

David's City: Terraced Structure

The terraced structure built during the Late Bronze (fourteenth to thirteenth centuries BC) or Iron Age I (twelfth to eleventh centuries BC) at the northeastern end of the City of David. It was constructed by fills of stone and soil and reinforced by thin stone walls, forming an artificial tell. This tell constituted a base on which the acropolis of Canaanite Jerusalem was apparently built. (This was the fortified section of Jerusalem where the administrative buildings of the Canaanite and Jebusite city were situated.)

After conquering the city, King David reembellished this structure as a base for his palace. The Bible does not mention David building a palace. He used the palace of his predecessors (the Citadel of Zion which he renamed the City of David). To reinforce the structure, he encompassed it with a system of terraces, for additional support to the fillings. It is this complex which can still be seen on the site. The palace, which David used inside the enclosure created by the terraced structure, may well be that which Hiram, king of Tyre, helped to reembellish (2 Sam. 5:11), or it may be David's Citadel mentioned in the Bible (2 Sam. 5:9). In the course of time, when King Solomon built the administrative center of his kingdom on the Temple Mount, consisting of a palace and Temple, the palace used by David was no longer of any significance. The terraced structure, which had served as a basis for it, turned into a tell. On this tell, and on its edges, dwellings were constructed. The result was a complete change in the terraced structure. Only a small section is still visible, enabling us to appreciate the extent of the royal construction works during the reign of King David.

The terraced structure was newly examined during the City of David excavations that began in 1978. Although the structure had already been unearthed in the excavations carried out by Macalister and Duncan (1923–1925) and by Kenyon (1967–1968), its real significance was not appreciated at the time.



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