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Jul 29, 2009 16:53 | Updated Jul 30, 2009 9:38

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By ETGAR LEFKOVITS

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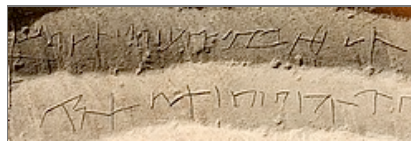
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Article's topics: Jerusalem, Second Temple

A unique Aramaic inscription on a stone cup commonly used for ritual purity during the first century has been uncovered in a dig on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, an archeologist said Wednesday.

The six-week excavation is being carried out within the Gan Sobev Homot Yerushalayim national park, close to the Zion Gate of the Old City.



Two lines of the Aramaic inscription. Photo: Stephen Pfann/UHL

The 10-line Aramaic script, which is clear but cryptic, is being deciphered by a team of epigraphic experts in an effort to determine the meaning of the text, said Prof. Shimon Gibson, of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, who is co-directing the excavation.

"This is a difficult script, not one that is worn or graded, which demands research," Gibson said.

He estimated that it would take a couple of months to determine what the inscription says.

"It is like digging out grandparents' hand-written letters," he quipped.

Gibson said the find uncovered two weeks ago was rare because few inscriptions from the Second Temple Period had been discovered in Jerusalem.

The dig also uncovered a sequence of building dating from the First and Second Temple periods through to the Byzantine and Early Islamic eras.

The additional finds include a house complex with a mikve ritual bath featuring a remarkably well preserved vaulted ceiling.

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Three bread ovens - dated to 70 CE, when Titus and the Roman army stormed the city - were also found in the house.

Archaeologists believe that this area of Jerusalem's Upper City was the priestly quarter during Second Temple times.

A large arched building with a mosaic floor from the Byzantine period preserved to a height of 3 meters was also uncovered. It may be part of a building complex or street associated with the nearby Church of St. Mary.

Word of the day: [meat](#)

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- 61. 60 - sounds like you know exactly who i am**
mike - (08/04/2009 00:22)
- 60. 59 - I see. "Mike is not anonymous"**
Mike - (08/03/2009 08:01)
- 59. 57, 58 why anonymous?**
mike - (08/02/2009 22:14)
- 58. 55 Mike - you fool no one, the cult is your Christianity**
Anon - (08/02/2009 11:08)
- 57. 55 Mike - your Christianity is the cult**
Commenter - (08/02/2009 08:22)
- 56. 55 Is that like a cartoon you watch?**
Eliyahu - Yisrael (08/02/2009 07:21)
- 55. 54 cultboy**
mike - (08/01/2009 17:19)
- 54. First line looks a lot like Tehilim 26.8**
Paqid Yirmeyahu - Israel (07/31/2009 18:32)
- 53. Revised Sentence**
psk - unholy journalistic empire (07/31/2009 18:07)
- 52. First line looks a lot like Tehilim 26/8**
Paqid Yirmeyahu - Israel (07/31/2009 17:47)
- 51. Maybe it says . . .**
Michelle - (07/31/2009 14:50)
- 50. Why the Delay in Translation: The Answer**
Yaakov - (07/31/2009 04:49)
- 49. #42 & "Cryptic" Translation--it's all about the money!**
Christoph - USA (07/31/2009 02:51)
- 48. cup**
yudl - USA (07/30/2009 23:48)
- 47. #1 not even close to the same thing....**
Mitchell F. - NC (07/30/2009 23:18)
- 46. Re: #25 letter from great aunt to your grandmom**
A regular Jewish guy - (07/30/2009 23:09)
- 45. Re #15 "Palestinian artefacts"**