Jerusalem is not a ghost town, where time stands still, but a vibrant city; a religious and political arena. Its significance derives from the memories stored within it, as well as from its living fabric. The same is true of its antiquities: they acquire their meaning through their interaction with living people. Those who would transform Jerusalem into a museum, consign it to a slow death. Those who would exploit the past for the sake of quick economic or political profit, inflict immeasurable damage.

All of Jerusalem's residents are entitled to live in it, but they must be able to hear to its many voices. The power we wield to build and to destroy makes us particularly responsible for preserving these voices and providing a space for the memories that give meaning to our lives.
Who are we?

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. We believe archaeology tells a complex story that is independent of tradition, religious or otherwise, and that listening to this story and bringing it to the wider public can promote values of tolerance and pluralism.

Archaeological sites are among the main cultural assets of this country and belong to all the communities, peoples, and religious groups living in it. Moreover an “archaeological site” consists not only of ancient layers but also of its present day attributes—the people living in it or near it, their culture, their daily life and their needs.

We at Emek Shaveh are dedicated to changing the view that sees the remains of the past as tools in the service of a national struggle. We oppose attempts to use archaeological finds to legitimize acts that disenfranchise communities.

We support archaeological practices that benefit society as a whole. We promote efforts to include the residents living in and around the site in archaeological activities such as joint excavations and development. All this can bolster the environmental consciousness of local residents, encourage community involvement, and even generate a process of positive social change.
What is the guide?

This guide is based on Emek Shaveh’s archeological tour in the village of Silwan and at the City of David national park. The tour, initiated in 2007, is led by Israeli archeologists in cooperation with Palestinian residents of Silwan.

The guide focuses on the remains of past cultures found in the archeological site of ancient Jerusalem (City of David), while acknowledging the Palestinian village of Silwan in which the site is situated. It gives the visitor the tools for an independent appreciation of the variety of cultures and eras represented at the site, with an emphasis on everyday life.

The village of Silwan is adjacent to the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Any action taken in an area of conflict affects and is affected by that conflict. Therefore, no archeological excavation, tourist trail, or even tour guide can be free of politics. This guide does not presume to ignore the political situation, nor does it claim to be objective. On the contrary, the goal of the guide is to arouse awareness of the reality in Silwan today, and of the role that archeology plays, both in the conflict and in the understanding of the past of the city.

The guide offers several stories and hypotheses about the history of the city and about the interpretation of its remains. We do not pretend to be exhaustive. Archaeological research is dynamic; new theories and hypotheses shed light on our understanding of the archeological remains. Even a casual visit to the site can inspire new interpretations of the past, sometimes of no less value than those offered by scholars.

The guide proposes a number of routes through the archeological site and the village of Silwan: for example, you may choose to focus either on the village or on the archeological park, or take a combined route that includes both the village and the park. Whatever your choice may be, the visit to the site and to the village is a personal one, and the guide is a tool that will help you create this personal experience. It is our hope that you will share the personal experience and what is written in this guide with those around you.
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A Short History of Ancient Jerusalem

The first 3000 years (5000 to 2000 B.C.E)

In the beginning was the water: a spring in the heart of the mountain, gushing out at intervals from between the rocks. Legend (told in a much later era) has it that the discharge (Hebrew: giha) of this spring (which many years later was named “Gihon”), conjured up the image of a dragon lying in the heart of the mountain and intermittently releasing the water it had swallowed. Shepherds would occasionally set up camp with their flock near the spring that flowed down the slope of the hill and the stream at its base; their presence is marked by ceramics and flint artifacts 6000 to 7000 years old. Hundreds of years later, permanent houses began to be built, and about 5000 years ago (3000 B.C.E.) the place had already become a small village whose residents used the natural caves in the side of the mountain for burial. The site where Jerusalem would later be built was still a backwater—probably because of the uninviting location of the spring: on a steep slope, surrounded by barren hills, far from the routes that traversed the Judean Hills and Samaria, and surrounded by barren valleys bordering the desert, which could support a few dozen families at the very most. The village was settled and abandoned alternately until only a few shepherd families remained, whose tomb-caves have been discovered on the surrounding hilltops.

The birth of Jerusalem

Sometime after 1800 B.C.E. bold and resourceful Canaanites harnessed the spring and transformed it into the nucleus of a small mountain kingdom. At that time, throughout the land, towns were emerging in the plains and in the hills: mounds were fortified, water systems were dug, shrines were built, and a network of satellite settlements was established around the main cities. Jerusalem joined the trend: Stone fortifications were built and the spring water was captured and channeled through pools and tunnels to protected sites. Villages appeared in the countryside of the walled town, forming an integrated system: the city provided defense and political power, while the surrounding villages provided labor and agricultural produce for the city, which was not economically self-sufficient.

It seems likely that the bold act of appropriating the spring-water from nature and from the power that controlled it was complemented by the construction of a temple at the top of the hill. In the temple, the priests—human mediators between the divine and the profane—appeased the gods with the blood of sacrifices and the smoke of the altar. If such a temple—the likes of which have been found in many Canaanite cities—did exist, nothing remains of it, save the enduring sanctity of the hilltop itself.

The abandonment of the villages surrounding the city, the restriction of the area of settlement within the city itself to the hilltop, away from the spring, testify to a decline in Jerusalem’s fortunes during the days of Egyptian rule in Canaan (1500 to 1200 B.C.E.). Remains of the period appear to be confined to a hilltop citadel and a
few elaborate burial caves in the nearby, suggesting that the town was now little more than a small chiefdom.

Nonetheless, it can be said that Canaanite Jerusalem established several enduring features of the city’s future history: the vertical axis linking the netherworld (the spring) with the celestial (the hilltop); the axis between settled land and desert; and the axis between the living and the dead. Jerusalem exists between these three axes, always trying to maintain the balance that is both the source of its strength and of its weakness.

**Judean Jerusalem**

The archeological remains indicate that, for the first 250 years of the kingdoms of Israel and Judea, Jerusalem remained a small stronghold for a ruling elite, with few villages established in its environs. Tradition tells of the expansion of the city northward, to the Temple Mount, but there is no direct physical evidence of this. Only after 750 B.C.E. did ancient Jerusalem transcend the borders of the Canaanite hill to expand toward the north and west. In this period, the kingdom began intensive activity on all fronts: construction and fortification of the hill, the development of administrative and economic control (inscriptions, seals, and weights); control of the water sources (the Shiloah Tunnel), and the construction of a necropolis (first on the slope of the Kidron—Old Silwan of our day—and after that on all sides of the city of the living). Jerusalem of the latter days of the Judean Kingdom was a large city, and the southeast hill formed a quarter of that city: At the top of the hill, to the north, townhouses were built, and at its bottom were poor neighborhoods. Social tensions accompanied the expansion of the city, and we find a correlation between the Prophets’ warnings and the physical evidence: substantial gaps in income and signs of resistance to the ruling elite. Over the years many houses were abandoned in the lower city, and on the eve of its destruction, the city was a sparsely populated shell. When the Babylonians captured the city in 586/7 B.C.E. only the northern part of ancient Jerusalem—the elite quarter—was looted and set on fire; the other parts of the city has been abandoned without the physical destruction of the houses.

**The southeast hill under imperial rule**

Very little is known about Jerusalem in the Babylonian and Persian eras (580–330 B.C.E.). Under Hellenistic and Hasmonean rule (up to 63 B.C.E.), sparse remains and a handful of graves testify to the abandonment of the eastern slope of the hill. Under the Romans, Jerusalem prospered once again, and the southeast hill was rebuilt. Its streets were paved, channels for water collection and drainage were built, and massive structures were put up. It seems that the urban renewal in this quarter was meant primarily to serve the needs of the great temple built by Herod on the Temple Mount, and to revive the axis between the waters of Shiloah, collected in a pool at the southern edge of the quarter, and the sacred hilltop. For the most part, however, Jerusalem expanded to the north and west, towards today’s Old City and far...
beyond it, and it was surrounded by an immense necropolis. The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus (70 B.C.E.) gravely damaged the structures on the eastern hill, and in the late Roman period many new structures, including a large courtyard villa, were built atop those ruins. In the Byzantine era, with the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity, Jerusalem once again took on unprecedented religious importance, and the southeast hill was incorporated into the holy city. Archaeological excavations on the site have revealed a church, wealthy homes, and a wall surrounding the city in the area of the Shiloah Pool.

An interesting change occurred at the beginning of the Islamic period: the large houses were deserted and the hill of the ancient city came to serve both as a burial ground and for the construction of small residential structures. Very little is known about the city in this period, but the remains of a Hebrew inscription found in excavations are likely proof that part of the quarter housed Jewish or Qaraite inhabitants, whose settlement in the city had been prohibited during Christian rule.

After the early Islamic period, the southeast hill was abandoned and remained outside the walls. The hill was covered with refuse and earth brought from the valleys, and the people of the adjacent village of Silwan began to farm the land. The spring on the hillside continued to serve the residents of the village, but the built-up area was confined to the eastern slope of the Kidron Valley. Only at the end of the 19th century did the people of Silwan begin to build houses on the agricultural area. During these years ancient Jerusalem was forgotten and became an extension of the village of Silwan, while the focus of all religions shifted toward the Temple Mount/Haram el-Sharif and the walled city.
Before entering the village and the archaeological park

The compound of the archeological park begins at the entrance to the Wadi Hilwe neighborhood in the Palestinian village of Silwan, to the south of the Temple Mount/Haram el-Sharif, outside of the walls of the Old City. You are in East Jerusalem—a large area that includes parts of 28 villages that were annexed to the city and to the State of Israel after 1967. To date, this annexation has not been recognized by any country in the world.

Coming upon the tourist site from the north (with your back to the Old City), you begin walking down Silwan’s main street - Wadi Hilwe Street. To your right is the fenced-in Givati parking lot, the large part of which is occupied by archeological excavations. To your left are some houses of the village and below them, the entrance to the City of David Visitors Center.

This starting point captures the complexity of the visit to the City of David and the village of Silwan. Just a few dozen meters from the Temple Mount/Haram el-Sharif we find ourselves in the heart of a typical Palestinian village, amidst and beneath whose houses there are archeological remains. Throughout the tour we will focus on the archeological remains and on life in the village. The village and the archeological site are intertwined, and it would be artificial to separate them. An example of this interconnectedness is evident in the City of David Visitors Center.
The Givati Parking Lot

Until just a few years ago, this fenced-in area at the northern edge of the ridge, was an open lot, appropriated for use as a municipal parking lot. In 2003, a trial excavation, initiated by real-estate developers, was conducted in proximity to the adjacent homes. The excavation, about 15 meters deep, revealed impressive remains of ancient structures, from the Islamic era back to the Iron Age. Extensive work on the site was renewed in 2007, and it continues uninterruptedly to this day. The sheer extent of the excavation area and the massive concrete supporting walls clearly indicate that the excavations are intended to make room for a large building planned by the developers, Elad, who hold the rights to the plot. It is also clear that in order to deepen the foundations of the new structure, ancient structures have already been dismantled and entire archeological layers removed. Was a construction plan approved on the site? If so, how is it that construction was approved so close to the walls of the Old City? What will be the fate of the antiquities in the place? Will they be covered by the new structure? Who will determine their fate? Investors? The government? All of these questions remain unanswered.

In the meantime, the area of the excavations is surrounded by a fence decorated with photographs and pictures of an imaginary, green and pastoral, Jerusalem, advertisements for the activities of Elad, and Israeli national symbols such as the Menorah (the seven-branched candelabrum) and the Knesset building. These images create an interesting contrast with the reality of an excavation conducted in the heart of a poor Palestinian neighborhood where there is not a single ornamental tree or lawn, let alone a public garden.

Ahmed Qarein: I live next to the Givati parking lot. There was always a parking lot here for cars and buses. We parked our cars here too. During the day, we used the empty parts of the parking lot to play soccer, ride bikes, and in general as a meeting place. We would also use the large space for weddings. In 1996, when I got married, I put up a tent for the Hamam al-‘aris ceremony. This is a ceremony held before the wedding, in which the men and the groom gather, and in the center of the ceremony is the shaving and haircutting of the groom. At the ceremony sheep are slaughtered, of course, and there is food. The use of the parking lot for wedding ceremonies was common in the village for decades, and I was not the first to use the asphalt-paved lot for such a ceremony.
2. **The Visitors Center**

The Visitors Center of the City of David archeological site is prominently situated near the northern entrance to Silwan, entry free of charge. The guard at the entrance does not screen the visitors, but his presence at the entrance to the compound, with its olive trees, arched architecture, and high level of upkeep, makes for a remarkable contrast with the village. Several houses of the Palestinian residents of Silwan are confined within the Visitors Center, but they are almost invisible. To find them, look for the typical satellite dishes and black water tanks.

The site is part of the “Jerusalem Walls National Park,” which surrounds the Old City. The national park as a whole is under the auspices of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, but the part containing the site of ancient Jerusalem (City of David) in Silwan is managed by Elad—an ideological non-governmental organization whose primary aim is to settle Jews in East Jerusalem. This, to the best of our knowledge, is the only national park in the country managed by a private, politically motivated organization. Other national parks, like Masada, Tzippori, Bet She’an, or Avdat, are managed by the Israel Nature and Parks Authority or the local authority that has jurisdiction over the area in which the park is located.

Remains of a large residential neighborhood from the Abbasid period (8th–9th centuries) were found in the excavations in the Givati parking lot and in trial excavations beneath the Visitors Center. This neighborhood is not included in the official tour and its remains are not visible (most were removed). A visit to an archeological site is normally based on excavated remains that have been left in place. Thus, in your visit to the archeological site of ancient Jerusalem, keep in mind that entire layers have been removed and their remains are not visible today, although they are an important part of the history of the place.
Nihad Siam: Before the Visitors Center was built, an elderly couple from the Shahada-Qarein family lived here and cultivated fruit trees. The entire area was an orchard and they made their living selling the fruit to the villagers. Most of all I remember the woman, who lived for several years after her husband died. We used to buy fruit from them. After her death the land was transferred to the settlers, though I am certain that their daughter did not sell the land. Apparently it was because of “absentee property” laws. At the entrance to the orchard, by their house, there was a very large eucalyptus tree, where today you have the guard post of the entrance to the Visitors Center. The shade of the tree served us in the summer days, but most of all the tree was a meeting place. When you made a date at “the tree,” everyone knew that it meant the large eucalyptus tree.

Excavations beneath the Visitors Center

The first excavations were conducted here in the early 20th century by R.A.S. Macalister, and the most recent excavation by Eilat Mazar, in 2005–2008. The visible remains include walls, rock-cut cisterns that were originally in cellars, and flat rock surfaces. With parts of the site exposed down to bedrock at various times and debris added to others, from antiquity to the present, the entire deposit can be likened to a slab of Swiss cheese, in which ancient structures of different epochs survive between the holes. This makes it very difficult to discern the precise chronological sequence of the structures, leading to many disagreements over the interpretation of the finds.

It is clear that some of the walls date to the Byzantine era, as do some of the cisterns. Other cisterns are Roman or slightly earlier, and there are several earlier walls, though their precise date is debated: Some would date a large part of them to the Hellenistic period (3rd–2nd centuries B.C.E.), but most archaeologists place them in the 11th–10th centuries B.C.E. and even earlier.

The difficulty in dating and interpreting the findings has to do with the poor preservation, the complicated stratigraphy (order of strata or layers), and the difficulty in determining where each stratum begins and ends and which finds belong to which stratum. At this specific site, there is an interesting intersection between faith and archeological research. Those who would see the Bible as a precise historical source attribute the most substantial structures to the 10th century B.C.E. and even go so far as to claim that they belong to the palace of King David. Most scholars refute this claim, dating the remains to other periods and arguing that the use of the structure and the identity of its builders are not clear.

The Lookout

In the northeast section of the Visitors Center, you will find an excellent lookout over the southeast hill, the Kidron Valley, and the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif. On your way to the lookout you may note the plaques honoring the overseas donors
who have helped realize the vision of Elad. As you go up the steps, the houses of the Palestinians who live beneath the lookout remain out of sight. The lookout plaza allows a clear view of Silwan and of the interface between the archeological park and its surroundings. To the north is the southern wall of the Old City and the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif compound, topped by the dome of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. To the east of the Old City is the deeply incised Kidron Valley and above it the Mount of Olives, with its huge Jewish cemetery of the 14th–21st centuries, the Palestinian village of A-Tur, and the bell-towers of a number of churches.

At the southern edge of the cemetery lies the Palestinian neighborhood of Ras al-Amud, in the village of Silwan. The village of Silwan extends from Ras al-Amud toward the Kidron Valley and westward to the slopes of Mount Zion behind us.

Our itinerary includes open archeological areas within the village. A small part of these areas were expropriated from their Palestinian owners for public use by the British mandatory government or by Israel. Most of the land, however, had already been purchased in the Ottoman period by the Baron de Rothschild and earmarked for archeological excavations. Until 1995, excavations were restricted to those areas. Since then, excavations have been extended to village commons, to properties transferred to private Jewish ownership under the “absentee property” laws, and underground—beneath the houses of the village—via archaeological galleries. Archeology has thus been transformed into a sophisticated tool for creating facts on the ground: sometimes it legitimizes Jewish construction (as in the salvage excavation ahead of construction in the Givati Parking Lot, see insert); sometimes it re-designates public areas as touristic sites (as in the Shiloah Pool, see below, No. 10), and sometimes it creates underground connections between touristic sites (as in the Stepped Road, see below, p. No.39).

During the early days of Canaanite Jerusalem, in the 18th century B.C.E. (Middle Bronze Age IIb), the city was bordered by the Kidron Valley and the Tyropeon Valley (a barely visible depression running southward from the Dung Gate, a little beyond the line of houses visible to the west). The southern border of the city was at the junction of the two valleys. Looking at the topographical location of ancient Jerusalem and its relationship with its surroundings, it is easy to understand why the city's development was constrained. It was located at a lower elevation than the surrounding hills, surrounded by narrow ravines, at some distance from any major route and from fertile agricultural lands.

The raison d'être of the city at this location was doubtless its water source—the Gihon Spring—which provides water all year long (see insert). The technological investment in collecting and channeling the water, from the Canaanite period to the present, became a symbol of power and sophistication. The town certainly viewed the defense and exploitation of the spring, as well as the control of access to it, as essential. The construction of fortifications, towers, and administrative structures, such as those found around the spring and in Areas G and E, are evidence of the way in which the consolidation and mobilization of the population enabled the city itself
to become a source of power, and its leaders to become mediators between the inhabitants of the city and the celestial and netherworldly forces controlling nature. From the Visitors Center you may continue by way of the excavation area or from its eastern side towards Area G. Should you choose to skip Area G, you can turn westward (to the right) at a fork in the path to the south of the Visitors Center, onto Wadi Hilwe Street—the main street of the village. Alternately, continue directly southward along the paved alley, past the settlers’ houses and the houses of the Palestinian residents, to the excavation site of R. Weill and to the Shiloah Pool. A third option is to continue downhill to the east (continuing left at the fork in the road) toward the entrance to the ancient water system (Warren’s Shaft) and to the large excavation area on the slope of the ancient city, Area E.
The Gihon Spring

The Gihon Spring, or in Arabic, ‘Ein Umm al-Daraj, is an active karstic spring with an average discharge of about 1500 cubic meters per day. In a pre-modern way of life, this was enough water to support thousands of inhabitants, with enough left over for flocks and vegetable patches. The spring is fed by rainwater percolating through the rock to a subterranean cavern. Until recently, the water flowed out of the rock intermittently. (Today the flow is regular, apparently as a result of the many changes in its catchment area, and the water is no longer drinkable.) In the Middle Bronze Age, when Jerusalem was founded as a Canaanite city, water was collected for the first time within a system of man-made channels and pools, and free access to the water was restricted. From that time on, and for thousands of years, various methods were used for transporting and collecting the water, creating the complex system of the Shiloah (Siloam) channels, tunnels, and pools. Surplus water flowed from this system back to the Kidron Valley to the south of the ancient city, where until recently, the vegetable patches of what is today the al-Bustan neighborhood were located. An impressive system of Bronze-Age walls and towers, which served to protect the spring, has been excavated in underground excavations since 1995. Until just a few years ago one could freely access the spring and the system of channels from an ancient staircase at the bottom of the slope, next to the paved plaza that can be seen from the lookout. Today access to the spring can be gained only through the national park.
3. The Administrative Sector – Area G

Named Area G during Yigal Shiloh’s excavations (1978–1985), this important excavation area sheds light on the history of ancient Jerusalem and on the character of the city. Immediately noticeable are the quantities of stones in the excavation area. Although it looks like a mass of rubble, the stones are in fact the remains of a sequence of separate structures built on top and inside of one another over the course of centuries.

Beginning at the bottom of the excavation area, note the stepped rows of stone blocks. These steps cover a massive fill of earth, stone, and supporting walls, as can be seen in the section between the steps and the large square tower, built in a much later period (the Hellenistic Period), bordering the area to the south. The terraced stone blocks create a sort of artificial slope running from the bottom of the hill, near the spring and the wall surrounding the ancient city, up almost to the highest spot in the ancient city. Doubtless this construction was meant to impress, as well as to serve as a base for an important structure (citadel? palace? temple?) at the top of the slope. Opinion is divided as to the time of the building of the stepped-stone structure and the identity of its builders. Should it be dated to the 12th–11th centuries B.C.E. to the inhabitants whom we call “Canaanites” or “Jebusites,” or rather to the 10th century B.C.E, to the period that in biblical tradition marks the beginning of the Kingdom of the House of David? The remains are ambiguous, and even the most optimistic find little that points to the culture and ethnic identity of the builders of the structure. Moreover, the efforts expended on proving or disproving the biblical narrative have left us with very little information as to the character of the city during the period: its houses, people, or culture. The only thing we can say for certain is that, so far, the finds indicate that the city included a single fortified complex, surrounded by a few poorly built structures.

In the center of Area G, in the middle of the stepped-stone structure, you will note a number of stone walls, some perpendicular to the stepped structure and others parallel to it. These are the remains of houses that were built into the earlier structure in a much later period, in the late 8th century B.C.E. A reconstructed floor, suspended in the air, represents an ancient level of a structure whose second storey was supported by square columns. To the south of it you will notice a staircase going up to the second floor. Another structure with a staircase was partially exposed in the northern part of the excavation area. Between them you can see a perforated stone that apparently served as a toilet. These houses, which were destroyed in a fire when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E. belonged without a doubt to the ruling elite, as they were the only ones who could allow themselves to build so near the center of government. Not only the houses but the artifacts found within them testify to the high status of their inhabitants.

The large stone tower at the southern end of the excavated area, and the wall extending from it and going up along the stepped-stone structure are the latest
components in Area G. They are generally attributed to the fortifications of the city in the Hasmonean period, when only the center of the southeast ridge was settled and the eastern slope was largely abandoned.
Ancient Jerusalem – section
Courtesy of the publication of the Yigal Shilo delegation
Where is the king?

The Area G excavations revealed dozens of ancient Hebrew inscriptions written on potsherds or impressed on clay seals, most of them dating to the beginning of the 6th century B.C.E. Many inscriptions carry the names of persons who must have been high officials in the Kingdom of Judea. A few of them are even mentioned in the Bible as royal ministers, the most prominent being Gemariah Ben Shafan, who is mentioned in the book of Jeremiah.

None of the scores of inscriptions found in ancient Jerusalem, including the famous Shiloah Tunnel Inscription (see below, No. 5), mention the name of a king. The names of neither the founders of the dynasty—David and Solomon—nor of the later historically attested kings such as Hezekiah, have been found in the dozens of past and ongoing excavations in the site. What, then, does the presence of some fifty names of government officials from the Kingdom of Judea and the absence of the name of even a single king actually mean?

Perhaps it testifies to the dominance of this class in government. The king and the temple may have been at the top of the system, but the prominence of the ministerial rank and its strong presence in the written finds suggests that the kingdom was not run by an omnipotent king or by the priests. The large elite necropolis found on the eastern slope of the Kidron Valley, among the houses of Old Silwan (below, No. 4) provides further archeological evidence of the power of the high officials. As with the inscriptions, we have ample evidence for the burial of ministers, but not of the kings, despite intensive attempts in the early 20th century to find them within the City of David.
Religion, ritual, and cult in Ancient Jerusalem

The earliest undisputed ritual find in Jerusalem is a fragment of a ceramic cult stand with molded human figures on it. The stand was made in the Canaanite tradition, and perhaps it should be attributed to a shrine that was built on the nearby hilltop. More evidence of early ritual practice is a small niche with a stela and two chalices found on the lower slope of the city and dated to the 10th–9th centuries B.C.E.

Thousands of clay figurines and parts of clay figurines of women, as well as hundreds of figurines or parts of figurines of animals, were found in strata from the times of the kings of Judea. The number of figurines found in Judahite Jerusalem is the largest found in any site in Israel. The fragments of figurines were found in almost every structure excavated in the site, sometimes dozens in one place. These figurines tell us about a very widespread popular belief in the importance of female figures—an expression of an unofficial religious practice that may have been the exclusive realm of Jerusalem’s women.

To this day no conclusive evidence has been found as to the existence of a temple in Jerusalem, even after the excavations around the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif and the sifting of the dirt fill from the hill. This is an example of the limits of archeology’s ability to verify or build upon biblical sources. Only some of the religious rites of Jerusalem of the Kingdom of Judea are known to us, although what we do know paints a very different picture than that of Jewish ritual practice from later periods, which centered around gathering and praying in the synagogue.
4. **Old Silwan and the elite necropolis of Ancient Jerusalem**

The landing just past the southern exit of Area G offers a good view of the old center of the village of Silwan and of the rock-cut tombs in the scarp just below the village. Unlike in our modern world, where the dead are separated from the living and confined to the realm of personal memory, in ancient times, the necropolis—the city of the dead—was a place in which the social negotiation between the living continued. In Old Silwan there are scores of tombs, some of them quite elaborate. They display a variety of architectural styles (some of northern or Mediterranean origin) and a few are identified by their ancient Hebrew inscriptions. These tombs, which may well have been family plots, presumably served Jerusalem’s elite in the time of the monarchy. Their prominent presence in the landscape directly across from the elite quarter served as a constant reminder of the social order, mirroring the structure of the town. By contrast, the burial place of those who populated the lower slopes is unknown, and they may have had no burial site at all.

The burial chambers in the cliff were eventually looted and emptied. In Byzantine times (325–638 CE) they served as hermits’ cells. Nowadays some of them are incorporated into buildings in the village and others remain exposed on the cliff.

The houses of Old Silwan, merging with the bedrock on the slope of the hill, can be recognized by their traditional masonry, their arched cellars, and the winding narrow passages between them. In the century or more since they were built, second and third storeys, courtyards, and openings have been added on, and new buildings have been built alongside them. All this creates a potpourri of styles and materials that make the old village an historical site in its own right, one that preserves the heritages of many eras—Ottoman, British, Jordanian, and Israeli. A lack of building space and municipal or government urban planning has resulted in dense construction and an inadequate infrastructure. The large amount of garbage strewn below the graves is also an indication of the municipality’s neglect of basic sanitation.
The past as a foreign country

Present-day life, the shape of society, language, style of government, technology, and human understanding is very different than that which existed one hundred or two hundred years ago, and radically different than that which existed 2000 to 3000 years ago. Terms such as “nation,” “people,” “belief,” and “religion,” which seem so obvious and well-defined today, had a completely different meaning thousands of years ago, and some of these concepts did not even exist in those times. The term “nation” for example, emerged in Europe only in the past few hundred years. Discussing ancient cultures like the Canaanites, or the inhabitants of Judea, in terms of nationhood, is fundamentally misguided. A modern social perspective is not applicable to ancient history.

The archaeologist who studies ancient societies and cultures will never be able to fully grasp how people in ancient societies understood themselves and the world around them. If archaeologists try to explain the archaeological finds based on their own contemporary experience, the conclusions reached will inevitably be partial and selective. Archaeologists must confront this difficulty and explain it to visitors who arrive at a site expecting to hear accounts in line with modern-day ideas.

Visitors to the site of ancient Jerusalem often imagine an Israelite society that believed in and prayed to one god. The archaeological finds, on the other hand, point to a heterogeneous society that worshipped multiple gods and practiced ritual sacrifice. It was a society in which every house had a female icon. The totality of perceptions, texts, and affiliations of this ancient society differs greatly from the monotheistic religions which prevail today. Many people find these differences difficult to understand.

Houses above the tombs in Ras al-Amud
5. **The spring, the wet aqueduct, and the dry aqueduct**

From the Old Silwan lookout you can continue either to Warren’s Shaft and the ancient water system (an entrance fee must be paid to Elad in the visitor’s center); to Area E (see below); or along the alley leading south toward the excavations of R. Weill, past settlers’ houses (“Meyuchas House”), and to the Shiloah Pool. The ancient water system is comprised of almost a kilometer of subterranean passages, including the still-active aqueduct, Hezekiah’s Tunnel. The length of the tunnel itself is approximately 530 meters. Before its incorporation into the national park, access to the spring and aqueduct was free. The villagers used the spring-water and sold wax candles for visitors to use when walking through the dark tunnel. The local name, ‘Ein Umm al-Daraj, is connected with the ancient staircase that led to the spring from the direction of the village. Above the staircase, a Mamluk-era arch (c. 1300 C.E.) can be seen. This entrance to the spring is now blocked, and the entire water system is covered and hidden from the village. It leads to the Shiloah (Siloam) pool (see below).

If you choose not to enter the aqueduct, you can continue on to Area E and to the area of Weill’s excavations (see Point no. 7).

The tunnel carries the waters of the Gihon Spring/‘Ein Umm al-Daraj to the Shiloah Pool/Birket al-Hamra at the southern end of the site. Parallel to this tunnel there is a covered channel/rock-carved tunnel, now dry. The dating of rock-cut systems is a complex matter, and it largely depends on establishing the relation between their various components and the structures above-ground. Recent work by Reich and Shukrun indicates that part of the system (upper Warren’s Shaft, the dry aqueduct) was carved by Canaanites in the 18th–17th centuries B.C.E. (Middle Bronze Age IIb). The main tunnel, in which water still flows, is attributed to the period of the Judean monarchy and to King Hezekiah. This dating is based on the style and content of a long inscription carved inside the tunnel (the Shiloah Inscription, now in Istanbul), and by a biblical reference to the construction of a water works by King Hezekiah.

The depth of the water in the tunnel can reach 70 cm, and walking through it requires a flashlight. The tunnel ends in a small pool by a mosque, which is under the jurisdiction of the Muslim Waqf. The pool and mosque are relatively recent (see also No. 7 below).

**The Shiloah Inscription**

The Shiloah Inscription describes the work of the crews carving the tunnel. It describes the moment when the two teams of workers met in the middle, having each dug from a different end.

“When three cubits were left to cut, the voice of one man could be heard calling another, (for) there was a ZADA (a crack?) in the rock, on the right and left. And on the day of the tunnel (being finished) the stonemasons struck each man towards the other, pick against pick, and the water flowed from the source to the pool.”
Since the discovery of this inscription in 1880, many questions have been left unanswered: When exactly was it written? Why was it found deep inside the tunnel and not at the entrance? Why is the name of the ruler who planned or authorized the tunnel not included? Some scholars have tried to date the inscription, based on the writing, to the Hellenistic period, but most scholars attribute it to the 8th century B.C.E. to the period of the kingdom of Judea. One might expect the inscription of a ruler or king to be placed at the entrance to such a project, glorifying him and mentioning his name. In this case, although there is no mention of a year or a king, it has become the common opinion that the tunnel is from the days of Hezekiah, and that the inscription was written by him or on his instructions, since Hezekiah is mentioned in the Bible as having initiated water works (Kings II, 20, 20).

If we set the biblical context aside as inconclusive, we can discern another, no less fascinating, story: in the six-line inscription the following words are repeated: “tunnel” (4 times), “diggers” (3 times) and “pick” (3 times), as well as the expression “one man to another” (3 times). Could this not be of a group of engineers and workers documenting its own achievements, far from inquisitive eyes? The fact that the inscription mentions no names supports the theory that it was written in a collective spirit. The location of the inscription inside the tunnel may be evidence that the workers were afraid to place it on the façade of the royal project.

The preparation of the inscription by a group of workers, or at their request, testifies to just how widespread writing itself was. Canaanite writing, from which Hebrew writing developed, was much easier to master than Egyptian hieroglyphics or Mesopotamian cuneiform. The first to write in an alphabetical system were the Canaanite miners who worked for the Egyptians in the turquoise mines of the Sinai Peninsula, hundreds of years before the Shiloah Inscription was written. It is possible that there was a tradition of literacy in the working class, and that one of the stone-cutters, or, more likely, a professional scribe hired by them, actually carved the inscription.

A replica of the inscription can be seen in Area E.
6. Area E

Beyond the modern entrance to Warren’s Shaft is a large excavation site: Area E of the Shiloh excavations of the 1980s. The area comprises the northern half of the land purchased one hundred years ago by Baron Edmond de Rothschild for the express purpose of archeological excavations. The area is not residential, and it has only two houses, whose tenants were charged with tending to the Baron’s property. Area E can be viewed from above, from a concrete pathway leading southwards, or from below, from a path that runs along the ancient walls and then turns east toward a one-way exit leading to the valley and to the al-Bustan neighborhood.

Area E includes the remains of houses and fortifications of different periods, and it requires some effort to distinguish between them. In the deepest spot of the excavation, next to the massive wall on the eastern, lower side of the slope, there are a few simple rooms belonging to what might be the first permanent structures ever built in Jerusalem. These are dated to the Early Bronze Age (c. 3000 B.C.E.). The latest remains in the area, which look like agricultural terrace-walls, indicate extramural activity during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Between these extremes lie the bulk of the visible house walls, which belong either to Canaanite Jerusalem (18th–17th centuries B.C.E.) or to that of the Judean monarchy (Iron Age II, 8th–7th centuries B.C.E.)

The massive wall that bisects Area E from north to south marks the border of the ancient city. Two kinds of construction are observable in the wall: massive stones set directly on bedrock, and smaller stones, usually added to the boulder-like construction. Shiloh’s excavations revealed that the massive stones were part of the first wall ever built in Jerusalem, in the Middle Bronze Age II. A few houses from this period abut the inside of the wall.

The wall was repaired about one thousand years later, in the days of the Judean monarchy (Iron Age II, c. 750 B.C.E.), and new houses were built, much more modest than those excavated in Area G. The meager remains attributed to the intervening centuries raise doubts as to the actual size of the city between 1600 and 750 B.C.E. In any event, it is clear that there were long periods of time in which this part of the city was not fortified.

Who were the inhabitants of the city during that long stretch of time? When did “Canaanite” Jerusalem become “Israelite”? The archeological evidence on the cultural transitions is scant, and in effect we know next to nothing about the social and human make-up of the city until the late monarchic period, when the wall was renovated and the houses adjacent to it were rebuilt.

In the center of the excavation area, above the city wall, you may note the structure built of large white ashlar blocks. This structure belongs to the latest phase before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, and it is one of the few structures from this phase on the lower slopes of ancient Jerusalem. The houses around it were already abandoned when it was built and when the city was destroyed. In contrast
to the elite residences in Area G, which met a fiery destruction in 586 B.C.E. the modest houses on the lower slope in Area E were largely deserted before 600 B.C.E. and were actually spared the fate of the upper city. This suggests that the decline of Jerusalem actually began many years before its physical destruction. The ruling faction, it seems, could no longer secure the defense or livelihood of the bulk of the population, and the lower classes began to desert the city for the agricultural outskirts. The destruction of Jerusalem, like the destruction of other cities in ancient times, was a catastrophe for the elites. The farmers who lived outside of Jerusalem could carry on with their lives under the new regime. For them, there was no great difference between being ruled by Judean or by Babylonian kings.
1. Area E - sewage tunnel
2. Area E and Ras al-Amud houses
7. The R. Weill Excavations

In 1913–1914 and 1923–1924, French archeologist R. Weill conducted excavations in Ancient Jerusalem, on land purchased by the Baron de Rothschild from the residents of Silwan for that purpose. Weill, who hoped to find the graves of the Davidic dynasty, excavated a large area in the heart of the ancient city but, to his chagrin, hit upon a large quarry and agricultural installations. It is now clear that the quarry dates from a relatively late period, possibly late Roman (2nd–3rd centuries C.E.); quarries are notoriously difficult to date.

Weill identified two large empty caves in the western part of the area as tombs of the kings of the House of David. This identification rests solely on their size, their unusual shape, and his expectation to find the tombs of the kings in the City of David. Near the caves is a rest area used for the guided tours offered by Elad. Note the facsimile of the Theodotos Inscription—a dedicatory inscription of a Jewish public figure with a Hellenized name, who was the “head” of a synagogue in Second Temple times. The inscription was found in the refuse covering the quarry, and its source is unknown. What was the meaning of the inscription at the time of its writing, and what is its meaning today? Is there a connection between it and the “revival of Jewish settlement” by Elad?
R. Weill excavation, Meyuchas House and quarried hollows

R. Weill excavation – quarries in the rock
‘Abd Shaludi’s story: I live across from the excavation area known as “the tombs of the House of David” (the area of R. Weill’s excavations). In the middle of the excavation there was a lone house known as “The Meyuchas House.” The house is on the way from my house to my cousin’s house. In the Meyuchas House there lived an old woman with 11 fingers, and most of its rooms were empty. We were afraid to walk past the house on our way to visit one another, and we would take a round-about route on the path that exists today. I remember that one day I stood across from the house, I was maybe 11 years old, and I said to myself that I wouldn’t budge until I had the courage to walk by the house on the way to my cousin’s. I remember that I stood facing the house, maybe a quarter of an hour or more, and then I decided to walk to my cousin’s house the short way. That was the last time I was afraid of that house.

When I grew up I would escape to the caves in the site whenever I would have a row with my father. I set up a den, a corner to sleep in, and even a small pool. Sometimes I spent the entire night there. In 1990 I went to prison, and returned only in 1997. The place was different. Since then, even if we were playing ball, and the ball would land in

Conclusions of an Archeologist

Deciphering remains of structures and fragments of tools is not a job for the layman. The archaeological excavator is the one responsible for interpreting the find, thereby turning the inanimate object into a meaningful story and relating it to the scientific community and the wider public.

The story told by the archaeologist is often different than the one known by the wider public and often complements it in some way. The archaeologist achieves an understanding of past cultures primarily through studying the finds. The public, on the other hand, derives its understanding of the past from traditional narratives: Bible stories, myths, historical narratives, religious affiliation, and more. Unfortunately the archaeological analysis is less well-known, and archaeological discussions often take place far away from the public ear.

Archaeology is not an exact science and the archaeologist’s conclusions are influenced by his/her subjective opinions. Every excavator has a personal and collective identity and an agenda that shapes the focus of his/her research and conclusions. It is only natural, for example, that the discovery of an ancient synagogue will interest a Jewish researcher more than others. The archaeology of the biblical period attracts primarily researchers from a cultural background where the bible is a central component. The researchers at the City of David/Ancient Jerusalem site identified with biblical Jerusalem, for example, were primarily Jews and Christians with a knowledge of religious and historical sources.

For this reason, other explanations and narratives are offered in addition to the interpretation given by the archaeologist excavating the site, often carrying more
What is East Jerusalem?

After the Six Day War in June 1967, Israel re-drew the borders of Jerusalem through the annexation of some 70 square kilometers into its municipal boundaries. The annexation greatly enlarged the municipal territory of Jerusalem, turning it into the largest city in Israel. Besides the Old City and some six square kilometers around it, another 28 Palestinian villages that were on the periphery of the city were annexed. 70,000 Palestinians who lived in the annexed area in 1967 suddenly found themselves under Israeli control. The State of Israel gave these residents the option of becoming Israeli citizens, but this proposal was collectively rejected. The claim of the Palestinian residents was that accepting Israeli citizenship would provide legitimization for the annexation, which was declared illegal by the UN Security Council, and would erase the Palestinian identity of the people, which has the city of Jerusalem at its roots. Therefore, the residents of East Jerusalem received a status of permanent residency in the State of Israel. At the beginning of 2010, there were approximately 300,000 Palestinian residents in East Jerusalem. While in 1967 the Palestinian residents of the annexed area comprised approximately 25% of the total population of Jerusalem, today they make up over 35%.

Although the Palestinians in East Jerusalem have the right to vote in Jerusalem municipal elections, they boycott the elections for the same ideological reasons that they refused to accept Israeli citizenship: legitimization of the illegal annexation and loss of their Palestinian identity.

From the annexation to this day, the government of Israel has advanced massive building projects of large Israeli neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. These are considered settlements, and are illegal under international law. Today, some 200,000 Israelis live in these neighborhoods. Counting the Palestinians and the Israeli residents of the settlements in East Jerusalem, a majority of Jerusalem’s inhabitants live in the eastern side of the city, beyond the Green Line, the internationally recognized border between the two states. International law does not recognize the annexation and sees East Jerusalem as part of the West Bank.
8. The Al-Bustan Neighborhood

The Al-Bustan (Arabic: “The Orchard”) neighborhood was named for the fruit trees of the villagers of Silwan, which were irrigated with the spring water that drained from the Shiloah Pool. In the last decades, most of the orchards disappeared and in their place the villagers built dozens of houses, making the village one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in Jerusalem. As elsewhere, infrastructure is poor, from sewage and sanitation to schools and kindergartens. Most of the houses in the neighborhood are defined as “illegal houses.” In 2005 the Jerusalem Municipality tried to demolish 88 of the houses in the neighborhood, but retreated from the decision due to international and local pressure. At present, dozens of houses in the neighborhood are slated for demolition by the municipality.

Those who support the house demolitions claim that, besides the fact that the houses were built without a permit (as are most of the houses in East Jerusalem, due to the difficulty of receiving building permits from the municipality), the place is of historical value. According to them, this is the so-called “Garden of the King,” mentioned often in the Bible. Once houses are demolished it will be possible to “restore ancient glory” and turn the place into a touristic gem.

In truth, no one knows for certain where the Garden of the King was located, and the chances of identifying an ancient garden in the channel of the Kidron brook, with its thick mantle of fill accumulated over the thousands of years of settlement in the city, are slim to none. Moreover, one must ask whether the restoration of a biblical landscape within a populated urban area a worthy goal. Is it right for Al-Bustan to be threatened with demolition only because of its proximity to an archeological site? Is it fair to turn the archeology of Jerusalem from the common cultural resource of all its residents to a political tool to justify dispossession and destruction?
9. The exit from the Shiloah Tunnel/Birket al-Hamra and Byzantine Jerusalem

At the exit of the Shiloah Tunnel is a small pool surrounded by high walls. This pool abuts the village mosque and the community center, and it is the property of the mosque (Waqf or Islamic religious endowment). The remains of columns inside the pool belong to a church that was built on the site in the 5th century C.E. The church is one of the many structures from the Byzantine Era (4th–7th centuries C.E.) that were uncovered in parts of the southeastern hill and on the slopes of Mount Zion. These structures include the remains of a wall, mansions, monasteries, and churches. The remains from this period are now almost invisible, however the wealth of finds testifies to Jerusalem’s impressive scope during the Byzantine era. The city wall surrounded the entire area of the present-day Wadi Hilwe neighborhood and Mount Zion, and continued north of the Old City. In the Byzantine era, the Christian rulers invested in the transformation of Jerusalem into a religious-spiritual center for the Christianized Roman world. Throughout the city and outside of it, churches were built in places that marked the important events in the life of Jesus.
Exit from the Shiloah Tunnel
10. The Shiloah Pool

Until just a few years ago, a public path ran along the southern cliff of the southeast hill. The path was parallel to the open part of the ancient waterworks (the “surplus channel”) where water accumulated in a small pool at the end of the Shiloah Tunnel. In 2004, following a sewage leak, the remains of a large complex were exposed. Parts of the complex were already familiar from the many excavations conducted in the area since the 19th century. Following the expansion of the excavation site, a paved plaza and wide steps were found, which apparently encircled a large pool. The excavators estimated that the pool is from the first century B.C.E. (early Roman period), and identified it as the Pool of Shiloah (Siloam), which is mentioned in the New Testament. In order to conduct the excavation, the area was closed off to the residents of the village, and later it was transformed into a tourist area for which an entrance fee must be paid (separately, or as part of a tour in the water system).

From the pool ascended a stepped road (underneath the present-day ground-level), which was discovered for the first time more than one hundred years ago along the Tyropoeon Valley leading up to the western edge of the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif. This road was recently re-excavated via several tunnels that were dug around the mosque on three sides.

The fencing-off of areas for excavation purposes, changes in land designations, and the eviction of the Palestinian residents, even if temporarily, as has been done in the excavation sites in Ancient Jerusalem/Silwan, is not always necessary. In most cases, there are simple ways to preserve the life routine of the residents without impeding research. For example, the Shiloah Pool excavation area could be opened to the villagers, and they could be allowed easy access to the kindergarten and the mosque, as in the past.

11. The houses in the village (Palestinian residents and Israeli settlers)

Silwan today has a population of about 40,000 Palestinian residents, most of them Muslim. Alongside them live about 400 Jewish settlers who came to the village under the auspices of the El’ad Organization. Most of the settler houses are in the same Wadi Hilwe neighborhood as the City of David archeological site.

The village of Silwan is hundreds of years old, and some people believe it was built in the time of Salah al-Din (Saladin), in the 12th century C.E. The most ancient part of the village adjoins the ancient burial chambers in the cliffs to the east of the Kidron River, where remains have been found of an early settlement of Christian monks. These
caves were gradually incorporated into the village, the original buildings forming the foundations of later structures. It is a good idea to walk through the alleyways of the old village, if possible with a local guide from the Wadi Hilwe Information Center, to observe and appreciate the unique combination of architecture and ornamentation typical of hillside Palestinian villages.

Until the twentieth century most of the dwellings were in the eastern part of the village or in the neighborhood of Ras al-Amud, at the top of the eastern hill, while the villagers farmed small plots on the hill above the spring. The growth of Jerusalem throughout the twentieth century has led to extensive construction on the hill and to the establishment of the Wadi Hilwe neighborhood. Jewish settlement in the village began in 1991, and settlers receive support and assistance from the Israeli authorities.

Architect Dana Berman defined the urban fabric of Wadi Hilwe as a “perforated landscape.” It is perforated above ground, with built-up areas and open spaces that clash in a mishmash of styles, some ideologically motivated (the “biblical” construction of the settler houses and the Visitors’ Center) and some defined by economic constraints (the mix of stone, concrete, and steel in the improvised Palestinian construction). Below the surface it is perforated by ancient cavities and unstable fillings, as well as by the channels and tunnels dug by British and other archeologists in the early twentieth century and by their Israeli successors at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

From an archeological perspective, the appearance of the village is a material manifestation of the changes it has undergone. The village has two types of streets: those designated for tourists are paved with cobblestones or tiles, and those for the use of the Palestinian residents are sometimes not paved at all. It is also easy to observe the differences in infrastructure and sanitation that characterize the different parts of the village. Above the street is the level of control and surveillance: security cameras placed along the streets and between the houses, and armed guard towers on the roofs. The Palestinian houses are distinguished from the Jewish houses by style, building material, the roofs and the objects on top of them: satellite dishes and black water tanks on the one hand, solar panels and large Israeli flags on the other. The settlers’ houses under the auspices of El’ad are concentrated in a few areas in the village. Some settler houses stand on their own, surrounded by electric fences and guard booths, while other settlers have moved into disputed houses, which are still partially occupied by the Palestinian residents.

You may notice the physical relationship between the houses and the archeological excavations: Where are the houses incorporated into the touristic and archeological fabric, and where are they threatened by it, whether by a high fence, a deep shaft, or a tunnel? What would have to change in order for the landscape of Wadi Hilwe and ancient Jerusalem to be complete and continuous?
Settler house between Palestinians houses in Silwan

Silwan/City of David – looking south
1. Al-Bustan neighborhood in Silwan
2. Saber bakery
3. Security cameras in Silwan’s streets
4. Bana’s falafel
12. **Wadi Hilwe Street**

This main street descends steeply from the foot of the Old City, down to the Al-Bustan neighborhood, and it provides a good introduction to the neighborhood, which flanks it on both sides. About 5000 Palestinians live in Wadi Hilwe, and here, as in the rest of the neighborhoods in the village, there are no public buildings; no public entity, state or city, has invested in meeting the needs of the inhabitants.

At the northern end of the street is the City of David Visitors’ Center on one side and the Givati Parking Lot excavations on the other. We have already discussed both of these features. Along the street you can see well-fortified settler houses, distinguished from the other houses in the village by the guard booths on their roofs and the Israeli flags hanging outside.

The street is on a sharp incline; because of the lack of municipal refuse collection, residents’ garbage is often visible piled on the street. Houses have been built in a private, disorganized fashion, and cars are often parked on the sidewalks. In the upper part of the street, just a few houses away from the visitors’ center, is the Wadi Hilwe Information Center, established and run by the Palestinian residents of the neighborhood (marked with a multi-language sign above a large iron door, Point 13). Across the street from the information center and slightly below it, behind a high wall, a deep shaft leads to one of the excavation tunnels of the Israel Antiquities Authority.
**Hidden from the Eye (Underground tunnels and excavations)**

The practice of digging horizontal tunnels underground fell into disuse, and has not been considered a legitimate scientific archaeological method for over a hundred years. It was replaced by the stratigraphic method, whereby digging is carried out vertically from the surface level down into the ground. This method affords a better understanding of the archaeological finds and the different layers, and prevents unnecessary damage and destruction.

In the Old City and the site of Ancient Jerusalem, archaeologists are reverting back to the practice of digging tunnels. Currently there are several tunnels being dug in Silwan; some are dug continuously, some intermittently. The excavations take place underneath the village and in pursuit of specific archaeological finds, such as an ancient Roman street ascending from the Shiloah Pool northwards, fortification digs towards the center of the hill around the structure by the spring, and a dig at the center of the Wadi Hilwe neighborhood, undertaken for the purpose of cleaning out an ancient drainage system.

Digging tunnels in the name of archaeological research is less vulnerable to public criticism than an excavation which is not undertaken for research purposes, because the former is justified to the public as a means to study and learn about the history of a site. Excavating tunnels in the site of Ancient Jerusalem/Silwan places archaeological research in the center of the ongoing territorial struggle in Jerusalem, and benefits the settlers in two ways: first, because the finds they may discover increase public interest and the number of visitors to the area under their control; and second, because it allows them to present the subterranean “biblical” story to the public in a way that is completely unrelated to the aggressive and sometimes violent struggle for control currently taking place above ground.
13. The Wadi Hilwe Information Center and Madaa Community Center

The Madaa Community Center was established in 2007 by several local Palestinian activists. The center offers extracurricular activities for the children of the village: music lessons, summer camps, a library, and a computer lab. The women of the village hold meetings there, organize a variety of community activities, and study Hebrew. Madaa is the only community center in Silwan and it is not recognized by either the Israeli authorities or the Jerusalem Municipality.

At the entrance to the community center, on Wadi Hilwe Street, you will see a red iron door and a sign for the Wadi Hilwe Information Center. The information center was founded in July 2009, and its aim is to provide information about life in the village under Israeli rule and in the shadow of the settlements. The center provides information on the life of the villagers, their world-views, their daily difficulties, and their struggle to preserve the character of their village according to their belief and understanding. The information center is one of the only places where you can learn about life alongside the archeological park, and the information aims to clarify the need to reconcile the study of the past with the present needs of the residents. More details about the information center can be found at www.silwanic.net.
Summary

The dozens of excavations in ancient Jerusalem have yielded thousands of fascinating findings as well as insights into the way people lived in earlier eras, including the inhabitants’ level of education (from private inscriptions), their administration system (measurements and weights), and their dietary customs. Each of these layered subjects can bring a visitor close to the history of Jerusalem and the lives of its inhabitants, who were flesh-and-blood people and not legendary figures.

This guide is based on the belief that it is possible to integrate one’s personal beliefs and the importance of the archeological site. In it we offer basic information that enables you to visit the village of Silwan and the archeological site of ancient Jerusalem in a different way, with an awareness of the influence the site exerts on life in the village today.

The archeological tour is not meant to answer to all questions; indeed, we hope that your tour has raised new questions and has led you to think about the past, about the identity of society today, and about the role of archeology in the conflict. Our goal in creating this guide is bring you on a journey into a past that has no owners, a past that does not provide evidence against present-day cultures. If by the end of the tour we have managed to give you new information and food for thought, then we are satisfied. In order to continue on the journey, you are invited to keep up to date through our website: www.alt-arch.org.
### Time Line

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<td>A small settlement</td>
<td>Area G and various places along the slope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Persian period</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>332-63 BCE</td>
<td>Beginning of the Hellenistic period, the expansion of the city during the Hashmonean period</td>
<td>The Givati parking lot, Area G, the eastern slope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Hellenistic period</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63 BCE - 70 AD</td>
<td>The city expands northwards; the building of Herod’s temple on the Temple Mount and its destruction</td>
<td>The Givati parking lot, the visitors’ center, Shiloah pool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Early Roman period</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-330 AD</td>
<td>Reconstruction of Jerusalem as a Roman city (Aelia Capitolina)</td>
<td>The Givati parking lot, Weill excavations area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Late Roman period</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Around 330</td>
<td>The city evolves into an important Christian center</td>
<td>The visitors’ center, Givati parking lot, the Shiloah Pool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Early Byzantine period</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Time Line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Type of settlement and culture</th>
<th>Main excavation area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>638</td>
<td>the beginning of the Arab period</td>
<td>Givati parking lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>661</td>
<td>the Umayyad Caliphate</td>
<td>The Givati parking lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750</td>
<td>the Abbasid Caliphate</td>
<td>The Givati parking lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>969</td>
<td>the Fatimid Caliphate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1033</td>
<td>Earthquake – Silwan/ ancient Jerusalem is abandoned</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1099</td>
<td>The Crusader Period</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1187</td>
<td>The Ayubic Dynasty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1250</td>
<td>the Mamluk Period</td>
<td>The Shiloah Pool, the structure near the spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1517</td>
<td>the Ottoman Period</td>
<td>The village houses in Silwan are concentrated on the eastern slopes across from ancient Jerusalem (City of David)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>The British Mandate</td>
<td>Beginning of modern construction in Wadi Hilweh (City of David)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>the Hashemite Kingdom - Jordan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Israeli rule</td>
<td>Silwan is annexed to Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations for Routes

All of the routes are circular. The visit can be done without paying the entrance fee to the City of David. Or you may pay the entrance fee in order to enter the excavation area under the Visitors Center, the aqueduct, and the Shiloah Pool. It is recommended to stop at each point on your route and to read the corresponding section of the guide (pages 8–40).

1. The Comprehensive Route

Duration: approximately three hours. This route includes many archeological excavations and many areas in Silwan’s Wadi Hilwe neighborhood.

The route begins at the northern entrance to the village of Silwan (Point no. 1) and continues to the City of David Visitors Center (Point no. 2), where you can purchase tickets if you are interested in entering the areas that require tickets. From the Visitors Center go down to the Government Complex (Point no. 3), and from there go up the stairs along a fence to the landing from which you can see the mouths of the graves in the cliffs, overlooking Old Silwan (Point no. 4). Then, continue to the entrance of the aqueduct (Point no. 5). If you don’t go into the aqueduct, continue straight and go down the steps to Area E (Point no. 6). After visiting Area E, go back up the stairs and turn left towards the Meyuchas House and the excavations of R. Weill (Point no. 7). From the area of Weill’s excavations, exit the gate and turn left for a view of the Al-Bustan neighborhood (Point no. 8). From the lookout, carefully walk down the paved road to reach the entrance to the Shiloah Pool (Point no. 9). If you did not purchase tickets for the pool, continue along the street, walk around the pool, and turn right. This is the beginning of a relatively sharp uphill climb. After a few minutes turn right to the Birket al-Hamra and to the exit of the aqueduct (Point no. 10). Return to the main road and keep walking up it (Point no. 12). On both sides of the street you can get an impression of the village, and of the settler houses amidst the houses of the Palestinian residents (Point no. 11). After a steep climb of a few minutes, you will see a red gate and above it a sign that reads “Wadi Hilwe Information Center” (Point no. 13). You are very welcome to go inside. If one of the residents is there, he/she will be happy to tell you about the center and about life in the village. After a visit to the center, continue along Wadi Hilwe Street up to Point no. 1.

2. The Multi-Layered Route

Duration: approximately three hours. It begins with a familiarization with life in the village today and continues to a varied visit of a number of archeological sites.

The route begins at the northern entrance to the village (Point no. 1), continues down Wadi Hilwe Street (Point no. 12) to the Wadi Hilwe Information Center (Point no. 13). You are very welcome to go inside. If one of the residents is there, he/she will be happy to tell you about the center and about life in the village. After visiting the information center, continue down the street until you reach a small grocery store on your left. Immediately after it, turn right and continue on a small and windy
street that ends with a paved street. Turn right on the paved street and walk down to the entrance gate of the Meyuchas House. This is the excavation area of R. Weill (Point no. 7). From there continue on a narrow side path until you reach steps. Go down the steps until you reach Area E (Point no. 6). If you want to shorten the route continue straight to the entrance to the aqueduct (Point no. 5) at this point. From Area E go up the stairs to the Government Complex (Point no. 3). Before the descent to the Government Complex you can stop and look out for a view overlooking the tombs and Old Silwan (Point no. 4). From the Government Complex go up the stairs to the City of David Visitors Center (Point no. 2) and exit at the northern entrance to the village (Point no. 1)

3. The Fast Route

Duration: approximately one hour. It includes a visit to some of the excavation areas in the upper part of Silwan, and ends at the Wadi Hilwe Information Center.

The route begins at the northern entrance to the village (Point no. 1), and continues to the Visitors Center (Point no. 2), where you can purchase tickets if you will want to enter the areas where payment is necessary. From the Visitors Center go down to the Government Complex (Point no. 3), and from here go up the stairs and turn left to Wadi Hilwe Street—the main street of the village (Point no. 12). On the street turn left and after a few dozen meters you will see on your left a red door and on top of it a sign for the Wadi Hilwe Information Center (Point no. 13). You are welcome to go inside. If one of the residents is there, he/she will be happy to tell you about the center and about life in the village. After visiting the information center continue up Wadi Hilwe Street to the starting point.
**Useful Information**

**Food**

In Silwan there are a number of stores and mini-markets where you can buy food. At the northern entrance to the village, on the street that leads to the Visitors Center, is a large yellow metal door. Inside is an inexpensive falafel place run by the Bana family. • If you want to order for a group, it is advised to call in advance and speak with Mahmud Bana: 052-683-1389.

Further down Wadi Hilwe Street there are a few mini-markets where you can buy food and other products at local prices.

Under the Visitors Center is Shweiki’s Mini-Market. At the mini-market you can also get hot drinks and sandwiches.

Across the street from the Wadi Hilwe Information Center is the Al-Tawil Mini-Market which has a small bakery. There you can get inexpensive pizza, grilled cheese, and a variety of sandwiches.

Adjacent to the entrance to the Shiloah Pool is Adnan’s Mini-Market. You can sit there and order sandwiches and other simple foods.

**Transportation**

**Buses:** East Jerusalem Bus no. 76 reaches the northern entrance of Silwan and the City of David Visitors Center. Egged buses 12 and 38 reach the Dung Gate, just a minute’s walk from the northern entrance to the village.

**Parking:** Because of the crowdedness in the village it is recommended to park in the Mount Zion Parking Lot, or outside the Old City in the Carta or Mamilla parking lots. The entrance to the village is about a five minute walk downhill from the Mount Zion Parking Lot, or about a 20 minute walk through the Old City from the Carta or Mamilla parking lots.

**Taxis:** There is a waiting point for taxis across from the Dung Gate and at the exit from the Shiloah Pool, next to the various stores. If you don’t see a taxi, it is a good idea to ask one of the residents, and they can help you.

Optional taxi Drivers: • Nihad Siam 054-8077230 • Amin Malaa 054-5674805
• Muhamad Abasi 052-5363132 • Said Siam 052-3455103

**What to bring**

**Walking shoes** – for walking through the village and archeological site

**A hat** – for protection from the sun in summer and from the cold in winter

**Drinking water**

**Cash** – for buying food and drink at the village mini-markets

**Israeli I.D. or foreign passport** – to present to the many police officers and border patrol officers patrolling the village and archeological site

**A flashlight** – for walking in the water tunnel

**Shoes for walking in water** – for walking in the aqueduct

**A change of clothing or shorts** – for walking in the aqueduct
Who are we?
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. We believe archaeology tells a complex story that is independent of tradition, religious or otherwise, and that listening to this story and bringing it to the wider public can promote values of tolerance and pluralism.

Archaeological sites are among the main cultural assets of this country and belong to all the communities, peoples, and religious groups living in it. Moreover an “archaeological site” consists not only of ancient layers but also of its present day attributes—the people living in it or near it, their culture, their daily life and their needs.

We at Emek Shaveh are dedicated to changing the view that sees the remains of the past as tools in the service of a national struggle. We oppose attempts to use archaeological finds to legitimize acts that disenfranchise communities. We support archaeological practices that benefit society as a whole. We promote efforts to include the residents living in and around the site in archaeological activities such as joint excavations and development. All this can bolster the environmental consciousness of local residents, encourage community involvement, and even generate a process of positive social change.


For further information please visit the Emek Shaveh website: www.alt-arch.org

If you are interested in alternative archaeological tours, workshops, or lectures, please contact us at: info@alt-arch.org or +972-(0)545-667299

www.alt-arch.org
Jerusalem is not a ghost town, where time stands still, but a vibrant city; a religious and political arena. Its significance derives from the memories stored within it, as well as from its living fabric. The same is true of its antiquities: they acquire their meaning through their interaction with living people. Those who would transform Jerusalem into a museum, consign it to a slow death. Those who would exploit the past for the sake of quick economic or political profit, inflict immeasurable damage.

All of Jerusalem’s residents are entitled to live in it, but they must be able to hear to its many voices. The power we wield to build and to destroy makes us particularly responsible for preserving these voices and providing a space for the memories that give meaning to our lives.