

# Rare 2,550-year-old silver coin discovered in Judean Hills

**Rare coin, among the earliest evidence for the use of coins in the country, discovered in Judean Hills; sheqel weight found in nearby building dates to Kingdom of Judah.**

## [Israel National News](#)

Jan 17, 2024, 9:35 AM (GMT+2)

Rare evidence for the earliest use of coins in the country — an extremely rare silver coin dated to the Persian period (6th–5th centuries BCE) — was recently discovered in an Israel Antiquities Authority excavation at a site in the Judean Hills.

The excavation, carried out during the course of infrastructure works undertaken by the Netivei Israel National Transport Infrastructure Company, also exposed a building from the First Temple Period, with even earlier evidence for commerce in the form of a sheqel weight.

The rare coin was discovered by Semyon Gendler, the Acting Judean District Archaeologist of the Israel Antiquities Authority. The coin, found intentionally broken, was minted with a square stamp embedded into one face; later, more sophisticated techniques produced coins with protruding rather than sunken stamps.

According to Dr. Robert Kool, Head of the Israel Antiquities Authority Numismatic Department, “The coin is extremely rare, joining only half a dozen coins of its type that have been found in archaeological excavations in the country. The coin was minted in a period when the use of coins had just begun. The rare find contributes information concerning the way

trade was carried out, and the process whereby global commerce moved from payment by weighing silver pieces, to the use of coins. The coin belongs to a group of very early coins that were minted outside Israel, in the regions of ancient Greece, Cyprus and Turkey. In the 6th–5th centuries BCE, such coins began to appear at sites in the Land of Israel.”

An additional indication of the gradual process is the fact that, although the silver coin was minted as a coin, it was found intentionally cut into two. This indicates that in the 4th century BCE, it was used as a weighed piece of silver, rather than as a coin, even though coins were current in this period.

According to Michal Mermelstein and Danny Benayoun, excavation directors on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority, “The site was situated in the rural area of the Kingdom of Judah, whose capital was in Jerusalem. It was first settled in the First Temple period, in the 7th century BCE (2,700 years ago), during the reigns of the kings of Judah, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon and Josiah, a peak settlement period in the kingdom of Judah. A characteristic ‘four-room house’ was uncovered from this period, and the sheqel weight, found on the floor of one of the rooms in the house, provides early evidence for trade. The dome-shaped stone weight would have been used for weighing metals, spices, and other expensive commodities. The sign on the weight was an ancient Egyptian (hieratic) abbreviation for the word sheqel, and the single incised stroke represents one sheqel. The weight weighs 11.07 g.”

“This was in effect a standard weight in the region of the kingdom of Judah, showing that commodities were carefully weighed in the markets,” say the archaeologists.



The sheqel weight from the First Temple period uncovered at the site

Moriya Reef, an engineer and Southern Region Projects Department Manager for Netivei Israel, said: "We began the substantial project on Highway 375, which aims toward expanding into a two-lane, two-way highway, 8 km long, including arranging junctions and expanding the existing underpasses on the route. We fully recognized that this area required collaboration with the Antiquities Authority for the possibility of discovering archeological findings at any point throughout the job site. We enabled them to conduct their work parallel to the progress on the highway, and there is no doubt that its findings are amazing. The thought that we discovered such important and meaningful findings thanks to initiating an infrastructure project is undoubtedly quite exciting."

According to Eli Escusido, Director of the Israel Antiquities Authority, "It is always surprising, how important findings are discovered in unexpected places. The tiny coins are a crucial source of information in archaeology. They provide us visual details, inscriptions, and dates. Through a tiny object like a coin, it becomes possible to trace human thought processes and observe that our economic habits have remained largely unchanged for thousands of years - only the technology has changed. In this context,

it is interesting to consider future archaeological research in a world that has adopted electronic commerce."



A figurine of a horse dated to the First Temple period



Excavation Director Michal Mermelstein with an Iron arrowhead from the First Temple period found at the site.

Retrieved January 17, 2024, from [Rare 2,550-year-old silver coin discovered in Judean Hills | Israel National News - Arutz Sheva](#)