



Middle East Spotlight

Archaeological Discoveries Further Validate Jewish Ties to Israel

This year, July 31 marks the start of Tisha B'Av, a fast day on the Hebrew calendar commemorating the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem and the subsequent expulsion of most Jews from the Land of Israel. While in exile, the dispersed Jewish people yearned for and maintained an unbroken connection to the land of their ancestors. Despite indisputable historical, biblical and archeological evidence that ties the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, modern-day detractors continually attempt to diminish and deny this millennia-old connection.

Most recently, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) passed a [resolution](#) in May 2017—on Israel's Independence Day—that denied Israeli claims to Jerusalem. UNESCO passed an even more egregious [resolution](#) in October 2016 that only referred to the Temple Mount by its Islamic name, erasing Jewish links to their ancient capital city.

Fortunately, a number of recent archaeological discoveries provide additional proof to refute such assertions, confirming the actual physical connection between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel, including Jerusalem.

In October 2016, the Israel Antiquities Authority [uncovered](#) an ancient papyrus from the First Temple period that has the earliest Hebrew reference to Jerusalem, apart from the Bible. Dating back to seventh century BCE, the [document](#) is one of three existing Hebrew papyri from that era and the [first non-biblical source](#) to mention Jerusalem from that time period, predating the Dead Sea Scrolls by several centuries.

In September 2016, scientists formally [announced](#) that they had restored a 2,000-year-old biblical text, known as the Ein Gedi Scroll. The scroll, which contains the Book of Leviticus, was found in the burnt-out Holy Ark of an ancient synagogue in Israel. It is the [oldest biblical text](#) that has been unearthed since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the [earliest copy](#) of one of the five books of Moses to be found in a Holy Ark.

In August 2016, archaeologists [discovered](#) a synagogue in the Galilee that predates the destruction of the Second Temple. Seven other such synagogues have been discovered in Israel, but this was the first one unearthed in a rural setting. Unlike synagogues built after the Second Temple's destruction, those built before were not used for regular worship, but were instead utilized for Torah readings, meetings and study.

Israel's detractors and international organizations like UNESCO continue to deny the Jewish connection to Jerusalem, but these discoveries provide the latest evidence in support of the historical truth that we commemorate on Tisha B'Av: The history, culture and religion of the Jewish people are inextricably tied to the Land of Israel.