

Byzantine Monastery with Mosaic Inscription from Deuteronomy Discovered Near Kiryat Gat

An ancient Christian monastery has been discovered north of Kiryat Gat, the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) announced in a press release.

“The monastery is dated to the Byzantine period (5th-6th centuries CE), and it is part of an ancient site that already existed during the Roman period and continued for approximately 600 years,” the IAA said.

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In addition to the monastery, the excavation uncovered remains of a wine press, a warehouse and several other ancient structures.

On the floor of the monastery ruins is an intricate mosaic that includes “crosses, lions, doves, an amphora (a ceramic maritime shipping jug), flowers and geometric patterns.”

At the center of the mosaic is a passage from the Torah written in Greek: “Blessed are you when you come in, and blessed are you when you go out” (Deut. 28:6).

This verse is one of the blessings that Moses says Israel will receive “if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God” (Deut. 28:1).

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Excavation managers Shira Lifshitz and Maayan Margulis noted that the location of the monastery “is the largest and most significant site discovered in the region from the Roman and Byzantine periods.”

“The findings indicate continuous settlement from the early Roman period through the late Byzantine period.”

The IAA is scheduled to display the ancient Christian mosaic in Kiryat Gat.

“Soon, the ancient mosaic will be moved to the Israel Antiquities Authority’s mosaic workshop for preservation before being displayed in the city,” said Mark Avrahami, head of IAA’s Artistic Conservation Department.

Also found at the site were “a great quantity of imported ware, coins, marble elements, metal and glass vessels.”

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