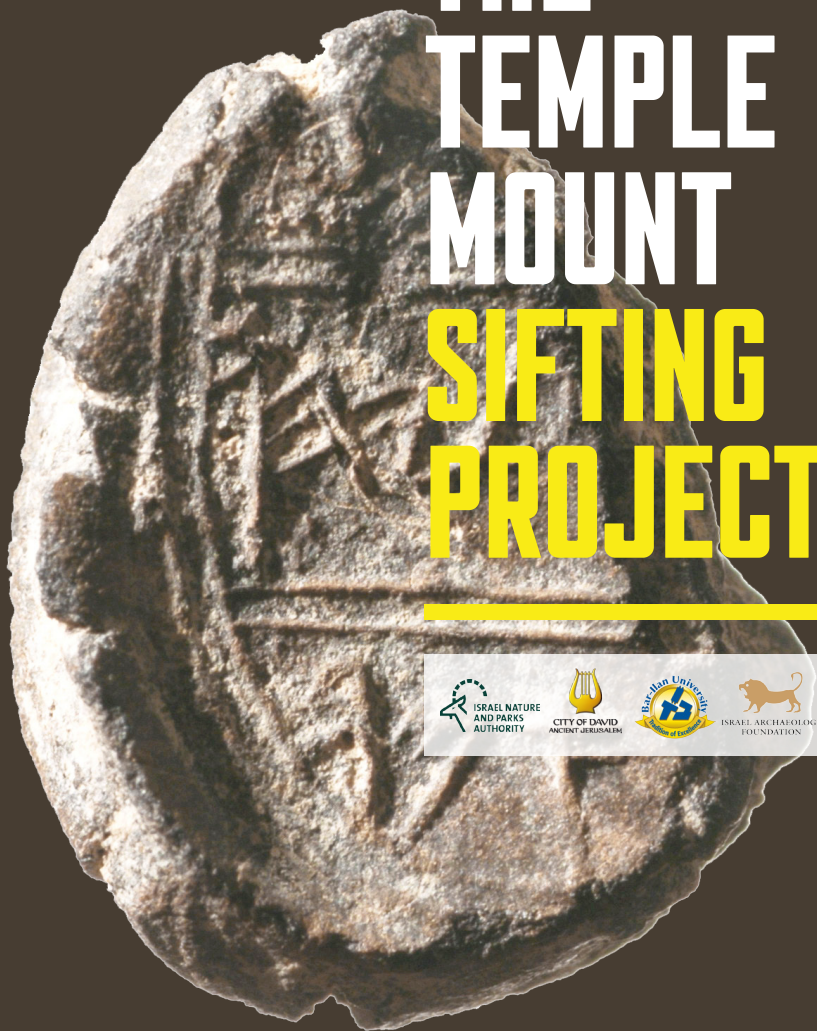


THE TEMPLE MOUNT SIFTING PROJECT



Anything that
happens on the
Temple Mount
resonates
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THE TEMPLE MOUNT

The Temple Mount is sacred to more than half of the world's population. It is Judaism's holiest site, where the First and Second Jewish Temples once stood, and it remains the focal point of Jewish longing prayer till this day. For Christians, it is home to the Temple that Jesus knew; and it is the third holiest site in Islam, the location of the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque. Anything that happens on the Temple Mount resonates throughout the world.

Despite the fact that the Temple Mount is mentioned numerous times in the Bible and in important ancient historical sources, much of its past remains a mystery. **No archaeological excavation has ever taken place on the site** because of its political sensitivity. The absence of archaeological data has resulted in many unresolved historical questions that are the subject of much scholarly debate.

THE SIFTING PROJECT

In 1999, the Waqf (the Muslim trust that manages the site) illicitly bulldozed a huge pit at the southeastern corner the Temple Mount and dumped approximately 400 truckloads, 9,000 tons, of soil saturated with archaeological artifacts from all of Temple Mount's historical periods into the nearby Kidron Valley.

Archaeologists Dr. Gabriel Barkay and Zachi Dvira from Bar-Ilan University understood that this discarded earth represented a treasure trove of information relating to the Temple Mount's history, despite the fact that

it had been so brutally wrenched from its archaeological context.

In 2004, they seized this unique opportunity and established the Temple Mount Sifting Project at the Emek Tzurim National Park on the slopes of Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, with the goal of rescuing the ancient artifacts and conducting research that would enhance our understanding of the Temple Mount's history.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Since the Temple Mount has never been excavated, the ancient artifacts retrieved in the Sifting Project provide valuable and previously inaccessible information. Even though they have been extracted from their archaeological context, most of these artifacts can be identified and dated by comparison with those found at other sites. The Project developed new methodologies and technologies for studying the finds from the Temple Mount and has implemented advanced quantitative and analytical methods for understanding the significance of the distribution of finds throughout the mass of debris. This is as close as anyone has ever come to excavating the Temple Mount itself.

THE FINDS

Every bucket of earth that we sift contains ancient artifacts from almost every period since about 3,000 years ago. The most common categories are pottery fragments, glass vessels' pieces, metal objects, animal bones, worked stones and mosaic tesserae.

In addition to these general categories, there are many fascinating finds, such as fragments of stone vessels, jewelry, beads, terracotta figurines, arrowheads and other weaponry, weights, clothing accessories, gaming pieces and dice, bone and shell inlays, furniture decorations, ornaments, bone and ivory objects, and fragments of inscriptions on stone and pottery.

There are also elaborate architectural remains, including fragments of columns and their capitals, fragments of mosaic floors, opus Sectile floor tiles, frescos (colored wall plaster

pieces) and glazed wall tiles. To date, the Sifting Project has uncovered more than 5,000 coins, ranging from tiny silver coins from the 4th century BCE to coins minted in modern times. Among them are very rare and exciting coins such as a silver half-shekel minted during Second Temple times (66/67 CE) for the payment of the half-shekel Temple donation commanded in the book of Exodus.



■ Wailing wall

■ Dome of the Rock

■ Al-Aqsa Mosque

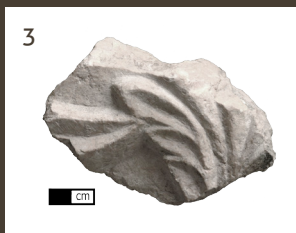
■ Bulldozed Pit

Soil from the Temple Mount illegally dumped by the Waqf in the Kidron Valley



“For your servants have cherished her stones, and have redeemed her dust”
(Psalms 102:14-15)

The Sifting Project has become a global educational endeavor. More than 150,000 volunteers have participated in the sifting, a number unprecedented in any archaeological project anywhere in the world.



1

Bronze arrowhead dated to the 10th century BCE, the time of King Solomon. Arrowheads from this period are rarely found in Israel, and it may attest to the existence of an armed force on the Temple Mount during this period.

2

A cone-shaped stone seal from the first days of the First Temple period, the time of King Solomon, depicting two quadrupeds. This type of seal is very rare and the first of its kind found in Jerusalem

3

A fragment of an elaborately decorated frieze. The design is of an acanthus leaf typical of Herodian architecture. The stone has burn marks and may have originated in the Temple itself.

4

A clay seal impression that bears the Hebrew names אִמֶּר and יְהוֹאָחָז, meaning "(Belonging to) [...]yah (son of) Immer". Immer was the name of a priestly family mentioned in the books of Jeremiah and Chronicles. This seal impression is the first ancient Hebrew inscription ever found from the Temple Mount and directly attests to the administrative activities in the First Temple.

8



5

A large limestone column capital of the Doric order. It could be associated with the eastern porch ("Solomon's Portico"), which was probably built during the Hasmonean dynasty's reign.

6

A rare silver half-shekel coin that was found in the sifting. These coins were used for paying the annual Temple tax according to the Biblical commandment in Exodus 30:13-15.

7

Bronze Irano-Schythic triple-bladed arrowhead which was used by the Babylonian army when it conquered Judah and destroyed the Temple in 586 BCE.

8

Floor tiles of various shapes, colors and sizes that were used in the opus Sectile Roman paving technique in royal structures. This type of floor is mentioned in the writings of Flavius Josephus regarding the floor of the open courts that surrounded the Temple.



Various pieces of jewelry from different periods. Materials include semi-precious stones, glass, bronze, silver and gold.

Bone and ivory dice common to the Roman period. Jewish law from that exact time, per the Mishnah, disqualifies any person who plays with dice (Sanhedrim 24b).



Arrowheads from the Second Temple period.



THE NEXT PHASE

Archaeological finds that lay hidden within the Temple Mount soil for thousands of years can now be scientifically analyzed and published for the first time. More than half a million finds await processing and analysis in our laboratory. This study and publication are enormous tasks that require diligence and the expertise of many scholars. Publishing the results of this work will shed more light on the long history of this sacred site and hopefully contribute to the resolution of many unanswered questions.

**OUR RESEARCH
IS CASTING NEW
LIGHT ON THIS
UNIVERSALLY
SIGNIFICANT AND
HALLOWED SITE**

If you wish to support this project,
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