

Israeli Youth Uncovers Ancient 'Magic Mirror' Used for Witchcraft

A remarkable artifact, dating back about 1,500 years to the Byzantine period, was discovered this week by a 17-year-old taking part in an excavation conducted by the Israel Antiquities Authority at the Usha archaeological site in northern Israel.

Youth leader Aviv Wiesman from Kiryat Motzkin discovered what as dubbed as a "magic mirror" during the annual 56-kilometer survival trek from Mount Meron to Mount Hermon. The excavation was part of the Education Ministry's Shelah Young Leaders' Survival Course.

While working on the ancient Usha site amid the remnants of ancient walls, Weizman uncovered a fragment of pottery protruding from the ground. She pulled it out and presented it to Dr. Einat Ambar-Armon, director of the IAA Educational Center.

The Jerusalem Post reports that the plaque was identified as a mirror plate, which was once used for casting spells.

"The fragment is part of a 'magical mirror' from the Byzantine period, the 4th–6th centuries CE," explains Navit Popovitch, IAA curator of the classical periods. "A glass mirror, for protection against the Evil Eye, was placed in the middle of the plaque.

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"The idea was that the evil spirit, such as a demon, who

looked in the mirror, would see his own reflection, and this would protect the owner of the mirror,” Popovitch adds. “Similar mirror plaques have been found in the past as funerary gifts in tombs, in order to protect the deceased in their journey to the world to come.”

✖ The director of the Education Ministry’s Shelah and Land of Israel Studies, Eli Shayish tells the Jerusalem Post that the “magic mirror” has significant meaning for Wiezman.

“The participation of the pupils in the archaeological excavations deepens their feeling of belonging to the country and its heritage,” Shayish says.

During the journey, the youth delegation includes visits to several archaeological sites overseen by the IAA, which are scattered across the country and will soon be open to the public.

Archaeologists are making numerous discoveries of ancient artifacts these days, including a tablet possibly linked to Joshua’s altar and a Galilean synagogue from Jesus’ time on earth.

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Shawn A. Akers is the online editor at Charisma Media.