

Drs. Knohl and DeConick on the Gabriel Stone (with my two cents thrown in):

80 לשלושת ימין ...ח אני גבריאל ... ל..[?]

ח or ה

81 שר השרין ד..ן ארובות צרים א] א..[?]

80. In three days li[ve], I, Gabri'el ...[?],

81. the Prince of Princes, ..., narrow holes(?) ...[...]

Professor Knohl interprets the (partial) Hebrew text in line 80 as an imperative following the circumstantial phrase “in three days”. This is followed by another clause that begins with “I, Gabriel ...?” In Knohl’s view, the word would begin with the letter ח. This is possible, but so is the letter required for April’s suggestion (see below).

April DeConick suggested that the word in question should not be translated with imperative force as a command (“live!”), but perhaps ought to be translated “in three days raise [us?] up,” further suggesting the stone follows Hosea 6:2 in this regard. This may sound like a command, but it could be April doesn’t say, but I presume that for this translation she’s arguing for is an imperfect (Hosea 6:2 has an imperfect Piel 3ms of this lemma). At any rate, that is how professor Knohl understood her comment, for in his response he refers to a translation “he will raise us up” from Hosea (which, again, is an imperfect). April would need a Piel (like in Hosea 6:2) or a Hiphil form for her suggestion to be possible. The first letter looks like it could be the letter ה and not the letter ח as Knohl transcribes. Those two letters are notoriously difficult to distinguish in inscriptions of this type (basically anything that isn’t the epigraphic Hebrew script).

Knohl disallows April’s suggestion on the basis of Hebrew syntax, saying “If this was really the meaning of this word, we should expect to find the object of the reviving act immediately after that.” Well, there are obviously examples where the subject “immediately” follows such a verb form, and after that we get the object. I’m sure Knohl is aware of that. I think what’s he’s angling for here is that one would expect a suffixed object immediately following. So how about that? A couple comments to consider:

1. Hiphil 3ms forms of the lemma in question (חיה) do occur in the Hebrew Bible.

For example, the form **חַיְהִיָּה** appears in 2 Kings 8:1; 2 Kings 8:5; Josh 6:25;

Josh 14:10. Since only the first letter is “clear” (even though it could be two different letters), Knohl cannot rule out a form that would, semantically, yield the same or similar results to the Piel Imperfect found in Hosea 6:2. There are enough letter spaces (5 would be needed – and Knohl marks five total consonants) for such a form (suffixed object on the hypothetical Hiphil form, just as we have a suffixed Piel form in Hosea 6:2).

2. If this were the case—if we had a Hiphil verb form with a suffixed object—then the following “I Gabriel” could conceivably be the subject as well: “I, Gabriel, will raise X up.”

It seems to me that Professor Knohl’s dismissal of April’s suggestion is too hasty. We may well have a citation (albeit with a different stem) of what Hosea 6:2 is saying. And in that case, the National Geographic nonsense that both Knohl and DeConcick (and me as well, naturally) are lamenting gets all the more ridiculous. Like that will matter to them.