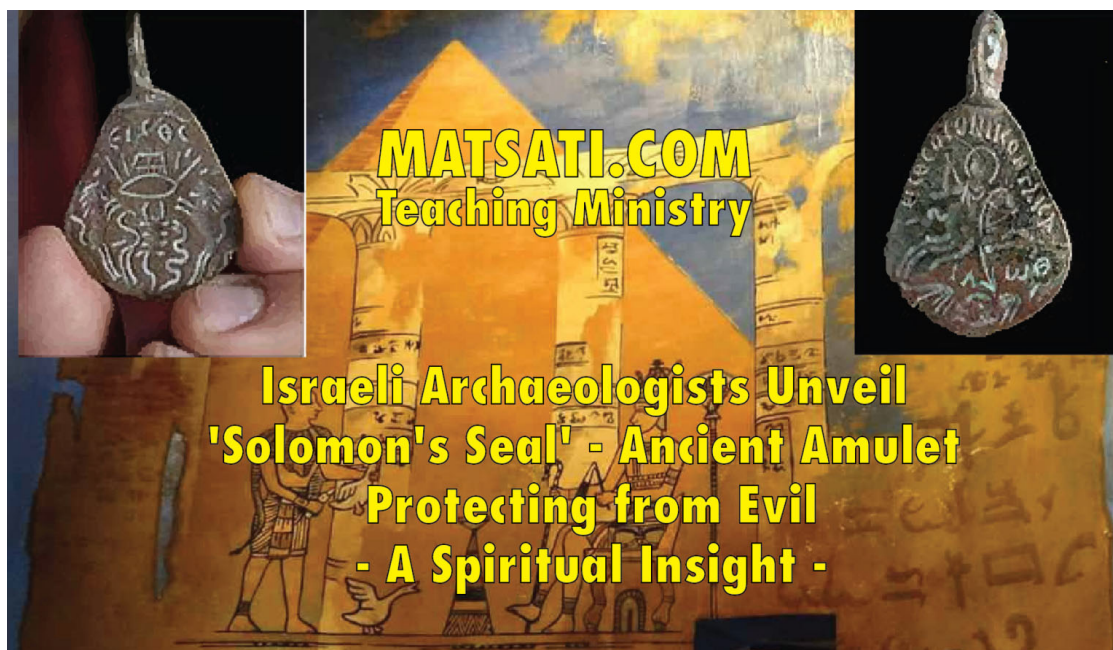


Israeli Archaeologists Unveil 'Solomon's Seal' – Ancient Amulet Protecting from Evil – A Spiritual Insight

By MATSATI - June 5, 2021



Recently, a Byzantine-era amulet was returned to Israel Antiquities after having been discovered 40 years ago. Archeologists calculate that the amulet is approximately 1500 years old, and is made of bronze, and was used to protect someone from the evil eye (from demons). The idea of using an amulet to protect against the evil eye is not just an ancient practice. One may find these in the form of necklaces for women, the Hamsa Hand of Fatima Evil Eye Pendant almost anywhere in Israel today. These kinds of amulets are as common today as it was back in ancient times. In fact, this was so common in ancient times, archaeologists have discovered them not just in archeological sites, but also in ancient tombs some 2000 years old on the shores of the Nile River in Sudan. These graves included richly decorated ceramic boxes with large eyes painted on the front which is believed to be designed to protect against the evil eye. In the case of the Nile river excavations, this dates back to the Kingdom of Kush in Egypt. The Egyptians had a belief in the afterlife and were therefore buried with a number of goods and items that would serve them after death. One such item was containers made for alcoholic beverages which contained engravings of a horned deity. This horned deity is believed to be the god Amun who in the kingdom of Kush was often depicted by a ram's head. The Kushites shared some of the religious beliefs of the Egyptians such as their gods Amun and Isis along with the concept of evil spirits.

References

1. *Dr. Eitan Klein, Archeologist and Deputy Director of the Antiquities Theft Prevention Unit for Israel Antiquities Authority, holding the Byzantine-amulet under investigation.*

Source: Dafna Gazit / Israel Antiquities Authority

In ancient times, i.e. in the Byzantine period, this amulet was used as a demon-repellent, to ward off evil spirits. The pendant is believed to have been worn by pregnant women to protect both the mother and the unborn child from demons. Researchers also believe that this pendant may have been worn by someone involved in ritual magic belonging to a mystical Palestinian Gnostic cult. Researchers however are unsure which group predominantly wore these amulets, Jewish women or Gnostic cult members, or both. The Byzantine period is equivalent to the Talmudic times in Galilee. The Jewish antiquities describes the amulet in the following way: *"The amulet is a necklace pendant made of bronze. The amulet bears the figure of a rider on a galloping horse. The rider's head is encircled with a halo and he thrusts a spear down toward a female figure lying on her back. Engraved in a semicircle above the rider is a Greek inscription that reads: 'The One God who Conquers Evil.'"* The tetragrammaton, the four letter name of God spelled in Greek letters is inscribed upon the amulet. The description of the reverse side of the amulet *"An eye depicted on the reverse is pierced by arrows and by a forked object. The eye is threatened from below by two lions, a snake, a scorpion, and a bird. On the upper part of the same side is the abbreviated Greek inscription: 'One God.'"* The archeologists say that this type of amulet is sometimes called *"Solomon's seal"* where the rider is described as *overcoming an evil spirit*. According to a report in the newspaper Haaretz the amulet was found near the ancient synagogue of Arbel. The location of Arbel is mentioned in the Talmud, the liturgical poetry (piyutim), and in salvation texts from the sixth and seventh centuries (see Jastrow, ארבל I, *Legends of the Jews 1:6:253*). The valley of Arbel is referenced in relation to the *Redemption of Israel*. The valley of Arbel is near the place of Armageddon that is described in the book of Revelation in the NT. All of these things may have played a role in the use of this type of amulet for protection by Christians, Jews, and other people groups in the region. Scholars have generally identified wearers of such amulets as *Christians or Gnostics*. The fact that this amulet was discovered at a Jewish settlement with a synagogue in the fifth and sixth centuries indicates that even Jewish people of the period wore amulets of this type for protection against demons.

The Spiritual Insights that we receive from this type of research is related to our trusting in God in the midst of horrific evil. In ancient days, we do not know to what extent the events in one's life were attributed to demonic spirits. As people of faith, we are able to feel the tension between the depravity of mankind, the influences of evil spirits, and the sustaining power of an all powerful creator God (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:4, Tehillim / Psalms 33:4, Colossians 1:16-17, and Hebrews 1:1-3*). This is why Paul wrote what he did according to *Ephesians 6:10-12*.

אגרת שאול אל האפסים פרק 1

סוף דבר, חזקו באדון ובכם גבורתו. לבשו את מלוא נשק האלהים למען תוכלו לעמד נגד נכלי השטן; כי לא עם בשר – ודם מלחמה לנו, אלא עם רשיות ושירות, עם מושלי השכת העולם הזה, עם כחות רוחניים רעים בשמים.

EPHESIANS 6:10-12

6:10 FINALLY, BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS MIGHT. 6:11 PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD, SO THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO STAND FIRM AGAINST THE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL. 6:12 FOR OUR STRUGGLE IS NOT AGAINST FLESH

***AND BLOOD, BUT AGAINST THE RULERS, AGAINST THE POWERS,
AGAINST THE WORLD FORCES OF THIS DARKNESS, AGAINST THE
SPIRITUAL FORCES OF WICKEDNESS IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES.***

Paul says we are not wrestling against people in this world, the truth of the matter is that we wrestle against the underlying spiritual forces of this world. These spiritual forces influence men towards wickedness as these are the schemes of the evil one. These things also remind us of the power of God according to the gospel of Mark and Luke:

הַבְּשׂוּרָה עַל־פִּי מַרְקוֹס פֶּרֶק א

“מַה לָּנוּ וְלָךְ יֵשׁוּעַ מְנַצֵּרְתָּ? בָּאתָ לְהַשְׁמִיד אוֹתָנוּ! אֲנִי יוֹדֵעַ מִי אַתָּה -- קְדוֹשׁ הַאֱלֹהִים!”

MARK 1:24

1:24 “WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH US, JESUS OF NAZARETH? HAVE YOU COME TO DESTROY US? I KNOW WHO YOU ARE-THE HOLY ONE OF GOD!”

הַבְּשׂוּרָה עַל־פִּי לֹקֶס פֶּרֶק ד

“אַהֲהֵה, מַה לָּנוּ וְלָךְ, יֵשׁוּעַ מְנַצֵּרְתָּ? הָאֵם בָּאתָ לְהַשְׁמִידֵנוּ? אֲנִי יוֹדֵעַ מִי אַתָּה -- קְדוֹשׁ הַאֱלֹהִים!”


LUKE 4:34

4:34 “GO AWAY! WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH US, JESUS OF NAZARETH? HAVE YOU COME TO DESTROY US? I KNOW WHO YOU ARE-THE HOLY ONE OF GOD!”

What is interesting about this statement is that we observe what happens when the evil spirit is in the presence of Yeshua, he cries out in fear according to [Mark 1](#) and [Luke 4](#). This man from all appearances, may have seemed as normal as you and I sitting in the synagogue. Underneath the external appearances however there was a demon hidden from sight. In the presence of the Messiah he was revealed. What Paul writes in Ephesians and what the gospel of Mark and Luke record actually provides us with an interesting point about the sovereignty of God. Today, a lot of people get confused on the difference between God's sovereignty and the presence of evil in this world as we see in this example how an evil spirit was hidden away and actively working in the midst of God's people. These things show us that there is a war waging in this world between deception and truth. The sages describe these things paralleling the NT text saying, *“Everything is in the hands of heaven”* (הכל ביד השמים), see [Talmud Bavli Berakhot 33b:23](#), [Megillah 25a:9](#), [Niddah 16b:1](#), [Ramban on Devarim 18:13:1](#), and many other places in the rabbinic literature, [Ecclesiastes 9](#), [Colossians 1:16](#), [Romans 8:28](#)). The rabbis couple this phrase that everything is in the hands of heaven with *“except the fear of heaven”* (חוץ יראת השמים). This means that even though our lives are being observed from heaven, the choices that we make in this life are in our own hands. This is where the sovereignty of God and freewill meet. In this life, we have faith in Yeshua, and enter into a covenant relationship with our Father in heaven, we

are still responsible for what we do in this life. We have a special calling to come out of this world, to be holy and separate unto God in righteousness and truth! This means that we are to stay away from the evil practices of this world, such as never playing Ouija board games, because this is a well-known way demons are invited into one's life. Tarot cards, mediums, fortune tellers, voodoo, Wicca, the occult, astrology, or any other fascination with the spirit world, or the dead, can attract and encourage evil spirits to enter into one's life. These kinds of things are not just games to play but are very real and dangerous! If a person has done these things out of fun even as a child, the evil one will come and enter his or her life and lay in wait for the opportunity to take advantage. Demons many times function in secret, in the hidden place, inside of a person, undetected for a very long time. This is most likely what had happened with the man who had the unclean spirit in the synagogue in which Yeshua cast out! In the presence of the Messiah he had no choice but to leave!

Let's look at a modern day counterpart that parallels the ancient amulets. Take Catholicism for example. Catholicism uses items to ward off demons, such as holy water and blessed salt around doorways and windows. Catholics also wear amulets to ward off evil spirits, such as the Saint Benedict medal. Prayer is used as a sort of incantation using the rosary and the prayer of Saint Michael. Other catholic recommendations for warding off evil spirits is to simply attend mass regularly. It is believed that one receives grace through the sacraments and prayer, which more or less have a ritualistic function just like the evil eye amulet of ancient times. Note how each of these things are more or less ritualized methods using objects similar to the amulet doing something in one's own ability as opposed to trusting and believing in the power of God to deliver. An interesting point is drawn out related to what we are reading here in Mark and Luke, this man who had the evil spirit, he apparently attended Synagogue regularly too which his attendance did nothing to prevent the evil spirit from entering him or even for removing the entity from this man. The point is these things are no different from the ancient practice that we read according to the archeological discoveries and the evil eye. It is interesting what the scientific research is drawing out for us, that parallels the traditions of Catholicism, or of the occult, when looking at ritual methods to ward off spirits, these things are ineffective. What we need is the power of God in our lives to drive these evil spirits out. As we read here in [Mark 1:24](#) and [Luke 4:34](#), the presence of Yeshua did not just reveal the evil spirit, but also drove the evil spirit from the life of this man and set him free! Having Yeshua (Jesus) in our lives is the most effective and only way to deal with the presence of demons, lies, and untruths. The second way to best deal with spiritual attack is to grow in holiness. It is impossible to grow in holiness when one draws near to the world adopting liberal Ideologies or any of the other numerous godless Ideologies that exist in our culture today. Holiness requires the presence of God in our lives via His Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts and our listening to God's call on our lives by walking in His ways and obeying the commands meaning that we turn from sin and leave the way of the world! What these things teach us as human beings is that we have the ability to choose between good and evil. This means we have a personal responsibility to live in holiness before God! Note that this is not a work of ourselves as someone may propose this is no different from wearing an amulet. This is in fact a function of the presence of God in our lives leading who leads us into all righteousness and holiness according to God's Word. With God and the Messiah Yeshua in our midst, we will be motivated to make the choices, to turn from unholiness. This means our entire lives will change, this involves what we see, what we read, what we listen to, as these things fill our minds which then lead to action (sin). Take television for example is filled with ungodliness,

witchcraft, the occult, and all sorts of immoralities! Consider how this may affect one's faith and relationship with God, this should cause a reason to pause and modify our viewing habits! 

This is the blindness of the postmodern world that refuses to see the truth of human sin and evil and the underlying spiritual forces that are at work to subvert the truth of God. The world manufactures narratives to explain away evil and ungodliness in this world. This is why those who join themselves with the world's Ideologies become blind to truth and righteousness. Similar to the demon who hides in the life of the one who is afflicted, the blindness of this world afflicts those who mingle their faith and they don't even realize the spiritual impact it actually has as causing one to join with sin! Those who seek the Lord and His presence in their lives will find power and truth, whereas those who walk in liberal ideologies and the ways of this world will find an ineffectual and powerless life. The powerless Life leads to what we are reading in the ancient ritual practice to ward off evil spirits by one's own efforts. For the believer in the God of Israel and in Yeshua the Messiah, the one who genuinely believes and receives the presence of God in his or her life, affirms the moral and spiritual order of existence (*i.e. living life according to God's Word*), the power of God is present to demand the evil spirits to leave!

Notice how significant these things are, just as we noted earlier that we have a personal responsibility to live in holiness before God! This is a huge responsibility in terms of how these things affect others. The reason this is so significant is one man or woman can determine the path of a nation. One man can cause thousands to die, and the Torah teaches us how even one man who lives by faith can lead to the salvation of thousands. Remember what happened in Parashat Pinchas, when Zimri brings a Midianite woman into the camp of Israel and to his tent leading to a plague to fall upon the congregation of Israel. Pinchas saw this and by faith took a spear and drove it through them both stopping the plague. Note the mingling with the nations, the way of the world, led to mass death. Another example is king David, he numbered Israel which led to 40,000 dying in a plague. These two examples show how one man has a responsibility to others. Note another example, from Parashat Shelach Lecha, the spies grumbled and we are told they died immediately. This led to a massive loss of life, as generations would die wandering in the wilderness for 40 years and not enter the Promised Land. The people because of their complaint also eventually led to their death, but God had mercy as they were given 40 more years. The Torah reveals our responsibility to others. In [John 17:21](#) Yeshua prayed that we would be one with one another just as he is one with the Father in heaven. This parallels what we read in [Jeremiah 32:39](#) *I will give them one heart and one way, so that they will always fear Me for their own good and for the good of their children after them. (NASB)* This means we are to walk as one, as it says as having one heart. God's people are to love as one man, united as one soul, each being responsible for the other. This is why we either stand with God in heaven, or we are against Him, there is no middle ground. This is why it is impossible to share our relationship with God with the world's Ideologies. When accepting the world's ideologies one is watering down his or her faith. This is why those who walk in liberal ideologies and the ways of this world will find an ineffectual and powerless life. This is a very dangerous approach to faith and life as a believer. This is why Paul wrote what he did saying we are not wrestling against people in this world, but against the underlying spiritual forces that are at work in this world. These spiritual forces influence men towards wickedness as these are the schemes of the evil one, and this is exactly what takes place

when one joins themselves with the way of the world. The idea of using an amulet to protect against the evil eye is not just an ancient practice, these things are as prevalent in our modern day taking many different forms and these things are ineffective. What we need is the power of God in our lives which comes by His presence and indwelling of His Spirit in our hearts. These things speak to us on how important it is to trust in God and in His Messiah Yeshua. We trust and believe in the power of God to deliver us because our war is spiritual in this world! When we do this, we are strong in the LORD and in the power of His might, as taking the *"whole armor of God"* so that we can *"withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."* (Ephesians 6:11-18)

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<https://www.matsati.com>

Dr. Duane D. Miller received his Ph.D., M.S., and B.S. Degree in Chemical Engineering from The University of Akron Ohio. He is currently a Chemical Engineering Researcher. Duane's research expertise has focused upon functional materials development for the control, conversion, and release of process gases in Energy production technologies. His R&D interests include computational chemistry, developing novel technologies for converting biomass to fuels and studying their fundamental interactions during the chemical conversion process. His past experience includes sorbent development for pre- and post-combustion CO₂ and SO₂ capture, selective absorption of H₂S from methane streams, O₂ capture for oxy-fuel combustion, photocatalytic reduction of alcohols, NO_x reduction catalysis, the development of oxygen carriers to combust fossil fuels (CH₄ and coal) for the chemical looping combustion processes, and the extraction of rare earth elements using patent pending sorbents. His research expertise has focused on operando-characterization using Infrared, Raman, and UV-Vis spectroscopy to observe the nature of the catalytic active sites and reaction intermediates under realistic reaction conditions, allowing direct correlation of molecular/electronic structures with catalyst performance during Gas-Solid / Liquid-Solid Adsorption and Photocatalytic Processes with real time online analysis of reaction products using ICP-MS and mass spectrometry. His current work involves a multi-disciplinary approach to developing, understanding, and improving the catalytic gasification of coal and methane, high temperature chemical looping combustion, and the catalytic decomposition and gasification of biomass and coal using novel microwave reactor. He has been studying the Hebrew Scriptures and the Torah for 20+ years and sharing what he has learned. The studies developed for MATSATI.COM are freely to be used by everyone, to God be the Glory!