



Biblical Archaeology - Part 1

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Exciting things have been happening lately in the world of Biblical archaeology.

In November of 1999, the Muslim Waqf began an illegal construction project on the Temple Mount which caused irreparable damage to Temple Mount archaeological artifacts. The rubble from this project was mixed with garbage and then taken secretly to a location in the Kidron Valley and dumped in mounds below Mount Scopus.



photo taken by Natan Gesher

After gathering private donations, Dr. Gabriel Barkay and Tzachi Zweig proceeded to quietly move the 70 truckloads of rubble to a location near Hebrew University. The rubble was then sorted via a mechanical sorter and then volunteers began to sift through the rubble by hand. So far, they have found some very interesting items within this rubble, dating from the time of the First Temple and up to the Byzantine Era (6th-7th century CE):

A coin dating from the time of the Jewish Revolt and just before the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE which bears the inscription "L'Herut Tzion" which means "For the Freedom of Zion";

Pottery shards dating from the First and Second Temples;

Animal bones from the sacrifices at the First and Second Temples;

A seal bearing a 5 pointed star with ancient Hebrew letters spelling out Jerusalem between the points of the star which dates from the 3rd century BCE - the Hellenistic Era;

Over 100 ancient coins have been found with several from the period of the Hasmonean Dynasty - one coin bears an inscription which reads "Yehonatan High Priest Friend of the Jews". Another coin found was of Alexander Jannaeus;

A Scytho-Iranian arrowhead which was the type used by the armies of King Nebuchadnezzar, dating to the destruction of the First Temple;

A bronze arrowhead dating from the time of the Maccabees; and,

An ivory comb dating from the Second Temple period and similar to ones found at Qumran (this was probably part of a mikveh station).

The work on sifting through this rubble continues.

In addition to the above, just this year alone, we have been told of a tablet which bears an inscription that mentions a messiah that will rise from the dead after three (3) days. This tablet dates between the late first century BCE and the early first century CE and is presently stirring up a lot of controversy. Here is a link to the New York Times article:

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/06/world/middleeast/06stone.html?_r=1&hp&oref=slogin

Just last month we learned of 2 interesting finds: A stone dating from the Second Temple period which contained an inscription in Hebrew which read "Son of the High Priest" and which was found a few days prior to Yom Kippur. And then there is what I consider a really exciting find ... a shard which contains the oldest Hebrew text. This shard was found in July of 2008 at the site where the Bible says that David killed Goliath. Carbon 14 dating places this shard between 975 and 1000 BCE, which is the time of the rule of King David. The shard seems to be part of a letter and has about 5 lines of text on it. Though translation of the text is ongoing, it has been reported that the words "king", "judge" and "slave" have been translated. It will be very interesting to see if the rest of the text is legible enough to be translated. Below is a photo of this shard (many thanks to the AP):



In August 2008, there was an announcement that the Dead Sea Scrolls are being digitally photographed and will be uploaded onto the Internet for public viewing. It is expected that this project will take about 2 years to complete. In 2001, the full text of the Dead Sea Scrolls were released for publication... but ... the new digital photography methods being used on

the Dead Sea Scrolls right now are revealing text that could not previously be seen. Below is a Getty photo which shows an actual page from the Dead Sea Scrolls and the digital photo of the same page:

Ok ... I do not know about all of you out there... but I think this is so cool!!!

For additional information, please see the following: (do not type the hyphens).

http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=070830202010.xvz-4id1f&show_article=1&_large

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1219572138771&page-name=JPost%2FJPostArticle%2FShowFull>

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1220444319782&pagename=JPost%2FJPostArticle%2FShowFull>

