

# Archaeologists pinpoint site where Romans breached Jerusalem walls

October 24, 2016

JERUSALEM (RNS)—The site where the Roman army breached the outer walls of ancient Jerusalem before capturing the city and destroying the Second Jewish Temple nearly 2,000 years ago has been discovered, the Israel Antiquities Authority says.

Archaeologists made the discovery last winter during an exploratory survey at a future construction site, the Israel Antiquities Authority announced Oct. 20.

After expanding the excavation, archaeologists discovered the remains of a tower jutting from what they believe was the Third Wall, the outermost wall surrounding Jerusalem at the end of the Second Temple period.



A spearhead from the battle against Titus' army. (Photo by Clara Amit, courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority) Opposite the tower's western facade they found dozens of catapults and stones the archaeologists are certain were used by the Romans, led by Titus, against the Jewish guards who defended the wall from the tower.

The discoveries confirm a detailed account of the battle by the contemporary historian Josephus, said Rina Avner, one of the lead archaeologists.

“We found pottery from the Second Temple period within the cement of the wall, which was on the same level as the balustrades. We dated the embedded pottery to 70 A.D., the year Josephus said the Romans attacked the city and destroyed the Second Temple, forcing the Jews into exile,” Avner said. “We were able to cross-reference our finds with the writings of Josephus. It was amazing.”

The find comes amid an outcry over a recent resolution by UNESCO that ignores Jewish and Christian ties to the Temple Mount and refers exclusively, as Muslims do, to the Haram al-Sharif, or Noble Sanctuary.

The latest discoveries add to the large volume of other proof that Jews lived in Jerusalem thousands of years ago, Avner said.

The UNESCO resolution “erases history and actually tries to destroy our past and the Christians’ past,” he asserted.

*(Michele Chabin is RNS’ Jerusalem correspondent)*