

3,000-Year-Old Mystery Solved with Discovery of Ancient Fort in Jerusalem

Archaeologists have unearthed a massive fortification in Jerusalem, believed to have protected the city's biblical kings some 3,000 years ago. This discovery, hailed as "monumental" and "dramatic," resolves a long-standing mystery regarding the City of David's ancient defenses.

The excavation, ongoing since 2007 near the Givati Parking Lot—the largest active archaeological site in Jerusalem—has revealed a variety of historical layers, spanning from the Middle Ages back to ancient times. The latest find is a remnant of a moat that once bisected the City of David, separating the royal palace and Temple Mount from the rest of the city, including the Ophel.

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This fortification corresponds with the city's division mentioned in the Bible as Ophel and Millo. A biblical reference of the discovery can be found in 1 Kings 11:27, where it is stated, "And this was the cause that he lifted up his hand against the king: Solomon built Millo, and repaired the breaches of the City of David his father." The identification of this moat, which features sheer, unclimbable cliffs on both sides, marks the resolution of a 150-year-old archaeological puzzle concerning Jerusalem's northern defenses.

The origins of the moat remain unclear, but it is evident that it was utilized during the time when Jerusalem served as the capital of the Kingdom of Judah, starting nearly 3,000 years ago. Tel Aviv University's Professor Yuval Gadot and Dr.

Yiftach Shalu from the Israel Antiquities Authority note that during this period, the moat delineated the city's expansion to the south, where the general populace resided, from the Acropolis—the upper city, which housed the palace and temple on the Temple Mount.

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The moat's discovery, which spans at least 70 meters from west to east, has prompted a reexamination of past excavation reports, particularly those by British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon in the 1960s. This discovery also rekindles discussions about biblical terms related to Jerusalem's topography, specifically Ophel and Millo.

Eli Escusido, Director of the Israel Antiquities Authority, expressed his awe at the discovery, noting that the excavations in the City of David continue to reveal new insights into biblical literature. "When you stand at the bottom of this giant excavation, surrounded by enormous hewn walls, it is impossible not to be filled with wonder and appreciation for those ancient people who, about 3,800 years ago, literally moved mountains and hills," he remarked.

The continuous uncovering of archaeological treasures in Jerusalem showcases the historical and spiritual significance of Israel and Jerusalem as the Jewish homeland. As Psalm 122:3-4 states, "Jerusalem is built as a city that is designed for a multitude, where the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as a decree of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord."

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