

In the City of David: 2,000-year-old rare stone box discovered

Rare enigmatic stone box from the Second Temple period discovered during City of David excavations was used for commercial activity, then burnt – evidence of the destruction of Jerusalem about 2,000 years ago.



The box discovered during Israel Antiquities Authority excavations in the City of David. Zohar Shemesh, Israel Museum, Jerusalem

A rare multi-compartment stone container, dating back to the days of the Second Temple – about 2,000 years ago – is being revealed to the public for the first time at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

The unusual and rare box was discovered during excavations conducted by the Israel Antiquities in the City of David part of the Jerusalem Walls

National Park, funded by the City of David Foundation in collaboration with the Ministry of Heritage.

The square box, measuring 30 x 30 cm, was carved from soft limestone and divided inside into nine equal sized compartments. The multi-compartment container was discovered in a destruction layer inside an ancient store dated to the end of the Second Temple period that once stood alongside the Pilgrimage Road in the City of David. The sides of the box are blackened, indicating that it was burnt perhaps during events of the Great Jewish Revolt, which ultimately led to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Researchers assume that the box was used for commercial purposes such as displaying premeasured goods. According to Dr. Yuval Baruch and Ari Levy, excavation directors on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority, "During the excavations of the Pilgrimage Road, where the box was discovered, many objects have been found testifying to the flourishing commercial activity that took place alongside the road during the Second Temple period."

"During the excavations, we have uncovered ceramic and glass vessels, production and cooking facilities, various measuring tools, stone weights and coins. Together, these objects suggest that the road was connected to commercial activities such as a lively urban market. The Pilgrimage Road connecting the Pool of Siloam to the Temple Mount was the main thoroughfare of the city 2,000 years ago. It seems that the newly-discovered box was related to this commercial activity that took place along the Pilgrimage Road."

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