

Tablets and Genesis

Commentary for December 1, 2020 — Actually, an Ancient Collection of Tablets

“Genesis: Twelve Eyewitness Reports and Genealogies” is this month’s Doctrinal article. (First read the “[December 2020 Newsletter](#).”) The Genesis article presents a paper written by Dr. Thomas Arnold on how evidence internal to the Book of Genesis gives confidence to the eyewitness nature and origin of authentic accounts in Genesis — all before Moses. Much of the evidence is not new and Dr. Arnold works from a book written in 1948 by P.J. Wiseman titled [Ancient Records and the Structure of Genesis: A Case for Literary Unity](#) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, (1936, 1948) 1977). I believe Arnold provides a corrective to Wiseman’s data and provides a more precise analysis and outline of the text of Genesis to further confirm the reliability of the scriptural text.

There have been many reviews and suggested improvements of Wiseman’s theory. The first major scholar to accept Wiseman’s work was R.K. Harrison in his book *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Tyndale Press, 1970).

Two Factors: Tôledôt Writings and Catch-Lines

Thousands of ancient stone or clay tablets inscribed with writing have survived through millennia and can be deciphered and read today. These tablets demonstrate two phenomena. The first are the *tôledôt* writings at the end, the bottom, of the stones or tablets. These are the words **“These are the generations ...”** (in Genesis 2:4, 5:1, 6:9, 10:1, 32, 11:10, 27, 25:12–13, 19, 36:1, 9, 37:2, with variations). Wiseman found these statements to be signature or identification words revealing several things: who was the writer, the owner, the possessor, or subject of the writing. Sometimes dates were given. These *tôledôt* writings on tablets give important information when multiple tablets are discovered in an archive.

The second phenomenon in tablets is the use of “catch-lines.” They also occur at the end of tablets. When a writing was long and required more than one tablet, an indicator was used, termed a “catch-line,” which were a few words at the end or bottom of a tablet. The same words are repeated at the top of the second tablet. These catch-line words establish the proper sequence for reading the tablets.¹

Once noticed and understood by Wiseman, these two phenomena of tablet writing are clearly in evidence in the Book of Genesis:

“... much of the book of Genesis would have been written on tablets. We know that they were in use in the days of Moses. Similarly, it is very probable that the Ten Commandments were written on tablets (not ‘tables’ [as in the King James

¹ This method of writing and communicating was tedious. Copies were time consuming to produce. The recipient had to have a reader, usually a scribe, fluent in the same written language as the writer or scribe who wrote down the dictated message.

Version]) **of stone**,² and in a manner similar to Babylonian tablets in 'that the tablets were written on both their sides' (Exod. 32:15). The Hebrew verb 'to write' means to 'cut in' or 'dig', a reference to the early method of writing.

Similarly we find that in ancient Iraq, **it was the ending and not the beginning of a tablet which contained the vital information** as to [1] the name of the writer, [2] date on which written and [3] description of the composition."

• **Wiseman, Ancient Records, 33**

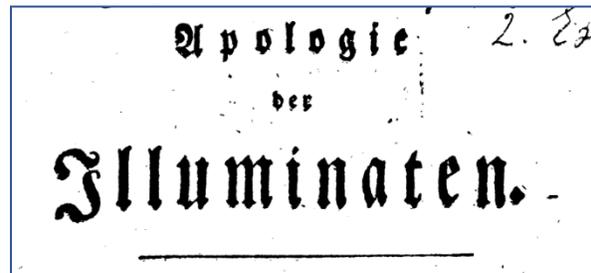
When a document extended over several tablets sometimes the tablets were numbered in addition to the catch-lines (Wiseman, p. 32).

A Catch-line Example

Below is a portion of a title page for the German book, *Apologie des Illuminaten* [translated as *Defense of the Illuminati*] by Adam Weishaupt written in 1786. Below that is a sample of a catch-line. On most every text page of this 374-page book there is a catch-line word at the bottom of one page and it is the first word on the following page. Note the single word at the bottom of page 136 (not numbered). That word is a preview of the first word on page 137.

I am not sure when that feature went out of style in printing, but it probably became unnecessary when printing became more reliable. In 1786 Adam Weishaupt thought it was important to his message to retain catch-lines or catch-words.

This book about the Illuminati (an organization founded in 1776 by Weishaupt) was printed three years before two significant events in 1789: (1) the Constitution of the United States took effect with the elected Congress and George Washington as President of the United States, and (2) the French Revolution began. See my article, "[Conspiracy in Scripture](#)."



Conclusion

These factors, the *tôl^edôt* and the catch-lines, are clear indicators that the documents compiled into the text of Genesis are genuine and very ancient. This month's article, "Genesis: Twelve Eyewitness Reports and Genealogies" will go into detail about the *tôl^edôt* evidence and structure of Genesis.

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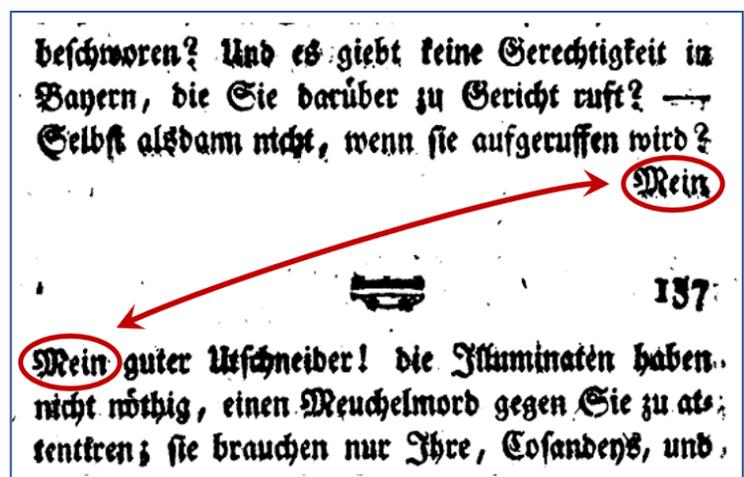


Figure 1. Title, and Catch-line from page 136 to 137

² YHWH twice wrote the Commandments on stone (Exodus 24:12, 31:18, 32:16, 34:1-2, 4; Deuteronomy 10:1-2, 4).