

Prophets' Names Appear in the Ebla Tablets, 1500 Years Older Than the Torah

H A R U N Y A H Y A

Dating back to around 2500 BC, the Ebla tablets provide very important information regarding the history of religions. The most important feature of the Ebla tablets, discovered by archaeologists in 1975 and which have been the subject of much research and debate ever since, is that they contain the names of three prophets referred to in holy scriptures.

The discovery after thousands of years of the Ebla tablets and the information they contain is extremely important from the point of view of clarifying the geographical location of societies revealed in the Qur'an.

Around 2500 BC, Ebla was a kingdom covering an area that included the Syrian capital Damascus and south-east Turkey. This kingdom reached a cultural and economic peak but later, as happened to a great many civilizations, it disappeared from the stage of history. It was apparent from the records that were kept that the Kingdom of Ebla was a major cultural and commercial center of the time. (1) The people of Ebla possessed a civilization that established state archives, built libraries and recorded commercial contracts in written form. They even had their own language, known as Eblaite.

The History of Buried Religions

The true importance of the Kingdom of Ebla, regarded as a great success for classical archaeology when first discovered in 1975, came to light with the finding of some 20,000 cuneiform tablets and fragments. This archive was four times greater than all the cuneiform texts known to archaeologists over the last 3,000 years.

When the language used in the tablets was deciphered by the Italian Giovanni Pettinato, an epigrapher from the University of Rome, the scale of their importance was better understood. As a result of this, the finding of the Kingdom of Ebla and this magnificent state archive became a matter not just of archaeological interest, but one of interest to religious circles, too. That was because as well as the names Michael (Mi-ka-il) and Talut (Sa-u-lum), who struggled alongside the Prophet David, they also contained the names of prophets mentioned in the three holy books: The Prophet Abraham (Ab-ra-mu), the Prophet David (Da-u-dum) and the Prophet Ishamel (Ish-ma-il). (2)

The Importance of the Names on the Ebla Tablets

The names of the prophets identified in the Ebla tablets are of the greatest importance as this was the first time that they had been encountered in historical documents of such age. This information, dating back to 1500 years before the Torah, was most striking. The appearance in the tablets of the name of the Prophet Abraham recorded that the Prophet Abraham and the religion brought by him had existed before the Torah.

Historians analyzed the Ebla tablets from this perspective, and this major discovery regarding the Prophet Abraham and his mission became the subject of research with regard to the history of religions. David Noel Freedman, an American archaeologist and researcher into the history of religions, reported, based on his studies, the names of such prophets as Abraham and Ishmael in the tablets. (3)

Other Names in the Tablets

As stated above the names in the tablets were those of prophets referred to in the three holy books, and the tablets were far older than the Torah. In addition to these names there were also other subjects and place names in the tablets, from which it can be seen that the Eblaites were very successful traders. The names Sinai, Gaza and Jerusalem, not too distant from Ebla, also appeared in the texts, showing that the Eblaites enjoyed commercial and cultural links with these places. (4)

One important detail seen in the tablets was the names of the areas of Sodom and Gomorrah, where the people of Lot lived. It is known that Sodom and Gomorrah was a region on the shore of the Dead Sea where the people of Lot lived and where the Prophet Lot communicated his message and called people to live by religious moral values. In addition to these two names, that of the city of Iram, which appears in the verses of the Qur'an, is also among those in the Ebla tablets.

The most noteworthy aspect of these names is that apart from in the texts communicated by the prophets, they had never before appeared in any other text. This is important documentary evidence showing that reports of the prophets who communicated the message of the one true religion at that time had reached those areas. In an article in *Reader's Digest* magazine it was recorded that there had been a change in the Eblaites' religion during the reign of King Ebrum and that people had begun to add prefixes to their names in order to exalt the name of Almighty God.

God's Promise Is True...

The history of Ebla and the Ebla tablets which came to light after some 4,500 years actually point to one major truth: God sent messengers to Ebla, as He did to every community, and these called their peoples to the true religion.

Some people adhered to the religion that came to them and thus attained the true path, while others opposed the message of the prophets and preferred a wicked life. God, Lord of the heavens, the earth, and all that lies between, reveals this fact in the Qur'an:

We sent a Messenger among every people saying: "Worship God and keep clear of all false deities." Among them were some whom God guided but others received the misguidance they deserved. Travel about the earth and see the final fate of the deniers. (Qur'an, 16: 36)

References

- 1) "Ebla", *Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopaedia*, © 1995 Funk & Wagnalls Corporation, Infopedia 2.0, SoftKey Multimedia Inc.
- 2) Howard La Fay, "Ebla: Splendour of an Unknown Empire," *National Geographic Magazine*, December 1978, p. 736; C. Bermant and M. Weitzman, *Ebla: A Revelation in Archaeology*, Times Books, 1979, Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, Great Britain, pp. 184.
- 3) *Bilim ve Teknik* magazine (Science and Technology), No. 118, September 1977 and No. 131 October 1978
- 4) For detailed information, please see Harun Yahya's *Miracles of the Qur'an*.