

# Ancient handle with Hebrew text found in Jerusalem

May 20 2009, By JOSEPH MARKS , Associated Press Writer

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This image made available by Israel's Antiquities Authority Wednesday, May 20, 2009 shows an Iron Age handle inscribed with the Hebrew name "Menachem," which was the name of an Israelite king, discovered in an excavation in Jerusalem. Archaeologists digging on Jerusalem's Mount of Olives have discovered a nearly 3,000-year-old jar handle bearing ancient Hebrew script, a find significantly older than most inscribed artifacts dug up in the ancient city, an archaeologist said.(AP Photo/IAA)

(AP) -- Archaeologists digging on Jerusalem's Mount of Olives have discovered a nearly 3,000-year-old jar handle bearing ancient Hebrew script, a find significantly older than most inscribed artifacts unearthed in the ancient city, an archaeologist said. The Iron Age handle is inscribed with the Hebrew name Menachem, which was the name of an Israelite king and is still common among Jews.

The inscription also includes a partly intact letter, the Hebrew character "lamed," meaning "to." That suggests the jar was a gift to someone

named Menachem, said Ron Beeri, who directed the excavation for the [Israel](#) Antiquities Authority. There is no indication the inscription refers to the king himself.

The name and similar variants have been found on Egyptian pottery dating back 3,500 years, and the Bible lists Menachem Ben Gadi as an ancient king of Israel. But this is the first time an artifact bearing the name has been unearthed in Jerusalem, Beeri said.

"It's important because it shows that they actually used the name Menachem during that period," Beeri said. "It's not just from the Bible, but it's also in the archaeological record."

Based on the style of the inscription, he dated the handle to around 900 B.C., the time of the first Jewish Temple in [Jerusalem](#) as recounted in the Bible.

The vessel the handle was attached to did not survive, so it is impossible to tell what it was used for, Beeri said. Similar vessels were known to have held products like oil or wheat.

Construction workers uncovered the archaeological site while digging the foundation for a girl's school being built in the area, Beeri said.

Excavators also uncovered storage vessels and implements from two earlier nomadic settlements, both dating to around 2,000 B.C., he said, as well as artifacts dating from the time of the Roman Empire around 2,000 years ago.

[Archaeologists](#) have completed their dig, and construction workers building the school are back on the job, Beeri said.

The Mount of Olives is just outside Jerusalem's Old City. The hill is

important to Jews because of its proximity to the destroyed Temple and to Christians, who believe it is the site where Jesus ascended to heaven.

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