

Jewish Connection To Jerusalem

Recent discoveries are welcome affirmation of what should be self-evident

By LAWRENCE H. SCHIFFMAN

The ongoing excavations of Jerusalem never seem to stop yielding amazing treasures that bring to life the Bible and the history of the Jewish people in its holiest of cities.

FIRST PERSON

This latest discovery comes on the heels of the disgraceful UNESCO resolution that by implication seeks to deny the historic relationship of the city to the Jews and their history.

The recent discovery of what may be the personal seal impression of Isaiah the Prophet, coming soon after the discovery close by of the seal impression of Hezekiah the King, serves as a welcome affirmation of the Jewish connection to Jerusalem, something we thought would have been self-evident to Jews, Christians, and even Muslims.

Our story starts in 2015 with the announcement that a bulla (seal impression) of King Hezekiah was found in the archaeological excavations directed by Dr. Eilat Mazar of the Hebrew University at the area known as the Ophel, south of



The excavations at Ophel, south of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

the Temple Mount. Dr. Mazar had been excavating in this part of the city for some thirty years, having started there under her grandfather Professor Binyamin Mazar, a great archaeologist who also served as president of the Hebrew University.

The term Ophel (spelled with an ayin) is used a few times in the Bible to refer to a raised area between the City of David in the

south and the present-day Temple Mount in the north. This area contained the palace and surrounding structures built in the Solomonic period, ca. 970-930 BCE.

Dr. Mazar arranged for my wife and me to tour these excavations last summer, and it brought back memories of the time her grandfather had spent with us showing us his southern wall excavations some 40 years earlier.

Judah (Yehudah),” referring of course to the kingdom of Judah after the split of the kingdom that occurred immediately after the death of King Solomon.

This seal, like that of Isaiah, who most likely is the prophet, was found through wet sifting (wetting and then straining) debris that came from outside a building that — at least at the end of the kingdom of Judah, close to the destruction (586 BCE) — was used as a royal bakery.

Perhaps what is most amazing is that Dr. Mazar’s colleagues, while cleaning other bullae just a few years later, realized that they had



Ouria/Tudmor/Riat Mazar

The ancient bulla (seal impression) which may have belonged to the prophet Isaiah.

The announcement in 2015 concerned a bulla that preserved the actual seal impression of King Hezekiah. It was one of 37 that had been recovered. A bulla is a clay seal that is pressed onto a cord that closes a vessel or a sack, or seals a

recovered a bulla that may be the seal of the prophet Isaiah. It had been found only ten feet away from Hezekiah’s! Dr. Mazar has been cautious in avoiding the claim that this must be the seal of Isaiah the Prophet but seems to

Perhaps most amazing is that a recovered bulla that may be the seal of the prophet Isaiah had been found only ten feet away from Hezekiah’s!

legal contract. The bulla itself is a bit less than half an inch in diameter. The owners, or in the case of legal documents the parties to the agreement or witnesses, impress their seal (chotam) onto the clay as a signature. Numerous examples of such seal impressions, including others of known biblical personalities, have been found in excavations.

The text revealed in 2015, written in the old Hebrew script, read as follows: le-Hezekiah Achaz Melech Yehudah, “to Hezekiah (son of) Achaz, King of

favor this view, and with good reason.

The preserved part of the bulla has three sections. On the top is the image of a deer, a symbol of blessing. Then there are two lines of text in the old Hebrew script, with a bit of text broken off the left side. The first line is le-Yisha and the second has navi (without the final alef). The most likely proposal is that the text should be restored as le-Yishai[yahu] navi or perhaps ha-navi. Other possible readings are less likely. So it is safe to say that we probably (but

continued on page 30



Middle Neck Glatt

Glatt Kosher Butcher • Deli • Catering







Let us cater your next affair

CATERING FOR ALL OCCASIONS
Engagement • Sheva Brachot
• Brit Milah • Bar/Bat Mitzvah
• Birthday • Office Parties

Delivery To
Manhattan
And The
Hamptons

501 Middle Neck Rd., Great Neck, NY 11023
Tel: 516.504.MEAT (6328) • Fax: 516.504.6329

View our menu at: www.middleneckglatt.com

Sunday 7:00 AM - 5:00 PM; Mon 7:00 AM - 6:00 PM
Tuesday 7:00 AM - 7:00 PM; Wednesday 7:00 AM - 7:00 PM
Thursday 6:30 AM - 8:00 PM; Friday 6:00 AM - 4:00 PM; Saturday Closed

Under the Strict Supervision of the Vaad Harabonim of Queens

Jerusalem

continued from page 6

not definitely) have an original seal impression of the prophet Isaiah.

In Isaiah's lifetime, the power of Assyria was on the rise, and the Assyrians demanded fealty and tribute from the surrounding nations, including the northern Kingdom of Israel and Judah to the south.

From the beginning of Hezekiah's rule in ca. 727 BCE, he followed the approach of his father, Achaz, by maintaining loyalty to Assyria. He therefore managed to escape the Assyrian armies who destroyed the Northern Kingdom and exiled many of its inhabitants in 722 BCE. But a few years later, from about 712, he began to resist and ultimately rebelled against Assyria. During the period of accommodation, he succeeded in bringing about col-

lective teshuvah, a religious reform of great proportions.

porter. Throughout this period, Hezekiah used the Ophel buildings

ly tied to each other and, in turn, to the history of the southern Kingdom of Judah. Their names appear together in the same verse 15 times in the Bible. The Talmud (Berachot 10a) tells us of this close relationship, so close that the king could teach the prophet a lesson valuable for all of us even in the worst of circumstances: "Never give up hope even when there is a sword on your neck."

Is there any reason to wonder why these two inspired leaders had the merit to have their signatures discovered so close to each other in time and place? These discoveries certainly remind us that no amount of anti-Israel or anti-Semitic propaganda can overturn the truths of history. The connection of the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem will not be severed!

Dr. Lawrence H Schiffman is Judge Abraham Lieberman Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies and Director of the Global Network for Advanced Research in Jewish Studies at New York University

Is there any reason to wonder why these two inspired leaders had their signatures discovered so close to each other in time and place?

In all of this, Isaiah the Prophet was a strong influence and sup-

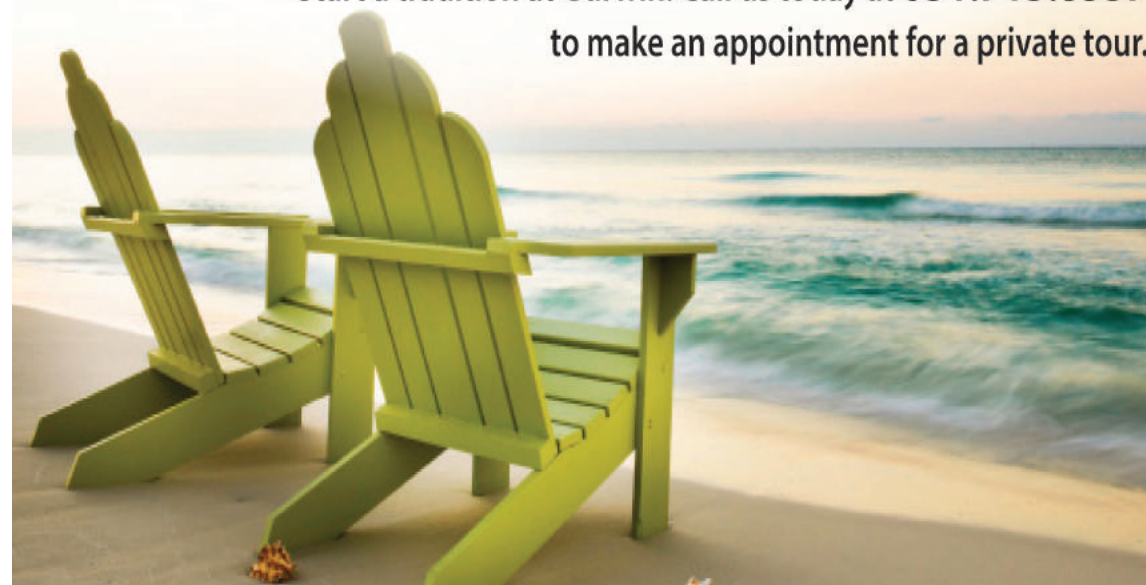
for parts of his administration. In 701 BCE the Assyrians sought to put down his rebellion and sent their forces to Judah where they destroyed numerous towns and cities throughout the country, as shown by archaeological research and by Assyrian annals written in the Assyrian dialect of Akkadian, the language of Mesopotamia. The Book of Kings tells us of the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem from Assyria.

It is amazing that the seals of King Hezekiah and the Prophet Isaiah were found so close to each other. The Bible teaches us that the lives of these two men were close-

New opportunities, new friendships & new traditions AT GURWIN ASSISTED LIVING

With every step, encounter another reason to get out and do what you love. We thought of everything – dining, fitness, beauty, entertainment, security, health care and assistance – so you don't have to! Join new friends and enjoy the same fun things on Long Island – including beaches, parks, shopping and more – or keep busy right here at Gurwin. From small group activities like book clubs, card games and art class, to bigger group events like parties, movies and lectures, every day welcomes a new tradition.

Grow close to new friends. Stay close to the ones you love.
Start a tradition at Gurwin. Call us today at **631.715.8537**
to make an appointment for a private tour.



GURWIN JEWISH
FAY J. LINDNER RESIDENCES

ASSISTED LIVING
WWW.GURWIN.ORG

Part of the Gurwin Family of Healthcare Services

Long-term Care • Short-term Rehabilitation • Medical & Social Adult Day Care • Home Care
Ventilator/Respiratory Care • Memory Care • Palliative & Hospice Care • Assisted Living
On-site Dialysis • Proposed Independent Living Community



New Yorkers have a special affinity for Israel.

This year, they'll make Manhattan's Celebrate Israel Parade on **Sunday, June 3** a massive outpouring of love and support for the Jewish State.

New Yorkers have a special affinity for Israel.
This year, they'll make Manhattan's Celebrate Israel Parade on **Sunday, June 3** a massive outpouring of love and support for the Jewish State.

It'll also be **your best opportunity** this season to reach active, engaged, and dedicated New Yorkers who:

- Travel to Israel as tourists
- Visit family and relatives in Israel
- Study in Israel
- Plan to purchase or own property in Israel
- Plan to make aliyah to Israel



Join us now for this Special Preview Issue, and in addition to our regular readership circulation, you'll get FREE exposure as we provide **EXTRA DISTRIBUTION** of our Parade Preview to participants who attend and take part in the celebration!

Plus

We'll be providing FREE bonus distribution of the Long Island Jewish World in the Hamptons, among Long Island's East End upscale summer resort communities.

To place an ad, call Harriet Feigenbaum 516.594.4000

JewishWorld
JEWISH TRIBUNE

Production Office: 511 Hempstead Avenue, West Hempstead, NY 11552
Tel: (516) 594-4000 • Fax: (516) 594-4900 • Email: ljeworld@aol.com