

Archaeologists Unearth Rare 1,700-Year-Old Inscription on Church in Israeli Desert

German and Israeli scientists discovered a 1700-year-old stone bearing the name of a city believed to be the possible location of an ancient biblical town.

The Greek inscription refers to the city of Elusa (*Halutza* in Hebrew) and was discovered during excavations in Halutza National Park in the Negev desert.

“The name of the city of Elusa appears in a number of historical documents and contexts, including the Madaba mosaic map, the Nessana papyri and other historical references. However, this is the first time that the name of the city has been discovered in the site itself. The inscription mentions several Caesars of the tetrarchy, which allow to date it around 300 C.E.,” the Israel Antiquities Authority said Wednesday in a press release.

The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declared Elusa a World Heritage site. The city is one of two main potential locations for the biblical city of Ziklag.

Ziklag is mentioned in Genesis, Joshua and Samuel. King David is believed to have been given the town by a Philistine king named Achish.

According to the Israel Antiquities Authority, Elusa was founded toward the end of the 4th century B.C. and was an important station along the ancient Incense Road between Petra and Gaza. The city continued to develop over the years and reached its peak in the Byzantine period in the fourth to mid-sixth centuries A.D.

Dr. Tali Erickson-Gini, an archaeologist who worked on the project, said wine was largely responsible for the flourishing of the entire region.

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