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Between Holiness and Propaganda

Archaeology and Political Claims over the Old City of Jerusalem



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Emek Shaveh is an organization of archaeologists and community activists focusing on the role of archaeology in Israeli society and in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We view archaeology as a resource for building bridges and strengthening bonds between different peoples and cultures, and we see it as an important factor impacting the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Our fundamental position is that an archaeological find should not and cannot be used to prove ownership by any one nation, ethnic group or religion over a given place.

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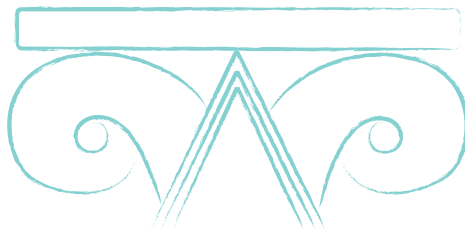
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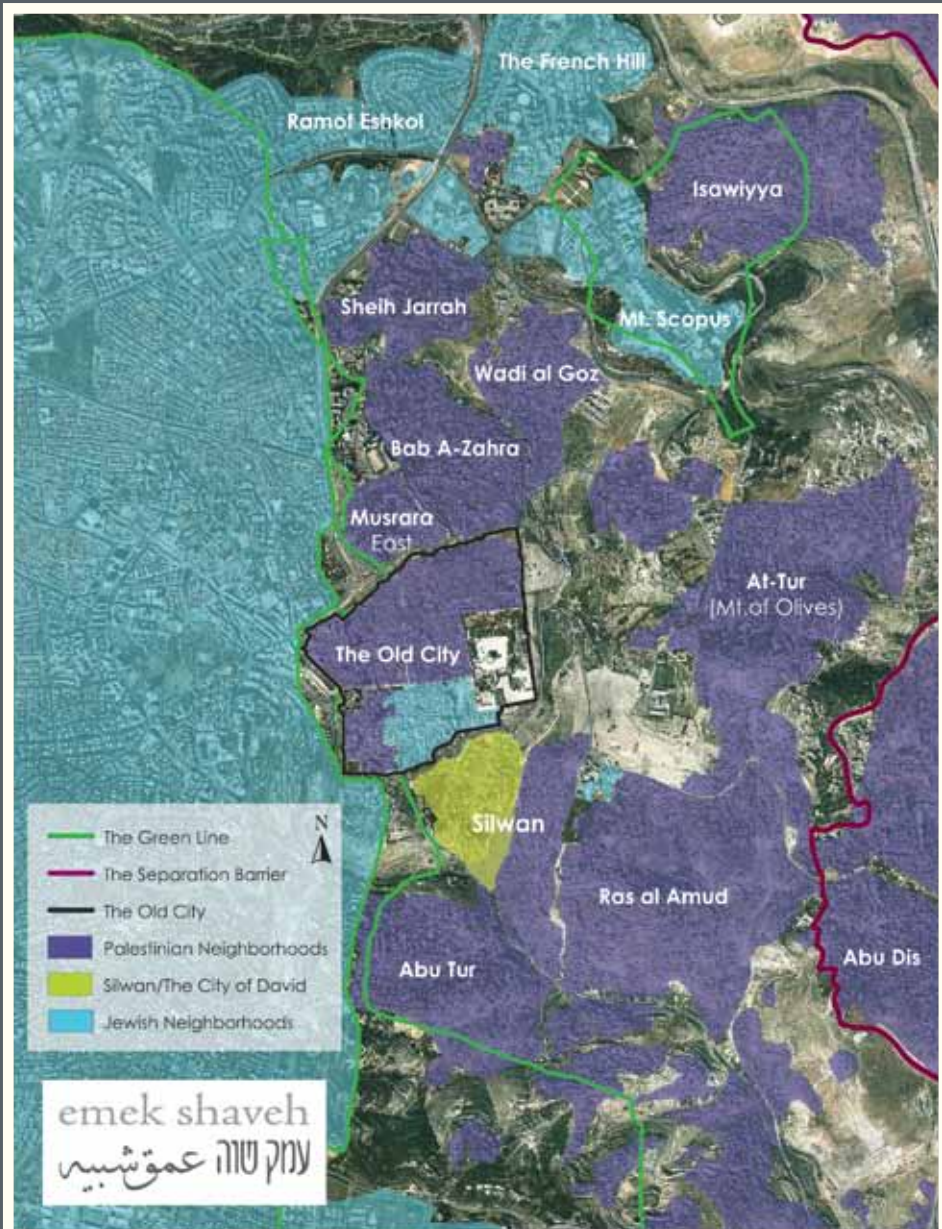
Being neither Jew (British or foreign) nor Arab, but English, I am not wholly for either, but for both. Two hours of Arab grievances drive me into the Synagogue, while after an intensive course of Zionist propaganda I am prepared to embrace Islam.

”

Sir Ronald Storrs, *Orientalism*
(The Military Governor of Jerusalem during the British Mandate)



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Map of Jerusalem

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Introduction

Archaeological excavations are tied to the political conflict in Jerusalem from two distinct aspects: one is the appropriation of land to be excavated, which can be interpreted as a means of control over a certain place or area. The second is the focus on the past, which can be seen as an instrument for appropriating the past to one particular group and its narrative. For these reasons, all archaeological activity in the Old City of Jerusalem is perceived as threatening and political. Nonetheless, the excavations do not all impact on the political situation to the same degree. Some are conducted in light of residents or merchants' needs, are limited in their range and do not turn into national projects.

While reviews of specific archaeological excavations and their implications abound, the chapters in this booklet offer a broad picture of the local archaeological projects. As we understand it, focusing on one event or archaeological dig does not permit an inclusive view of the full complexity of the situation, which must be comprehended in the context of socio-economic conditions in the Old City, its density, and the political battle for sovereignty.

As far as archaeology in the Old City of Jerusalem goes, it appears there is no end to research options. In this publication we concentrate on the effect of central digs in the Old City, digs whose placement and size exacerbate the surrounding divisions. The information is offered in three parts. The first chapter deals with the main recent excavations in the Old City; the second focuses on archaeology in the holy sites; the third describes the digging of tunnels and underground caverns beneath the busy streets of the Old City and Silwan village.

Principal Archaeological Activities in the Old City of Jerusalem in 2011 And their Socio-Political Impact



The Old City, view to the north-east

In 2010, in a publicity shot for the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), CEO Shuka Dorfman notes that the breadth of excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem over the past five-six years was unprecedented: “**we are digging (in the Old City) as no one has dug for 150 years.**”¹ This includes digs in open sites, digging of tunnels and reconstruction and preservation work.

Though the archaeological digs in the 60’s and 70’s of the past century were the most extensive and prolonged to date, the IAA CEO’s statement, even if exaggerated, is in accord with government plans from 2005 to develop the historical basin of Jerusalem for tourism. The State of Israel and the Jerusalem Municipality have allotted over 620 million NIS (480 million NIS from the government, 144 million NIS from the city) to develop tourism and archaeology in this area from 2005-2013. In 2008 alone, 50 million NIS were spent for these purposes, and it appears that similar sums were expended in later years.²

This document delineates the main archaeological sites that have been preserved or developed over the past year, and sites of socio-political significance. Following the description of these sites, we offer an analysis of the socio-political effects of the digs in the Old City. Alongside scientific archaeological digs, the authorities have been carrying on wide-spread digging of tunnels and underground grottos. Information on the underground digs can be found in the Jerusalem Underground chapter.



Wall painting in the Cardo – between fantasy and reality

Chapter 1: History of the Digs

Archaeological digs in the historical basin of the Old City of Jerusalem were begun some 150 years ago, under the leadership of European researchers such as Conrad Schick, Charles Clermont-Ganneau, and others. These digs covered small areas in the Old City (mostly Church lands), areas adjacent to the walls and gates of the Old City, or open areas such as the Ophel (the Ophel Archeological Park, below the southern wall of the Temple Mount), the Tower of David (the Citadel), and more.³ Extensive digging in the Old City began at the end of the 1960's (after the 1967 Six-Day War) and has continued to this day. From the perspective of the State of Israel, archaeology in the Old City was seen as part of the research into the identity of the Jewish people and their bond to the land. While archaeological studies were carried on scientifically, and various layers of different periods were dug up, **many researchers identified their work with the drive to discover, study and even prove the past of the Jewish people in Jerusalem.**⁴ Many of the sites that were dug and made available to the public are under state and municipal control; the remaining sites are under the auspices of churches and the Islamic Waqf. Responsibility for the sites is divided between these bodies.

Two of the most extensive digs in the Old City are the Ophel Excavations south of the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif, and to the west, the excavations in the Jewish Quarter. The Ophel Excavations project, run by Benjamin Mazar, was begun in 1968

and completed in 1978. The area flanks the southern wall and part of the western boundary of the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif. The excavations of the Jewish Quarter were run by Nahman Avigad from 1969-1982. Both were academically sponsored by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. While excavations in the “Ophel” were concentrated in a single, extended site, those in the Jewish Quarter took place in a great number of sites dispersed throughout the area. The third largest archaeological site is that of the Tower of David, contiguous to the Jaffa gate. This site was dug several times over the 20th century.⁵

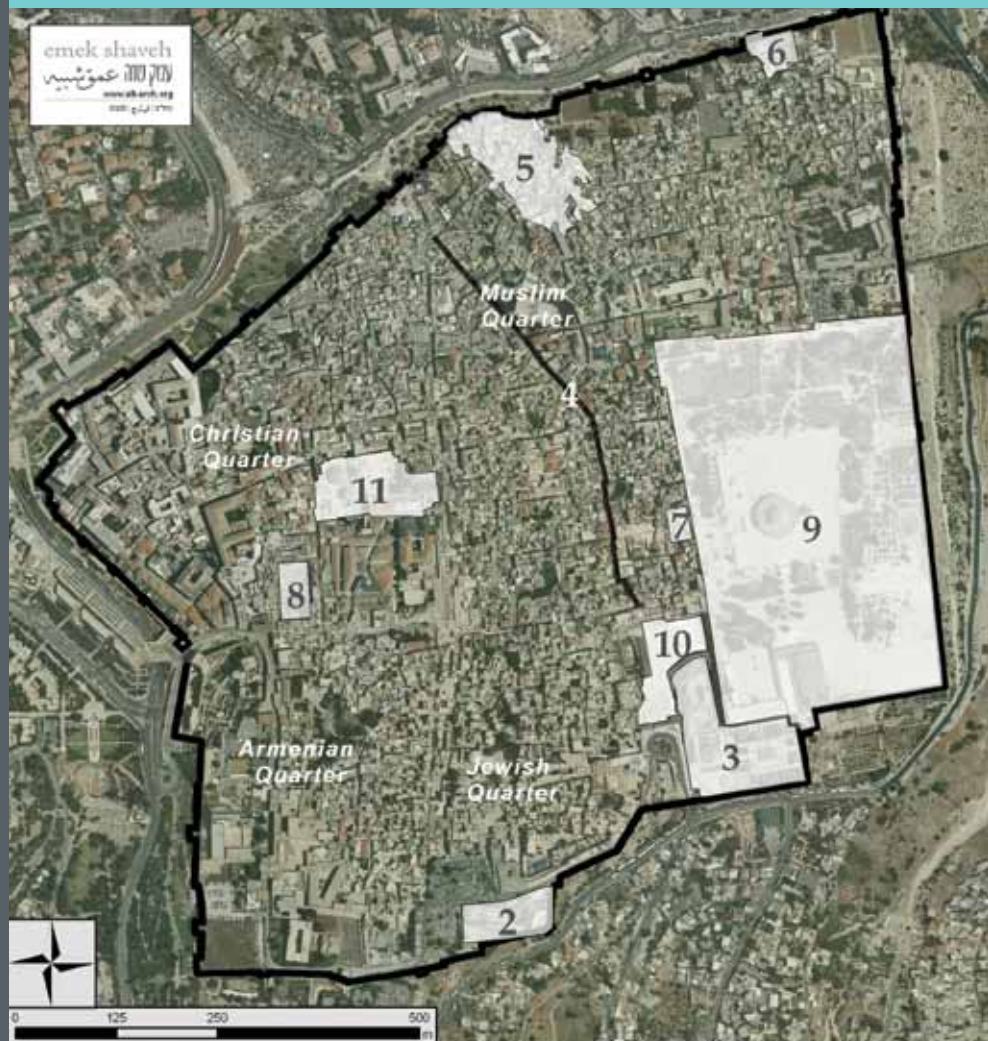
Most of the structures in the Old City were built in the last few centuries over older layers. Immediately after the 1967 Six-Day-War, the Old City was declared an antiquities site, so that **any building activity, even enlarging a doorway, entails obtaining permits from the Antiquities Authority.**⁶ Consequently, the IAA is involved in all development and building work there. The IAA runs dozens of excavations in the historic basin of Jerusalem’s Old City, from short salvage excavations that last only a few days to extensive digs carried out over several years.

Over the years, the IAA (and the Antiquities Department before it) carried out a great many digs for development and building purposes, in both private homes and shops and public structures. Digs in the Knights Halls in the Christian Quarter or the Latin Patriarchate are one example.⁷ Many digs were performed after residents damaged the antiquities. In general, these sites are not open to the public, and sometimes the majority of remnants were removed so the sites could be developed. These salvage excavations are essential for ongoing life in the Old City, and in order to adapt the city to changing needs such as new construction for the growing population, tourism development etc. Under the Antiquities Authority Law, such excavations are performed throughout Israel, not only in Jerusalem’s historical basin.



Chapter 2: Prominent Archaeological Activities in the Old City in 2011

Prominent Archaeological Activities in the Old City of Jerusalem



Legend

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1 — Old City Walls | 6 Herod's Gate \ Burj al-Laklak |
| 2 The Nea Church | 7 Little Western Wall \ HaKotel HaKatan |
| 3 Ophel Excavations \ Davidson Center | 8 Hezekiah's Pool |
| 4 Al-Wad Street | 9 Temple Mount \ Haram al-Sharif |
| 5 Solomon's Quarry \ Zedekiah's Cave | 10 Western Wall Plaza |
| | 11 Church of the Holy Sepulchre |

1. Old City Walls

In 2004, several stones fell from the Old City walls and landed in the De Pierre College yard. This event led the authorities responsible for the Old City and its antiquities to begin preservation work of the walls. **In 2007, after years of surveying and planning, the Antiquities Authority began preservation work on several sections of the wall.⁸ The work continued up to 2011, and is currently near completion. The preservation is funded by the Prime Minister's office,** which is also responsible for it. It is managed by the Jerusalem Development Authority (JDA). The project's cost is about 20 million NIS.⁹

The current walls around the city were built in the 16th century, early in the Ottoman rule in the region. Some sections of the walls were built over the contours of ancient walls from the Crusader period, the Muslim periods and the Byzantine-Roman periods.¹⁰



Damascus Gate/Bab Al-Amud preservation work 2011

2. The Nea Church

Remnants of the Nea Church, dated to the 6th century CE, were unearthed in the course of excavations in the Jewish Quarter in the 70's. The church appears in the literature as one of the largest and most impressive of Jerusalem churches; its splendor rivaled that of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The remnants uncovered included part of the apse, a series of underground arches and the south-eastern end

of the church. Above the remnants dated to the Byzantine period, a second church was found, dated to the Crusader period.¹¹ This church, though smaller than the Nea Church, is among the largest of its period to have been uncovered in Jerusalem.¹² Today the churches are located in the central public park in the Jewish Quarter, named the Gan Hatkuma. The churches are fenced in and closed to the public. They are under the aegis of the JQDC (the Company for the Reconstruction and Development of the Jewish Quarter). Ostensibly, one could visit the Nea Church after prior coordination with company offices, but generally a great deal of patience and determination are required to receive the keys to the excavation site. **The site is neglected and heaped with trash; stone relics and architectural objects scattered throughout the interior are barely distinguishable from the trash that litters the site.** The JQDC owns most of the Jewish Quarter; according to its plans, the area adjoining the Nea Church is destined to serve as an underground parking garage for the quarter's Jewish-Israeli residents.¹³

Remnants of the Byzantine Nea Church (effectively locked from tourist eyes)



Remnants of the Nea Church, Crusader Period

3. Ophel Excavations – Davidson Center

This site, **the largest continuous excavation in the Old City**, is located south of the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif and the Old City Walls, or Silwan village. Antiquities unearthed here include graves from the Abbasid period (8-9th centuries CE) as well as remnants from large structures identified as palaces or administrative buildings from the Umayyad period (7-8th centuries CE). Below and beside these, the Byzantine period (4-7th centuries CE) layer unearthed includes dwellings and a structure identified as a monastery. From the Late Roman period (1-4th centuries CE), main findings are related to army uses, and include a bakery that served the Tenth Legion of the Roman army, which was settled in Jerusalem. Another layer has been dated to the Early Roman period. A few findings from earlier periods were also uncovered.¹⁴

The area was declared a national park at the end of the 90's, and a few years later the Davidson Center was built and the place was turned into an active museum. The area is managed by the East Jerusalem Development Company (PAMI), a city/state government body. Preparing the site for visitors included preservation and reconstruction of the Umayyad palaces, the Herodian street, buildings from the Byzantine period, and more.



The Davidson Center – Robinson's Arch and relics from the Roman street

In 2011, three important projects took place in this site:

1. Preservation named the “Ritual Baths Lane” – preservation of purification baths dated to the 1st century CE/BCE and identified with the Jewish tradition at the time of the Second Temple. The baths are located in the eastern section of the Ophel excavations, outside the Old City walls. The baths are seen as a sign of Jewish presence and religious practice during the Second Temple Period (2nd century BCE-1st century CE).¹⁵ **The decision to preserve the baths emphasizes the Jewish findings and identity over the many other layers and findings uncovered at the site.**



Preservation work – Ritual Baths Lane

2. In June 2011, the Ophel Walls site was opened to the public. This is a small section of the Ophel excavations, close to the Ritual Baths Lane. Several walls dated to the 8-7th centuries BCE – the Judean Kingdom period - were unearthed there. The site’s preservation includes all of the early walls and a Byzantine structure.¹⁶ **This section, meager in findings in comparison to other areas in general, and to the Ophel excavations in particular, becomes central in the tourist trail.** The importance attributed to Judean Kingdom findings by Israeli culture is incommensurate with their quality.



The Ophel walls in the Davidson Center after preservation works

3. The construction of an underground tunnel that connects the Silwan village to the Western Wall Plaza (see Underground Jerusalem chapter).

The preservation work on the Ophel walls and the tunnels that were dug create a continuous tourist path linked to the City of David site in Silwan. The excavation of a connecting tunnel between the Old City and the City of David site, and the identification of the Ophel walls with the Judean Kingdom is comparable to presenting archaeological remains in the City of David as part of King David's palace.

4. Al-Wad Street

Towards the end of 2011, the Jerusalem Development Authority (JDA) is expected to publish a tender for infrastructure work in Al-Wad street, though plans for this work have been well-known for quite a while. The infrastructure work includes changing a sewage pipe that runs under the street, from the Damascus Gate to the Western Wall Plaza. In the 70's and 80's, the street was excavated by a number of archaeologists, so that one can assume that the area slated for infrastructure development has already been dug. **It is unclear if the upcoming excavations will be used to dig yet another tunnel connecting the Western Wall tunnels, which currently end at the Via Dolorosa, to the Damascus Gate or to Solomon's Quarry/Zedekiah's Cave.**



Al-Wad street

5. Zedekiah's Cave

The cave is located under about a fourth of the Muslim Quarter, with an entrance outside the Old City Walls, between the Damascus gate and Herod's Gate. The area was made tourism-ready decades ago, and is under the aegis of the East Jerusalem Development Company (PAMI). Further development work that includes bringing a sewage pipe into the cave and the construction of public bathrooms is currently underway. The excavation of an emergency exit leading outside the walls, across from Salah A-Din street is also underway. The site is being developed to host small groups.

Zedekiah's cave served as a stone quarry for thousands of years. Testimonies of its use have been found from the 2nd century BCE and until the 15th century CE. This is one of the largest and most labyrinthine man-made caves in Jerusalem. The cave was in use over many different periods and by a variety of rulers who quarried stone for many purposes. There are no regular tours at the site, but those that do take place there during school vacations and on Jewish festivals when practicing Jews can travel, stress that the cave was used to quarry stones for the Temple (a theory which cannot be proved).



Solomon's Quarry/Zedekiah's Cave – northern end



Burj al-Laklak excavations in the vicinity of Herod's Gate

6. Herod's Gate/ Burj Al-Laklak

One of the few construction-free sites in the Muslim Quarter is called Burj Al-Laklak. The site is located east of the Damascus Gate and separates the Walls and the homes in the Sa'adiya neighborhood. **In 1998, the Israel Antiquities Authority began digging the area to prepare it for the construction of houses intended for Jewish settlers.** The project was initiated and funded by the Ministry of Tourism, though it was slated for homes, not tourism. Excavations unearthed remnants of structures from the 1st century CE up to the Ottoman period.¹⁷ The digging culminated in 2008 after partial exposure of ancient relics, and no work was done to preserve or protect the antiquities. Consequently the area is neglected and exposed relics are damaged; the site is fenced and locked. Though it has not been dug in recent years, we believe the digging will continue once the political decision is made to advance the construction of a Jewish settlement on the site.

7. The Little Western Wall (the Little Kotel)

The Little Kotel is part of a wall situated in the Muslim Quarter, in a narrow lane at the end of Bab Al-Khadid st. (which leads to the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount site). This is a small section of the western support wall of the Temple Mount, part of which is dated to the Second Temple period. The Little Kotel is identified as the place nearest to the Holy of Holies that Jews were permitted to pray at. (The Holy of Holies itself was out of bounds for everyone but the high priest). The length of this section of the wall is about 10 meters, and in recent years it has been serving as a prayer site for Jews, especially on Fridays. **The designation of the area for Jewish prayer creates friction between the Palestinian residents living beside the Little Kotel and Jews who come to pray there.** Residents are forced to adapt their daily lives to the rhythm of Jewish prayer and to events that take place at the Little Kotel.¹⁸

The Little Western Wall



8. Hezekiah's Pool

Hezekiah's Pool, a water reservoir surrounded by houses on all sides, is located in the Christian Quarter. The reservoir is rectangular, but not symmetrical. To the north it is bounded by the Coptic Khan, and on all other sides by homes and shops. The reservoir was never excavated or dated, but a drainage tunnel that connects to it was excavated and dated to the Late Roman period (2nd century CE). It is reasonable to assume the pool is from the same period.¹⁹ Photographs from the early 20th century show the reservoir full of water. Today there is no access to the pool except through homes and shops. In recent years, several initiatives were launched to clean the trash accumulated in the reservoir as it is a sanitation hazard and a source of illness and infection. **Recently, a new internet group has called for a cleanup and excavation of the reservoir because it is an important site for the Jewish people.**²⁰ The group associates the reservoir with King Hezekiah of the 8th century BCE, though it is clear there is no connection between the reservoir and Hezekiah, as it appears to have been built in the Late Roman/Byzantine period.

In tandem with the activity of the internet group, the Jerusalem Municipality has begun cleaning the reservoir, a move which has angered the Copts, the Greek-Orthodox authorities and the Islamic Waqf, all of whom share custody of the area. The cleanup began on June 2011 and was intensive and continuous for several months. It was unilateral, as the various sides were unable to coordinate activity despite their shared interest.



Hezekiah's Pool after the cleanup

Chapter 3: Archaeological Activity and its Socio-Political Impact

Work conducted to preserve the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem or to repair and reconstruct the sewage system under Al-Wad street is vital for preserving the ancient quality of the Old City. It is evident that much of the preservation work is not damaging to the local population, and **often salvage excavations are performed to facilitate daily life in the city**. Nonetheless, as we see in the effects of the archaeological projects on the Old City require review in the context of overall, widespread political trends.

The preservation and excavation work taking place in the Davidson Center – the Ophel Excavations – are performed for relics that are not outstanding, ritual baths dated to the Second Temple period, including some built in cellars or excavated in the rock. The remnants dated to the Judean Kingdom are scanty and difficult to decipher as they were destroyed and neglected, and built below layers and structures from later periods. There is no preservation of prominent and important antiquities such as the Ummayyad structure and others of later periods, but **much work around structures that while not well-preserved are identified with national significance for the Jewish people**.

In comparison with the high level of attention devoted to relics in the Davidson Center, **the neglect of the Nea Church in the Jewish Quarter stands out loud and clear**. The church is almost entirely off-limits to the public, neglected and littered. Thus one of the most impressive archaeological finds unearthed in excavations in the Jewish Quarter remains unknown, and does not receive the preservation and cultivation it merits. The preservation work in the Jewish Quarter and the contrasting neglect of other sites make evident the desire to highlight the Jewish past of this area, and to link relics that are 2,000 years old and more to contemporary residents of the Jewish Quarter. Thousands of years represented in layers from other periods are neither researched nor displayed as they should be.

Ostensibly the preservation of the Old City walls, built in the 16th century, is an exception and free of political purposes, but in fact, **alongside the importance of preserving the walls, the state of Israel is reinforcing its hold on the boundaries of the Old City**. The preservation work acts to exhibit and convey the boundaries placed on Palestinian residents from every direction, and displays Israeli control over the city walls. This may be the reason for the Prime Minister's Office decision to fund this work.²¹

Another example of the way the authorities intervene in preservation efforts can be seen in the cleanup of Hezekiah's Pool in the Christian Quarter. The land owners (the Islamic Waqf, the Copts and the Greek-Orthodox Church) raised the need for a cleanup in the first years of the last decade, but were opposed by the Antiquities Authority. The municipality's decision to clean the reservoir without any coordination with the landowners reinforces the assumption that the place is intended for the use of settlers or other Israeli groups.²² The south-western wall of the reservoir abuts the Petra Hotel, whose ownership is under litigation in a dispute between the settler

organization “Ateret Cohanim” and the Greek-Orthodox Church.²³ It is as yet unclear whether there is a connection between the legal contest and the cleanup of the pool. The cleanup accrues to other archaeological goings-on in areas populated by Palestinians, such as the excavation at Burj Al-Laklak/Herod’s Gate, which may be currently on hold, but has been designated for a compound for settlers in one of the last open spaces in the highly-crowded Muslim Quarter. The fitting of Zedekiah’s Cave for visitors in the area between the Damascus Gate and Herod’s Gate is not part of populating the Old City with settlers, but preparing the site for large-scale events and bringing thousands of Israeli tourists into the Palestinian business center of East Jerusalem strengthens Israel’s stronghold there. At the same time, ancient relics are presented in a way that accentuates the Jewish/Israeli past in the area, though the cave served the city over thousands of years and in fact gives testimony to the continuity of multi-cultural settlement.

The sites and archaeological activities discussed here do not encompass all the archaeological work taking place in the Old City. Additional projects are being planned below the Damascus Gate in the Roman Plaza Museum Compound, in the Jaffa Gate area, and more. The projects reinforce the drive to bolster Israel’s connection to the Old City while simultaneously ignoring the link between Palestinian residents and the past. Israel’s hold on the area is not reinforced via a connection with the local Palestinian population, but via archaeological activity that is injurious to the residents and often contradicts their needs.

Archaeology in the Central Holy Sites in the Old City of Jerusalem



Prayer in the “Ophel” excavation site

The holiness of a holy site – however ancient – is more prominent in the public’s perception than its antiquity. As most of the public, and especially believers, see the site in relation to its religious significance, **the attempt to discuss the archaeological importance of the site can never be separated from the feelings of believers.**

The holy sites in Jerusalem’s Old City have a central role in the political struggle in the region. Each side emphasizes the Old City’s central importance to its tradition, basing it on the majority religion of its people. Thus Jewish holy sites are seen as Israeli assets, and Islamic holy sites are held as Palestinian assets. Many Christian sites are controlled by different churches that are also involved.

This document focuses on the three central holy sites in the Old City: Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount, holy to Muslims and to Jews, the Western Wall, holy to Jews, and the Holy Sepulcher, holy to Christians. We will examine archaeological activities at these sites, and how they affect the socio-political situation in the Old City. Developments in the holy sites impact billions of believers. Archaeological activities and the preservation of antiquities in these sites carry a very wide radius of importance. It is impossible to separate religion and politics in these sites from science. Consequently, we believe that all research and archaeological activity in these sites are inherently political.

1. Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif



Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount

The oldest standing structures in the Old City today are the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock in the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount compound. Both were built in the seventh century, apparently by the Umayyad caliph Abd Al-Malik. Most of the architecture at the site is from the Islamic periods, and the Islamic Waqf is in charge of the site. Since 1967, the place is under self-rule as a Muslim autonomy, and there is no archaeological supervision. After the Oslo accords were signed, there was a short period of cooperation between the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) and the Islamic Waqf.

In 1996, riots that erupted as a result of the opening of the tunnel connecting the Western Wall and the Via Dolorosa ended in the deaths of dozens of Israelis and Palestinians. After the riots, the IAA reduced its archaeological supervision of the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif.²⁴ **IAA officials indicate that since 1996 it has been difficult to implement this supervision.** At this point the Waqf initiated various construction projects in the site, the most extensive being the clearing and renovation of the cavernous halls known as King Solomon's Stables, which were turned into a mosque. **A large opening was forged at the south-eastern end of the cavern with large-scale mechanical tools that damaged the antiquities severely.** The State Comptroller's Report of 2011 confirms failings of supervision and failure to acquire

permits for development projects in the Temple Mount 2001-2007: “Significant deficiencies were found regarding supervision of most of the (development) work performed in the years under review (2001-2007). This work was not coordinated with the law-enforcement authorities in the Temple Mount and was conducted without the required license and permits.”²⁵



Al-Aqsa Mosque façade

It is difficult to assess the degree of destruction undergone by the antiquities in the Temple Mount for two central reasons: one, the Islamic Waqf does not provide precise details, such as the size of excavations, their depth, or a description of the findings; the second, severe criticism of the destruction at the site accompanies the heartfelt wishes of the many who would like to see full Israeli sovereignty there. The Islamic Waqf, meanwhile, is consciously dedicated to shoring up the Islamic hold on the Temple Mount, and considerations regarding the preservation of antiquities are of secondary import.

From 2005 on, the “Temple Mount Sifting Project” has been offered nearby as a hands-on experiential activity for pupils and visitors. The initiative is supported by the El’ad organization (a settler organization which also runs the Visitors Center at the Mount of Olives and the City of David archaeological site). The actual soil sifting, which uses soil thrown into the Kidron Valley during Waqf works in the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif, is not an archaeological project, and has no scientific value.

This project, which purports to expose remnants from the Jewish temple or other important Jewish antiquities, sifts very little actual material, and provides no reliable information on the degree of destruction at the Temple Mount, because the soil is out of its archaeological context. The project is an example of an initiative that uses antiquities for religious, nationalistic and political interests.²⁶

2. The Western Wall Plaza



The Western Wall Heritage Foundation is responsible for the plaza and for the Western Wall Tunnels. The foundation is a government body operating from the Prime Minister's Office. It is funded by the government and by private donors. The excavation of the tunnels began immediately after the 1967 Six-Day War. The digging was managed by the Ministry of Religion and did not follow scientific archaeological standards. Instead of conducting an archaeological dig, it was decided to place an archaeologist to oversee the work. Publications of archaeologists involved in digging the tunnels show that a great deal of information is lacking as it was produced under archaeological supervision without a properly organized excavation.²⁷ Archaeological supervision permits some follow-up of the development and excavation work, but is not a scientific operation; its conclusions are not comparable to those of orderly archaeological digging.

From 2005 on, the most extensive and large-scale excavations in the Old City have been conducted by the IAA in the Western Wall Plaza or the tunnels, under the authority and funding of the Western Wall Heritage Foundation.

In 2005, the IAA began digging in the western section of the Western Wall plaza. The excavation, spread over about 1.5 dunam,²⁸ continued till 2009 almost without interruption. The dig unearthed remains of the Mugrabi quarters which Israel destroyed in 1967 along with ancient remains going back as far as the 7th century BCE. The Western Wall Heritage Foundation plans to build a three-four storey museum over the excavation site. A group of archaeologists have protested, saying that the construction will harm the archaeological findings,²⁹ but the plan was approved for deposit in the regional planning committee. The structure is intended to stand facing the Al-Aqsa Compound.

Western Wall Foundation officials openly declare that the excavation aims to find remnants of the Second Temple.³⁰ These officials see periods associated with the Jewish past, such as the Judean Kingdom period (10th – 6th centuries BCE) and the Second Temple period (2nd century BCE – 1st century CE) as the main targets of the excavations. In this way, antiquities from the past can be linked to contemporary Jewish belief, creating a direct connection between a 2,000 year old Jewish past and our own day. These pronouncements do not accord with IAA statements that the excavations deal with all the periods represented in the site, without aiming for any particular one or ignoring others.³¹ It might be said that after decades of digs that were managed by the Religion Ministry and the Western Wall Heritage Foundation under inappropriate conditions, in today's political climate the IAA cannot stand up to decisions made by religious officials. Past experience suggests that wealth and the Heritage Foundation's executives will determine the route tourists take in the tunnels, and will select the periods and the interpretations to be presented.

3. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher

The church is located in the Christian Quarter, and custody is divided among several denominations: Greek-Orthodox, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, Catholic and Syrian. It was built in the 4th century CE, and has undergone many renovations, changes, demolitions and restorations. The church as we find it today is based on construction from the Crusader period.³²

Despite the recognition that the Holy Sepulcher is one of the most important ancient sites in the Old City, **the involvement of the IAA and other official bodies in development and excavations in the church often depends on agreements and conditions set by the various denominations.** For one example, when the St. Vartan Chapel (in the interior of the church, beyond St. Helena's Chapel) was renovated - from November 1975 to February 1976 - archaeologists were invited to oversee the work only once it was completed. The scientific publication was based on information and documentation collected from remains left on the site after the renovation was complete.³³



Muslim Quarter homes with the Holy Sepulcher domes in the background



Renovations at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher

In 1996, the IAA conducted an archaeological dig within the Coptic Church section of the Holy Sepulcher, and with Coptic Church funding. The dig was initiated following a quarrel between a store owner who dug into a cavity³⁴ below his store and the Coptic Church personnel, who claimed the space belonged to them. The clash led to the involvement of the Palestinian Authority, the Egyptian government, the Israeli government, and Israeli courts. Consequently, and as church executives wanted to prove their rights to the underground caverns, the IAA was asked to excavate the site. The invitation to a professional government body was made in order to corroborate the church's hold on the site. As there was a legal contest regarding land ownership, the IAA should have verified ownership and waited for the resolution of the legal battle. Up to such resolution, it should have prevented any construction or digging at the site. Nonetheless, the IAA chose to excavate there, thus indirectly colluding with the Coptic Church and confirming its claims to ownership. The excavations uncovered remains that included structures and excavated niches from the Byzantine period, a church from the early Islamic period, and a domed structure from the Crusader period.³⁵

The contest between various denominations over areas and control in the Holy Sepulcher, and other contests between them and those who own adjoining structures, foil the supervision, research and preservation proper to this extraordinary site.

4. Women of the Wall, Archaeology and Holiness



Women of the Wall at prayer in the Davidson Center

The many holy sites of the multiple religions and denominations in the Old City are all characterized by discrimination against women, beginning with areas allotted to women's prayer, and ending with their role and standing during the prayer service. One of the only groups battling this discrimination and aiming to receive full rights is the Women of the Wall.³⁶ This group, which comprises religious women from various branches of Judaism, has been battling for women's right to pray at the Western Wall for over 20 years. The group has demanded the right to pray in the women's section of the Western Wall, wrapped in a talith (Jewish prayer shawl), once a month for several hours. This request was perceived as a threat to Jewish prayer at the Wall as it is currently practiced, and religious leaders, rabbis and politicians have spoken out forcefully against it and against women's rights.

In the year 2000, after a long legal battle that began in 1989, the Israeli Supreme Court - sitting in a panel of nine - determined that the Women of the Wall may not pray as they wish at the Western Wall plaza.³⁸ Instead, **it was decided to allot a special prayer area for them in the archaeological excavations of the Davidson Center – in an area called Robinson's Arch.**

After the 1967 Six-Day War, the area south of the Mugrabi Gate was designated for archaeological excavations while the area to the west was designated as the prayer compound of the Western Wall. Robinson's Arch lies in the area intended for archaeological research. The decision to fit antiquities for prayer raises several questions: should excavation sites change their designated purposes and become religious sites? Are the Women of the Wall seen by the Jewish Orthodox establishment as unacceptable, making prayer in an antiquities site reasonable precisely because the site isn't holy? Is the significance of antiquities qua antiquities secondary to local religio-political interests?

It appears that the answer is yes, at least to the final question: in 1995, the IAA asserted that prayer services may not be held in antiquities sites: "It does not appear possible to hold prayer services of any form whatsoever at this site," was the IAA's response to the Supreme Court.³⁹ However, as the legal battle dragged on, it was decided to fit the antiquities site for prayer.⁴⁰ **The solution - changing the site's designation from an antiquities site to a prayer site - confirms the hierarchy regarding holy sites: religious leaders, political interests, the wider public, women, and finally antiquities. In this regard, the status of the antiquities, like that of the women, is subordinate to that of the interests of religious and political factions.**

Summary

On the face of it, questions regarding the methodology of archaeological excavations, their scientific level and professionalism are the business of the archaeological community. But when holy sites are presented as one nation's political asset, and when the antiquities are among the means used to bolster one side at the cost of the other, archaeological research is centrally important in reinforcing the chosen narrative.

The degree of suspicion, animosity and caginess in the holy sites is perhaps the highest in the Old City, where every unilateral action, even a renovation of a standing structure, heightens tensions. In this climate, independent archaeological activity, backed by a wide public of many religions, nations and sectors, can offer an alternative to a situation where archaeology is held hostage in religious and political battles.

Incorporating international elements and creating inter-religious dialogue are crucial not only to defend the antiquities from physical harm, but to give the antiquities a measure of protection from exploitation by extremists and nationalists. The remnants of the past can be used by such extremists to enflame the political conflict, or, alternatively, to present a complex and multi-cultural narrative of the past. Such a complex presentation can reinforce the role of the antiquities as a significant asset for all residents and visitors, and support the voices of moderation. In the present reality, it appears that the moderates are being drowned out.

Underground Jerusalem

The excavation of tunnels, channels, and underground spaces in the Historic Basin

The tunnels being dug in the Old City and in the adjacent Palestinian village of Silwan have reached the headlines once again. **In the four years since 2007, the Israel Antiquities Authority (henceforth: IAA) seems to have been focusing its efforts and energies on the excavation of channels, tunnels, and underground spaces in the Historic Basin of Jerusalem (The Old City and its environs).** Under the mantle of scientific research, the IAA is laying the groundwork for an ideological tourism with political overtones.

Although engaging in ostensibly scientific activity, the IAA provides no easily accessible information regarding the location and objectives of its excavations, the scope of its activities, or the nature of its finds. More often than not, the information about the tunnel excavations is provided after the fact, through a communiqué from the IAA spokesperson, and is not reported transparently during the excavation, as would be expected from a government service acting in the center of a city. Needless to say, such secrecy heightens the suspicion of irregularities, of harm done to archeological finds, and of the advancement of covert goals through the excavations.

The goal of this document is to provide a detailed picture of the state of underground excavations in the Historic Basin. We estimate that additional areas are being excavated, but they are not mentioned in this document, as we do not yet have enough information about them. It is our hope that in the future, the IAA will fill the gaps and provide the public with all the required information about its excavations in the Historic Basin of ancient Jerusalem. Such transparency is vital for the restoration of the trust of the public - including the Palestinian public and the international community - in the archeological activity being undertaken in the city.

Legend

1. Zedekiah's Cave
2. Western Wall Tunnels
3. Ohel Yitzhak Synagogue
4. Western Wall Plaza
5. Ophel excavations
6. Givati parking lot excavation
7. Tunnel following drainage channel and 'Herodian' Street
8. 'Gihon' Tunnels
9. Excavated by Ch. Warren

Underground excavations in Jerusalem's Old City and Silwan

emek shaveh
למק טורה עמק שבי

(ח"צ | ש ל ג | cpb)



Underground excavations in Jerusalem: From 1865 to the present

This intensive interest in underground tunnels and channels, whether ancient or contemporary, turns the clock back some 150 years. At that time, the first European archeologists in Jerusalem, aided by laborers from Jerusalem and its environs, dug deep in the heart of the Holy City in order to establish its ancient topography and the nature of the structures adjacent to the Temple Mount. First and foremost among them was Capt. Charles Warren, R.E. In order to avoid the prying eyes of the Ottoman authorities, Warren dug vertical shafts at some distance from the walls of the Temple Mount, and from there he continued to excavate in “galleries” - horizontal tunnels dug along the ancient walls. Warren dug alongside the Western Wall, from the area of Robinson’s Arch in the direction of Barclay’s Gate (one of the gates of the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif) and north of there, at points that today constitute part of the network of “Western Wall Tunnels”. He exposed an ancient gate attributed to the temple complex of Herod (1st century BCE), which led to the Temple Mount itself.⁴¹ Warren’s excavation project was also based on an 1862 map documenting the wells and water systems on the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif.

In addition to the excavations around the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif, Warren and his team dug in the adjacent village of Silwan, exposing important parts of a water system dated to Bible-era Jerusalem. Here too, the excavations were conducted deep underground, far from the authorities’ view. Among the things discovered there were shafts, tunnels, and channels - both naturally formed and man-made, that have become known as Warren’s Shaft.

For as long as Ottoman rule lasted in Jerusalem, excavations continued in the shaft/gallery format. In 1894–1897, archeologists F.G. Bliss and A.C. Dickie dug a sprawling system of channels and tunnels around Mount Zion and the Siloam Pool/Birket al-Hamra. Between 1909 and 1911, an expedition led by M. Parker renewed the investigation of the ancient waterworks of Jerusalem, hoping to find a subterranean passage from the Gihon Spring in Silwan to the heart of the Temple Mount, where, they hoped, they would discover the treasures of the Temple. Parker and his crew explored the Siloam Tunnel and Warren’s Shaft and dug new galleries,⁴² but had to abandon the excavation following the disclosure of their attempt to bribe some Waqf guards in order to dig under the Temple Mount itself.

This series of excavations, conducted behind the backs of the authorities, thus served to reinforce two central narratives regarding the archaeology of Jerusalem. The Western, scientific narrative that identified the “real” Jerusalem beneath the surface, while viewing the present inhabitants of the city as degraded, benighted remnants of the past who obscured the importance and destiny of the Holy City; and the Muslim-Palestinian narrative, which viewed archaeology as a tool of western imperialism aimed at undermining the Islamic presence in Al-Quds and in the Haram Al-Sharif.

Although the 19th- and early-20th-century explorers are considered the founders of the archaeology of Jerusalem, **the science of archaeology developed rapidly and**

the “gallery” method of excavation was soon abandoned. The primary objective of any scientific excavation became the exposure of the historical layers from top to bottom, revealing the order of their stratification. Under British and Jordanian rule, the archaeology of Jerusalem emerged from the twilight, excavations began to take place by the light of day and successive layers of the city’s history were peeled away in an orderly fashion, from the surface and on down. **Nonetheless, “underground” excavations did not entirely disappear, and it is possible to find heirs to those 19th-century Old City excavators at different times and in various contexts.**



Charles Warren in a tunnel under the Old City of Jerusalem

Tunnel excavations following the Six Day War

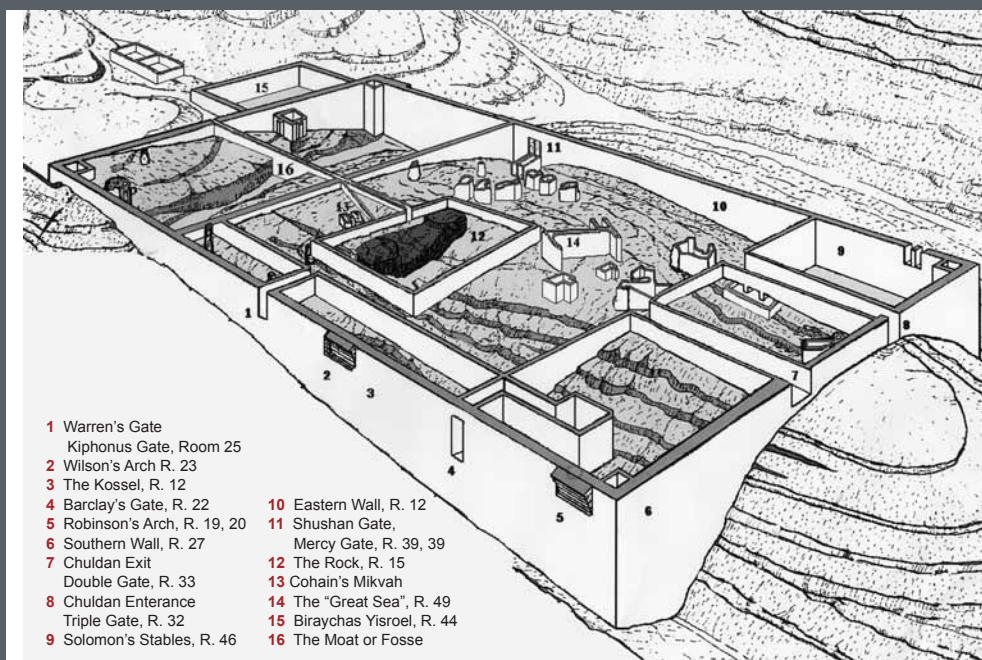
Following the Six Day War, intensive archaeological activity began in and around the Old City. Leading researchers from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem were among those to conduct extensive excavations: Nahman Avigad in the Jewish Quarter; Benjamin Mazar south of the Temple Mount (the Ophel), and Yigal Shiloh on the southeast hill of ancient Jerusalem (the City of David). These excavations were conducted according to accepted modern methods, and underground systems were approached from above, revealing their access points and their relation to the overlying structures.

There were also, however, non-scientific excavations: **In 1969, at the initiative of the Ministry of Religion, the excavation of a tunnel began along the Western Wall, underneath the densely built-up Muslim Quarter houses that border the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif.** This excavation continued until the beginning of the 1990s, and among other things re-exposed Warren's Gate, the gate leading from the Temple Mount, beneath the present-day city level. Although this was done under the auspices of a government ministry, this excavation was for many years a covert operation: **it was unlicensed by the Israel Department of Antiquities (the predecessor of the IAA) and no record was kept of its finds.**



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In the first phase of development of the tunnel, visitors had to enter and exit through a single opening near the Western Wall. In 1993, the extension of the Western Wall Tunnels through to the Via Dolorosa in the Muslim Quarter were completed, although its opening was delayed until 1996. These were the early days of Benjamin Netanyahu's first tenure as prime minister, less than a year after Yitzhak Rabin's assassination and at the height of the political struggle with the Palestinian Authority for political control of East Jerusalem. Under the aegis of then Mayor Ehud Olmert, it was decided to open the northern opening of the tunnel, on the Via Dolorosa. **The opening of the tunnel - "the rock of our existence" - provoked violent demonstrations and clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinians throughout the West Bank, in which dozens were killed and hundreds were injured.**⁴³ With the cessation of the confrontations, the Western Wall Heritage Fund began to use the northern exit of the tunnel in order to increase the number of visitors to the Western Wall Tunnels. **Thus the Western Wall Heritage Fund expanded the area of its control up to the heart of the Muslim Quarter.**



- 1 Warren's Gate
- 2 Kiphonus Gate, Room 25
- 3 Wilson's Arch R. 23
- 4 The Kossel, R. 12
- 5 Barclay's Gate, R. 22
- 6 Robinson's Arch, R. 19, 20
- 7 Southern Wall, R. 27
- 8 Chuldan Exit
- 9 Double Gate, R. 33
- 10 Chuldan Entrance
- 11 Triple Gate, R. 32
- 12 Solomon's Stables, R. 46
- 13 Eastern Wall, R. 12
- 14 Shushan Gate,
- 15 Mercy Gate, R. 39, 39
- 16 The Rock, R. 15
- 17 Cohain's Mikvah
- 18 The "Great Sea", R. 49
- 19 Biraychas Yisroel, R. 44
- 20 The Moat or Fosse

Temple Mount

Charles Wilson and Charles Warren 1864 AD (drawn by Leen Ritmeyer)

The plans of the Temple Mount and its gates according to the
British Exploration Society of Palestine

Tunnel excavations under archaeological auspices

Since the mid-90s, the IAA has become the central and virtually exclusive organization conducting excavations in the Old City and the Historic Basin. The IAA is responsible for the conduct of excavations from the Siloam Pool on the slopes of Silwan to Herod's Gate in the northern wall of the Old City.⁴⁴ Most of the excavations are done at the initiative of organizations other than the IAA (governmental and non-governmental), whether as salvage excavations done before construction work or as development excavations for tourism purposes.

As for underground excavation activities, these began, modestly at first, in the area of the Gihon Spring/'Ein Umm al-Daraj (details below) at the request of the settler organization, El'ad, and the Israel Parks Authority. The turning point came in 2004 when, on the southern slopes of the City of David archaeological park - located in the Wadi Hilweh neighborhood of Silwan - an ancient pool and the remains of a Roman road leading up from it toward the Temple Mount were revealed.⁴⁵ At the same time, at the top of the Tyropean valley, extensive excavations began under the Ohel Yitzhak Synagogue adjacent to the Western Wall plaza.⁴⁶ For knowledgeable observers, it was clear that these two enterprises, although occurring at a distance from one another and seemingly separated by the walls of the Old City and the houses of Wadi Hilweh, were in fact connected by the ancient streets and drainage channels discovered back in the days of Bliss and Dickie. It seems likely that the idea was already broached to link up with those old excavations, both in a physical sense (the rediscovery of old tunnels) and an ideological one (the renewal of the long-abandoned method of tunnel excavations). Since 2004, the IAA has joined forces with the ideological organizations that are developing the area of the Western Wall and the City of David National Park and has **begun to realize their plan to connect the City of David to the Western Wall plaza in a single underground system**. The system includes excavated galleries, ancient drainage channels, and large underground spaces that were cleared of their contents. In 2005–2008, the IAA began to conduct tunnel excavations both in Silwan⁴⁷ and around the Western Wall - where tunneling was employed to connect between the Ohel Yitzhak Synagogue and the Western Wall Tunnels.

In the southern part of Silwan, in a lateral tunnel excavation, parts of the early Roman street documented in the 19th century by Bliss and Dickie were exposed.⁴⁸ Further on up the slope, above the level of this road, a shaft was excavated from above into Bliss and Dickie's tunnels in order to reveal a covered stone-built drain. This drain seems to have run under the continuation of the same early Roman street. Well over the height of an average person, **the channel runs beneath Wadi Hilwe Street and the adjacent houses, continues towards the Temple Mount excavations (the Davidson Center), continuing north beneath the Western Wall plaza.**⁴⁹ It should be noted that the excavations in Silwan are funded by the El'ad Organization, and conducted by the IAA as part of tourism development for the City of David National Park.

Since 2007, excavations have been taking place within the Western Wall Tunnels and in the spaces that extend westward to Al-Wad - Hagai Street, beneath the residential houses of the Muslim Quarter. Hundreds of square meters are under excavation, and the works involve piercing ancient walls and removing large amounts of fill, only some of which is methodically documented. These excavations are also to a large extent a return to structures studied by early researchers such as Warren, Hamilton, and others.⁵⁰ They revealed remains from almost every important period in the history of the city: a large hamam from the Mamluk period (Hamam al-'Ein), remains of Aelia Capitolina (the Roman colony built on top of the ruins following the destruction of the Second Commonwealth in 70 CE), remains from the early Roman era, and more.



Excavation in The Western Wall's Tunnel - 2011

Ancient underground complexes

In the area of the Old City and the village of Silwan are a number of ancient underground complexes, hundreds or thousands of years old, that have been studied during the course of the 19th and 20th centuries. The best known of these are Zedekiah's Cave (aka Solomon's Quarries) in the Old City and the Siloam Tunnel and Warren's Shaft in Silwan. These spaces are an important part of underground Jerusalem.

1. Zekediah's Cave

Zedekiah's Cave is located under the northern houses of the Muslim Quarter. Its entrance is found outside of the walls, between the Damascus Gate and Herod's Gate. The site was prepared as a tourist site decades ago and is currently under the jurisdiction of the East Jerusalem Development Company. Meanwhile, the Western Wall Heritage Fund is searching for funding for the development of the site.

Zedekiah's Cave served as a quarry for hundreds and even thousands of years. The first evidence for the use of the quarry is dated to the 2nd century BCE, and it was apparently in use until the 15th century. This is one of the most breathtaking man-made caves found today in Jerusalem, and it was used during a number of periods, under many different rulers, and for a variety of purposes.

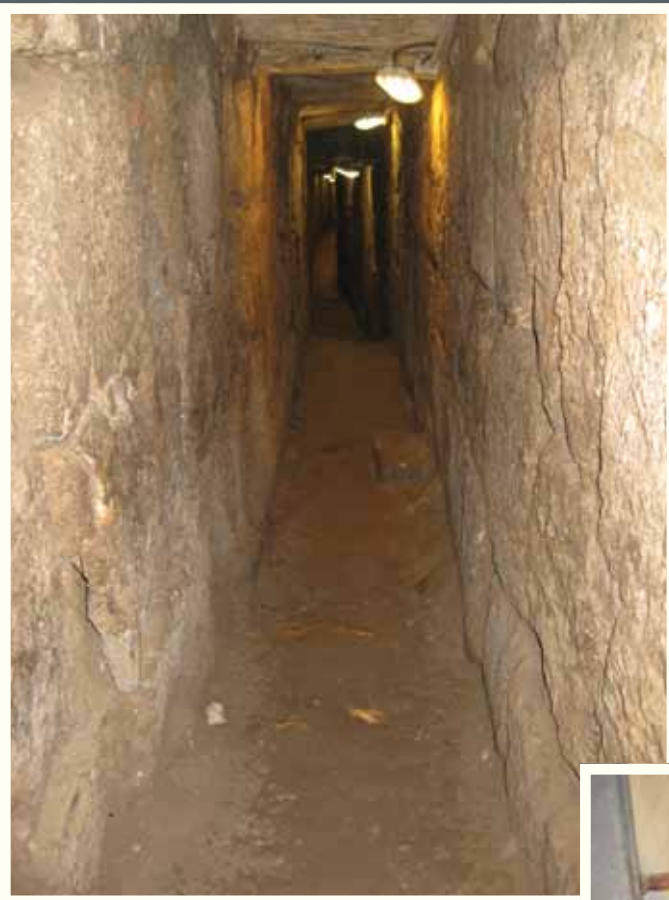
2. The Gihon Spring, Warren's Shaft, and the Siloam Tunnel

In the ancient mound of Jerusalem there are two unique underground systems. The best known of these is the Siloam (Shiloah) Tunnel. **The rock-carved tunnel, over 500 meters long, carries the waters of the Gihon Spring/Ein Umm al-Daraj - located in the Qidron Valley, between the two parts of the village of Silwan⁵¹ - to the Pool of Siloam⁵² at the southern end of the ancient mound and the Wadi Hilweh neighborhood. From the pool, the spring water runs down towards the houses of Al-Bustan.⁵³ The Siloam Tunnel system consists of a number of carved tunnels and channels, some of which still conduct water and some of which are dry. Studies of the tunnel date the first stages of its construction to the Canaanite period (18th century BCE - the Middle Bronze Age IIb), and the last to the Kingdom of Judah (8th century BCE - the Iron Age II).**

Midway between the top of the hill and the Gihon Spring, above the man-made tunnel, lies a system of hewn passages connected to a vertical shaft of apparently natural origin. This is Warren's Shaft, named after its 19th century discoverer, and its dating, purpose, and precise function are disputed.

In the decade and a half since 1995, excavations have been taking place around the Gihon Spring and the adjacent systems.⁵⁴ These excavations are conducted in the underground space beneath a residential structure and under the plaza facing the Silwan elementary school. Recently, excavations were extended by means of a tunnel dug westward, under a stepped public path. These excavations connect to the stepped section excavated in the 1960s by the archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon.⁵⁵ They revealed impressive remains of a fortification dating to the Middle Bronze Age.

The drainage channel uncovered in the village of Silwan



The ladder connecting between the level of the rainage channel to the (Herodian?) stepped street

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The (Herodian?) stepped street running northward from the Shiloah Pool

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Tunnel Excavations as Narrative

The IAA effects an interesting manipulation in its portrayal of the excavations in the Historic Basin. In its response to an Israel Supreme Court petition submitted by the residents of Wadi Hilweh, the IAA claims that the clearing out of the ancient drain underneath the houses in the village is little more than the rediscovery and cleaning of a channel whose existence has been long known.⁵⁶ This claim allows the IAA to emphasize that its tunnels are a *fait accompli*, and that its actions therefore do not pose any new threat to the houses above. At the same time, the IAA publicly advertises its discoveries as new and exciting. Another aspect is connected to the mythological status of past researchers: although some of their conclusions have become outdated, their adventurous spirit, their boldness and originality have turned their research and activities into an object of admiration. It thus becomes easy to embrace the old narrative that views archaeology as a bastion of Western science, and the opposition to it as a symbol of Oriental ignorance. This archaeological myth apparently enables the IAA to ignore changing methods and changing social and political realities. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the IAA relieves itself of any responsibility toward the local Palestinian population, neither informing it of its intents, or consulting with it as work proceeds.

Once the Roman drain has been opened, visitors will be able to take a circular walking trail in underground Jerusalem, beginning (or ending) near the Western Wall. From the area of the Western Wall, the path will go through the Roman drain/road to the Givati parking lot, just a short distance from the City of David visitors' center. There the tunnels of the Gihon and Warren's Shaft can be accessed, and at their exit, at the Pool of Siloam, the underground part of the Herodian stepped street can be reentered, leading back to ancient drain that leads back up at the Davidson Center, near the Western Wall. **Those who walk along this path are relieved of the need to confront the present reality of Jerusalem.** The circuit is meant to create a visiting experience in a parallel, imagined, Jerusalem, among the remains of two periods: the Kingdom of Judah and the Second Commonwealth. These two periods are identified, in the Israeli narrative, as the most meaningful periods for the formation of Israeli identity and the connection of the Jewish people to the land. The end (or beginning) of the path near the Western Wall plaza emphasizes the close connection between underground Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, the most holy place for the Jews.

According to the version marketed to the public, the excavations in the village of Silwan exposed a pool, a street, and a drainage and sewage system, all dated to the 1st century BCE (Second Temple period), and no more. These structures allow the visitor to relive the experience of making pilgrimage to the Temple in its glory, while also making palpable its destruction. In a new publicity film shown by the IAA on its website, the connection is presented between the 'Herodian' street in the Western Wall plaza on the one hand, and the tunnels and channels within Silwan, on the other. In this manner the aegis of the Western Wall extends itself to include the whole eastern ridge of ancient Jerusalem and the Wadi Hilweh neighborhood. The

IAA and its patrons - the El'ad organization, the Western Wall Heritage Fund, and others - work hand in hand in order to diminish both Jewish history and the history of Jerusalem. All of Jewish history is compressed into the short periods of Israelite-Jewish sovereignty in Jerusalem, while cultural layers that are not associated with Jewish political sovereignty or with the sacrificial cult are ignored. The history of Jerusalem is stripped both of the eras that preceded the Kingdom of Israel, and of what came after it, when it became the Holy City for the Christians and Al-Quds for the Muslims.

Moreover, **the story told about the tunnels serves as a means of justifying Israeli settlement in the Palestinian village of Silwan and in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City. The tunnels create an underground Jewish-Israelite city that transforms those in charge, i.e., the Israeli settlers, into inhabitants, and the disempowered, i.e., the Palestinian residents, into a temporary presence.**



Zechariah's Cave

Summary and Conclusions

The excavation of tunnels in the heart of the city entails, first and foremost, the exploitation of an ostensibly scientific-archeological means for the sake of literally undermining the lives of those who live above them. Since a large part of the conclusions of the archeological excavations conducted in recent years are based on 19th- and 20th-century excavations, their importance for scholarship is rather limited. The concealment of the actual scope of the works, the lack of scientific-archaeological rationale, and the emphasis on the emotional importance of the finds for the Jewish people, all attest to the political use that is being made of archaeology. The system of underground tunnels creates a parallel, ancient and unsullied city that pretends to represent the real Jerusalem, a Jerusalem preceding and disconnected from any conflict. This underground city renders the existing multicultural and conflicted city redundant while making control of the Historic Basin seem like a necessity in the eyes of the Israeli public, even at the cost of thwarting any political agreement.

The excavation of tunnels - one of the hallmarks of the 19th-century excavations in Jerusalem - has been revived in recent years. But this time around the excavations are not intended to deceive the authorities, but rather it is the authorities who carry them out, with the aim of deceiving the public.

The conduct of the Israeli authorities, in perceiving and portraying the archaeological finds in the Historic Basin as national property, should be troublesome for anyone who sees the city of Jerusalem, its past and its antiquities, as a place that must acknowledge and preserve the delicate and complex fabric of life of the city and the broad fabric of life of the cultures and peoples within it - in the past, present, and future.

Conclusion

The state of Israel has conducted more thorough archaeological excavations in the Old City than were ever attempted by any other government or organization. Despite this, **archaeological activity continues to provide a central pillar in its plans to strengthen its political grip on the Old City.** Archaeological activities have a clear influence on control over the Old City. Consequently, the Palestinians and various religious groups also see archaeology as a means to increase their control, or as a threat to their control. As the digging of the tunnels and the Waqf excavations show, political interests and the fear of archaeological discoveries often lead to damage to the research process and to the relics. The absurd result is that this colossal investment in archaeology is often coupled with destruction of irrecoverable sites.

There is an evident gap between the state's inability to enforce the scientific standards expected in heritage sites, and its huge investment in archaeological projects. In addition, the political exploitation of archaeological projects is accompanied by glaring disregard for residents' needs and for the importance of the sites to other religions and peoples.

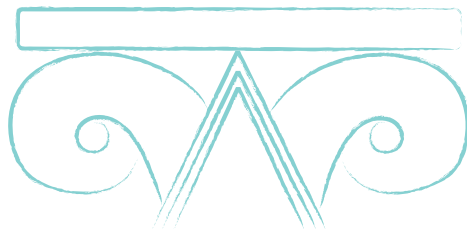
Israel is not the first to find it difficult to balance the standards of research with the preservation of local heritage sites and the improvement of the multi-cultural residents' daily lives. Jordanian rule, British rule and Ottoman rule faced the same problems, if in varying degrees, and the solutions they found were insufficient. One of the difficulties, no doubt, is the absence of balanced and professional bodies free of national and religious motivations.

We believe that only an international team or committee can cope with the competing interests of so many religious groups, while balancing between residential needs and the requirements of tourism. Only such a team, made up of professionals in the field of heritage-site preservation and conflict resolution, can contend with the various and extreme political interests, chart viable policy and methodologies, and monitor their implementation. International cooperation in Jerusalem is not a new idea; **this booklet does not concern itself with an international presence or involvement in daily life – social welfare, health, security, etc. – but with issues uniquely suited to such an intervention.**

We believe there is a need for a committee devoted to protecting, preserving and developing antiquities sites in the Old City and its environs. The committee must weigh residential needs and the religious and political situation, and balance the archaeological activity accordingly. Such a committee would provide a solution to a situation wherein archaeological research is led by religious organizations, extreme ideological groups, or even openly political government decisions that ignore basic residential needs. An international committee would highlight the antiquities and the Old City as international treasures, rather than as a national heritage site.



Construction works near Jaffa gate



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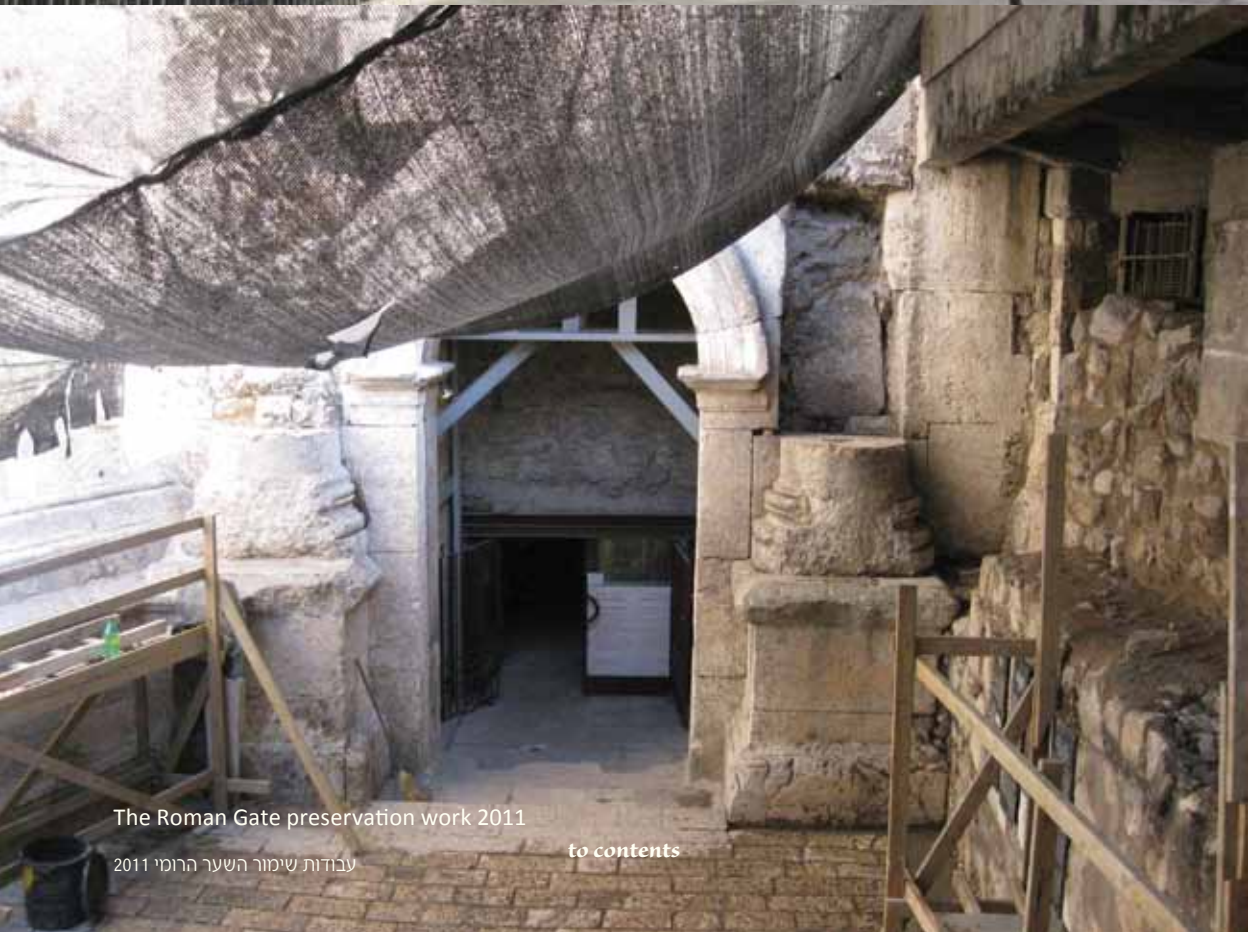


souq al-Qattanin

שוק הכותנה

Jaffa Gate

שער יפו



The Roman Gate preservation work 2011

עבודות שימור השער הרומי 2011

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