



Houses That Reflect Society

The Houses of Ancient Israel: Domestic, Royal, Divine offers a view of life into the agricultural world of the ancient Near East. The exhibit shows how ancient peoples viewed their own society—as a hierarchy of nested households extending from the simple domestic home at the bottom to the house of God at the top. This concept is represented graphically by the exhibit logo, shown above.



Ancient Israel

In archaeological terms, *The Houses of Ancient Israel: Domestic, Royal, Divine* focuses on the Iron Age (1200–586 BCE), during which the monarchy of ancient Israel emerged. The kingdom was located at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, and was divided between Israel in the north and Judah in the south. The area roughly corresponds to the modern state of Israel.



**Harvard
Semitic Museum**

6 Divinity Ave, Cambridge, MA 02138

HOURS

Monday–Friday 10:00 am–4:00 pm
Sunday 1:00–4:00 pm
Closed Saturday and on Harvard University holidays

ADMISSION: FREE

For information on educational tours, group reservations, events, and rentals, email: hsmreserve@hmsc.harvard.edu

PARKING AND DIRECTIONS

Visit the website for details on parking options

semiticmuseum.fas.harvard.edu | 617-495-4631

HMSC HARVARD MUSEUMS OF SCIENCE & CULTURE



Houses of Ancient Israel

Domestic, Royal, Divine



FLOOR

1

Harvard
Semitic Museum



House of the Father

Domestic

The people of Israel and Judah were members of tightly knit families and kin groups. Typically, households were led by the male head of an extended family living together in a large compound. The houses were usually built from sun-dried mud bricks set on rough stone foundations.

This "House of the Father" was the basic unit of Israelite society through which the ancient Israelites organized their social, economic, and religious worlds.



House of the King

Royal

The kingdoms of Israel and Judah in the Iron Age were characterized as the households of their kings. The king served as the royal father of the kingdom. The king, however, was only second in the ultimate hierarchy. His "house" was part of the even greater House of Yahweh. Yahweh was the national deity, a supreme patrimonial ruler and the ultimate father of all of the children of Israel.



House of Yahweh

Divine

The Israelites constructed the First Temple near the king's ornately adorned palace on the acropolis of Jerusalem, elevated physically and hierarchically above the rest of society. They regarded this religious structure as the house where the national deity, Yahweh, resided. Each king was considered the designated son of Yahweh, and from this perch the god and his son ruled together. Since the Jerusalem Temple was later destroyed, the reconstruction on view here is based upon archaeological parallels and the description in the Bible.

