

# Isaiah 45:3 in Action: 1,500-Year-Old Christian Mosaic Discovered in Israel

Archaeologists in Israel have uncovered a stunning 1,500-year-old Christian mosaic that was once the floor of a church or monastery. Experts found the mosaic during an excavation in the ancient Mediterranean coastal city of Ashdod-Yam, now part of the modern city of Ashdod.

The discovery was announced Thursday, Nov. 23, 2017, by the Israel Antiquities Authority. An inscription in Greek dedicated to the structure's builders offered archaeologists a vital clue. The inscription mentions a date on the ancient Georgian calendar, enabling experts to date the building. "By the grace of God (or Christ), this work was done from the foundation under Procopius, our most saintly and most holy bishop, in the month Dios of the 3rd indiction, year 292" it reads. The year 292 corresponds to A.D. 539.

"This is the earliest appearance of the use of the Georgian calendar in the Land of Israel, many years before it was used in Georgia itself," explained Dr. Leah Di Segni of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who deciphered the inscription.

Ashdod-Yam was an important city during the Byzantine period. Long hidden under sand dunes, the city is now revealing its secrets. "As far as we know, Ashdod is now home to the largest community of Jews of Georgian origin in the world," said Dr. Alexander Fantalkin of Tel Aviv University and Sa'ar Ganor of the Israel Antiquities Authority. "Testimony to the presence of the actual Georgians in the Land of Israel as far back as the Byzantine period has been found dozens of kilometers from Ashdod—in Jerusalem and its surroundings. But this is the first time that a Georgian church or monastery has been

discovered on the Israeli coast," according to Fox.

"And I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places so that you may know that I, the Lord, who calls you by your name, am the God of Israel" (Isa. 45:3).