



**Tourism and Sacred Sites:  
The Davidson Center, the Archaeological Park,  
and the corner of the Western Wall**

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**2015**

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Tunnels

The Christian Quarter

The Muslim Quarter

A tunnel managed by the Western Wall Heritage Foundation

The Western Wall

The Western Wall Plaza

The Mughrabi Bridge

The Jewish Quarter

An underground archaeological excavation

The Davidson Center

Established by the East Jerusalem Development Company and the Israel Antiquities Authority on land leased by the State to the company for the Reconstruction and Development of the Jewish Quarter (JQDC)

Financial Debt

The debt owed by the East Jerusalem Development Company to the JQDC paved the way for the Elad Foundation to take on the role of operating the Davidson Center after it paid the East Jerusalem Development Company's debt to the JQDC. But then the State intervened and stopped the Elad Foundation from taking over the Davidson Center.

A tunnel managed by the Elad Foundation

The Ophel excavations

The City of David

A national park managed by the Elad Foundation

The Givati Parking Lot

An archaeological dig funded by the Elad Foundation.

Silwan



August 2015

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Emek Shaveh is an organization of archaeologists and heritage professionals focusing on the role of tangible cultural heritage in Israeli society and in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We view archaeology as a resource for strengthening understanding between different peoples and cultures.

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Following the 1967 war and the destruction of the Mughrabi quarter, the Western Wall was informally split into two sections separated by the Mughrabi Bridge. To the north, the Western Wall Plaza, defined as sacred and used for prayer, was placed under the auspices of the Ministry for Religious Affairs. The area to the south of the Mughrabi Bridge was not legally defined as a separate area, but in practice became an archaeological excavation site that also includes the area adjacent to the southern wall of the Temple Mount.<sup>1</sup> For about a decade, the area was excavated by Benjamin Mazar, and other scholars followed.

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### **The Davidson Center**

During the 1990s, the area south of the Mughrabi ramp was turned into an open-air archaeological park and in 2001 the Davidson Center, located within the park, opened its doors to visitors. The center is a modern building partially built inside one of the administrative buildings of the Umayyad period (early Islamic period, 7th century CE). Most of the modern building is sunk in the ground and does not spoil the surrounding landscape. During the excavations in the park, remains of structures were discovered from the early Islamic period (the 7th and 8th centuries CE) and from the Roman and Byzantine periods (7th - 1st century CE), and a few remains from the Hellenistic and earlier periods (2nd - 8th century BCE). The Davidson Center displays finds from the excavations, highlighting those from the Second Temple Period (particularly the 1st century CE) – a street, shops, traces of the destruction of the city by the Romans - and the Umayyad period--a system of four administration buildings. At the visitor's center, one can watch a film that simulates the experience of a Jewish pilgrim who ascends the Temple Mount in order to buy a sheep for sacrifice. A computerized model offers the visitor an opportunity to walk through the area of the Temple Mount during the Second Temple period. The Umayyad period is also represented by a computerized model.<sup>2</sup>

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1) Uzi Benziman, Jerusalem – A City without a Wall, 1973.

2) [www.archpark.org.il](http://www.archpark.org.il)

## ***Construction of the center, funding, administration and the legal situation***

The Davidson Center was built by the East Jerusalem Development Company and the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA). The IAA participated in its planning and secured the funding for the center, and for a few years the IAA was also a partner in the managing of the center. The center was built without building permits. The IAA, the East Jerusalem Development Company, the project manager, and the architect “assumed that these works are included within the definition of ‘archaeological excavations,’ a claim which is completely baseless” according to the Jerusalem Municipality comptroller.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the infrastructure that the center uses was also illegally connected. The Israeli government leased the site to the Company for the Reconstruction and Development of the Jewish Quarter (JQDC), who, in turn, leased it to the East Jerusalem Development Company. However, a serious conflict ensued between the two government-owned companies regarding the operation of the Davidson Center. According to the East Jerusalem Development Company, the JQDC allowed the former “to develop the site, and only once development was in full swing and the center was built did it try to assume control over the site without having to assume any of the financial burden.”<sup>4</sup>

The East Jerusalem Development Company and the IAA initiated a master plan to “legalize” the center (plan no. 10294), but the original plan was lost and the process was held up. In addition, for years, the director general of JQDC refused to sign the plan and in so doing prevented its approval. In a discussion within the Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee from 21/7/2009, Deputy Director General of East Jerusalem Development Company Eli Shmuelian noted that the plan was entirely funded by the IAA:

Mr. Davidson, who donated the first Davidson Center, donated \$5 million to the previous center, and prior to his death donated an additional \$2.5 million held by the Israel Antiquities Authority.<sup>5</sup>

At the end of 2012 the plan was updated. Beyond legitimizing the center, the entrepreneurs (IAA and JQDC) wished to expand it by 400 meters sq. into a structure from the Umayyad period to the east of the already existing center, and to secure permission for demolishing the structure at the entrance to the center in case this would be warranted by the architectural plan for the Western Wall plaza drafted by Gobi Kertes. The overall

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3) “The licensing process for the exhibition and simulation center named after Davidson”—Report by the Jerusalem Municipality comptroller, May 2005, p.1013.

4) *Ibid.*, p. 1021

5) Jerusalem Regional Planning and Building Committee meeting 2009013, protocol from 21.7.2009, p.84.



plan called for the excavation and rebuilding of the entrance area to the Western Wall from the direction of Dung Gate.

Throughout this period, the dispute between the two government companies, the JQDC and the East Jerusalem Development Company, continued and finally came to court. In December 2013, the court decided that the East Jerusalem Development Company must vacate the property and transfer ownership of the JQDC. At the same time, the JQDC sued the East Jerusalem Development Company for rent arrears. The companies reached an agreement whereby the Elad Foundation would pay the debt to JQDC in return for operating the Davidson Center. In an agreement from 28.10.13 between Elad and the JQDC, it is stated that the Davidson Center is a “continuation” of the Silwan/City of David site “from a geographical, archaeological and tourism perspective”; and that Elad will run the center, collect entrance fees, pay for routine operations costs, and would develop the center in cooperation with the Israel Antiquities Authority.<sup>6</sup> At the time the agreement was signed, the East Jerusalem Development Company was headed by Naftali Bennett (currently Education Minister and formerly Minister of the Economy and the Minister for Jerusalem and the Diaspora), and the JQDC was directed by Uri Ariel (currently Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development and chairman of the “lobby for archaeology” in the Knesset, formerly Minister of Housing); both of whom belong to the Jewish Home faction.<sup>7</sup>

Once the agreement was publicized, serious criticism was voiced – including by Emek Shaveh – of the intention to place such a sensitive site in the hands of a private foundation–Elad. Also, the Reform and Conservative movements as well as “Women of the Wall” protested to the government that the agreement jeopardizes their ability to run prayer sites that are suitable for them. The State also appealed against the agreement and the court invalidated it. The fundamental reasons for this were:

- A. The court decided that the Elad Foundation does not hold any property rights at the Davidson Center and the Archaeological Park.
- B. The court learned that this is not a standard management agreement, such as the running of a food stand and cleaning services, but rather it is a deal that would hand control to Elad of the marketing of the site, guiding visitors, managing development and excavation projects, as well as enable Elad to use its logo in reference to the site, and more.

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6) Civil suite (Jerusalem) 60379-03-14: The State of Israel v. the Company for the Reconstruction and Development of the Jewish Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem Ltd (published in Nevo 8.9.14).

7) Nir Hasson, "Settler group Elad edges closer to controlling Western Wall, despite protests," *Haaretz*, 03.03.2014.

C. The court ruled that: “sites that carry unique archaeological and historic qualities, as well as cultural and religious significance must remain in the hands of a public authority, as a trustee of the public. The running of the site by a nonprofit organization cannot guarantee the principle according to which a sensitive and important place such as the one in question will retain ‘all-Israeli and all-Jewish features and not allow sectorial activities of any kind.’”<sup>8</sup>

Since this is an important antiquities site, which in the past had been developed and managed by the Israel Antiquities Authority, one wonders what is IAA’s position on this question?



Prayer podium in the Davidson Center

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8) Court Ruling: The State of Israel v. the Company for the Reconstruction and Development of the Jewish Quarter, 8.9.2014.





Bar Mitzva celebration in the Davidson Center

### **The Israel Antiquities Authority safeguards the Davidson Center from “religious” elements**

The IAA has on more than one occasion proudly taken credit for building the center and the Archaeological Park:

The Archaeological Park in Jerusalem was the Israel Antiquities Authority’s flagship project during the first decade of its existence...The Israel Antiquities Authority invested substantial sums of money in developing this impressive site to open it to the public and exhibit finds from the excavations. Also, the IAA built the Davidson Center for exhibition and simulation purposes [...]⁹

When the Women of the Wall campaigned to be given a place for prayer at the Western Wall, the Israel Antiquities Authority objected at first to allowing them to pray within the area of the Archaeological Park. Jon Seligman, then Jerusalem Regional Archaeologist wrote to the Women of the Wall in June 2010:

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9) *Dvar Avar*, The Israel Antiquities Authority publication Vol. 15, October 2010, p.17 (Hebrew).

Subject: Conference on the subject of the Western Wall plaza

I would like to note that the Israel Antiquities Authority set up the Archaeological Park in Jerusalem in order to balance the Western Wall experience for the public so that their experience of Jerusalem and the Western Wall would not be shaped by the interpretations of various religious organizations. The purpose of founding the park was to offer a secular, research-based perspective on the history of Jerusalem, and the Western Wall in particular, to the people of Israel of all backgrounds and to overseas tourists. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court has obliged us to agree to prayer in the area of the park when in fact we felt and still feel that this has become a *slippery slope whereby religious groups will take over the park piece by piece*. This has been manifested today in the discussion when a representative on behalf of the Conservative movement stated that in order to expand prayer in the park he is requesting to extend prayer times and enable free access to the park for the purposes of prayer and to set up permanent facilities for religious purposes. This undermines the Archaeological Park as a place where anyone can come to study about the Western Wall, without being subject to religious coercion or religious features. Unfortunately, I foresee that these demands by the Conservative movement will only increase in next few years.

In my opinion, safeguarding the archaeological park as the only *secular* site in the vicinity of the Western Wall is also part of your responsibility as a lobbying group for pluralism [...]

Sincerely,

Jon Seligman

Jerusalem Regional Archaeologist (document 1, our emphasis)

This is a fascinating letter, however the Davidson Center and the Archaeological Park never had a declared “secular” purpose; as far as we know, not one document that discusses the center mentions such a purpose. How then should we respond to the claim that the Israel Antiquities Authority is safeguarding the “secular and research-based” agenda for the Archaeological Park and the Davidson Center?

The Israel Antiquities Authority and the Davidson Center may be safeguarding the Archaeological Park from religious parties but in the past few years this has involved religious groups of a certain kind: the Reform and Conservative movements, and the Women of the Wall. Following the Supreme Court ruling from 2003, a temporary “floating” prayer podium was placed for the Women of the Wall above the Archaeological Park. At the point when there seemed to be an intention to expand the podium, the Israel Antiquities Authority expressed its objections. Senior representatives of the IAA and

other archaeologists protested strongly against the initiative by Chairman of the Jewish Agency, Natan Sharansky. The following is a quote from Jerusalem Regional Archaeologist Dr. Yuval Baruch:

“We are dooming the most important site in the state,” he said. “The Sharansky plan refers to 81 meters at the expense of the archaeological site. This is the only place from which we can view the stone courses of the Western Wall ... and the Herodian street, and from where it is possible to experience the events of the destruction. The Israel Antiquities Authority objects to the plan, and designating such an extensive area will attract criticism from the entire archaeological community.”<sup>10</sup>

If we read Baruch’s claims carefully we can conclude that the Western Wall, the Herodian street and the “events of the destruction” are what should be safeguarded, whereas a variety of other periods and the important artifacts associated with them are not even mentioned. The Women of Wall in fact supported the position that it is wrong to conduct any activities that could cause damage to the Archaeological Park. This was certainly not their intention.<sup>11</sup> Nothing came of the Sharansky plan, mainly because after it was publicized, the Supreme Court ruled that the Women of the Wall should be allowed to pray in the manner they wish within the Western Wall plaza itself.<sup>12</sup>

The position of the IAA is questionable as there was clearly no intention of “dooming” the Archaeological Park, but at most extending the prayer podium that is suspended over it, i.e. adding a level over the remains. How could the IAA object to this when during discussions about the construction of “Beit Haliba” for the Western Wall Heritage Foundation over the remains of the Roman Cardo and other remains, the IAA forcefully maintained that building a roof over the antiquities is an acceptable and excellent prospect! The roof, according to the IAA, protects the antiquities from decay, vandalism and litter. If it is acceptable to “bury” antiquities in the basement level of “Beit Haliba,” why not within the area of the Archaeological Park?

“Burying” antiquities in a basement level disconnects the remains from their surroundings and detracts from their educational value. It should only be resorted to when faced with no other choice. In the case of “Beit Haliba” the IAA endorsed the position of the entrepreneur, the Western Wall Heritage Foundation, which represents the mainstream Jewish (Orthodox) movement in the State of Israel. It would seem, therefore, that the

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10) Eric Bender, “Within less than a year – a plaza for joint prayers,” *Haaretz*, 7.5.2013 (Heb).

11) Bender, *ibid*; Nadav Shragai, “To whom does this Western Wall belong?”, *Yisrael Hayom*, 19.4.2013 (Heb).

12) Yehonatan Lis and Yair Etinger, “The women of the Wall retract,” *Haaretz*, 1.5.2013 (Heb).

issue at stake is not just religious: it is well known that the JQDC is well endowed with generous budgets and political power from which the IAA has benefitted considerably over the years.



Bar Mitzva celebration in the Davidson Center

## The Israel Antiquities Authority introduces the Elad Foundation to the Davidson Center through a sewage tunnel

The same pattern can be found in relation to the Elad Foundation, which channels many millions of shekels to the IAA for excavations in Silwan.<sup>13</sup> Elad has expanded its activities from Silwan to the area of the Archaeological Park with the encouragement of the IAA. For several years now, the IAA has been excavating in the Archaeological Park with funding from the Elad Foundation. The goal of the excavation is not archaeological, but rather touristic and political: to create a subterranean connection between the Elad site in Silwan and the area of the Western Wall along the route of an ancient sewage tunnel.<sup>14</sup> The Western Wall attracts millions of visitors a year. Even if only a small percentage of these were to arrive at the Western Wall through the tunnel at an extra cost paid to the Elad Foundation, this would suffice to fill its coffers. But this, ostensibly, is only a secondary goal. The political significance is much more important: to link these sites to one another in the public mind in order to blur the distinction between East and West Jerusalem. Most Israelis think of a visit to East Jerusalem as potentially frightening or dangerous, not as a tourist destination. But were they to arrive at the eastern city in subterranean tunnels and visit sealed and fenced-off sites “empty” of Palestinians, they could avoid experiencing Jerusalem’s divided reality.

The official website of the Israel Antiquities Authority includes several reports about sites that have been excavated or for which conservation work has been undertaken for the Elad Foundation. For example, the page discussing the “maintenance of conservation” in the City of David conducted for the Elad Foundation in the years 2010-2011, contains the following:

### Determining the significance of the site

...Here the Bible was sealed, the cultural-religious Book of Books of the Jewish People. Following 1967, with the development of archaeological research and the discovery of tangible finds which substantiate the scriptures, the ‘City of David’ became an important component in [building] the sense of a link between the present-day Israeli experience and the distant Biblical past.

The finds from excavations in ‘area G’ at the center of the site offer tangible evidence that the Babylonians destroyed the city in the year 586 BCE. This destruction and the destruction of the Second Temple were events that were

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13) Rafi Greenberg, "A Privatized Heritage: How the Israel Antiquities Authority relinquished Jerusalem's past," 2014, Emek Shaveh.

14) Nir Hasson, "Jerusalem's Time Tunnels," *Haaretz*, 24.4.2011; Yonathan Mizrahi, "From Silwan to the Temple Mount," 2012: pp.19, 23.

deeply imprinted in the collective memory of diaspora Jewry and were foundational events in the shaping of the nation in Israel. Signet rings were discovered in 'area G' and in the area of the 'visitors' center' [...] these finds link the present-day Israeli experience to the time of the Bible, and the Jewish people to Jerusalem.

### **The religious perspective**

1. Judaism – the site is associated with King David who unified the tribes of Israel, declared his seat in Jerusalem and crowned it the capital of the kingdom. The figure of King David has followed the people of Israel throughout history. He represents 'repentance',<sup>15</sup> the writing of the Book of Psalms and the purchasing of the 'Aravnah Granary,' the Temple Mount, on top of which the Temple was built.

2. Christianity – The Christians call the Bible the 'Old Testament.' They consider it scripture, and therefore any tangible connection to the Old Testament carries [for them] deep religious significance. According to the 'New Testament, Jesus was a descendant of the House of David [...]'<sup>16</sup>

In the above description of the site, no reference has been made to the Islamic, Byzantine and Roman periods with all their treasures, and the entire site is attributed to King David and the people of Israel.<sup>17</sup> The Jewish religious perspective is emphasized and the Christians are mentioned favorably. Yet in Islam too the Old Testament is important, as is the figure of King David (prophet, king, judge and more). Yet, Islam and finds from the Islamic period are not mentioned at all in this text.

The conservation department at the Israel Antiquities Authority has taken a text written by the Elad Foundation, or based on Elad's ideology, ignoring the fact that this is a piece of propaganda, not a scientific text. Could it be that no one within the Israel Antiquities Authority noticed this? By presenting a text like this on the official website, the IAA blurs the boundaries between a private foundation and a government agency, between propaganda and science.

Ostensibly the excavations in the sewage tunnel have been completed, as the IAA stated, in January 2011; yet northward excavations continue. In an internal document from 2012 former Director General of the IAA, Shuka Dorfman, said that the Authority will

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15) David's repentance for his sin with Batseba, 2 Samuel 12.

16) [http://www.iaa-conservation.org.il/Projects\\_Item\\_heb.asp?subject\\_id=10&site\\_id=3&id=127](http://www.iaa-conservation.org.il/Projects_Item_heb.asp?subject_id=10&site_id=3&id=127)

17) See: "Another Future: Conservation of Antiquities Sites - Suggestions towards a Partial Solution of Jerusalem's Political Problems," Emek Shaveh, November 2013.



transfer responsibility for the tunnel from one foundation to another:

The sewage tunnel

Yuval Baruch: The issue is attended to by the Western Wall Rabbi.

Suli Eliav [Director General of the Western Wall Heritage Foundation]: We will excavate there.

Shuka Dorfman: The “baton must be passed on” to the Western Wall Heritage Foundation.

Decision: It is the responsibility of the Western Wall Heritage Foundation to initiate a meeting with David Be’eri [Director General of the Elad Foundation] and Yuval Baruch (document 1).

Elad had already succeeded in creating a link with the Archaeological Park; the rest of the route, underneath the Mughrabi Gate towards the Western Wall tunnels, would now be funded by the Western Wall Heritage Foundation. The Foundation, for its part, is interested in making that link.

Yuval Baruch: We completed the excavation in Elad Foundation’s area. The question is what do we do now.

Suli Eliav: Tender a plan. We support continuing the excavation along the current route. It is important to us that it will link up with the Western Wall tunnels.

Yuval Baruch: We are removing the soil out from the Givati Parking Lot. Everything is in place. *It is possible to continue excavating* in a south-north direction [...]

Suli Eliav: We are interested in a physical connection to the [Western Wall] tunnels (document 3, our emphasis).

The Elad Foundation’s “area,” according to the IAA, has already reached the Archaeological Park. With the excavation completed, it was time to begin conservation and development and Elad was paying for this. But the documents suggest that in addition Elad continued to make substantial payments to the IAA for excavating the sewage tunnel in May 2013. For this particular section the sum of 335,468 NIS was mentioned (document 4). The documents show that the IAA is on very familiar terms with Elad, as can be concluded from the following minutes from a meeting in February 2012:

Yuval Baruch: The Elad Foundation signed an agreement with Arie Rahami-moff, to hire him as the architect of the sewage tunnel project stretching from Hezekiah’s Pool to the Mughrabi Bridge [...]

Raanan Kislev (Head of conservation at the IAA): As of today, architectural

planning should be discussed with the Elad Foundation [...] and it is necessary to take an operative decision on how to begin the work. Now we must now complete planning for the whole length of the tunnel [...]

Shuka Dorfman summed up the discussion:

2. The Israel Antiquities Authority is not replacing Elad in managing [the site], but it bears a responsibility as the organization that excavated the site (document 5).

According to Dorfman, it appears that the landlord is Elad and the IAA is the subcontractor, even though the funding for the Davidson Center was secured by the IAA. Dorfman's position is supported by Uzi Dahari, Deputy Director General of the IAA:

To tell you that I like the fact that the Elad Foundation is funding the project [at the Givati Parking Lot]? No, I do not. But Elad is like *any other entrepreneur, it is the landlord* and the excavation is a scientific excavation [...] we do not involve ourselves in politics.<sup>18</sup>

The IAA documents that we have obtained do not offer any vision. We have found hardly any documents that discuss a larger idea that would give direction to the IAA's activities. There have been no discussions about the educational, scientific or ideological content that would be offered at the site once the excavation and conservation works are completed. In a meeting from April 2012, only representatives of the entrepreneur mention content:

Rafi Ben Basat [formerly operations officer for the Yesha Council and Deputy Chairman of the Binyamin Council]: We should choose an architect who will plan the tunnel and its environs [...] Arie Rahamimoff, [...]

Yehuda Mali [one of the heads of Elad]: Now we must think about adding content and what would be the experience of the visitor in the tunnel" (document 6).

The developer is interested in content that would serve its ideology. It is easy to guess what the content and the visitor's experience would look like. The IAA website had a link to a publicity film about the sewage tunnel, starring an archaeologist who worked for the IAA at that time, Eli Shukrun:

"I am now ascending the first step on my way to the Temple," says Shukrun in the film who directed the excavations together with Dr. Ronny Reich. "From here they began to ascend the Temple, very slowly. One doesn't run to the

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18) Nir Hasson, "Jerusalem's Time Tunnels," *Haaretz*, 24.4.2011, our emphasis.

Temple, one walks very slowly. I feel a great deal of excitement because this is the first time I can actually touch the destruction.”<sup>19</sup>

No one approached the Temple through a sewage tunnel, but the significance is clear: This is where the ascension to the Temple Mount begins, in the present tense. This is not the language of the distant past. Perhaps these are now only a few voices within the IAA, but they appeal to a growing messianic national-religious public.

## **The Israel Antiquities Authority and Elad in one tunnel, along the Western Wall**

The sewage tunnel was only the beginning. In a much more crude alliance the IAA and Elad are excavating together alongside the southern part of the Western Wall (see attached map). The aims of this excavation, begun in early 2011, are not clear. The intention, as far as we can understand, is to excavate alongside the Wall – that is, to simply expose the bottom layers of the Western Wall. The IAA has handed to Emek Shaveh almost no documentation regarding this excavation. In the first published report, the excavators (Shukron and Reich) did not mention the developer.<sup>20</sup> The developer is, of course, the Elad Foundation. The excavation lasted from December 2013 to March 2014.<sup>21</sup>

These works were defined as “salvage excavations” – but these were not salvage excavations, as there is no intention of building in this area or developing it in any way. No urgent reason exists for excavating this section, as it is not facing destruction of any kind. These are planned excavations of a very particular kind. According to the documents, the entrepreneur at this time was the Israel Antiquities Authority:

Shuka [Dorfman] hello,

The following is my opinion regarding *your request* to complete the excavation work along the base of the Western Wall to its southwestern corner:

1. The excavations are possible from an engineering point of view, and carry considerable scientific interest: they entail exposing an entire corner of the Temple Mount foundation, at the point where clearly the construction of the Western Wall had begun progressing northward. It is also an opportunity to consider an excavation *alongside some part of the southern wall*, but this is a

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19) Idem.

20) Eli Shukron and Ronny Reich, *Archaeological News* 123, 2011.

21) Excavation permits 6971, 7016; Moran Hagbi and Joseph Uzziel, “Jerusalem, the Old City, the Western Wall foundations,” *Archaeological News* 127, 2014.

matter for a more serious conversation.

2. In my opinion it is possible to complete the works within two months
3. It would be most appropriate if Eli Shukron completed the work [...]

Yuval [Baruch]

(document 7, 11.9.2013, our emphasis)

Based on these documents it appears that the Elad Foundation did not impose the excavations along the southern part of the Western Wall upon the IAA, nor did it initiate these works. The IAA itself initiated these works, yet in practice, the excavations promote the political aims of the Elad Foundation. After the excavation is completed, guides on behalf of Elad will be free to educate visitors at the excavation site according to their world view, if Elad would become “the landlord” over this part of the Western Wall as well.

These “salvage excavations” conducted by the IAA and the Elad Foundation along the base of the Western Wall are, in our opinion, a grave matter from a professional point of view, because they involve using an excavation technique of digging in tunnels– despite the fact that no one has forced the IAA to use this inappropriate method here. Since it is agreed by everyone that this is an archaeological site of great importance, the site ought to be excavated by leading researchers in the field with a proven reputation and a record in publishing final excavation reports. The scientific approach to archaeological excavations is working top to bottom using a stratigraphic method, i.e. distinguishing between the various layers in a controlled methodical manner, slowly and meticulously. If important remains are found on the surface area, there are technologies available to document, dismantle and reconstruct these ruins after the completion of the excavations.

Yet the IAA breached a side tunnel, and conducted the excavation in an unscientific and destructive manner. Two pages (document 8) define the guidelines laid out by the conservation engineer, Ofer Cohen, for this excavation which he sent on 17.12.2013 to Yuval Baruch and representatives of Elad (similar guidelines were given by the same conservation engineer a year earlier for another section of the same tunnel, but these were not handed over to us). This is not so much an archaeological dig as it is a construction job. It includes breaching, quarrying, and the building of a massive construction: steel pillars, steel legs, steel bins, forging, filling with sand bags or construction material, cement grout, etc. Although the excavation is taking place alongside the Western Wall, the conservation engineer writes upon the guidelines, “City of David.” We do not know why this is the case. Perhaps he is just updating plans for tunnels that were breached previously for Elad in Silwan; or, perhaps, from his point of view, as is the case with Elad, Silwan and the Western Wall are one and the same (document 8, p.2).



Tunnel underneath the Western Wall



The road and the exit of the tunnel in the Davidson Center





Tunnel underneath the Davidson Center



Western Wall stones in the Davidson Center



In response to claims that they are conducting the works in the sewage tunnel in a manner that is unscientific and destructive, the IAA and Elad have a partial explanation. They claim that they have merely cleared soil and rockslide from a tunnel carved in ancient times, and hence did not cut through archaeological finds on the way. This claim is only partially correct: while it is true that the tunnel had already cut through remains from previous periods, it is possible that remains from later periods were placed within it, during periods when the tunnel was no longer in use. Anyone who excavates in tunnels is bound to cut through and destroy such remains (whereas a top-down excavation would have uncovered these and made it possible to document them properly).

However, there is no sewage tunnel that follows the lower sections of the Western Wall! The IAA breached towards the Western Wall in two tunnels that had been previously excavated by Charles Warren in the 19th Century<sup>22</sup>; but then they turned sideways and breached a new tunnel alongside the Western Wall.<sup>23</sup> This, in our opinion, is not an acceptable archaeological excavation but rather a harmful dig that destroys all the layers of soil, structures and ruins along the way. It involves, in the first place, introducing steel construction that in itself fractures and destroys antiquities. Afterwards, when excavating from the side, the fill is extracted leaving no possibility for examining and properly documenting the layers and clusters finds. This, in our opinion, is not archaeology. This is a destruction of archaeology.

## **Ideology and money**

In a discussion by the Jerusalem Planning and Building Committee in October 2010 over “Beit Haliba” Yuval Baruch explained the importance of financial resources for achieving scientific truth:

It is true that the academic issues were not illuminated during the excavations from that period [of the Cardo in the Jewish Quarter in the 1970s] in the same way as they are today. The “materia” [meaning archaeological excavation methods], the archaeologists are more accurate, and moreover, the resources that the [the Western Wall Heritage] Foundation have made available to science [i.e. to the IAA] in this case, are significantly better than what is given to other organizations and Yoram [Tsafrir] can testify, as one of the senior

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22) Wilson, C. 1865, *Ordnance Survey of Jerusalem*, London: p. 75; Warren, C. and Conder, C.R., 1884, *Survey of Western Palestine*: p. 178.

23) See Eli Shukron and Ronny Reich, 2012 “Excavations near the Robinson Arch 2011”, *New Studies on Jerusalem* 17: 219-228. On p.22 they write “Our excavation linked up these two tunnels alongside the Western Wall – and created in fact a new tunnel 2 meters wide and 3.5 meters high.”

archaeologists in the country, how important resources are *for arriving at the scientific truth. And it is important that we all remember this.* But this is not what drives us, *God forbid.*<sup>24</sup>

The abovementioned statement by Mr. Baruch tells us that there is an absolute scientific truth and that it can be arrived at only with the help a lot of money. It is our opinion that the excavation methods used during the 1970s were significantly better than today's method of excavating in tunnels. Digging in tunnels was never an acceptable archaeological "material," not even in the 19th century.

This is how committee members responded to Mr. Baruch's comments:

Mr Yishai Talor [representative of the Transport Ministry at the committee]: But what? In the area of [Beit] Haliba, the moment that money was given to them they excavated, and I say this to their credit, because they do excavate, and I know the Israel Antiquities Authority. We work with them often. Once you give them a large budget, then you can always reach compromises, and Yuval said this as a slip of the tongue – and we noticed this – Shaked, Avi and I – and I imagine that others also noticed this.

Mr Avraham Shaked [the coordinator of nature preservation in the Judean Hills at the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, representative of environmental organizations in the committee]: I kept silent.

Mr Yishai Talor: You were silent, but I noticed it. He said: Look they let us dig and will let us dig with big sums of money, and who gave it? The Western Wall Heritage Foundation so that they will dig.<sup>25</sup>

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24) Jerusalem Regional Planning and Building Committee, plenum meeting 2010013, 26.10.2010 p.95 (our emphasis).

25) Jerusalem Regional Planning and Building committee, session 2010013 (see footnote #21), p.114; (our emphasis).

## Additional projects – all of the remains are “ours”

The Elad Foundation’s sewage tunnel and Elad’s excavations along the base of the Western Wall are not the only projects conducted by the IAA in the vicinity of the Archaeological Park in recent years. In 2011-2012 conservation works were conducted along the “trail of ritual baths” to the south of the Temple Mount, in the Ofel area. This trail only emphasizes the remains associated with “Jewish” periods, despite the fact that the area contains many remains from other periods such as the Hellenistic period, late Roman period, Byzantine (buildings and a wall) the Umayyad period (administration buildings, one of which was identified by Benjamin Mazar as a palace), the Fatimid period (remains of a wall above the Byzantine wall), and the Middle Ages (a massive tower which blocked most of the Hulda gates). To the east the “site of the of the Ofel walls” has opened to the public and displays remains from the First Temple Period (Iron Age), while ignoring remains from other periods. In addition, excavations and conservation works have begun around the cemetery Bab a-Rahma, and there too the aim will most probably be to uncover and emphasize Jewish remains.<sup>26</sup> In September 2012 the IAA made a statement regarding the discovery of a water hole in the Ofel from the period of the Kingdom of Judea, despite the fact that the find cannot be dated with complete certainty.<sup>27</sup>

## Conclusion

In the archaeology of tunnels in East Jerusalem double standards are the norm. What is considered excellent roofing (in the case of “Beit Haliba”) wreaks actual devastation (in the case of the Archaeological Park). The Elad Foundation has a hold over the subterranean layers (in the Davidson Center and along the Western Wall), but the residents of the Muslim Quarter do not have any say over the ground underneath the floors of their private homes.

When the agreement to transfer management of the Archeological Park and the Davidson Center to Elad was publicized and then discussed in court, the IAA’s voice was not heard in public. This silence has aided Elad’s cause. Theoretical statements about objectivity and scientific truth are meaningless because in fact the activities of the IAA in East Jerusalem are promoting the interests of extremist nationalist organizations. The cooperation between the Israel Antiquities Authority and the settlers’ founda-

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26) Yonathan Mizrachi, “From Silwan to the Temple Mount: Archaeological excavations as a means of control in the village of Silwan and in Jerusalem’s Old City,” *Emek Shaveh*, 2012, pp.17-21.

27) Yonathan Mizrachi, “Remaking the City: Archaeological Projects of Political Import in Jerusalem’s Old City and the village of Silwan,” *Emek Shaveh*, 2013, p.15.

tions, first and foremost among them the Elad Foundation, is granting the one-sided nationalist narrative legitimacy even at the Davidson Center. Moreover, this cooperation strengthens the Elad Foundation in the process of taking over sites of historic and archaeological significance in Jerusalem's historic basin and allows it to edge closer to the most sensitive site in the area – the Temple Mount, as well as to the most important site for the Jewish people – the Western Wall.

In our opinion it is important that the Davidson Center, like all the other archaeological sites in Jerusalem, exhibit the beautiful remains that were discovered in this city – through all its periods and from all cultures.



The Ophel excavations from southwest

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