

FIRST TEMPLE-ERA SEAL **DISCOVERED**

Note from Pastor Kevin Lea: Try though they may, the Muslims will not be able to get away with the lie that Jerusalem was never home to a Jewish temple or capitol. What they have meant for evil is now resulting in proof that the Bible has accurately recorded the history of Jerusalem.

A First-Temple period seal has been discovered amidst piles of rubble from Jerusalem's Temple Mount, an Israeli archaeologist said Tuesday, in what could prove to be an historic find.

The small - less than 1 cm - seal impression, or bulla, discovered Tuesday by Bar-Ilan University archaeologist Dr. Gabriel Barkay amidst piles of rubble from the Temple Mount would mark the first time that an written artifact was found from the Temple Mount dating back to the First Temple period.

The 2,600 year old artifact, with three lines in ancient Hebrew, was discovered amidst piles of rubble discarded by the Islamic Wakf that Barkay and a team of young archaeologists and volunteers are sifting through on the grounds of a Jerusalem national park.

The seal, which predates the destruction of the First Jewish temple in 586 BCE, was presented Tuesday night to the press at an archaeological conference at the City of David sponsored by the right-wing Elad organization.

Barkay said that the find was the first of its kind from the time of King David.

He has not yet determined what the writing is on the seal, although three Hebrew letters -- thought to be the name of its owner -- are visible on one of its line.

The seal was found amidst thousands of tons of rubble discarded by Wakf officials at city garbage dumps six years ago, following the Islamic Trust's unilateral construction of an mosque at an underground compound of the Temple Mount known as the Solomon's Stables.

After the Antiquities Authority voiced disinterest in thoroughly sifting through the rubble discarded by the Wakf, Barkay applied -- and eventually received -- a license from the Antiquities Authority to sort through the piles

of earth thrown into the garbage dump in search of antiquities, and has since found scores of history-rich artifacts, from the First Temple Period until today amidst the rubble, including a large amount of pottery dating from the Bronze Ages through modern times, a large segment of a marble pillar's shaft, and over 100 ancient coins, among them several from the Hasmonean Dynasty.

While inexact, the ongoing sifting project, which is now being sponsored by Elad, has been called virtually unprecedented since archaeological excavation has never been permitted on the Temple Mount itself.

Meanwhile, in a separate major archaeological development in Jerusalem, a Jewish ritual bath, or *mikva*, dating back to the Second Temple period, and a First Temple Wall have been found in an underground chamber adjacent to the Western Wall tunnels, the Antiquities Authority's Jerusalem regional archaeologist Jon Seligman said during a tour.

The site is part of a new state-of-the-art tourist center at the Western Wall tunnels, which will be open to the public in two months' time.

The impressive site, which incorporates ancient and modern Jewish history in an attempt to reach out to Israeli youth, includes an elaborate audiovisual show, and nine magnificent glass sculptures, which serve to highlight both recent discoveries of artifacts and infrastructure dating back thousands of years, including one of the world's oldest aqueducts, as well as modern day Jewish history, such as the Holocaust and Israel's fallen soldiers.