

Archeologists unearth King David era temple near Jerusalem

December 28 2012, by Bob Yirka



Figurines of a person. Photograph: Clara Amit, courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority

(Phys.org)—Israel's Antiquities Authority (IAA) has [announced](#) that archeologists have unearthed a temple within walking distance of Jerusalem that appears to be approximately 2,750 years old. Artifacts found inside the temple suggest that despite the ban on idol worship at the time, those who visited the temple continued to engage in such practices.

The temple was discovered as part of a dig at a site known as Tel Motza, after the city of Mozah mentioned in the Old Testament. The site was

first uncovered as construction began on what was to be a new freeway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv back in the 90's. Since that time most researchers had concluded that the ancient community was little more than a storage facility for grain used by people in Jerusalem. This new find suggests however, that the settlement was more than that.

At the time that the temple was in use, a period during the King David era, the First Temple, in Jerusalem had already been built, and worshippers had been instructed to use it instead of other facilities to discourage the worship of various idols. Artifacts found inside the temple show that the people who visited the temple had chosen to ignore the decree and instead continued to idolize their icons as they chose. What's surprising, the researchers note, is how close the temple, and hence the ongoing idol worshiping practices, were to [Jerusalem](#) – close enough to walk.



Figurine of a horse. Photograph: Clara Amit, courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority

The newly discovered temple has exceptionally thick walls and is situated facing towards the east, to take advantage of the rising sun – its rays would have illuminated the objects that sat inside the temple, a clear attempt to glorify them. The temple also had what the researchers believe was once an alter in the courtyard along with a host of sacred vessels – pottery fragments and pieces of chalices – likely used for ceremonial purposes.

The discovery of the temple has historians excited because very few of them from that era have survived to modern times. Also, notably, researchers have found figurines inside the temple, representing animals – and some human – that hint, they say, of a coastal Philistine influence. They note that much more research will have to be undertaken before an accurate picture of the [temple](#) and surrounding area can be made.

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Citation: Archeologists unearth King David era temple near Jerusalem (2012, December 28)
retrieved 25 April 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2012-12-archeologists-unearth-king-david-era.html>

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