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**A Chisel from the Second Temple**



Photo by Clara Amit, Israel Antiquities Authority

Archaeologists have uncovered a stonemason's chisel that, in all likelihood, was used by the builders of the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Eli Shukron, an archaeologist working for the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), found the chisel last summer while digging at the lower base of the Western Wall, south of the Western Wall courtyard. However, the IAA has preferred to remain silent on the discovery, based on the need to study the tool and other evidence further before issuing statements, it explained.

Shukron has been digging in the area of the City of David and the Western Wall together with Prof. Ronny Reich for the past 19 years. In recent years Shukron has been excavating inside a tunnel leading from the City of David into the Old City, passing beneath its massive stone wall and ending at the Western Wall. The Second Temple was erected on the site now known as Temple Mount in Jerusalem, its western wall serving as a support wall, extending the area so it could accommodate tens of thousands of worshippers.

The tunnel is part of a drainage system built during the Second Temple period beneath a main road within the city, ending at the lower area of the Western Wall.

The chisel Shukron found is one of many archaeological treasures he and Reich have reported. Others include a Roman sword, cooking vessels from the period of the Great Rebellion (Bar Kochba) which ended in the defeat of the Jewish army, a gold bell of the kind that adorned the High Priestly robe, and a ceramic seal apparently used to confirm the suitability of sacrifices brought to the Temple.

Excavations have also shed light on the way the Western Wall was built. The most dramatic discovery was a batch of coins found beneath the wall, which led archeologists to rethink the date of its construction. Formerly, the Western Wall has been thought to be part of King Herod the Great's gargantuan construction project, which included the Second Temple itself. Shukron and Reich now believe Herod was not responsible for that part of the temple grounds because the coins found indicate a later date.

The stonemason's chisel was found last summer in the drainage tunnel. It is 15 centimeters long and its head has flattened through use. Shukron suspects a builder, working at one of the higher levels of the Western Wall, dropped it and for some reason never retrieved it. The artifact was covered by rubble and awaited Israeli archeologists for 2,000 years.

"I have no doubt that it belongs to the time the Wall was built," Shukron says. "We found it at the base of the Western Wall, about six meters below the main street of Second Temple. The coins and ceramics found in the area indicate the time the Western Wall was built. The chisel was discovered in a heap of stone chips created by stonemasons working on the Western Wall." These massive stones had been shaped elsewhere and transported to Jerusalem, where the job of fitting them one to another with incredible precision was done on site.

### The Maozes in the US

Bracha and Baruch are presently in the US, visiting family and friends. Baruch has been invited to address a number of churches, take expository conferences and address the subject of the Messianic Movement. His sermons on Colossians may be heard at [Sermon Audio](#) (click).

With occurrences at home, it is extremely difficult not to drop everything and return to be with the church and the nation. Bracha and I are also concerned for Rose, who reports that missiles roar over the house, which sometimes shakes when a missile is exploded nearby. The whole nation is threatened by a cynical regime in Gaza that has no interest in human life beyond the propaganda value that may be derived from civilian deaths.

Your prayers would be appreciated – for all involved.

I have discontinued publishing bulletins in times of tension. To receive intermittent updates of events at such times, “follow” my FaceBook page, or my Twitter (@BaruchMaoz) and LinkedIn accounts.

### Ministry and Family News

Although engaged in extensive travel, preaching and lecturing, the **translation of the New Testament** continues to make progress. I hope to complete Ephesians and Philippians before returning home. The final version of **Matthew** has been returned to the publisher.

The **Erez family** has bought a house in Bothell, Seattle, to be near the Richardsons. Eran will work from home, maintaining his position with Sandisk. Noam will attend a local High School and Nadav and Maya a local Christian school.

The **Thompsons** are expecting their third child (a girl) at the end of July or the beginning of August and the **Richardsons** (also a girl) in October. Bracha plans to remain

with the Thompsons until August 18 to help following the birth and then return in October to help the Richardsons.

**Katya and Felix Volenski** have moved to Quebec and are settling in. The initial period is extremely difficult, fraught with uncertainties, a sense of loneliness and of need. Do please pray for them.

**Rose's** engagement was terminated, at her initiative. She acted with courage, a noble and generous kindness and with great wisdom in the way she informed Alan of her decision and in the challenging aftermath. Both young people are now picking up the pieces of their lives, overcoming the disappointment and refocusing their attentions. Bracha and Baruch have grown to love Alan. We will miss talking with him.

**Bracha and I** are both very well. The trip has not been overly onerous for us, while people have been kind and opportunities for ministry many. We've enjoyed many a sweet moment together and, strange as it might sound, more opportunities to pray together than we normally have at home

Baruch's sermons may be heard, among other sites, on Sermon Audio. Click this link:

[Baruch's Sermons on Sermon Audio](#)

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