

# Gem seal with face of Apollo on it found near Jerusalem's Western Wall

November 6 2020, by Bob Yirka

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A gem seal depicting a portrait of Apollo. Credit: Eliyahu Yanai, City of David.

A team of researchers working with citizen archeologists on the Tzurim Valley National Park sifting project (near Temple Mount) has found a unique ancient gem seal—one that bears the face of the god Apollo. The

team, led by Eli Shukron, has been speaking with the press about the unique find and its possible history.

Gem seals are flat-faced, carved stones, generally coin-sized. They were used by ancient people as a form of signature. The seal was pressed against a soft material such as wax to leave an imprint of whatever was carved on the [stone](#). Such signatures were used when purchasing goods, signing documents or during business transactions. With this new find, the face on the seal was surprising, because it bears the face of the god Apollo. It has been dated to approximately 2000 years ago, a time when Jews were living in the area. Apollo was a Greek god, not theirs; the Jews were monotheistic. Thus, the question of why such a seal would be found there arose.

The researchers found that the stone was made of jasper (once considered to be precious), and had once been affixed to a ring (the stone is smaller than a fingernail), which means the owner likely wore it for purposes unrelated to making transactions. They suggest the owner was likely trying to take advantage of attributes that Apollo was supposed to represent, such as purity, success, health and light. The researchers also note that it was a particularly attractive seal; as the stone was carved, layers of yellow, light brown and white were revealed, giving the seal a certain aura. The face of Apollo was carved in profile with his long hair flowing down his neck. The researchers note that the god Apollo was revered by many people along the Eastern Mediterranean during that time, and people of different faiths were more than willing to embrace his more positive attributes.

The site of the dig contained soil that was once part of the foundation of the Western Wall, which surrounded the Second Temple in the City of David (modern Jerusalem). When the Romans came in AD 70, they destroyed the wall, leaving its foundation to crumble.

**More information:** A Gem Seal Bearing the Portrait of Apollo:  
[www.cityofdavid.org.il/en/apollo](http://www.cityofdavid.org.il/en/apollo)

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Citation: Gem seal with face of Apollo on it found near Jerusalem's Western Wall (2020, November 6) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-11-gem-apollo-jerusalem-western-wall.html>

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