

# Archaeologists unexpectedly discovered Byzantine Monastery

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Excavation is part of a large-scale excavation project conducted by the Israeli Antiquities Agency in preparation for the development and expansion of Ramat Beit Shemesh.

According to Benyamin Storchan, director of excavations, " *We were surprised by the excellent conservation status of the ancient ruins, and the abundance of artifacts discovered* ".



Researchers have identified a large monastic complex that may be the center for ancient pilgrims in Judean Shephelah. This area was abandoned in the 7th century for reasons not yet disclosed.

The discovery included studying the rest of the walls built from stones bearing rich architectural elements, marble columns and mosaic floors depicting decorative motifs of birds, leaves and pomegranates.

Since the excavation in the summer, in this area, there are more than 1,000 teenagers from different groups and organizations participated in the excavation.

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