

# Historic Jerusalem

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## Challenges and Proposals for Interim Steps

### Introduction

This document deals with the central role of archaeology and tourism in reshaping the identity of Jerusalem's Historic Basin, and the implications for future negotiations over sovereignty. **In the past 15 years, excavation, conservation and development works in Jerusalem's historic sites have become a central feature of the settlement project in the Historic Basin.** This process is facilitated by a tightening cooperation between the right-wing settler movement and the Government of Israel. It has evolved as a strategy intended to compliment the "traditional" and familiar patterns of the settlement enterprise in the Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, such as the seizure of houses and the settling of ideological settlers in residential areas in Silwan and the Old City. Emek Shaveh<sup>1</sup> has addressed the role of cultural heritage and archaeological sites in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and monitored developments in this arena over the last decade. The changes to the management of archaeological sites and heritage policy weaken the chances that Jerusalem could become the capital city of two states – Israel and Palestine – and are detrimental to the preservation of Jerusalem's multicultural heritage.

This document focuses on a geographical area of 3 square kilometers comprising the heart of the city and of the conflict. The area, known as the 'Historic Basin', contains many of the historic and holy sites to Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.

### Jerusalem First

This paper proposes several measures to mitigate against the pace of unilateral development in Jerusalem and create a foundation conducive to a future political resolution. These operative proposals are based on the recognition that agreements must be reached between Israel and the Palestinians on the preservation, development and presentation of sites in historic Jerusalem, that the pluralistic identity of the city must be protected, and the historical connection of all national and religious communities safeguarded.

### The Borders of Jerusalem

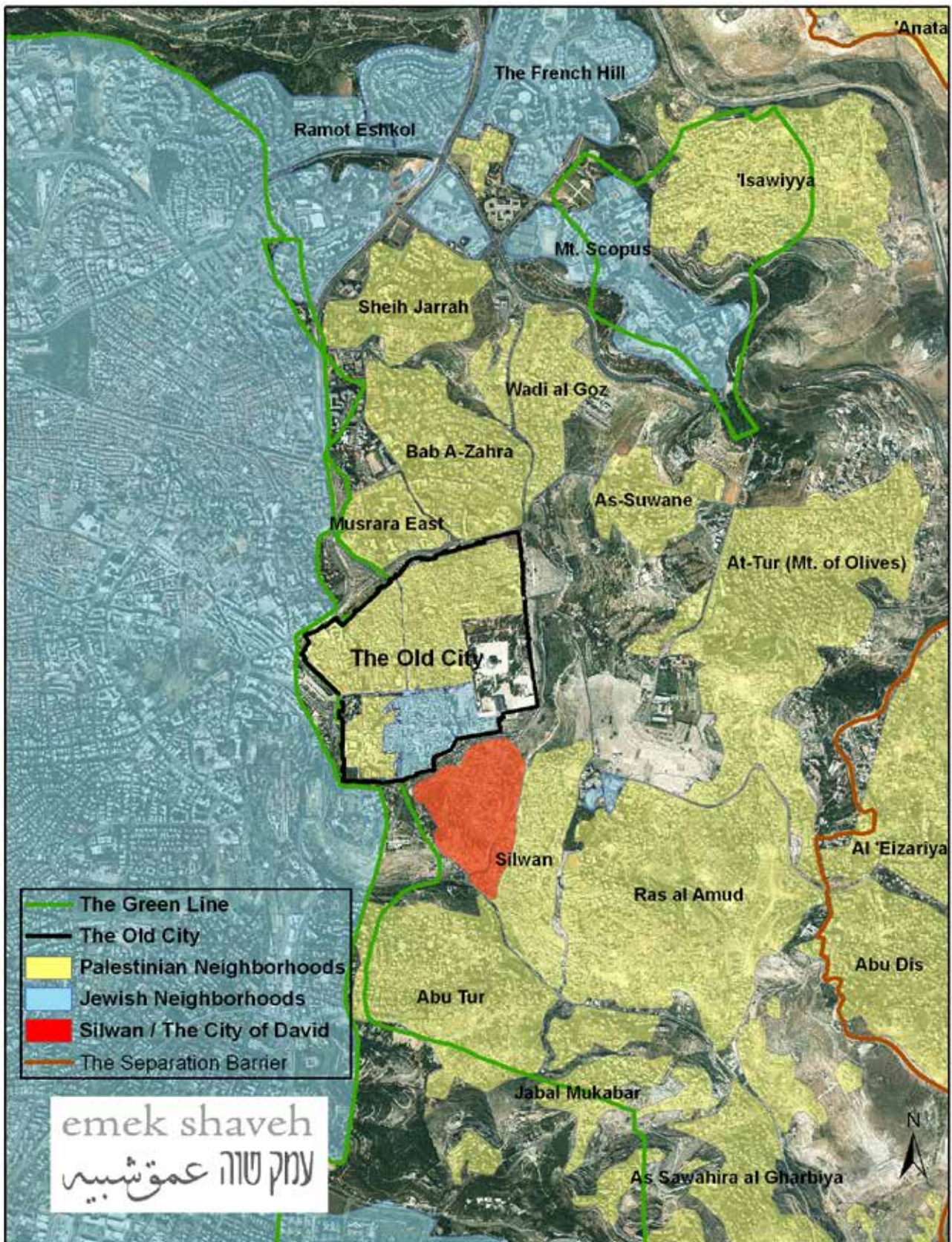
The municipal territory of Jerusalem was determined by the State of Israel in 1967 following the Six-Day war. During the British Mandate period, the city constituted some 40 square kilometers but was extended to 110 square kilometers after Israel annexed East Jerusalem. In 2003, the city's municipal area was expanded to 126 square kilometers. Today, Jerusalem extends from Bethlehem in the south to Ramallah in the north, while its eastern borders are the villages of Abu Dis and Al Azaria. The area of Jerusalem is twice the size of the city of Haifa and 2.5 times larger than that of Tel Aviv.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Emek Shaveh is an Israeli NGO working to defend cultural heritage rights and to protect ancient sites as public assets that belong to members of all communities, faiths and peoples. We object to the fact that the ruins of the past have become a political tool in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and believe that heritage sites can and should be used to promote values of pluralism and foster tolerance.

2. Jerusalem Municipality Website, Budget Book, b. [Jurisdiction](#) [Hebrew].

Despite the fact that the city encompasses a vast area, the dispute between the Israelis and the Palestinians concerns mainly an area of 3 square kilometers, which includes the Old City and the surrounding belt, with its historic and religious sites. The Historic/Holy Basin of Jerusalem is not a geographical or statutory term but refers to the city within its ancient boundaries and includes the central holy sites. Its borders are the Mount of Olives to the east, the village of Silwan, Mount Zion and the Ben Hinnom Valley to the south, Mamillah Cemetery in West Jerusalem, and a narrow strip north of the Old City.



## The Holy Sites

The majority of the sites in the Historic Basin are sacred to more than one religion and some are sacred to the three monotheistic faiths – Judaism, Islam and Christianity. The most famous are the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, sacred to Jews and Muslims, and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, sacred to Christians and divided among the various Christian denominations. In addition, there are many holy sites of historical importance such as caves, springs and other water sources, trails, summits and valleys, sites where churches, mosques or Jewish prayer sites have been built over the years. In some instances, a church and a mosque are built side by side. Over Jerusalem's long history, a pattern emerged whereby those in power frequently drove out faith communities who were not identified with the ruling authorities.

The focal point of the national-religious conflict in Jerusalem is the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, a 140-dunam compound in the southeastern corner of the Old City. Today, the compound is used for prayer and religious studies, and it houses some of the oldest religious structures in the region. Muslim tradition identifies the place as the “furthest mosque,” mentioned in the Quran at the beginning of Sura 17:

“Glory to Him who journeyed His servant by night, from the Sacred Mosque, to the Furthest Mosque [al-Masjid al-Haram to al-Masjid al-Aqsa], whose precincts We have blessed, in order to show him of Our wonders. He is the Listener, the Beholder.”

This is a description of the legendary journey of the Prophet Muhammad on the back of his horse al-Buraq from Mecca to al-Aqsa mosque, whence the Prophet ascended to heaven. Both Judaism and Islam identify the Dome of the Rock as the site of the binding (of Isaac – according to Judaism, of Ishmael – according to Islam) and the place of creation (“the Foundation Stone”).

The complex is identified as the location of the Jewish Temple, which was destroyed in 70 CE. The Temple Mount is the holiest site in the Jewish tradition. The most obvious evidence for the identification of the complex with the Second Temple is the extant section of the Western Wall, which dates to the end of the first century BCE or the beginning of the first century CE. This is one of the retaining walls of the Temple plaza. Archaeological excavations to the south of the Temple Mount and to its west revealed remains of capitals, stone carvings, and inscriptions, attesting to the importance of the site in the Early Roman/Second Temple period. The archaeological finds from these excavations, including the stone with the inscription “beit ha-teki'ah lehach[riz]” (“The Trumpeting Place”) reinforce the tradition that views the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif as the site of the Second Temple.<sup>3</sup>

Over the course of history, the Western Wall became holy to Jews, as the only accessible relic of the Second Temple complex, due to a 2,000-year-old rabbinic prohibition on ascending the Temple Mount itself. The proliferation of excavated sites around the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif and the Western Wall has given rise to a process of sanctification of newly excavated spaces. An example is the transformation of a chamber from the Crusader/ Mamluk period into an underground synagogue. In the Western Wall tunnels, prayers are held in the place identified as closest to the Holy of Holies – the holiest place during the Temple period. The proliferation of places of worship and the growing attribution of holiness to historic sites is contributing to the Judaization of the area surrounding the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif and impacts the struggle over sovereignty in the Historic Basin.

## The Status Quo

The religious and security discourses around the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif focus on maintaining the ‘status quo’, a concept that has changed over time in relation to the agenda of the governing authorities. Most of the agreements during the Ottoman period related to Christian holy sites, particularly the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. During the British Mandate in the first half of the 20th century, the British also attempted to promote a religious status quo and established

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3. Mizrachi, Y. [The Temple Mount/ Haram al-Sharif – Archaeology in a Political Context](#), Emek Shaveh, 2017.

a list of holy sites in Jerusalem. The British also passed regulations concerning access, prayer, and the preservation of holy places, and banned, for example, the placing of benches and partitions at the Wailing Wall by Jewish worshipers.

**Israel has upheld the authority of the Islamic Waqf, an Islamic religious endowment overseen by the Jordanian government, over the Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount since it occupied the Old City in 1967. Yet Israel, as the self-proclaimed sovereign over the area, controls access to the esplanade and security. This arrangement has given rise to many perceived infringements of the status quo by all parties.** In the 1990s for example, the Waqf transformed subterranean areas into a mosque, and in the process caused massive destruction to antiquities. In recent years Israel has periodically limited access by Muslims to the Haram, in clear violation of the status quo. In the public discourse the prohibition on Jewish prayer on the esplanade has become a cause célèbre for several prominent politicians in the ruling Likud Party and its Jewish Home coalition partner and has led to an increased presence of settlers and Israeli security forces on the esplanade. But while the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif is clearly the most sensitive site in the Historic Basin, **it is a mistake to perceive the esplanade in isolation from its surrounding environment, and to limit the discourse on maintaining the status quo to the esplanade itself. Israeli activity aimed at transforming the area surrounding the esplanade –whether through archaeological excavations or development of sites curated to highlight the periods associated with Jewish, history impacts the dynamics on the esplanade itself.** Since 1967, extensive changes in the area surrounding the Mount have isolated the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif from its environment creating a discrepancy between the cultural-historical characteristics of the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif and that of its immediate environment, a process which has contributed to the instability of the status quo. Among the government actions taken over the years is the destruction of the Mughrabi neighborhood in 1967, the prohibition of burial in the Muslim cemetery in Bab el-Rahma<sup>4</sup>, east of the compound, and the archaeological excavations and development of sites to the south, west and north of the compound creating a belt of archaeological-tourist experiences prominently featuring a narrative of Jewish belonging.<sup>5</sup>

## Historic Sites of National Significance

**One site which has been gaining prominence over the last two decades as a place of Jewish-Israeli national significance is the City of David situated outside the Old City walls in the neighborhood of Silwan.** This site, which includes archaeological remains from the beginning of Jerusalem's history, is presented as the city of King David, the first capital of the Jewish people, and as one of the most important sites of national significance in the country. The site has been managed since 2002 by the Elad Foundation, a right-wing NGO devoted to settling Jews in the Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan. The speed of development of the City of David site through archaeological excavations and the transformation of the antiquities into tourist attractions is unprecedented in Israel. Today, the City of David Archaeological Park is the Elad Foundation's flagship project and one of the most popular sites for the Jewish-Israeli public. It receives the full backing of the Israeli government which channels millions of shekels a year to the park and features it prominently in educational programs for schools and the military. It is transforming the neighborhood of Silwan into a place with a strong Jewish-Israeli identity and a justification for the indivisibility of Jerusalem.

## Key Authorities and Organizations Operating in the Historic Basin

### The Elad Foundation

A private foundation established in the late 1980s with a mission to take over homes of Palestinian residents in Silwan and settle them with Jews. In the early years, the Foundation was seen by the public and by politicians (including many on the right) as a dangerous fringe group. Subsequently, Elad began pursuing archaeological excavations and ventured into tourism and in 2002, it assumed

4. Emek Shaveh, [The Nature and Parks Authority has Resumed Fencing the Muslim Cemetery Bab el Rahmeh east of the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif](#), 2 September, 2015

5. Mizrahi, Y. [The Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif – Archaeology in a Political Context](#), Emek Shaveh, 2017.

management of the City of David Archaeological Park. Since then, Elad has extensively excavated and developed the site with a budget of millions of shekels a year derived from private donors and government allocations. Elad has curated the City of David site in a narrow and tangential manner, emphasizing the story of King David, distorting the significance of the archaeological finds, and ignoring multiple periods embodied in the site.

### **The Israel Antiquities Authority**

A governmental body responsible for excavating, researching, protecting, and the conservation of antiquity sites in Israel. The Antiquities Authority is also responsible for antiquities in East Jerusalem. Any construction work, excavation, development or renovation in the Historic Basin and in the Old City in particular requires the approval of the Israel Antiquities Authority. The current Director General of the Israel Antiquities Authority is Yisrael Hasson.

### **The Nature and Parks Authority (INPA)**

A government authority responsible for declaring and protecting national parks and nature reserves. The area surrounding the Old City—which includes the City of David site and the village of Silwan, the Ben Hinnom Valley and sections of the western part of the city—is defined as the ‘Jerusalem Walls National Park’. Any construction work, agricultural work, or development in the area of the national park requires the approval of the INPA. In 2002, the INPA transferred the management of the City of David National Park to the Elad Foundation. Since then it has been involved in the Foundations’s development plans. The head of the INPA is Shaul Goldstein.

### **The Jerusalem Municipality**

Most of the development projects in the Historic Basin come under the auspices of government bodies. With the exception of the municipality’s services for the city’s residents, it exerts most of its influence through the Jerusalem Development Authority (JDA), a municipal–government company that receives hundreds of millions of shekels for the development of East and West Jerusalem.

### **The Jerusalem Development Authority (JDA)**

A statutory corporation, 66% government controlled and 33% under municipal auspices, under the jurisdictions of the Minister for Jerusalem Affairs and the Jerusalem Municipality. Most of the development work in the Historic Basin is funded or promoted by the JDA. Its current flagship project is the cable car, which is slated to transport visitors from West Jerusalem to Silwan. The JDA is also responsible for culture and entertainment in the Old City basin.

### **The Ministry of Jerusalem and Heritage**

The current minister is Ze’ev Elkin, whose authority is primarily channeled through the JDA which funds projects in East and West Jerusalem.

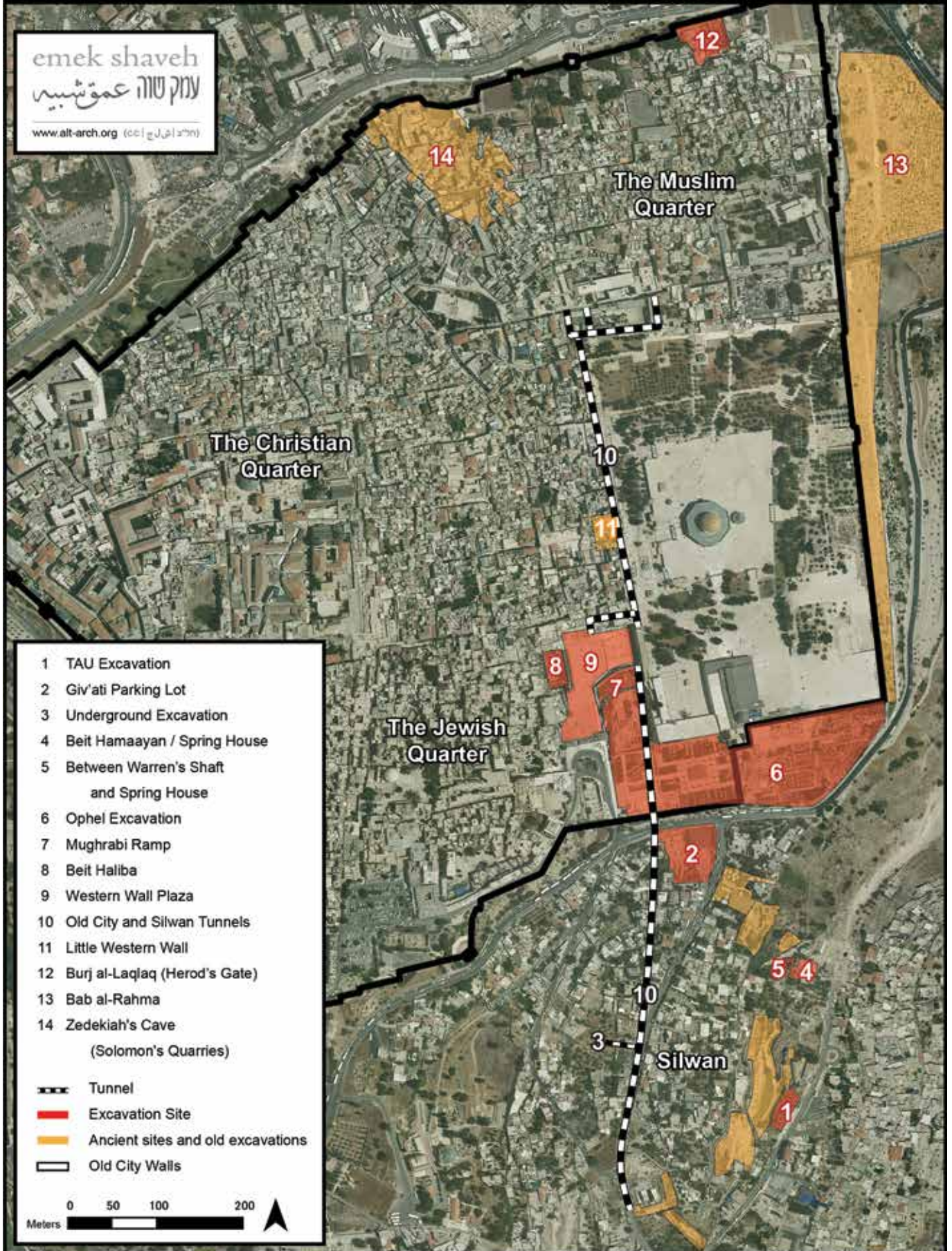
### **The Western Wall Heritage Foundation**

A governmental foundation responsible for the Western Wall Plaza and the Western Wall Tunnels. The foundation finances the excavation of the tunnels from the Western Wall Plaza northward, beneath the Muslim Quarter. The operation of the Western Wall Tunnels as a tourist site is a source of income and publicity for the foundation. Approximately about 700,000 people visit the tunnels annually.

### **The Islamic Waqf**

The body responsible for the Muslim holy sites including the Temple Mount / Haram al-Sharif. The Islamic Waqf has extensive property in the Old City, including shops, houses, and schools.

# Main Archaeological Sites in Jerusalem's Historical Basin



## Activities in the Historic Basin

Israeli activity in the Historic Basin can be divided into three main categories: 1. Archaeological projects in the area surrounding the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, including the excavation of tunnels underneath the Muslim Quarter, construction in the Western Wall Plaza, and the development of the Davidson Center site south of the Mount; 2. Widespread archaeological-tourism-settlement activity in Silwan, a neighborhood to the south of the Old City. This site is known to most Israelis as the 'City of David' and is managed by the Elad Foundation. Along with ongoing efforts to expand the settlement in Silwan above and below ground, the Elad Foundation, in cooperation with the Israeli authorities, is involved in developing touristic and commercial centers, including 3D audio-visual displays that simulate periods of history associated almost exclusively with a Jewish national narrative. Over the years, the Elad Foundation developed the park to the detriment of the local Palestinians residents who saw areas which were once open spaces closed off to them and appended to the park, endured ceaseless excavations in tunnels beneath their homes, and are now facing the prospect of having a cable car station situated in their neighborhood. 3. Along with the archaeological-tourism, Elad continues to buy houses and take over additional areas in the village.

**The settlement activities in the Historic Basin are part of the larger picture of settlement in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.** However, in contrast to the "traditional" settlement pattern of taking over and purchasing houses and land, the settlement in the Historic Basin takes on the form of extensive archaeological excavations. These excavations, mainly in the Old City and the village of Silwan, are driven by a nationalist agenda altering the identity of the city above and below ground.

**The vast majority of the excavations are carried out by the Israel Antiquities Authority.** The excavations are funded by settler groups or the State. The official goal of the excavations is the development of sites for tourism, but they impact the geo-political landscape in significant ways. In addition to excavations carried out in the open areas, for example in the area known as the Givati Parking Lot across from the Old City Wall, the various underground tunnels some of which are currently in the process of being excavated are approximately two kilometers long in total, extending from Silwan, along the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, reaching the Via Dolorosa in the Muslim Quarter.<sup>6</sup>

## Major Projects in Historic Jerusalem

### The Shalem Plan

A government decision from 2017 to create a large continuum of archaeological tourist sites above and below ground from Silwan to the Old City, united by a narrative foregrounding the historical bonds connecting the Jewish people to Jerusalem. The route will be insulated from the contemporary Palestinian environment in which it is situated. In 2018 the government allocated almost NIS 50 million to archaeological excavations in Silwan/City of David, an unprecedented budget for excavations.<sup>7</sup>

### The Kedem Center

A 15,000 sqm. visitors' center, with a Bible Museum at its center. It will be built at the Givati Parking Lot on top of the archaeological site, and will completely transform the area between the Old City walls and the entrance to Silwan.<sup>8</sup>

### The Cable Car

A transport route from West Jerusalem to Silwan, the cable car will be suspended on a line that crosses the Ben Hinnom Valley and the residential neighborhood of Silwan with a station at the Kedem Center at the entrance to the neighborhood. More than a transport solution, the cable car will consolidate Israel's political and economic control in the area and contribute to the ambitious plans to draw more tourists to the Historic Basin.<sup>9</sup>

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6. Emek Shaveh, [The excavation of tunnels, channels, and underground spaces in the Historic Basin](#), 2013.

7. Emek Shaveh, [The Israeli government approved a record amount for archaeological excavations in Silwan](#), May 13, 2018.

8. Ettinger, Yair, [Israeli Agency OKs Right-wing NGO's Plans to Build Large Visitors' Center in East Jerusalem](#), Haaretz, April 24, 2016.

9. Emek Shaveh, [The Cable Car to Jerusalem's Old City: Who Gains and Who Loses?](#), January 2018.





## The Clash of Narratives and the Role of Archaeology

In the political struggle over Jerusalem, the historical narratives of the Israelis and Palestinians are extremely significant. According to Jewish tradition, Jerusalem was the capital of the Kingdom of David 3,000 years ago, was the site of the First and Second Temples, and for thousands of years has been considered the heart of Jewish identity. According to Muslim tradition, al-Aqsa (the furthest mosque) is the place whence Muhammad ascended to heaven accompanied by the angel Gabriel. This tradition renders Jerusalem as one of the holiest cities in Islam. For Christians, Jerusalem is sacred because of the events of Jesus' life. Palestinians view Jerusalem as the heart of Palestine, while the Israelis who occupied East Jerusalem in 1967 saw the conquest as historical justice and a return to the city after 2000 years of exile.

The first archaeologists who excavated in Jerusalem were men of faith driven by their beliefs to expose the biblical city. British archaeologist Charles Warren, who excavated vertical shafts near the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif and Silwan in the mid-19th century, was followed by French, American, British and other archaeologists who viewed archaeology as a means of exposing the 'real' Jerusalem. On the other hand, the Palestinians have always referred to Western research as an imperialist endeavor aimed at undermining the Islamic presence in Al-Quds and al-Haram al-Sharif.<sup>11</sup> Since the occupation of the Historic Basin by Israel in 1967, archaeology has assumed a significant role in the shaping of a Jewish-Israeli identity for the city. One of the greatest scholars at the time, Michael Avi-Yonah, claimed that the conquest/liberation of Jerusalem was an opportunity to prove the historical connection of the Jewish people to the city.<sup>12</sup> Since the mid-1990s, archaeological activity has become the main strategy for consolidating Israel's sovereignty over the Historic Basin. The first to identify the potential for using archaeology in this way was the Elad Foundation who hitherto focused on settling Jews in the village of Silwan. With millions of shekels of private donations and government support, Elad strives to promote the story of King David and the narrative of return to the birthplace of the Jewish people. Hundreds of thousands of visitors – Israelis and tourists – who come to the site each year are exposed to a narrow historical narrative, ignoring thousands of years of peoples and cultures who left their traces in the city. The values guiding the development agenda in the City of David in particular and the Historic Basin in general was clearly articulated by Mayor Nir Barkat in reference to the newly inaugurated Pilgrims' Route: "I want to allow Jews and non-Jews to recreate this experience. Whoever wants to immerse himself (in the Pool of Siloam) and ascend towards an experience of the Temple Mount, anyone who does this knows exactly who owns this city."<sup>13</sup>

The City of David is, in fact, the crowning project in the connection between archaeology and the construction of a new Jewish ethos of control over Jerusalem, one which ignores the local Palestinian population. It should come as no surprise then that in a survey commissioned by Emek Shaveh in 2016, it was found that archaeological excavations are more troubling to the Palestinians in Jerusalem than other pressing issues such as the lack of infrastructure.<sup>14</sup>

## The Growing Significance of the Temple in the Experience of Silwan/City of David

In Elad's early years, the Foundation did not obviously promote a connection between the narrative of King David and the nascent Jewish nation on the one hand, and the narrative of the return to the Temple, on the other. In recent years, however, as progress has been made in the excavations along the ancient Roman road that runs underneath Wadi Hilweh Street in Silwan (which is yet to be opened to the public), the narrative linking the City of David site to the Temple Mount has now shifted to the foreground. The Roman road is presented to the public as the one used by pilgrims to ascend to

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11. Thus, for example, the excavations of Charles Warren in 1865 near the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif led to Muslim riots and to the Ottomans' decision to keep archaeological research away from the Temple Mount / Haram al-Sharif area. This, according to the book "Underground Jerusalem" by Charles Warren, London, 1876.

12. Avi-Yonah, M. *The Antiquities of Israel*, 1967, p. 3 [Hebrew].

13. Bendel, N. [67% of Jerusalem Arabs are disturbed by ascent of Jews to Temple Mount](#), First Source, June 4, 2016 [Hebrew].

14. Bendel, N. [67% of Jerusalem Arabs are disturbed by ascent of Jews to Temple Mount](#), First Source, June 4, 2016 [Hebrew].

the Temple, with its route beginning at the Pool of Siloam, once used as the purification pool whence they continued along the road leading up to the Mount.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, the growing emphasis on the Second Temple period coincides with the increased demand to allow Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif.

The most active authority in the Old City is the Western Wall Heritage Foundation. The foundation is responsible for excavating tunnels and underground spaces in the Muslim Quarter, known as the 'Western Wall Tunnels'. Tourists who visit the tunnels are presented with a narrative which is almost entirely focused on the connection of the Jewish people to the Temple. Thus, for example, the Western Wall Heritage Foundation established a tourist site dedicated to the story of Jewish pilgrimage to Jerusalem in a Mamluk Khan from the 14th century. This khan, known as "Daraj al-'Ein," was used by the residents of the city during the reign of the governor of Damascus Sayf ad-Din Tankiz, and was one of the most interesting projects at the time, alongside the familiar Cotton Market. In addition, synagogues and prayer sites are being built in the Western Wall Tunnels in structures from periods not associated with Jewish history in Jerusalem. **The Shalem Plan, launched by the government in 2017 (see above) will consolidate ancient sites into one continuous space offering visitors to Jerusalem a one-dimensional story that omits the past and present of Arab Jerusalem.**

## Shifts in the Palestinian narrative

Jerusalem is the heart of Palestinian identity and is of great importance to Muslims around the world. For Muslim Palestinians (over 90% of the Palestinian population), Jerusalem is the holiest place outside Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia, and they carry a historic role to safeguard the city from non-Muslims. In recent years, we have witnessed a worsening of the use of the historical narrative as a means of negating the Jewish connection to Jerusalem, and particularly to the Temple Mount / Haram al-Sharif. Various Palestinian politicians and leaders talk about the lack of evidence for a connection between the people of Israel and Jerusalem and the Temple, claiming that archaeological artefacts associated with Jewish history in Jerusalem are fabricated. Such statements are made by Palestinian Authority leaders such as Abu Mazen, and are directed at the Palestinian public.<sup>16</sup>

The impact is clearly felt on the ground. An example is the expulsion of tour guides who display maps or diagrams of the Temple on the holy esplanade, or the decline in the use of the Arabic translation of the word 'Temple' to refer to Jerusalem – 'Bayt al Maqdis'.

This process of radicalization certainly undermines the possibility of dialogue or a compromise between the two sides.

## The Holy Basin in the Peace Process

In the Oslo Accords, it was decided that the issue of Jerusalem would be saved for the final status agreement. In the 1990s, Faisal Hussein was appointed head of Jerusalem Affairs in the Palestinian Authority. His seat was located at the Orient House in the east of the city. In 2001, coinciding with Hussein's death and the beginning of the Second Intifada, the Orient House was closed down subsequently weakening the Palestinian Authority's influence within the city.

The first initiative that attempted to grapple with the issue of historic Jerusalem was the Clinton Parameters of 2000.<sup>17</sup> The Clinton plan proposed a special regime for the Old City: The Muslim and Christian quarters would be in Palestinian hands and the Jewish Quarter and the Western Wall Plaza would be governed by Israel. The Clinton Parameters left the Palestinians responsible for the Temple Mount / Haram al-Sharif, but referred to the spaces beneath the mosques as possessing unique significance for the Jewish people. This proposal was rejected at Camp David by Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat. The outbreak of the Second Intifada and the defeat of Ehud Barak in the 2001 elections further distanced the possibility of advancing a settlement for historic Jerusalem.

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15. Hasson, N. [In a Tunnel Beneath Jerusalem, Israeli Culture Minister Gives Obama a Lesson in History](#), Haaretz, December 31, 2016.

16. R. Jones, [Palestinians Reject Jewish History in Jerusalem, But Other Arab Leaders Don't](#), Israel Today, 24.1.2018.

17. The [Clinton Peace Plan](#) on the Geneva Initiative website

After the cessation of peace talks in the early 2000s, an attempt was made to revive the peace process through the independent initiative of Israeli and Palestinian public figures. The initiative, known as the 'Geneva Initiative',<sup>18</sup> was launched at the end of 2003 and dealt with all the major political issues between Israel and the Palestinians. The agreement proposed a solution to a number of central issues of the Historic Basin. The basis of the agreement in Jerusalem was the recognition of the religious and international importance of the city for members of the various faiths and peoples. Like the Clinton Parameters, the Geneva Initiative also proposed dividing the Old City so that the Jewish Quarter and the Western Wall would be governed by Israel and the Christian and Muslim quarters would be under Palestinian control. The Mount of Olives, the Western Wall tunnels and the Tower of David Museum would also come under Israeli authority. The initiative proposed policing and oversight mechanisms for the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif and in the Old City.

All the initiatives that dealt with the issue of Jerusalem focused on a physical division of the city and on questions of governance and oversight. To date, no initiative has dealt in detail with the curation of the city's ancient sites, or with advocating the idea of a common heritage as a means to promote a political solution.

## Recommendations

### Confidence Building Measures

In the present reality, it is not possible to imagine a solution that does not give adequate expression to the deep cultural, national, religious, and political attachments that both sides harbor towards historic Jerusalem. We argue that a sustainable political agreement must reflect these affinities. However, in the absence of negotiations it is still possible, in the current context, to take steps which could de-escalate tensions and contribute to a climate more conducive to successful future negotiations on Jerusalem. Such steps could include, for example, slowing down development at sites which are associated with heightened Jewish nationalism such as the City of David and the Western Wall Tunnels, along with investing in sites of significance for Palestinians, Islam, and Christianity.

### Key Messages

**Recognition of a large part of the development in the Historic Basin currently promoted by the Israeli government as an act of settlement-building aimed at strengthening the Jewish presence in Palestinian neighborhoods and at sabotaging the two-state solution.**

**Tourism and transportation development in Jerusalem should be based on the guidelines for safeguarding world heritage sites.** Historic Jerusalem is recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, and development work in the historic city must comply with the rules and regulations set forth in relation to World Heritage Sites throughout the world. Infrastructure and development should all contribute to a comprehensive solution to the challenges of historic Jerusalem, rather than cater to the needs of a specific public in a single location. The same holds for tourism and transportation development in the Old City – from projects such as creating paths or paving roads, developing infrastructure for a light rail, or expanding city gates. Easy access to the Western Wall for Jewish worshipers should be implemented as part of improving transportation arrangements to all sites in the Old City, i.e. ensuring a convenient route for Muslims to reach the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, and improving access for Christian congregants to churches.

Since Jerusalem is a World Heritage Site, the construction of new tourism hubs and services must be subject to criteria formulated by an Israeli-Palestinian-international committee of experts to discuss their location, purpose, necessity and legality, in accordance with UNESCO conventions (see below).

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18. [The Geneva Initiative website.](#)

## **Operative Steps**

**Extending the concept of the status quo as it applies to the main holy sites** to the historic sites and holy places in the area surrounding the Temple Mount/ Haram al-Sharif. The accelerated development, over the past decade and a half, around the Temple Mount/ Haram al-Sharif of sites of Jewish religious and national significance has contributed to the isolation of the esplanade, and increased concern amongst Palestinians, who view this as a challenge to the Waqf's authority at the Haram al-Sharif. One-sided development in the area should be ceased and all development or archaeological excavation work should be agreed upon by a joint committee of professionals and stakeholders.

**The establishment of an Israeli-Palestinian-international committee of professionals and stakeholders that will be tasked with drawing up guidelines and mechanisms for the preserving of Jerusalem as a pluralistic city.** The premise guiding the committee is that in the absence of a political agreement, major decisions about development, preservation and the presentation of sites in historic Jerusalem must be subject to approval by a joint committee. The parties will be guided by a commitment to preserving Jerusalem's multi-layered and multicultural historic narrative. Activities and development in the Historic Basin must be based on the following principles: agreement by a joint committee on the location of the excavations, joint decisions as to which periods, remains or artefacts should be preserved and presented to the public, and, at a later stage, who will manage the sites. Priorities for site presentation will be based on a commitment to be faithful to Jerusalem's multicultural heritage and subject to mutual agreements. Thus, for example, archaeological sites such as the Davidson Center or the City of David, will present the importance of the site throughout the ages and its significance across different cultures and faiths.

In theory, this is a straight forward requirement. Reality shows that there is a need for the commitment of all the parties, and the establishment of joint teams to reach agreements on these issues.