

Archeologists Find Rare Gemstone Near Jerusalem's Western Wall

Just north of the City of David (ancient Jerusalem), archaeologists believe they have found the first of its kind engraving on a precious gem of a biblical plant known to many as the balm of Gilead.

Deep underground in a 2,000-year-old drainage ditch next to Jerusalem's Western Wall, archaeologists say a rare artifact from Second Temple times was uncovered.

"It is a stone seal made of semi-precious amethyst stone with an engraving of a dove and a branch of a tree with fruit on the branch," said Eli Shukron, former archaeologist of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

"What was surprising was that the branch is a branch with fruits that are not recognized from other seals from that period," Shukron explained.

The seal was found while archaeologists and volunteers were sifting the remains from the drainage ditch at the Emek Tzurim National Park operated by the City of David.

"Once we found the seal with the branch and the fruit, we hypothesized that it was the biblical persimmon fruit plant as mentioned in the Bible and in the sources of the Second Temple period and the Byzantine period," Shukron said.

This biblical persimmon plant is not related to the orange persimmon fruit of today. It was known in ancient times by several names: bosome, balsam and the balm of Gilead

"Jerusalem's primary drainage channel was built under the pilgrimage road. The pilgrimage road started from the Pool of Siloam in the City of David and went up to the temple on the

Temple Mount of the Second Temple period. Apparently, this ring with the seal fell into the drainage ditch 2,000 years ago,” Shukron said. {eo}

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