

# Key to Translation of Phaestos Disk: Genesis 49

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## Histori

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## Description

This research examines the symbolic relationship between the pictographs on the Phaistos Disk and the blessings of Jacob in Genesis 49, using a comparative approach to uncover the theological and narrative meanings contained in the symbols.

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## Abstract

*The Phaistos Disk has been an archaeological and linguistic mystery for over a hundred years. This study aims to uncover the meaning of the symbols on the Phaistos Disk through a comparative approach with the symbolic narratives in Genesis 49. Using a descriptive qualitative research method with an interpretive approach and textual analysis, this study focuses on the relationship between the 45 pictographs on the disk and Jacob's blessings to his twelve sons. Each pictograph on the disk is associated with the nature and destiny of the tribes of Israel as described in Genesis 49. The analysis shows the correspondence between the symbols and the characteristics and prophecies Jacob conveyed to his sons, such as the lion symbol for Judah and the ship for Zebulun. This research offers a new approach to interpreting the Phaistos Disk, viewing it not just as a linguistic writing system, but also as a theological or narrative representation that reflects the worldview and cultural values of the Minoan people. These findings open up new insights into the potential for cultural exchange between Minoan society and ancient Israel and lead to a broader understanding of the spiritual and theological context in the ancient world.*

**Keywords:** *Phaistos Disk; Genesis 49; symbolism; Israel; Minoan, ancient narrative*

## INTRODUCTION

The Phaistos disk, discovered in 1908 on the Greek island of Crete, has long been one of the most fascinating and unsolved puzzles in archaeology and linguistics. Its spiral design and symbols, inscribed on both sides, have defied any comprehensive decipherment, despite numerous attempts by experts around the world. The disk, believed to date back to the Minoan Bronze Age (circa 1700-1450 BC), features 242 symbols made from 45 different pictographs, but the meaning of these symbols remains unknown (Baldacci, 2024). Over the past century, many theories have emerged regarding the origin and significance of the Phaistos Disk, including its potential connection to early writing systems from the ancient Near East and its possible association with astronomical or ritual practices. However, there is no single widely accepted theory,

which highlights the complexity of the disk and its potential role in understanding ancient Mediterranean culture (Andreeva, 2020; Peter Z. Revesz, 2015a). However, the purpose, origins and linguistic affiliations of the discs are still debated, adding to the intrigue surrounding these ancient relics. Peter Revesz has described the challenges of translating the Phaistos Disk. Revesz highlighted the contradictory interpretations by various linguists. This emphasizes the need for a computerized approach to eliminate human bias, as human translations often lead to errors and inconsistencies (Peter Z. Revesz, 2015a). Duhoux also conveyed the uniqueness of the Phaistos Disk manuscript, yet the lack of contextual data poses a significant challenge to decipher (Duhoux, 2000).

Recent research suggests that the disk may not be an isolated artifact, but rather part of a broader cultural exchange in the Mediterranean during the second millennium BCE, with potential influences from Egyptian and Hebrew traditions (Akulov, 2017; Reczko, 2009). In particular, the Phaistos Disk can be linked to the blessings of Jacob in Genesis 49, as discussed by Cusack (Cusack, 2017), whose interpretation links the symbols on the disk to the blessings of the twelve sons of Israel. This insight is groundbreaking, as it suggests that the Phaistos Disk may reflect a deep connection between ancient Hebrew and Minoan cultures, potentially revealing theological knowledge.

An important gap in the current literature is the lack of an integrated framework that considers linguistic aspects, especially in relation to the biblical context. Previous studies have largely focused on deciphering the text through a linguistic lens. Yves Duhoux in deciphering focuses on the archaeological context of the discs, and the various languages proposed (Duhoux, 2000). Whereas, Peter Revesz attempted to decipher the Phaistos Disk by focusing on a semi-automatic translation method for the Phaistos Disk, utilizing connections to Proto-Finno-Ugric and Proto-Hungarian languages, resulting in solar hymns associated with winter solstice ceremonies (Peter Z. Revesz, 2015b). Recent research, Braović et al. have also attempted to decipher various Bronze Age scripts, including the Phaistos Disk, by focusing on computational approaches (Braović et al., 2024). Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by proposing a new interpretation that links the symbols of the Phaistos Disk to the blessings of Genesis 49. The author argues that exploring potential parallels between the symbolism of the Phaistos Disk and the text of Genesis 49, a poetic chapter often referred to as the Blessing of Jacob, may provide new avenues for deciphering the Phaistos Disk.

Genesis 49 consists of a series of blessings and prophecies bestowed upon the twelve sons of Jacob, each characterized by different imagery and symbolism, which may resonate with certain motifs found on the Phaistos Disk. The prospect of drawing connections between these seemingly disparate sources has the potential to reveal common cultural or linguistic roots, offering new insights into the meaning and context of the disk. By investigating the symbolic landscape of the Phaistos Disk and Genesis 49, we aim to explore potential correlations that could illuminate the cryptic message of the disk (Timm, 2004). Deciphering the Phaistos Disk requires an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating archaeological, linguistic, and comparative mythological perspectives, while recognizing the limitations of current knowledge and the challenges inherent in interpreting ancient symbols.

## METHOD

The research method used in this study is an exploratory qualitative approach with with an interpretive approach and textual analysis method. This research focuses on interpreting the symbols found on the Phaistos Disk by comparing them directly with the symbolic images in Genesis 49, which contains Jacob's blessings to his twelve sons. This approach begins with the identification and classification of the 45 pictographs on the Phaistos Disk, then matching them with the visual and narrative metaphors in the Genesis text. The primary data sources in this study are the pictographs of the Phaistos Disk and the biblical text of Genesis 49 (Hebrew version and modern translation), while the secondary data is obtained from previous literature that discusses the interpretation of the disk and the theological exposition of Genesis 49 (Duhoux, 2000; Kušmirek, 2021; Steiner, 2013). The analysis is conducted by examining the correlation between the disk symbol and each character or prophecy in Genesis, as well as considering the Minoan cultural context and ancient Israel as the setting for interpretation. Thus, this method is expected to reveal possible theological or narrative meanings of the Phaistos Disk that have not been explored through a purely linguistic approach.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Cultural Context of Minoan and Ancient Israel as a Setting for Interpretation

In addition to symbolic analysis, it is important to consider the cultural context of the Minoans and ancient Israel in interpreting the Phaistos Disk. The Minoans, as an advanced maritime society, are known to have had extensive trade relations with other cultures in the Mediterranean, including possible interactions with ancient Israel. Since the Bronze Age, the region has been a center of cultural exchange, where luxury goods and knowledge were exchanged between the Near East and the Aegean region. The Phaistos disk, found on Crete, can be seen as an artifact of this wider cultural encounter. Research shows that contact between the Minoans and Egypt, as well as between the Minoans and other Near Eastern countries, facilitated the spread of religious, technical and cultural ideas that may have included influences from and on ancient Israel. In this context, the Phaistos Disk can be seen as one result of an exchange of ideas involving symbolism linked to wider religious and social influences in the Mediterranean. For example, the development of symbolism seen in the Phaistos Disk suggests the potential for exchanges involving influences from ancient Egyptian and Israelite traditions (Vinko Thomas Te Paihere Kerr-Harris, 2019)

This context is particularly relevant when interpreting the symbolism on the Phaistos Disk, as it not only sees the symbols as a representation of Minoan culture, but also as a product of the confluence of different cultures in the region. In this sense, Jacob's blessings in Genesis 49 can be seen as a reflection of theological expectations and values that may have also been adopted by Minoan society. Genesis 49, which describes the blessings Jacob gave to his twelve sons, serves as a roadmap for the future of Israel, where each tribe is depicted with deep symbolism, reflecting the theological and political values of the society. This suggests the possibility that the Minoan society, which relied heavily on trade and international relations,

may have adopted similar theological elements in their writing system and symbols. Akulov (2017) highlights the connections between Minoan and other Near Eastern cultures, which could be evidence of mutual influence in various aspects, including spiritual and mathematical knowledge (Akulov, 2017).

One important argument in this context is the Egyptian influence on the Minoans. The Minoans are known to have had a close relationship with Egypt, which is reflected in artifacts found in Crete and Egypt, as well as in art motifs that show Egyptian influence. Recent studies suggest that the encounter between Minoan and Egyptian cultures could have been a channel for the spread of religious ideas involving concepts of cosmology and deification that could relate to the influence of Israelite religion. For example, Minoan art from the same period as the Phaistos Disk shows motifs similar to representations of Egyptian deities, which may have influenced the Minoan religious world. In line with this, the discovery of artifacts connected to Israeli religion and Egyptian culture underscores the possibility of a deeper ideological mutual influence between these two civilizations.

The connection between the Minoans and ancient Israel is also reflected in biblical texts and archaeological evidence. Texts such as Genesis 49, which records the blessings Jacob gave to his sons, contain theological values that focus on the identity and future role of each of the tribes of Israel. For example, in this text, Judah is described as a leader with a powerful lion symbol, which is similar to how the symbols on the Phaistos Disk indicate an important role in the wider culture. This supports the view that Minoan society may have had a similar understanding of the theological and political roles depicted in the symbolism. It also reinforces the possibility that the Phaistos Disk symbols depict not only a writing system, but also profound eschatological and religious values (John Brian Brown, 2005).

Finally, this cultural interaction can be seen in the patterns of trade and migration that connected the regions around the Mediterranean Sea. The Minoans, through their sea trade routes, connected with various cultures, including Egypt, Anatolia, and even to the Levant, where ancient Israel flourished. Minoan sailors and traders brought not only goods, but also ideas, allowing for cultural exchanges that enriched their society with new knowledge. The discovery of similar symbolism between Minoans and Israelites shows that these two cultures were not only connected through material trade, but also through ideological and theological exchange, which created similarities in the way they understood the world and their place in it (Hitchcock & Maeir, 2017).

### **Analysis of Phaistos Plate Symbols with Genesis 49**

The analysis of the symbols on the Phaistos Disk, which totals 45 pictographs, focuses on mapping the relationship of the symbols on it to the prophecies and blessings given by Jacob to his twelve sons in Genesis 49 (Andreeva, 2020). The disk, which was found in Crete and is thought to date back to the Minoan Bronze Age (circa 1700-1450 BCE), has a spiral design that not only suggests an artistic impression but could also hold a deeper message. Genesis 49 itself is a poetic text that contains metaphors, images, and prophecies describing the characteristics of each of the tribes of Israel (Kuśmirek, 2021), which could be the basis for

understanding the symbols found on the Phaistos Disk. Therefore, understanding the connection between the symbols on this disk and the verses in Genesis 49 is important to uncover the meaning hidden in this artifact.



Figure 1. Image of Phaestos disk (Kyriaki Lympelopoulou, 2022; Macdonald, 1999; Revesz, 2015).














































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Figure 2. 45 Pictographs on the disk.

The 45 pictographs on the Phaistos Disk can be interpreted as telling the story of the Blessing of the Sons of Israel (Jacob) in Genesis 49:1–28. In this biblical passage, Jacob, on his

deathbed, blesses each of his twelve sons, each blessing rich in symbolic meaning, reflecting the future roles and destinies of the twelve tribes of Israel. The pictographs on the disk seem to align with the themes present in these blessings, where symbols may represent the characteristics, roles, and prophecies associated with each son. The pictographs are as follows:

Table 1. Genesis 49 Sons of Israel compared to Pictographs

Pictograph Number 1-45	Description	Pictograph	Genesis 49 Verse	Son Of Israel
#1	Troop	Marching Military	19	Gad
#9	Tiara	Royal Dainties	20	Asher
#10	Arrow	Archer	23	Enemies
#11	Bow	“	24	“
#12	Shield	E^T		At Math
#15	Mattlock	Instruments Of Cruelty	5	Simon And Levi
#25	Ship	Haven Of Ships	13	Zebulun
#23	Column	Gavel=Judge	23	Dan
#27	Hide	Wolf	27	Benjamin
28	Hoof	Strong Ass	14	Issachar
#29	Cat	Lion	9	Judah
#36	Vine	Friutful Bough	22	Joseph
#40	Ox Back	Hind	21	Naphtali
#45	Water	Wave	4	Reuben

The “lion” symbol on the Phaistos Disk for example, which is depicted with a lion's head or the image of a sturdy lion, very likely refers to the image of Judah in Genesis 49:9. In Jacob's blessing for Judah, it says that “Judah is the son of a lion,” which describes the strength and power of the tribe of Judah. Jacob prophesied that the leader would come from this tribe, and the lion metaphor reflects the dominant nature and ability to lead (Steiner, 2013). If the symbols on the Phaistos Disk truly indicate this power and leadership, then it is likely that the image of the lion serves as a representation of the same power, given that the Phaistos Disk is an artifact that may contain similar political or eschatological values. This illustrates the close connection between Biblical texts and the symbolism found in Minoan culture.

In addition, the “ship” symbol that appears on the Phaistos Disk could be connected to the blessing for Zebulun in Genesis 49:13, which describes Zebulun as a tribe that would live near the sea and be a harbor for ships. Zebulun was known as a tribe involved in trade and seafaring, and this role was symbolically depicted with ships. In the Phaistos Disk, the image of a ship is clearly visible in one of the pictographs, indicating that the people who made this disk probably recognized and appreciated the importance of sea trade, a theme that is also reflected in the Genesis narrative. Therefore, this ship symbol reflects not only the

geographical aspect of the Zebulunites but also their role in the economy and the extensive trade network that connected them with other civilizations in the Mediterranean.

Furthermore, the analysis of the “wolf” symbol on the Phaistos Disk also provides important insights, especially in relation to the blessing for Benjamin in Genesis 49:27. In the verse, Jacob refers to Benjamin as a “savage wolf,” referring to Benjamin's strong and courageous nature in battle. Benjamin, in Israel's history, was known for its outstanding military capabilities, and this prophecy foresaw the tribe's role in struggle and conflict. The image of the wolf on the Phaistos Disk depicted in a way that suggests similar strength and courage can be interpreted as a visual representation of the characteristics of the tribe of Benjamin, confirming the close connection between the symbolism on the Phaistos Disk and the Biblical text. As such, the wolf symbol can be seen as an affirmation of the narrative that depicts the tribe of Benjamin as indomitable warriors.



Figure 3. Disk showing 28 verses separated by a slash.  
There are 28 verses in Chapter 49  $= (4)(9) = Mc^2$

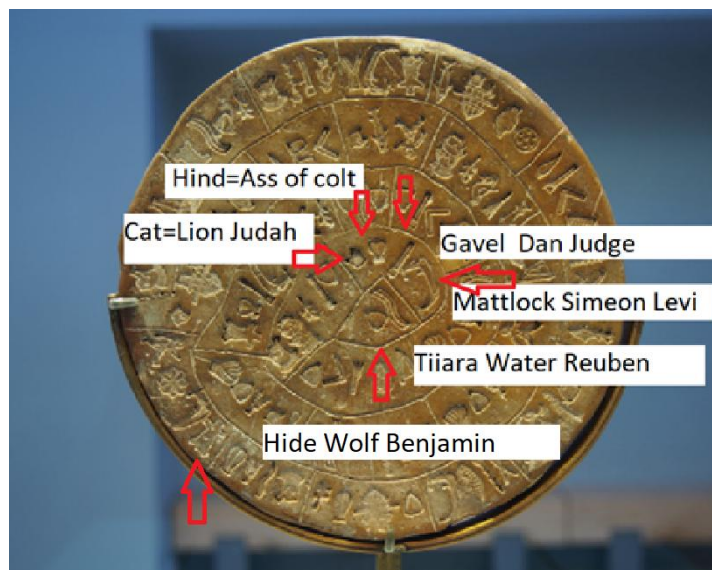


Figure 4. The Beginning of Genesis 49. QED

In a broader context, this correlation of symbols indicates that the Phaistos Disk is not just an object of art or writing, but also a symbolic tool that communicates theological and political values. Through the interpretation of these symbols, we can see the potential for greater theological influence of Hebrew culture on Minoan culture (Akulov, 2017). The text of Genesis 49, which contains strong symbolism related to the eschatological role of each tribe of Israel, provides a framework for the interpretation of the symbols on the Phaistos Disk. This opens up the possibility that the disk may contain broader messages, which go beyond the local Minoan context, and may also reflect hopes or prayers similar to those found in the ancient Hebrew tradition. In this regard, symbolic interpretations that suggest a connection between the symbols and Genesis 49 offer new insights into possible cultural and ideological exchanges between these two cultures.

### **Theological and Narrative Meanings of the Phaistos Disk**

The Phaistos Disk has long been considered a linguistic artifact, with symbols that may represent an ancient, lost writing system. However, a deeper analysis suggests that the disk could be more accurately understood as a symbolic narrative, reflecting the theological and spiritual worldview of the Minoan people. The symbols inscribed on the disk might not just serve an administrative or linguistic function, but could also express the Minoans' understanding of their relationship with higher powers. This interpretation aligns with eschatological narratives in various ancient cultures, including the Hebrew tradition, where texts like Genesis 49 convey future hopes and divine promises as articulated in Jacob's blessings to the twelve tribes of Israel (Schwartz, 1959).

The symbols on the Phaistos Disk may also represent a ritualistic narrative, echoing the spiritual journey of the Minoan people. Some scholars, such as Roberta Rio (2011), argue that the disk could be a ceremonial object that contains a structured ritual sequence. The organized arrangement of symbols on the disk reflects a larger system, embodying the religious and social concepts of Minoan society. This suggests the possibility that the Phaistos Disk was used in a religious context, perhaps as part of a ceremony tied to cycles of time, seasons, or celestial events, reflecting the eschatological worldview of the Minoans (Rio, 2011).

By comparing the symbols on the disk to Biblical texts like Genesis 49, intriguing parallels can be observed. Genesis 49, with its blessings from Jacob to his sons, lays out a division of theological and eschatological roles for the twelve tribes of Israel. Each tribe is depicted with rich symbolism that highlights their character and future destiny. The symbols on the Phaistos Disk can be understood in a similar light, where each pictograph represents not just an object or animal, but a deeper meaning tied to the future or collective expectations. Viewed through this lens, the Phaistos Disk emerges as a cultural "prophecy" or prediction, which might reflect broader worldviews, including influences from surrounding cultures like Egyptian and Israelite traditions (Revesz, 2015a; Revesz, 2015).

Further research by Revesz (2015) into the potential connections between the disk's symbols and ancient spiritual or astronomical concepts adds another layer of theological understanding. Revesz suggests that the disk may symbolize the celebration of seasons or

celestial events, both central to Minoan spiritual life. This leads to the idea that the Phaistos Disk might serve as an artifact that blends spiritual beliefs with scientific knowledge, used to determine time or specific rituals, much like similar artifacts found across the Mediterranean and Near East. Thus, the Phaistos Disk could be seen as more than just a cultural object; it may also represent a larger cosmological system (Andreeva, 2020).

These findings suggest that the Phaistos Disk, while often categorized as a linguistic or administrative artifact, holds deeper theological and narrative significance. By interpreting its symbols in the context of Genesis 49, the disk transforms from a mere tool for divination to a cultural artifact reflecting the integration of spiritual, social, and political values in Minoan society. This approach offers a new perspective on the Phaistos Disk and contributes significantly to our understanding of ancient cultural interactions (Reczko, 2009).

## CONCLUSION

This research concludes that the Phaistos Disk, often regarded as a linguistic or administrative artifact, likely holds deeper theological and narrative meanings. By interpreting the disk's symbols through a comparative approach with Genesis 49, the disk can be seen as a representation of Minoan society's spiritual beliefs and eschatological expectations. The research also suggests the possibility of cultural exchanges between the Minoans and ancient Israel, with shared symbolic and theological elements. This discovery contributes significantly to the academic understanding of ancient cultural interactions, particularly in the context of ancient Mediterranean civilizations. Thus, the Phaistos Disk is not only a linguistic or administrative tool but a profound artifact that might embody the intersection of spirituality, culture, and cosmology, shedding light on the historical and theological connections between Minoan and Israelite cultures.

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