrew King?" *BAR*, January/February 1980.

‡"Top Ten Discoveries: 'Yahweh and His Asherah,'" *BAR*, July/August/September/October 2009; and Sidebar "Yahweh and His Asherah: The Debate Continues," *BAR*, May/June 2001.

to YHWH.<sup>§</sup> Clearly the divine name was inscribed during the Biblical period.

By late Biblical times or in post-Biblical times, the precise extent of the Third Commandment's prohibition of the misuse of the name YHWH (many English translations render this commandment, "Do not take the name of the LORD in vain") was apparently no longer clear. The tradition thus arose not to pronounce the divine name aloud, thereby assuring compliance with the law, regardless of the exact prohibition. Hence, despite the fact that the name YHWH is written in a text (such as a Biblical book), when reading aloud (and all reading in antiquity was done aloud) Jews substituted the word Adonai ("Lord" or more literally, "my Lord").

When copying Biblical texts, as at Qumran for example, Jewish scribes continued to write YHWH with its four Hebrew letters yod-he-waw-he. Indeed, this practice continues to the present day among Jews: When writing sacred texts such as the Torah or the Book of Esther in scroll form (both of which are used in synagogue liturgy) and when printing the Bible in book form (or in electronic form) the word is written out as YHWH, but is read aloud another way, as Adonai.

### Did Herod Build Third Temple?

You state that "In the Second Temple period (the time of Jesus), the Temple built by Herod the Great dominated the Temple Mount" ("Revolt Coins Minted on Temple Mount," March/April 2011).

Fifty or 60 years ago, in at least some Catholic circles, the Temple built by Herod was called the Third Temple, but that no longer seems to be politically correct. Yet it seems agreed that Herod completely rebuilt the Second Temple erected by the returnees from the Babylonian Exile in the fifth century B.C.E. So why is Herod's effort not called the Third Temple?

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§Eric Wargo, "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Kemosh (But Were Afraid to Ask)" sidebar to P.M. Michèle Daviau and Paul-Eugène Dion, "Moab Comes to Life," *BAR*, January/February 2002; "A New Reading: Translation of the Mesha Stela," sidebar to "House of David' Restored in Moabite Inscription," *BAR*, May/June 1994.

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