

# Buried for 2,000 Years: Ancient Second Temple Discovery Found Beneath Western Wall Plaza

A Jewish person living during the Second Temple period – roughly 516 BCE to 70 CE – was required to immerse in a mikveh before entering the Temple. As a result, ritual baths were built throughout Jerusalem, near main roads, public buildings, and private homes, forming an essential part of daily life in the holy city.

One of those mikvehs has now been uncovered in an extraordinary location—hidden beneath the Western Wall Plaza. Hewn directly into the bedrock during the final days of the Second Temple period, the mikveh lay sealed for nearly 2,000 years.

The rectangular ritual bath measures about 10 feet in length ( meters), 4 feet 5 inches in width ( meters), and 6 feet 1 inch in height ( meters). Its walls were carefully plastered, and four hewn steps descend into the pool from the southern side.

The mikveh was burned during the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. As Roman forces set the city ablaze and destroyed the Second Temple, ash and debris sealed the ritual bath beneath layers of destruction, preserving it for nearly two thousand years.

“This was a Temple city,” explained excavation director Ari Levy of the Israel Antiquities Authority. “Daily life in

Jerusalem revolved around ritual purity. That reality shaped how people lived, what they used and how the city itself was built.”

Archaeologists also uncovered numerous pottery vessels, along with stone vessels characteristic of the Jewish population living in Jerusalem on the eve of the destruction. Stone vessels were commonly used because, under Jewish law, they do not contract ritual impurity.

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