Tel Dan stele

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| **Tel Dan Stele** |
| Tel Dan Stele, [Israel Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel_Museum). Highlighted in white: the sequence [*B*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bet_%28letter%29)[*Y*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yodh)[*T*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tav_%28letter%29)[*D*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalet)[*W*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waw_%28letter%29)[*D*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalet). |
| **Material** | [Basalt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basalt) |
| **Writing** | [Old Aramaic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Aramaic) ([Phoenician alphabet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenician_alphabet)) |
| **Created** | 870–750 BCE |
| **Discovered** | 1993–94 |
| **Present location** | [Israel Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel_Museum) |

The **Tel Dan Stele** is a fragmentary [stele](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stele) containing a [Canaanite inscription](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canaanite_and_Aramaic_inscriptions), discovered in 1993 in [Tel-Dan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel-Dan) by Gila Cook, a member of an archaeological team lead by [Avraham Biran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avraham_Biran), the pieces having been used to construct an ancient stone wall that survived into modern times.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan_stele#cite_note-1) The stele is in several pieces and contains several lines of [Aramaic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aramaic), closely related to [Hebrew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language) and historically a common language among [Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jews). The surviving inscription, which dates to 9th century BCE, details that an individual killed Jehoram, the son of Ahab, king of Israel and the king of the house of David.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan_stele#cite_note-2) These writings corroborate passages from the [Bible](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible), as the [Second Book of Kings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Book_of_Kings) mentions that [Jehoram](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehoram_of_Israel%22%20%5Co%20%22Jehoram%20of%20Israel), also Joram, is the son of an Israelite king, [Ahab](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahab), by his [Phoenician](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenicia) wife, [Jezebel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jezebel). Applying a Biblical viewpoint to the inscription, the likely candidate for having erected the stele is [Hazael](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hazael%22%20%5Co%20%22Hazael), an Aramean king, whose language would have been Aramaic, who is mentioned in Second Book of Kings as having conquered the [Land of Israel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_of_Israel), though he was unable to take [Jerusalem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem). The stele is currently on display at the [Israel Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel_Museum),[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan_stele#cite_note-3) and is known as [KAI](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kanaan%C3%A4ische_und_Aram%C3%A4ische_Inschriften) 310.



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Discovery and description[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tel_Dan_stele&action=edit&section=1)]

Fragment A of the stele was discovered in July 1993 by [Gila Cook](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Gila_Cook&action=edit&redlink=1) of the team of [Avraham Biran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avraham_Biran) studying [Tel Dan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan) in the northern part of modern Israel. Fragments B1 and B2 were found in June 1994.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan_stele#cite_note-FOOTNOTEBrooks20052-4) The stele was not excavated in its "[primary context](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archaeological_context)", but in its "secondary use".[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan_stele#cite_note-Demsky-5)

The fragments were published by Biran and his colleague Joseph Naveh in 1993 and 1995.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan_stele#cite_note-FOOTNOTEBrooks20052-4)

**Overview**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tel_Dan_stele&action=edit&section=2)]

It consists of several fragments making up part of a triumphal inscription in [Aramaic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aramaic_language), left most probably by [Hazael](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hazael%22%20%5Co%20%22Hazael)[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)] of [Aram-Damascus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aram-Damascus), an important regional figure in the late 9th century BCE. The unnamed king boasts of his victories over the [king of Israel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Israel_%28Samaria%29) and his apparent ally[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan_stele#cite_note-Athas-6) the king of the ["House of David"](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Davidic_line) (*[b](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bet_%28letter%29%22%20%5Co%20%22Bet%20%28letter%29)*[*y*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yodh)[*t*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tav_%28letter%29)[*d*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalet)[*w*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waw_%28letter%29)[*d*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalet)). It is considered the earliest widely accepted reference to the name David as the founder of a [Judahite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Judah) polity outside of the [Hebrew Bible](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Bible),[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan_stele#cite_note-FOOTNOTEFinkelsteinMazarSchmidt200714-7) though the earlier [Mesha Stele](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesha_Stele%22%20%5Co%20%22Mesha%20Stele) contains several possible references with varying acceptance. A minority of scholars have disputed the reference to David, due to the lack of a [word divider](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Word_divider) between *byt* and *dwd*, and other translations have been proposed. The Tel Dan stele is one of four known inscriptions made during a roughly 400-year period (1200-800 BCE) containing the name "Israel", the others being the [Merneptah Stele](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merneptah_Stele%22%20%5Co%20%22Merneptah%20Stele), the [Mesha Stele](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesha_Stele%22%20%5Co%20%22Mesha%20Stele), and the [Kurkh Monolith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurkh_Monolith%22%20%5Co%20%22Kurkh%20Monolith).[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan_stele#cite_note-FOOTNOTELemche199846,_62-8)[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan_stele#cite_note-9)[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan_stele#cite_note-10)

The Tel Dan inscription generated considerable debate and a flurry of articles, debating its age, authorship, and authenticity;[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan_stele#cite_note-FOOTNOTELemche199841-11) however, the stele is generally accepted by scholars as genuine and a reference to the [House of David](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Davidic_line).[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan_stele#cite_note-:2-12)[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan_stele#cite_note-:0-13)[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan_stele#cite_note-:1-14)