

Archaeologists Find Rare 'Pure to God' Temple Seal

Archaeologists digging near the Western Wall in Jerusalem's Old City unearthed a rare find used in the daily work of the ancient Jewish Temple.

The small clay seal is inscribed with two words in Aramaic meaning "pure to God."

"This is the first time we got [found] something that belongs to God, belongs to something that came from the temple," Israel Antiquities Authority archaeologist Eli Shukron said.

Archaeologists say the seal is the first archaeological evidence of the administrative workings of the Second Temple. That temple was built around 500 B.C. after Solomon's Temple had been destroyed.

Experts believe temple officials used the seal as a stamp to indicate that an object, such as oil or an animal for sacrifice, was approved for ritual use in the temple.

Archaeologists found this latest treasure, dated between the first century B.C. and 70 A.D. when the Romans destroyed the Second Temple, while excavating near the foundations of the Western Wall.

"It's very, very exciting to find something that priests use in the temple before 2,000 years—something that belong[ed] to the temple, and this is the first time we found a thing like that—ever," Shukron said.

Layers of soil covered the giant foundation stones of the outer wall of the Temple Mount. During the time of the Second Temple, the main street of Jerusalem would have been above it ... including the years when Jesus walked the city.

Shukron said all the dirt and debris from the area is meticulously sifted for artifacts.

“And the dirt that covered this stone from here we took it to the sifting and then we sifted and found the seal from this area, from this area that we stand,” he explained.

Archaeologists are not allowed to excavate on the Temple Mount itself because of political and religious sensitivities. It currently houses the Muslim mosques and shrines.

Not long ago, archaeologists found coins in a ritual bath under the nearby Western Wall, which indicated that King Herod the Great, builder of Jerusalem, didn't finish the Western Wall himself before he died.