

Hoard of Bar Kochba-era coins found in Judean Hills

• By BRIAN BLONDY

Israeli archeologists on Wednesday morning unveiled historical artifacts from a cave in the Judean Hills believed to have been used by Jewish refugees during the Bar Kochba rebellion in 132-35 CE. The discovery marks the first time Israeli researchers have ever found a large hoard of coins from this era.

The findings were presented at a press conference held at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

The gold, silver and bronze coins, 120 in all, were discovered in a cave in an undisclosed location within the Green Line. The almost inaccessible 20-meter-deep cave also yielded iron weapons, storage jars, oil lamps, a small jug, a silver earring and a glass bottle.

Prof. Amos Frumkin and Boaz Langford of the Cave Research Unit in the Department of Geogra-



BOAZ LANGFORD of the Hebrew University holds up one of the Bar Kochba-era coins recently discovered, together with iron weapons and other artifacts, in a cave in the Judean Hills. The hoard of 120 coins is the largest ever discovered.
(Brian Blondy)

phy of the Hebrew University, and Dr. Boaz Zissu and Prof. Hanan Eshel of the Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archeology at Bar-Ilan University, are still exploring the site and its bounty with the support of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority.

The artifacts are believed to be solid evidence for the theory that Jews took refuge in the Judean Hills during the revolt. Prof. Zissu explained that "since there is not a definitive historian [from the era], we have to rely on the information we glean from coins and other discoveries." He said that coins could be used to "map out" the geographical extent of the Jewish presence outside of Jerusalem during the Roman occupation.

The researchers believe that the Judean Hills' cave served as a hiding place for a dozen or more Jewish fighters. And based on the

cave's strategic location near the ancient city of Betar, the weapons and the amount of money found in it, Frumkin theorized that "the occupants were of a special status."

The majority of the coins, which are in excellent condition, were originally Roman. Jewish fighters impressed the coins with their own insignias, and leaders of the Jewish resistance dated coins for each year of the rebellion and imprinted them with symbols such as the Second Temple in Jerusalem as a means of spreading the rebellion.

Frumkin expects further discoveries in the area to surface, but possibly "none on this scale."

While the occupants of the cave were never to reclaim their belongings, their discovery helps to unlock some of the mysteries of the history of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel.