

*Chapter 5: The Comprehensive Plan
for the Excavation of the entire Western Wall Plaza:
The Darkness at the End of the Tunnel*

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1. Comprehensive Planning, or "Tossing Dust in their Eyes"?

"Mr. Dorfman also described the Israel Antiquities Authority's [henceforth: IAA] vision for the comprehensive plan, which includes the excavation of the entire Western Wall Plaza and the creation of a complete archaeological level underneath it, that will enable archaeological continuity from the City of David to the Western Wall Tunnels."¹

The collapse of the Mughrabi Bridge in 2004 was the signal for a new wave of building projects in the Western Wall Plaza, though the project of a new bridge itself did not materialize. The court that dealt with the objections to the reconstruction of the Mughrabi Bridge decided, among other things, that a "comprehensive plan" for the entire plaza was a necessity.

Various plans for the Western Wall Plaza (the Safdie Plan is the best known among them) had been put forward in the past, but all were ultimately shelved. In 2009, a planning process for the entire plaza was initiated, but going against normal practice in projects of this magnitude, no architectural competition was held.² The Western Wall Heritage Foundation simply hired architect Gabriel (Gobi) Kertes to work under the direction of Shlomo Eshkol, the Jerusalem city engineer (Document 2). Kertes presented a plan and, as far as we know, no other options were considered.

In April 2009, the IAA held a discussion on a "comprehensive vision" for the Western Wall Plaza; in other words, about Kertes's plan. We did not receive a summary of this discussion (Document 3). The first speaker, Raanan Kislev (head of the conservation department) described the situation correctly: This is a central crossroads, "and we are being drawn in"; the IAA must be "entirely" involved. The question is how?

Jon Seligman spoke next: The IAA has a responsibility "beyond the archaeology [. . .] to be present and to manage the heritage of the Old City." The same argument was made by Amos Kloner and Yoram Tsafrir, who opposed the building plans for Beit HaLiba and Beit Strauss on the grounds that, beyond the excavation area itself, there is a larger archaeological heritage that is worth preserving (though in the planning committees the IAA stood on the opposite side of the barricades, supporting the developers' position). Seligman continued and said:

1) Minutes of the decisions of the Jerusalem Region Planning and Construction Committee, Jerusalem District Administration, Hearing Number 2010013, 26 October 2010, p. 6; compare the transcript of the same hearing, p. 25.

2) On former plans for the Plaza see Nitzan Shifan, A. 2011, "Stones with a Human Heart": On Monuments, Modernism and Preservations at the Western Wall. *Theory and Criticism* vol. 38-39, pp. 65-100. (Hebrew).

"We must be at the center of this process; not to lead it, but to be a central player. There is a problem – we are under pressure, and, therefore, it is important that the process advance quickly. There was harsh public criticism of the pressure system that was brought to bear on us to approve the plan for Beit Strauss. It was determined in the municipal planning committee that the Mughrabi Bridge would not receive a permit as long as there is no comprehensive plan, and it was then agreed that any future projects would also require a comprehensive plan, despite the fact that it has not yet been completed" (Document 3, April 6, 2009).

Seligman thinks that the process must be pushed forward quickly in order to remove pressure from the IAA. The IAA hurried to approve the Beit Strauss plan. It was not troubled by the pressures to approve the plan, but by the public criticism against the approval of this plan. Yuval Baruch added:

"The comprehensive plan for the area is like "tossing dust in the eyes." We are talking about such an expensive project that it will not materialize. There are a number of projects that are happening "piecemeal" (the Givati parking lot is the prime example of this). We have to set conditions, but should not treat the topic as a comprehensive plan (Document 3)."



Picture 1: The Western Wall Plaza in 2015, general view. The Western Wall at center; the Archaeological Park on the right, Beit Strauss on the left.

According to Baruch, what is being considered is not a comprehensive plan; this is exactly the view of those opposing Kertes's plan for the Western Wall Plaza in the planning committees. Uri Barsheshet (a municipal planner) opposed Gobi Kertes's plan in the planning committee because, as he put it, it is a "plumber's plan":

“A plumber's plan, meaning that it is designed from the perspective of the plumbing – where the sewage line will go and where the elevators will be [. . .] but in no sense did they start with a vision.”³

According to Barsheshet, no one was consulted in the planning process, apart from the organizations that were directly involved, and it is not by chance that the comprehensive plan legitimizes *ex post facto* all the individual projects that were put forward beforehand:

“In the meantime, according to the plan, we can move to the permit stage for the individual projects. These will be advanced as detailed plans that are consistent with the master plan, such as the Mughrabi Bridge, Beit Strauss, and Beit HaLiba. How interesting – all the individual projects, in parallel, fit the master plan that was put together after them.”⁴

In the internal discussion in the IAA (Document 3) Yuval Baruch admits that there is no comprehensive plan, but in the planning committees the IAA would defend and praise Kertes's plan. According to Baruch, the way to get things done in the State of Israel is not with a well thought-out, comprehensive plan, which according to him is not applicable, but rather through the “piecemeal method”. Settler organizations in East Jerusalem work in exactly the same way. Perhaps this is why Baruch mentioned the Givati parking lot as the "prime" example of a project that "happened in a piecemeal fashion." Even before the structure on the site of the Givati parking lot was planned, and before its design was approved, the IAA promised Elad that it would support the construction.⁵

The next speaker was Uzi Dahari, Deputy Director for Archaeology at the IAA:

“We must not give up our right to veto according to clause 29 of the Antiquities Law. We need to be involved in all aspects of the planning, from the basement to the size and shape of the windows. We have to find a structure that will allow us to be both partners and overseers. It is important to us to lead the archaeological

[and] conservation processes from within this building project. We must act through the force of the Antiquities Law and reach decisions accordingly. [I am] in favor of the large project; this is a national project that will necessitate receiving funding from the state (Document 3).”

Dahari believes in a comprehensive plan, that is, in the "large project." The problem is that the IAA wants to be both the primary implementing body, and the supervising body, as the Antiquities Law 1989 allows. In such a situation there is no possibility of objectivity or impartial decisions. According to clause 29 of the Antiquities Law, as the supervising body the IAA is meant to protect ancient sites, including preventing any activity that could damage antiquities, including:

“Construction, paving, erecting facilities, quarrying, mining, drilling . . . erecting structures or walls . . . [etc.]”⁶



Picture 2. The Western Wall Plaza, view towards the Western Wall with the temporary Mughrabi Bridge (right) and Beit Haliba excavation area.

3) Transcript of the Plenary Session of the Regional Planning and Construction Committee, Hearing Number 2010013, 26 October 2010, p. 105.

4) U. Barsheshet, Transcript of the Plenary Session of the Regional Planning and Construction Committee, Hearing Number 2010013, 26 October 2010, p. 105.

5) R. Greenberg, “A Privatized Heritage: How the Israel Antiquities Authority Relinquished Jerusalem’s Past”, *Emek Shaveh*, 2014, p. 7

As the implementing body, the IAA has an interest in encouraging development in order to conduct excavations. The conflict of interest is self-evident; the decisive factor that tips the scales in support of the project is the fact that it "will receive funding from the state."

6) The Antiquities Law 1978, §29, various subsections (partial, unofficial translation).

Incidentally, it is not clear if the participants in this meeting had been given the complete design (that is, a detailed blueprint). Without the architect's blueprints it is impossible to understand the plan. In particular in the case of a project of this scale, with all its various implications, it is wrong to rush to make fundamental decisions for or against, without first examining the blueprints, and hearing the architect present the plan in person.

We were not provided with the IAA director's summary of the discussion, but the hope that the IAA would consider the comprehensive plan as necessary and desirable, requiring vision and principled thinking, has vanished.

The Mughrabi Bridge (which will not be discussed in detail here) is an example of another "project evolving according to a piecemeal approach."

Yuval Baruch: According to the proposed plan, an extensive archaeological excavation is required [. . .] We are talking about a complicated excavation, and the question is whether we can create a plan that will not require an archaeological excavation. It will require supports, grading, to remove part of the plaza, and we have to be prepared for that. We have to decide what will be the fate of remains that are discovered. It is already clear that the excavation will not be complete, and, therefore, I propose that we do not conduct it at all, and find an alternative engineering solution [. . .]

Shuka Dorfman: Piles for the supporting walls will spare us the excavation, and we should therefore build the wall on piles. We will conduct an orderly archaeological excavation, *with the intention of leveling most of the plaza*, but the decisions will be made according to the remains that are discovered.

Ofer Cohen: We are talking about a gravity wall that goes under the level of the plaza to a depth of a meter and a half. There is no sense in constructing piles.

Chen Kanari [Head of the Construction Department of the Western Wall Heritage Foundation]: The goal of the project is to expand the women's area and, for that reason, it is impossible not to conduct the excavation" (Document 4, 21 June 2009, our emphasis).

An "extensive" excavation is required, but the excavation "will not be complete." Therefore Yuval Baruch proposes "creating" a plan that allows the IAA to approve the construction, but without excavating. The IAA has a method for avoiding archaeological excavations: building on foundation piles (see the case of Beit Strauss, Chapter 1). Dorfman proposes that by using piles there will be a partial excavation, but the word "leveling" exposes the truth: the aim is not to leave an archaeological park full of remains, but rather a level and empty space for the purposes of construction or for a prayer area. This time the method does not work, since the issue at hand is a gravity wall for a bridge, not pillar foundations.

2. The "Pilot": The Realization of the Comprehensive Plan as a Particular Project that "Evolves in a Piecemeal Manner"

After Gobi Kertes was hired by the Western Wall Heritage Foundation to prepare a comprehensive plan, he proposed that most or all of the Western Wall Plaza be excavated to the depth of a full story that will later be covered by a roof resting on rows of pillars. The plaza above will remain open and expansive, while the underground level will serve various purposes: security checks, passage for visitors to the Western Wall, and a space for them to take cover from inclement weather, as well as an archaeological site. A discussion began in the IAA for the immediate promotion of the plan:

"The Western Wall Plaza Excavations

Soli Eliav [Director General of the Western Wall Heritage Foundation]: We must promote the project. Shmuel Rabin was appointed engineer and Eli Ilan [an architect who works on different projects for the Western Wall Heritage Foundation] was appointed architect. The goal is to reduce the number of pillars. I request that a representative of the [IAA] Jerusalem District participate in the meetings that take place at the Western Wall Heritage Foundation.

Ofer Cohen: We are talking about minor changes to the plan that was presented in the past.

Decision: It is Shmuel Rabin's responsibility to present the plan in the next status meeting (Document 5, 30 August 2009; this is the second page of Document 25 of Chapter 4).

At the next meeting, the architectural and engineering plans are presented "for the continuing excavation of the Western Wall Plaza". The Western Wall Heritage Foundation adds a small request:

Soli Eliav: We are asking for a permit in principle for drilling and constructing pillars. On the basis of the principle of six pillars for every 12 by 24 [meter] rectangle.

Shuka Dorfman summarized the discussion:

1. We should undertake a pilot of two rectangles, on the basis of 12 pillars, east of Beit HaLiba excavation, adjacent to the excavation (Document 6, 12 October 2009).

The Western Wall Heritage Foundation did not ask for a "pilot," but rather for a permit in principle to drill pillars. Shuka Dorfman limits this to a "pilot" of 12 pillars. This "pilot" alone will cover almost 600 square meters! From an engineering perspective there is no need for such a "pilot." These are not new, untested pillars that need to be checked.

From an archaeological perspective, this means damage to antiquities, just as in the case of the drilling for Beit Strauss (Chapter 1). Is it possible that they are discussing here a different "project that is unfolding in a piecemeal fashion" and not Gobi Kertes's comprehensive plan? Expanding the area of women's prayer was discussed in the context of the Mughrabi Bridge, but only to the extent of about half of the area of the "pilot" discussed here. There is, therefore, no connection between them. Additionally, Dorfman mentions the site explicitly: "East of the Beit HaLiba excavation, adjacent to the excavation." That is, there is no connection with the HaLiba project either. There is no project other than Kertes's comprehensive plan that fits the indicated area.

We have to understand the extent of the absurdity: the IAA consistently claims that it was one of the first to call for a comprehensive plan for the Western Wall Plaza. Now comprehensive planning has begun; but the developer and the IAA will realize the "comprehensive" plan immediately, without any comprehensive perspective, as another project that "evolves bit by bit," before Kertes's comprehensive plan is even approved in the planning committees.

The following document on the subject is from a "status" meeting from March 2010:

"The Western Wall Plaza Excavations

Soli Eliav [Director of the Western Wall Heritage Foundation]: We are waiting for the IAA's comments.

Raanan Kislev [Head of the Conservation Department in the IAA]: We have not yet received the plans. It is already two months that we are waiting for the file with all the plans.

Chen Kanari [Head of the Construction Department, the Western Wall Heritage Foundation]: We are talking about two excavation grids, 1-2, that were already excavated in the past.

Eli Ilan [Architect for the Western Wall Heritage Foundation]: Shmuel Rabin, the project engineer, and I are discussing the topic. I am not pleased with the solution of the pillars. I am still trying to get a plan that I can be satisfied with, and then I will pass it along to the IAA.

Jon Seligman: When the plan is prepared, we can get ready and begin to work.

Uzi Dahari: We are talking about a mega-project, we have to prepare all the aspects.

Yuval Baruch: This is a smaller project than Beit HaLiba.

Decision: A working group should be established and decisions should be made regarding all aspects of the pilot" (Document 7, 7 March 2010)."

Chen Kanari perhaps means the eastern section of the excavations of Beit HaLiba. It is not clear how it is possible to conduct such a "pilot" there, since that is part of the area of Beit HaLiba, which requires its own, separate system of pillars. They had not yet reached an agreement on the location of the pillars for Beit HaLiba by that time (see Chapter 4). Shuka Dorfman (Document 6 above) indicated an adjoining space, to the east of the Beit HaLiba. Dahari's comment also clarifies that the issue is the comprehensive plan for the entire Western Wall Plaza (while Yuval Baruch perhaps thought only of the 600 square meter pilot).

The "working group" was not established; if it was, it either did not produce any written documentation, or such documents were not given to Emek Shaveh. At a meeting a month later they discuss a list of other projects and as he concludes the discussion Dorfman remarks:

"A. The Western Wall Plaza – we are in principle in agreement regarding the plan. We must accept the final designs and approve them. We must prepare an excavation plan, determine who will excavate, and bring it to approval (Document 8, page 2, 14 April 2010)."

This is the last time that the "pilot" is mentioned; the allusion to developing an excavation plan and choosing an excavator makes clear that what is being referred to is a virgin area of the Western Wall Plaza that was on the verge of becoming a "project that happens bit by bit." The idea of the "pilot" disappeared as mysteriously as it appeared. We can only marvel at the idea of drilling pillars over 600 square meters of the Western Wall Plaza as an "experiment" for a mega-project. This before the mega project itself received a construction permit or was even presented for discussion in the planning committees!

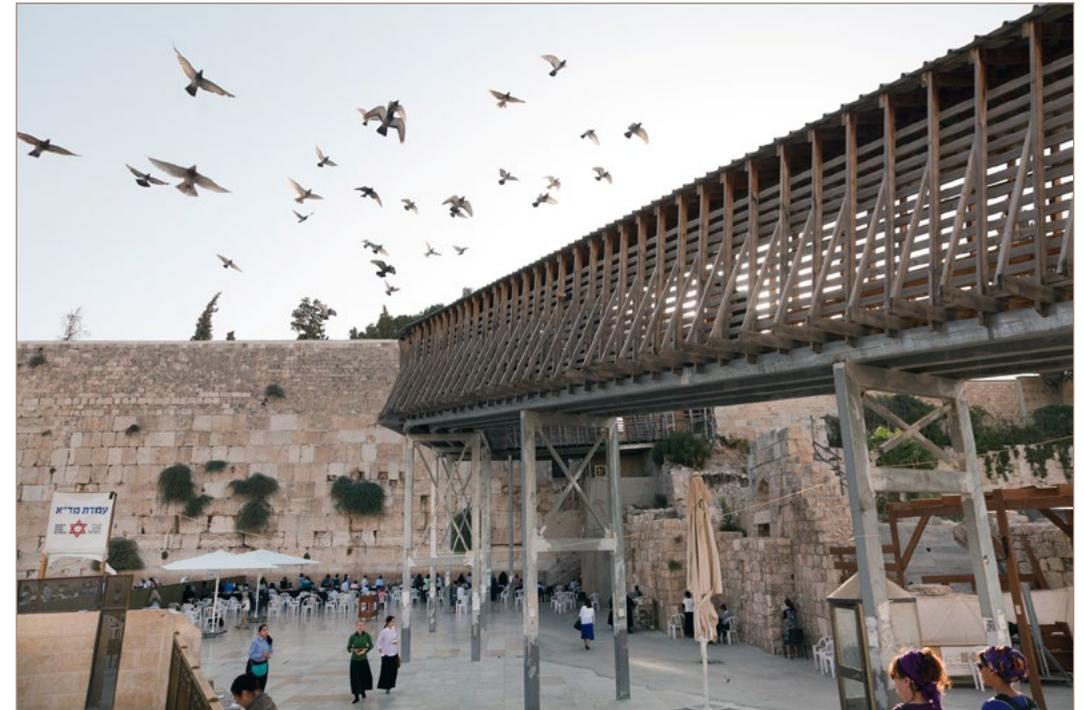
3. Preparing for a Mega-Project or Throwing Dust in Their Eyes?

Apparently in the wake of Shuka's conclusions (Document 8), a "proposal for managing the excavation project in the Western Wall Plaza" was prepared. We have only one page of this document, undated and unsigned (Document 9). The recognition of the size of the project is slowly dawning on them. This is a "gigantic project that will continue for many years." Do the developers understand this fact? For many years large excavation pits, after the manner of Beit HaLiba, will dot the Western Wall Plaza; as each pit is excavated that space becomes disconnected from the plaza, not only during the excavation itself but until all construction ends.

Various options are presented, but in vague way, so the reader must read between the lines. The basic assumption is that "partnership with a leading academic institution is necessary," but option C does not include a university. From a management and professional coordination perspective, all the options assume that the excavations will be run by the IAA and the overall responsibility "rests with the [Jerusalem] District Archaeologist" (meaning Yuval Baruch). In option C, it is determined that each excavation area will have one excavation director "at the level of a senior archaeologist from the IAA or the university" – though according to option C the university is not a partner . . .

In terms of the execution of the project, options A and B (but not option C) declare that the excavation will be "modular." A nice word to be sure, but meaningless in this context. From the moment a pit is excavated, it will disturb the Western Wall visitors until the construction ends. Since they intend to excavate a gigantic area (all or most of the plaza), they cannot excavate all of it at once, and will be forced to excavate in different stages, one after the other. The "modularity" mentioned is not any sophisticated planning principle. Real planning is absent. For example, is it more suitable to begin the excavation in the northeast portion of the plaza, or in the southwest? Should the pits be spread over the area, or should each new excavation area be added next to the one before? What is the proper size for each pit? And how many can or should be excavated at once? Excavation on this scale and in so central a location needs real planning, not "pretend" planning.

There seems to be no realization that such a mega-project requires in-depth consultation and preparation. Likewise, ethical questions of what this project will mean for the remains that will be discovered (see below) do not arise.



Picture 3: The temporary Mughrabi Bridge and, on the left, the Western Wall Plaza



Picture 4: The Western Wall Plaza with the Mughrabi Bridge (left) and security check structures (right). Following Kertes's plan the entry will be dug and new security structures will be built on the "archaeological level."

4. The IAA Mobilizes to Approve the Comprehensive Plan

The IAA participated in the meetings of the "Western Wall Steering Committee" in the Jerusalem Development Authority, where the principles for the design of the Western Wall Plaza are formulated; most of these principles focus on the design of the new structures. In addition, it was determined that:

“4. The axis of the Cardo will be uncovered in stages along all its length and will serve as a public passage. To its west, the rock escarpment that descends from the Jewish Quarter will be exposed, as far as possible along its entire length.

5. The archaeological layers that are currently exposed, and those that will be uncovered in the future, near the western edge, will be public, and the entrance to them will be, in principle, by way of the new structures (Document 10, 10 December 2009).”

The comprehensive plan was presented in a meeting of the steering committee in January 2010 (Document 11); the minutes are brief, but we learn from them that visitors will enter near the Dung Gate at the south of the Plaza, where the security check facility, storage, etc. will be located. Visitors will travel by foot along the lower level of the Umayyad palace, some seven meters below the ground level of the plaza today, and this plan will "improve the carrying capacity of the Western Wall area." The Davidson Center office complex will be removed (see above, Chapter 2). Transportation and parking were the principal problems discussed, not archaeology.

Prior to the discussion in Jerusalem's regional planning committee a preparatory meeting took place, and the Vice Minister of Education, Shai Rinsky, urgently requested that the IAA provide "a document detailing the IAA's position on the plan" (Document 12, 20 October 2010). It seems that we have only received the first page of this document (Document 13, 25 October 2010), which includes only general statements. There is also the final section of a document that was written by Yuval Baruch, undated: "the IAA supports Kertes's plan, which, in its opinion, is essential and represents a fitting balance "between the wish to preserve archaeological remains and display them to the public, and the necessity of development in the Holy Basin" (Document 14).

The most detailed document of the IAA's position on the comprehensive plan is from October 2010 (Document 15). The document attempts to adjust the plan to fit the framework of international conservation treaties, which emphasizes the importance of diversity. It is determined that the "general outline" will preserve "the city plan from the Second Temple period (including a number of locations where finds from the First Temple were discovered)" and will be based on "the Roman street plan from the period of Aelia Capitolina." Visitors will enter near the southern wall and will move north, principally

along the route of the Cardo (Document 15, page 2, §2.02). "The Umayyad Palace Complex" will serve as a visitors entrance; otherwise only the individual projects already underway are mentioned (Document 15, §2.03, 2.04).

Around June of 2010 the head of the conservation department prepares a presentation for the director of the IAA, of which, again, we have only a portion. One of the pages defines the "vision":

- "Regularizing the visitor entrance to the Western Wall Plaza from an overall perspective.
- Creating a public space that will allow visitors to experience a world heritage site in a proper and acceptable way, through exposure, understanding, and display of the different archaeological layers.
- Regularizing visitor access in a convenient, accessible, clear, and experiential way, and laying the groundwork for a large increase in visitors.
- Preserving the spirit of the site, and creating an appropriate planning frame for it (Document 16).”

This presentation is mentioned in a discussion from 17 June 2010 on the Western Wall Tunnels that touched on the issue of the comprehensive plan (Document 17). According to Yuval Baruch, on the one hand "we have to refrain from developing individual sites. For that reason we have to make a logical connection between the sites in terms of content"; but, on the other hand, "the separation between the archaeological park complex, the City of David, and the Western Wall Tunnels is no less important than regulating visitor movement." So should they be separated or connected? According to Baruch, the comprehensive plan "came to be naturally."

We think that Kertes's comprehensive plan did not come into being naturally, but rather is an attempt by those who hired Kertes to legitimate, under a smokescreen of "comprehensive planning," the individual plans already underway through the method of "projects that happen in a piecemeal manner."

The Director of the IAA summarizes the discussion: "As of today, nothing happens without our involvement" (Document 17, §2). The question is: what happens as a result of the IAA's involvement? Mr. Dorfman complained that there is no comprehensive planning: "What has been presented is a random collection of many different small projects. On the national level things should not be conducted in this way, since they must be planned from a comprehensive perspective." The IAA is among those responsible for this situation as it supported all the projects that "evolved piecemeal" (not all of which are small).

Gobi Kertes's plan was approved in Jerusalem's regional planning committee on 26 October 2010, after all the relevant bodies mobilized to support it. The mayor of Jerusalem Nir Barakat made a personal appearance at the meeting – his first – as did the Director of the IAA, Shuka Dorfman. The IAA rushed to support the product, without devoting any thought to the planning process; but "without a proper process it is impossible to make professional decisions on any level."⁷

5. The Archaeological Implications of the Comprehensive Plan

What is the significance of Gobi Kertes's plan from an archaeological perspective? The IAA was obligated to discuss this before it announced its support for the plan. But the IAA mobilized to support the plan regardless. It is not easy to understand the details of Kertes's plan, since it was not presented in public and it is difficult to find the blueprints. We have relied on the following sources:

1. The planning committee discussion from 26 October 2010 and a further internal discussion from 27 September 2011.⁸
2. Gobi Kertes's comments during a discussion of the objections to Beit HaLiba.⁹
3. Two blueprints from the IAA documents, one from the Western Wall Heritage Foundation from 22 October 2010 (Document 18) and the second from Gobi Kertes from September 2011 (Appendix: Visitor Movement, Document 19).
4. A model that was published on the "Hyde Park" website in October 2010 (Picture 7).¹⁰
5. Various IAA documents (such as 15-16 above) referring to the plan.

From these sources the following picture emerges:

A. A parking lot will be excavated to the south of the Old City wall on an area of 1,200 square meters: part of this area is currently covered by a road, and part has been excavated in the past. To make room for the parking lot the entire area will be excavated deep into the rock. If remains will be discovered, they will have to be removed.

B. The Western Wall Plaza will be excavated, entirely or partially, and a visitor reception area will be built on the lower level – including a security check facility, information, toilets, etc. The entire area to be excavated is marked as 3,460 square meters; the security building alone will take up several hundred square meters (Plan 18, area 6; Plan 19, areas marked "1"). This will require excavation on a gigantic scale. The Cardo and the Herodian road are meant to serve as the transportation routes.

C. A significant amount of space will be required for new construction at the expense of antiquities, such as staircases, elevator shafts, and long wheelchair ramps (Document 19, Point 2).

The archaeological implications are as follows:

8) Subcommittee on Objections, the Regional Planning and Building Committee, Jerusalem, Hearing Number 2011114, 27 September 2011, pp. 108-137.

9) Minutes of the Decisions of the Subcommittee on Objections, Ministry of the Interior, Jerusalem District Administration, Hearing Number 2013007, 14 February 2013, §29-30.

10) http://www.hydepark.co.il/topic.asp?whichpage=38&topic_id=2706912&forum_id=20422

7) Mike Turner, quoted from a letter sent to the planning committee: Minutes of the Decisions of Regional Planning Committee, Ministry of the Interior, Jerusalem District Administration, Hearing Number 2010013, 26 October 2010, p. 17, §28.

1. Archaeological ethics has emphasized for decades that it is forbidden "to excavate everything," and archaeologists always leave a significant part of any find unexcavated for the sake of future generations. Perhaps future archaeologists will have new research questions and new excavation methods. This case concerns an excavation of the entire plaza, and no one has any reservations. On the contrary, the IAA's "vision" is an excavation of the entire area from the City of David to the Western Wall Tunnels.

2. It will be impossible to preserve and to display archaeological remains in the areas intended for new construction (see above, section C). In all these areas they will be obligated to remove (clear away) the remains that will be found.

3. Though the IAA mentions diversity, in practice primarily "our periods" (periods associated with Jewish history - the First and Second Temple periods) will be preserved along with the system of Roman roads (Document 15 above). The documents do not mention the preservation of remains from the Islamic periods as part of the "vision." There is no doubt that in order to reach the "archaeological floor," excavators will need to remove remains from the Islamic periods. To the east of Beit HaLiba still stands the last remaining portion of the Afdaliyyah school. The IAA has announced that it will take steps to ensure that a similar "removal" of this structure will not occur again.¹¹ The excavator of Beit HaLiba building and other researchers have expressed the hope that:

“While about two-third of unit C3 were removed during the 2005-2009 excavations, remains of its eastern third are apparently extant. Should this part of the unit be excavated and reconstructed, al-Afdal's largely destroyed Madrasa may be given a modicum of commemoration.”¹²

The Umayyad administration buildings will serve as reception and security check areas. This will not leave appropriate space for archaeological exhibits and learning, but rather it will be an area that the visitors will want to pass through as quickly as possible. Such conservation can be compared to the toilet walls in Beit Strauss rather than to the conservation of the Cardo or the First Temple structures in the Beit HaLiba area.

4. The ancient street plan – the Cardo to the west and the Herodian street in the east – are intended to serve as the public access route to the Western Wall. It is difficult to see how this is possible. The Cardo (Document 18, 19, number four in pink) enters the Beit HaLiba and narrows considerably because of a planned staircase. In the discussion in the region planning committee Amir Shoham, the conservation advisor for East Jerusalem Development, Ltd., noticed this fact, and added that, so far, four individual projects are already planned along the route of the Cardo (a parking lot and an elevator, the inspection

11) B. Z. Kedar, et al, "The Madrasa Afdaliyya / Maqam Al-Shaykh 'Id: An Example of Ayyubid Architecture in Jerusalem," *Revue Biblique* 121 (2012), p. 283, n. 26.

12) Ibid, p. 287.

building, a massive lobby, and Beit HaLiba). He turned to Yuval Baruch and asked:

“Each one of these structures is entirely different from the rest. Visually, each one is entirely different. That means that the street will have no sense of unity; suddenly you will be confronted with many different things. I'm asking [. . .] if you think that this design – as it is presented now in the master plan – is good for the Cardo [. . .]”¹³

This question did not receive a proper answer.

The Herodian street adjacent to the Western Wall cannot serve as a public passage for large numbers of people. First of all, no opening in the wall is planned at its southern end, nor any additional area for security checks (Plan 19, Point 3).¹⁴ Secondly, how will the low Herodian street (which passes underneath the Mughrabi Bridge) join the Western Wall Plaza (or the Western Wall Tunnels, a paid site that is not appropriate to serve as a free passageway for masses of people)? Thirdly, the carrying capacity of the Herodian road is tiny since it is almost entirely blocked by an ancient rockslide (Picture 5). Ronny Reich described it this way:

It seems that the most dramatic find is the large rockslide of Herodian building stones on the surface of the road, which strengthened the image of the destruction [...] We left about half of the fallen stones where they stood at the excavation site as a memorial to the destruction [. . .] as a monument of dramatic power and historical importance.¹⁵

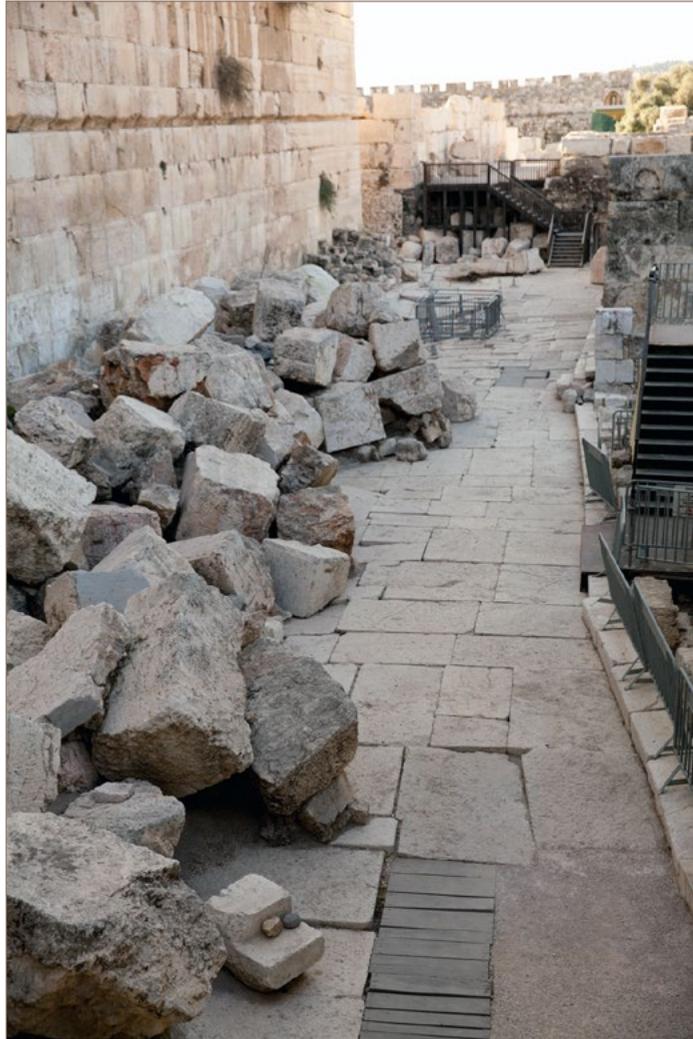
Further south, the Herodian street is twisted and sunken because of the collapse of the large mass of Robinson's arch. Can anyone imagine “fixing” this and removing the massive rockslide, associated with either the destruction of the Temple complex (in 70 CE), or with the earthquake of 363 CE?¹⁶

13) Transcript of the Plenary Session of the Regional Planning and Construction Committee, Hearing Number 2010013, 26 October 2010, p. 207.

14) When they discussed Beit HaLiba and the possibility of putting an additional security check facility there, the mayor of Jerusalem cried: "They won't approve it, there is only one security check here below. You can't add another security team for the police, it is impossible to add another security check facility. Do you know what it entails to add another security check?" Transcript of the Plenary Session of the Regional Planning and Construction Committee, Hearing Number 2010013, 26 October 2010, p. 207.

15) R. Reich, "The Second Temple Period Road Along the Length of the Western Wall," *Ariel* 180-181 (2007), p. 152 (Hebrew).

16) N. Hasson, "Archaeologists: Western Wall Stones Result of earthquake not Roman Destruction", *Haaretz* 4.1.2015.



Picture 5 The Herodian street, looking south with the rockslide. Is this a possible access route for millions of visitors? Photograph: Emek Shaveh.

Since the ancient roads will not suffice, one will be forced to open other routes. Kertes's plan shows this clearly. Note the arrows depicting visitor movement (Plan 19, Number 5) and the model (Picture 7). Visitors are meant to circulate throughout the entire "archaeological" level. The Cardo is marked on the western side with hatch marks – a very small part of the area designated for visitor movement. Even the archaeological park is presented in the model as a straight and empty plaza. In reality, the archaeological park is packed with remains, and it is possible to move through it only in small groups and along twisting paths (Picture 6).



Picture 6: the Archaeological Park today. An area full of archaeological remains is not a suitable passage for millions of visitors hurrying on their way to the Western Wall, not to mention visitors lingering around, for example families celebrating a Bar Mizvah.

The situation is even more severe because, in contrast to what has been claimed regarding Kertes's plan, in reality the Cardo cannot serve as a passage at all if this plan is realized. The reason is that the security building on the archaeological level is located in the center of the area, far from the Cardo. Anyone going towards the Western Wall on this level and traveling in a south-north direction will be forced to pass through the security check. Along the whole length of this level a barrier or wall will be built (see Document 19, the black line on the blueprint, on the sides of the square security check, between the blue arrows marked 6 and the brown arrows marked 5), that also dissects the Cardo. Visitors will turn straight towards the security check; no one will go along the Cardo in order to hit a wall and then turn ninety degrees to the right. Visitors will also continue from the security check area directly to the Western Wall, that is, to the north-east; a few may turn north-west (if their goal is to reach the Beit HaLiba); but no one will turn around and walk left along the dividing wall in order to return to the Cardo.¹⁷ In other words, the current plan destroys the feeling of walking in the footsteps of those who travelled along the Cardo

17) Notice also the "L" shaped walls along the Cardo in document 19, which will further isolate and block it from view.

in the past; it destroys the idea that the Cardo could be a continuous, open passage.

If that is not enough, in the discussion Gobi Kertes described the archaeological level as also intended for visitor reception and a waiting area; that is, as an expansion of the Western Wall Plaza:

“Underneath that [upper] level [. . .] we present here the level [. . .] of the archaeological area that is, in essence, intended for more expansive visitor reception [. . .] Naturally if these areas adjoining the Cardo will be excavated, it will create a sizeable space, protected from rain and sun, which gives us another option for visitor reception [. . .]”¹⁸

That is how others understood this plan as well, including the mayor of Jerusalem Nir Barakat: "The master plan means expanding the plaza, and without parking [lots]."¹⁹ The chances that another wide ancient street will be discovered along the north-south axis, between the Herodian street and the Cardo, are minuscule. How will the millions of visitors move from one place to another. Would they step on the remains?

Kertes's plan will cause a destructive removal of archaeological remains on a massive scale to suit the needs of new construction (security check facility stairways, columns, etc.), and in order to make room for the presence and movement of huge numbers of people. Unlike the Beit HaLiba area, where an uninterrupted archaeological level will be presented to relatively small groups, who have come especially to see it, the "archaeological" floor of the comprehensive plan will be dedicated for the most part to new construction and for the movement of millions of people rushing to the Western Wall. When the remains are discovered, it will be too late to stop or to change the plan. The IAA should have opposed the plan in its current version and required that important finds from all periods be preserved *in situ* (without removal). Instead, the IAA has acted as the developers' partner. Mobilizing for the approval of "projects evolving in a piecemeal fashion" has become a common practice. In essence, the IAA is abandoning a substantial share of Jerusalem's archaeological heritage, violating the principles for which it was founded.



Picture 7: A model of the comprehensive plan, looking north. The Cardo is the hatched area on the left side of the columns on the lower "archaeological" level. The "archaeological" level is presented here as a leveled zone, empty of remains.

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http://www.hydepark.co.il/topic.asp?whichpage=38&topic_id=2706912&forum_id=20422

18) G. Kertes, Subcommittee for Objections, Regional Planning and Building Committee, Jerusalem, Hearing Number 2011114, 27 September 2011, pp. 111-112. Kertes later clarified that visitors coming from the south can wait "in the archaeological area under the plaza [. . .], a space that is protected from sun and rain."

19) Minutes of the Decisions of the Regional Planning Committee, Ministry of the Interior, Jerusalem District Administration, Hearing Number 2010013, 26 October 2010, p. 155.

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