

Ancient 'Mount of Olives' lamp with Jewish Temple symbols discovered in Jerusalem

A rare 1,700-year-old lamp with Jewish Temple symbols has been uncovered in Jerusalem, the Israel Antiquities Authority announced on Thursday.

Excavation Director Michael Chernin explained the importance of the ancient artifact he referred to as the Mount of Olives lamp.

"After the Roman Emperor Hadrian suppressed the Bar Kockba rebellion in 135 C.E., Jews were expelled from the city. The Mount of Olives lamp is one of the few material traces of a Jewish presence around Jerusalem in the 3rd-5th centuries C.E.," Chernin said.

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"The exquisite artistic workmanship of the lamp, which was found complete, makes it outstanding and extremely rare," he continued.

Chernin said the discovery of the ancient artifact is "particularly surprising," acknowledging that there is "very little evidence of the existence of a Jewish settlement in and around Jerusalem from this period."

Benjamin Storchon, an IAA research archaeologist, assessed that the ancient lamp is of "the 'Beit Nattif' type, named after a production workshop identified in the 1930s near Bet Shemesh," a town west of Jerusalem.

Storchan further explained that “oil lamps with menorah decorations are exceedingly rare, and only a few similar Beit Nattif-type lamps can be found in the National Treasures archive. The choice of symbols on the lamp is not accidental. This is a fascinating testimony connecting everyday objects and faiths among ancient Jerusalem’s inhabitants. It seems that the lamp belonged to a Jew, who purchased it because of its religious affiliation and memorial to the Temple.”

“It is evident that the lamp maker dedicated a great deal of time and effort to its decoration,” he added.

Storchan concluded by highlighting the level of refinement behind the production of the ancient lamp.

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“The molds were made in two parts (upper and lower). To create the lamp, the potter pressed the clay into the molds and then pressed them together. Finally, the vessel was fired, and it could be used. This method of producing lamps in molds allowed for refined designs, as well as the addition of delicate and intricate decorations,” he said.

Israeli Heritage Minister Rabbi Amichai Eliyahu welcomed the discovery of the ancient lamp, linking it to the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah.

“This unique oil lamp, which in an exciting manner bears the symbols of the Temple, connects the lights of the past with the Hannukah holiday of today and expresses the deep and long-standing connection of the nation of Israel to its heritage and to the Temple’s memory,” Eliyahu stated.

The Holy Land is, despite its compact size, filled with archaeological treasures from various periods. This is attributed to its long and complex history and its

geographical position at the intersection between Asia, Africa and Europe.

Israeli archaeologists recently **discovered an ancient Jewish oil lamp** dating back to the 4th-6th centuries at the Zippori National Park in Israel's northern Galilee region. The sites are linked to the life of Jesus and early Christianity.

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