

## Ancient Figurine Reveals Early Human–Animal Bond in Israel



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Doha, November 2025 – Archaeologists from Israel and the United States have uncovered a rare 12,000-year-old clay figurine in northern Israel that offers remarkable insight into early human–animal relationships and symbolic expression. The discovery, announced by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, is considered the earliest known representation of interaction between a human and an animal in Southwest Asia.

The miniature artifact, found at a Late Natufian prehistoric village near the Sea of Galilee, depicts a crouching woman with a goose resting on her back. Researchers describe the piece as an exceptional example of naturalistic artistic skill long before the development of the Neolithic period.

Measuring just 3.7 centimeters in height, the figurine was crafted from local clay and fired at temperatures close to 400 degrees Celsius. Microscopic examination revealed traces of red pigment on both figures, as well as a fingerprint believed to belong to a young adult female craftsman. According to the research team, the artist's use of light, shadow, and subtle detailing reflects techniques that became common only thousands of years later.

Archaeologists believe the scene holds spiritual or ritual meaning, offering a rare look into the symbolic world of early settled communities. While geese were a known part of the Natufian diet, they also carried cultural and symbolic value, which may explain their presence in this intimate

human–animal portrayal.

The discovery suggests that prehistoric villagers were already experimenting with narrative art and developing forms of storytelling that would later shape Neolithic belief systems. Researchers say the figurine provides an important link in understanding how early communities expressed identity, spirituality, and their connection with the natural world.