

## *Archaeological Excavations in Jerusalem since 1967* From Making the Biblical Narrative to Settlement Activity

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### **Introduction**

In Palestine, archaeology is not detached from ideological and political dimensions. Archaeology has developed in the land of Palestine to serve the purposes of both ideology and politics. In all its stages, archaeology has been a faithful servant of ideology and politics. Probably since before the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, archaeology has been informed by a clearly defined methodology. Premised on the hypothesis of the historiography of events, archaeology is tasked to demonstrate those events which occurred on the land of Palestine as narrated by the Old Testament. Establishing these narratives on the ground has been an integral part of the “sacred mission”. Accordingly, maps, place names, and terms have been produced in consistency with the Old Testament. This field is designated as “Biblical Archaeology”. Renowned European or American universities seldom lack a section or institute that specialises in this field. Interest in biblical archaeology in Palestine has competed with major and great archaeologies, such as Pharaonic Egypt and Mesopotamia.

The land of Palestine has transformed into a significant competitive playing field for Western researchers, who looked forward to demonstrating the validity of the biblical narrative and bringing any (sacred!) antiquity back to their countries, which proves directly or indirectly a connection with the Old Testament. In many cases, overbearing presumptions were made to adapt archaeological discoveries to tell a narrative that had already been prepared in advance. The main concern was to apply this narrative to reality on the ground. Oftentimes, excavation findings were, in fact, set before any layer was removed from an archaeological site.

Representing an intermediate stage between conservatives and liberals and attempting to strike a balance between approaches of both sides, Amihai Mazar states that, in Palestine, archaeology has been, so far and to a large extent, driven by interest in the Old Testament. The majority of archaeologists working in Palestine comprised researchers and specialists in the Old Testament. Therefore, they understood archaeology and history through biblical texts. This understanding dominated their analysis of archaeological discoveries ... Against this background, grave errors were made in archaeological discoveries in Palestine, such as diagnosing “King Solomon’s Mines” in Timna ... understanding Warren’s Shaft in Jerusalem ...<sup>1</sup>

In reality, the statement made by Mazar applies to the majority of Israeli archaeologists and historians. Following the demise of the dominant school, the traditional narrative could no longer be upheld in its entirety. Most of these archaeologists and historians could not completely do without that narrative, however. They opted for a halfway house. Even though a critical spirit is noted, the writings published by these scholars lack clarity. I believe that this linked to the function of historiography. Conflict over the land of Palestine never came to an end, neither with Camp David nor with Oslo. Hence, objective conditions other than those prevailing to this day were needed to egress from the traditional crucible (Zionist narrative).

It seems that we have entered a stage, which was intended to confirm validity of the absolute holy scripture through archaeological discoveries. However, some scientific integrity by certain Israeli archaeologists led

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1 Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible. 10,000-586 B.C.E.* (New York, 1992), p. 31.

to findings that provided a surprisingly nuanced picture of those originally planned. In other words, the monster turned against its creator. As Israeli critical philosopher Gabriel Piterberg puts it: "... However, the findings of this (archaeological) research were destructive, and stupid to some extent. Sincerity to scientific honesty by archaeologists from the generation of archaeologist Yosef Herzog<sup>2</sup> has disproved what was supposed to be proved and confirmed."<sup>3</sup>

## Jerusalem in Israeli excavations

Much has been written in different languages about Israeli archaeological excavations in Jerusalem. Nadia Abu El Haj has made a pivotal and significant contribution to the study of archaeology and politics in Israel in general. El Haj presents her argument within a theoretical framework, which touched off an angry reaction even from the Zionist lobby in the United States of America. It clearly demonstrates how history and archaeology are used as political tools in historiography in Israel. Jerusalem definitely accounts for a considerable part of El Haj's investigation.<sup>4</sup> In fact, on an international academic level, every book or article on the antiquities of Jerusalem involves a critical review of archaeological accomplishments in the city, where archaeology has been used as political and ideological tools.<sup>5</sup>

Albeit important, the issue does not only concern the historical narrative and how valid it is, particularly in a matter relating to the history of monotheistic religions and history of scientific research. It is essentially about the search for historical justifications connected to the legitimacy of the ownership of history by a certain party and a deliberate negligence of other concurrent and complementary histories.<sup>6</sup> This is also associated with other central actors, who wrote this history and shaped the civilisational image of a geographical entity that was not secluded from a broader civilisation.

Ahead of the Israelis, foreign conservative groups worked towards constructing a historical framework of the city of Jerusalem. Having proved it as a "historical fact", or rather as a "divine truth", that framework was brought in line with the Old Testament narrative in full and in tedious detail. The process of exploring the city of Jerusalem started with topographical surveys and involved a projection of key civilisational landmarks inside or in the vicinity of the Old City on detailed maps. Countless "archaeological" excavations were conducted in an attempt to unveil the historical contexts of the city, particularly those which intersected with the Old Testament period. The Holy Landscape and the Holy Land Geography<sup>7</sup> have become an established fact, which is not open to interpretation. The majority of archaeological sites were demarcated, substantiated and infused with available sacred texts, regardless of how consistent these scriptures were with the reality on the ground. Future generations had to deal with, and premise their scholarship on the

2 Herzog, Professor at the Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures, Tel Aviv University, stated that "[a]rchaeological discoveries in the Land of Israel during the 20<sup>th</sup> century have led to discouraging results. Everything is fabricated. We have not found anything consistent with the biblical narrative."

3 Gabriel Piterberg. *The Returns of Zionism: Myth, Politics and Scholarship in Israel*, (London and New York, 2008).

4 Nadia Abu El-Haj, *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001)

5 See, e.g., Klaus Bieberstein, *A Brief History of Jerusalem from the Earliest Settlement to the Destruction of the City in AD 70*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017), pp. 8-18.

6 On the other peoples who lived in Palestine during the so-called "biblical period", see the significant publication of Whitlam: Keith Whitlam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History*, (Routledge, 1996).

7 Books on the geography of Palestine were published widely in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A large number of these publications can be cited, including J. C. Wigram, *The Geography of the Holy Land*, London 1832; George Adam Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, (London 1894).

basis of, these sites as if they proved absolutely vital. It can be argued that setbacks in the current history of Jerusalem, and Palestine as a whole, originate in this historical period.

At this stage, in which archaeologists coming from the West were active, many research institutes were founded in Jerusalem as well. These institutes continue to operate in the city until this day. In fact, methodologies relatively varied in line with the national experience of the followers of archaeology schools. However, all these were in agreement that the archaeological methodology and biblical history would not only provide an academic approach, but would also set a clearly defined goal. Surely, this does not mean that the work of these institutions is censured and rejected; this is a false accusation one does not wish to arrive at. Many contributions made by the archaeology institutes were of paramount importance. They left behind an indispensable documented legacy. On the other hand, understanding the history of these institutions helps reach a critical reading of their works. It may also draw attention to their procedures as well as review and criticise their publications. A second necessary caveat is that notions should not be generalised to everybody. Some scholars pulled loose from and were out of harmony with the institutions they used to represent or work for. Other even went as far as criticising and rejecting the precepts of their institutions and presented significant alternatives to reconceptualising archaeology in Palestine.

Side by side with the army, the Israeli archaeology school can be described as a central tool in a formation process that is based on the Old Testament. This school has contributed to converting Palestine (the territory occupied in 1948) into a global archaeological hub. Combining Western and Israeli researchers, joint expeditions were established for archaeological excavations and historiography. This relatively small area has gained a prominent position, drawing much interest and excitement. Consequently, hundreds of books and thousands of articles have been published in all world languages. As a result of Western and Israeli contributions, a historical picture of the city of Jerusalem was created in relation to the history of political regimes, which ruled it directly or indirectly as client ruling authorities of great powers. This picture was not grounded in the social and economic history of Jerusalem, particularly the history of the human groups who made the history of the city. This is exactly what happened in the aftermath of the 1967 war, when Israel was in direct control of the remaining part of Jerusalem, particularly the Old City. In collaboration with Israeli universities, the Israeli Archaeology Department launched a series of survey and excavation projects throughout Jerusalem, mainly targeting the Old City. These endeavours were designed to search for traces of biblical history. A key example was the excavation project in the Moroccan Quarter and its surrounding areas, Jewish Quarter, Silwan, and Tal al-Dhohour (Ophel). In addition, a series of excavations in water tunnels under the ground of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and its environs down to Wadi Hilweh in Silwan have continued since 1967.

In spite of the direct link between archaeology and Zionism, the number of Jewish archaeologists and the limited projects they launched before 1948 ought not to be overestimated. An archaeology department was established at the Hebrew University at its inception. However, Jewish archaeologists cannot be compared in any way, either in terms of the number or size of excavations, to foreign schools and expeditions. Certainly, they cannot be compared to Israeli archaeologists, who were active after the State of Israel had been proclaimed in 1948. Worthy of mention are significant Jewish archaeologists before 1948, namely, Yigael Yadin, Benjamin Mazar-Sukenik, and Avi-Yunah. Each had his own story and impact on archaeology. Before they engaged in archaeological activity and until the last day of their lives, all these archaeologists had an abiding connection with the Zionist movement. What they had in common was that they studied and received training in archaeology in Europe, their place of origin. In addition to their Zionist thinking, they brought with them then current concepts and tools of this science. Hence, the nationalist idea that prevailed in Europe during the inter-war period was fused with their Zionist thought. Like their European counterparts, these Jewish archaeologists were not driven by a religious perception. They were engrossed with transforming the idea of religion into a state. Therefore, they were not as much preoccupied with proving

the existence of religious parables as with demonstrating the existence of the people of Israel in the history of Palestine and linking this existence to Zionism, which called for “reclaiming” Palestine.

After June 1967, Israeli excavations were launched in the vicinity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Israeli archaeology so gluttonously embarked on this “booty” that they lost their scientific and ethical balance. They did not hesitate to use bulldozers in these excavations. The political became confused with the scientific and the religious. For them, it was an opportune moment to score a cutting edge scientific breakthrough, namely, a discovery in connection with the Temple. This was driven by the ecstatic effect of the resounding victory in the June 1967 war. The notable politician and archaeologist Yigael Yadin can be viewed as a model of this confusion.

Yigael Yadin<sup>8</sup> was the spiritual father of archaeology in Israel after 1948. Apart from his many works, Yadin was the most successful Israeli, who drew a connection between Israel and the past. He created some national symbols, including the Masada myth.<sup>9</sup> Yadin also led the largest excavation campaign in the area surrounding the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Having started his career in the military, he ended up Chief of Staff of the Israeli army in 1949. After he completed a three-year term of service, Yadin resigned from the army in 1952. In 1956, he received a PhD degree in archaeology for his translation of some of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran Caves Scrolls). Yadin led excavations in Masada, Qumran, and Tel Megiddo. Yadin’s campaign was widely criticised because he misrepresented the history of the Masada fortress, changed the historical myth into a “reality”, and turned those who committed suicide (if any) into national champions and a model of the Jewish warrior who refused to surrender and preferred to die as free men.<sup>10</sup> Yadin spent his life in pursuit of David and Solomon. Later, his research and excavations, particularly his historiography of archaeological research, were subject to much scrutiny and rejection. Yadin’s military motive was so visible in archaeology that he appeared as if he waged an existential war. He always felt that the existence of Israel could only survive by “proving” the fact of its existence in history. Therefore, Yadin confused science with wishful thinking whereby he could no longer distinguish between the two.<sup>11</sup>

Yadin’s most significant publication was an edited extensive book, with contributions from a group of historians and archaeologists. In this publication, Yadin attempted to present the official Israeli narrative of the history of Jerusalem.<sup>12</sup> In 1976, Yadin formed a political party, the Democratic Movement for Change (Dash). In its first participation in the 1976 elections, Dash picked up 15 out of 120 seats in the Knesset. Hence, Yadin became Deputy Prime Minister. Yadin’s model reflects Israel’s considerable investment in archaeology as a source of legitimacy. To date, Israel accounts for the largest number of archaeologist per population in the world.

8 Yadin was born in Jerusalem in 1917. His father, Eleazer Sukenik, was a well-known archaeologist. Yigael changed his family name to Yadin. He joined the Haganah militias when he was 15 years of age.

9 Yigael Yadin, *Masada: Herod’s Fortress and the Zealots’ Last Stand*. (New York: Random House 1966). On the role Yadin played in creating the Zionist legend, see the extensive study of Silberman: Neil A. Silberman, *A Prophet from Amongst You: The Life of Yigael Yadin, Soldier, Scholar, and Mythmaker of Modern Israel*, (Boston: Addison Wesley 1994).

10 Much has been authored, either in favour of or against Yadin, who used scientific tools to prove the “historicity” of a myth and gave a wrong account of archaeology. To prove the myth, he sacrificed science and scientific tools. See, *inter alia*, these two important treatises: Nachman Ben-Yahuda, *The Masada Myth. Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1995); Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Sacrificing Truth. Archaeology and the Myth of Masada*, (Amherst, New York: Prometheus/Humanity Books 2002).

11 See, N. Silberman. “Archaeology, Ideology, and the Search for David and Solomon”, in eds. A. Vaughn and A. Killbrew, *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period*, (Atlanta, Society of Biblical Literature 2002), p. 395-404.

12 Yigael Yadin, *Jerusalem Revealed: Archaeology in the Holy City 1968-1974*, (Yale University Press, 1976).

The other model of the Jewish archaeology school is Benjamin Mazar (born Binyamin Zeev Maisler)<sup>13</sup>. Considered as the most prominent Israeli historian and archaeologist, Maisler was also well-versed in the scriptures of the Old Testament and historical geography of Palestine. Relying on sacred texts, he was renowned for integrating archaeology, geography and antiquities of the ancient east. In addition to his longstanding military service, Maisler held many offices. He took up the post of President of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1953 until 1961. His archaeological work was characterised by large scale excavations, which he led in the aftermath of the June 1967 war along the western and southern walls of (as well as underneath) the Al-Aqsa Mosque in search of the ruins of the Temple. Maisler was of the view that archaeology was part of his national identity. Archaeological research was a national service that was as important as military service.

There are two approaches to archaeology in Israel. The first misrepresented history, historical narratives, and historical events. In the first approach, history is used as a justification for existence as a state with a capital and national anthem. It denies the main reason behind the establishment of the State of Israel by colonial powers and organisations, which sought to seize control of a significant area with a strategic location and resources. Accordingly, Israel provides a key contribution to fragmenting the region and preventing its re-emergence as a power. Decades after establishing and institutionalising the invented state, various disciplines of history have played a central role in ensuring the continued legitimacy of Israel. In fact, the role of this “state” has not ended yet, but may do in the future. At any rate, the mechanisms Israel can develop to ensure its continued existence should never be underestimated, even if the role of history and archaeology play in justifying its existence diminishes.<sup>14</sup> The second, unofficial, approach, is still generally marginal. It has taken archaeology away from political, religious and ideological rivalries.

To achieve the objectives of archaeology, it can be argued that Israeli excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem and its environs have been concentrated in several areas, which fully reveal the intended purpose behind them. These can be summed up as follows:

#### **a. Al-Aqsa Mosque and its surrounding areas**

Israeli excavations have been concentrated in all areas around the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Dozens of excavation works have been conducted, particularly in the southern and western areas. While some are visible, other excavations are underground, taking place beneath buildings along the western wall of the mosque. In some locations, excavations are taking place beneath the Al-Aqsa Mosque itself. Excavations have covered the spacious area, which was created by demolishing the Moroccan Quarter in June 1967. These excavations were not tailored to write the history of Jerusalem or uncover interesting antiquities, which might have emerged in this area. The stated goal was, and still is, to unveil the ruins of the First and Second Temples. Therefore, archaeological excavation has never been irrelevant to the Temple. Early excavation activity, particularly between 1967 and mid 1980s, was the prevailing concern par excellence. It is worth noting that the most important discovery of the excavations in this area, especially around the south-western corner of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, was the Umayyad governor’s palace, which comprises eight large buildings. The discovery of these premises has a long story. On this site, the most dangerous excavations are carried out along the western wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and of which we know nothing. These have been kept secret, but

<sup>13</sup> Born in Russia in 1906, Maisler had a PhD degree from the University of Giessen, Germany, in 1929. He directly immigrated to Palestine, where he was appointed as secretary of the Palestine Exploration Society. In 1959, Maisler became chairman of the society, whose name was changed into Israel Exploration Society.

<sup>14</sup> For further details, see: Nur Masalha *The Bible and Zionism: Invented Traditions, Archaeology and Post-Colonialism in Palestine-Israel*, (London: Zed, 2007); P L Kohl, M. Kozelsky, and N. Ben-Yehuda, (eds.) *Selective Remembrances: Archaeology in the Construction, Commemoration, and Consecration of National Pasts*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

can only be evidenced by the sound of excavation works.

This area has been transformed in an archaeological site and named Davidson Park. An audiovisual presentation displays the story of the First and Second Temples. Unequivocally, the presentation not only uses the terms applied to the history of Jerusalem, but also shows that no one other than the Jews has ever lived in the city. No one has any right to Jerusalem save the Jews. To promote holiness, the presentation is fused with selected scriptures from the Old Testament. Ir David Foundation, commonly known as Elad settlement association,<sup>15</sup> manages the Davidson Park. This raises the concern of archaeologists, even within the Israeli archaeology community, who recognise how sensitive the site is as well as the nature of the extremist narrative presented to visitors. Based on archaeological discoveries, most parts of this narratives have been disproved by scientific circles.

### **b. The Jewish Quarter**

As is well known, Israel designated an area of up to 12 percent of the Old City of Jerusalem and declared it as a Jewish Quarter without regard to existing properties. Islamic structures in this area comprise almost 87 percent of all real estate.<sup>16</sup> Later, Israel carried out large scale excavations in the context of the Jewish Quarter Reconstruction Project. Destroying the quarter's historical fabric, Israel reconstructed the majority of buildings. This was unprecedented in any old city around the world, especially one with the status of Jerusalem. In parallel, archaeological excavations were designed to draw a link between the Jewish Quarter and ancient historical periods, particularly of Herod the Great's reign. Adding nothing to historical claims, these excavations adorned the Jewish Quarter with many archaeological sites, giving it a deeper historical significance. For example, discoveries included a Roman colonnade street, a German church dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and a wall which is believed to trace back to the late Greek period. The history of this structure, which Israel calls the Hasmonean Wall, is currently re-examined. Discoveries also unfolded a house that was burned during the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Israeli archaeologists claimed that the house belonged to a Jewish rabbi.

A special focus was placed on Jewish synagogues, which were renovated, in the expanded Jewish Quarter. The majority of these date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Only one synagogue was built during the Mameluke period. Recently, the Hurva Synagogue was reconstructed with an elevated dome, reflecting conflict over the Old City's horizon. From their point of view, the Old City may not keep two great domes, namely the Dome of the Rock and dome of the Church of the Sepulchre, without a Jewish dome. In any case, archaeological discoveries did not establish any Jewish connection to the site of the Jewish Quarter prior to the Mameluke period. The Jewish communities who lived in the city earlier were negligible and did not leave behind any structures of architectural significance. Some travel literature narratives talk about a symbolic, though uninfluential, presence of the Jews during various Islamic periods.

### **c. Tunnels**

Israel's obsession with the search for ruins of the Temple began at an early stage and in building on the  
15 Founded in 1986, Elad is an extremist settlement movement that seeks to resettle the Jews in Jerusalem in general, an in Silwan in particular. The movement depends on donations from the Jews around the world, especially in the United States. In twisted ways and through expropriations, Elad has managed to seize control of a number of Arab homes in Wadi Hilweh. Almost 400 Jewish settlers currently live in this neighbourhood. For more information on Elad, other settlement associations and Temple movements, see Ir Amim, *Dangerous Liaison: The Dynamics of the Rise of the Temple Movements and their Implications*, (Jerusalem 2013).

16 See Munir Fakhr al-Din and Saleem Tamari. *Jerusalemite Waqf and Properties: A Study of the Old City Properties in the Twentieth Century*. (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2018), p. 24.

efforts of Western expeditions. However, this obsession was more ferocious after the Moroccan Quarter had been demolished in 1967. The demolition revealed some corridors that led to routes underneath buildings, particularly those dating back to the Mameluke period and located along the western wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Excavation of the main tunnel was completed and inaugurated by Benjamin Netanyahu in 1996, sparking the Al-Aqsa Uprising. The Israelis name it the Hasmonean Tunnel after a Jewish dynasty that ruled Jerusalem on behalf of Ancient Greece. However, the majority of components of this tunnel trace back to the Roman, Byzantine, Islamic and Crusader periods. Many halls that make up the tunnel have been converted into prayer rooms for the Jews. Through the tunnel excavations, the Israeli authorities have managed to seize control of the entire western wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, up to 400 metres in length. From this tunnel, offshoots spread out to the west and east. While some tunnels are known and publicly announced, others are not. Currently, no one knows how far the excavations of planned tunnels have gone. Excavations start from the Al-Kittan Cave, called Solomon Cave by the Israelis, east of the Damascus Gate, extending underneath the Al-Sa'diya Quarter towards the Al-Wad Road, and intersecting with the main tunnel.

The second phase of tunnel excavations involved linking the Silwan Pool through Wadi Hilweh to the Archaeological Park near to the Umayyad Palaces in the vicinity of the Al-Buraq Square, converting the latter into a connecting link of tunnels.

Tunnels are not a place to display the lower layers of successive historical periods in Jerusalem. Rather, these are a place by which the narrative is manipulated. However, this narrative is not misrepresented thanks to the landscape of mosques, churches, Palestinians who run their shops, schools, and institutions in the Old City. In its current landscape and over 50 years to all Israelisation attempts, the Old City of Jerusalem continues to be Palestinian. Tunnels lead the visitor to another world, in which the Palestinian and Palestinian symbols disappear. The visitor dives into the tunnels, all of which tell the story of the greatness of Israel and its attachment to ancient history.

#### **d. The Axis of Silwan**

Located just a few metres south and southeast of the Old City of Jerusalem, the village of Silwan is an additional main axis of extensive excavations. This part of the city of Jerusalem has been called the "City of David". It comprises the most ancient hill in the city, which is called by Palestinians as Tal al-Dhohour or Tal Silwan. It should be noted that excavations on this site commenced with Western expeditions in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and have not stopped since then. Following intensive exploration and excavation, the site was transformed into an exclusively Jewish national park after 1967. In spite of the mediocre and unclear discoveries and significant disagreements about their interpretation, these have been inflated to an unparalleled scale. All sound, light and visual techniques are put to use to tell a story, which has no trace on the site.

Strikingly, this hill is located over the Silwan Spring, the only water spring in Jerusalem and which connects with many underground channels. The site has allowed room for unrestrained fancies. The situation has even been ludicrous. It speaks of the Great Palace of David, its exquisite gardens, and administrative centres of a sprawling kingdom. What is seen on the ground is completely irrelevant, however. The most one can see is a relatively underdeveloped small village. The axis of Silwan is being expanded on a daily basis in the hope that anything new can be unveiled.

On this site, the story of David and Solomon are told, transforming both figures into visual characters who can be watched while they storm into the Canaanite Jebus. They can be watched while they freely roam about the area. Solomon is seen while he is building the Temple, taking a walk in the exquisite gardens of Silwan (Al-Buṣṭan neighbourhood), and arriving at the water spring to drink and cleanse himself ... These

narratives, which are both comical and tragic at the same time, do not mention that Jerusalem at the time (iron age, or 10<sup>th</sup> century BC) was nothing but a small village with a population of only about 400. By force of the narrative, rather than on the basis of the findings of archaeological excavations, Jerusalem transforms into a capital of a vast and great empire. The presented narrative was drafted by conservative Western and Israeli archaeologists. Rewritten by the Elad settlement association, the narrative makes the visitors charged with both Jewish and Christian sentiments. They feel as if they are literally living in the biblical period. They watch the films, which were produced on the same archaeological site, as well as the stones which were reconstructed in a manner that is beyond any doubt or dispute.<sup>17</sup>

### e. Miscellaneous places in Jerusalem

Israel has not saved an effort to excavate any piece of land in Jerusalem. The city has, therefore, been the most excavated area in the world. Excavations were also carried out in the context of infrastructure works, which were implemented in East Jerusalem either lawfully or unlawfully. In particular, infrastructure is provided for the construction of settlements, settler bypass roads, and the light train. In the process, many archaeological sites and monuments were discovered in various places across the city, encouraging further excavations. Hence, no spot in the city has not been excavated. It is true to claim that nothing remained to be excavated. Currently, excavations are underway within buildings of the Old City. Every building is in need of renovation. A renovation licence can only be issued after archaeological excavations are carried out by the Israel Antiquities Authority. Within this framework, several excavations are conducted all year round. Needless to say, the area surrounding the Old City's walls has seen dozens of excavation works.

This review does not address an extremely important issue, namely, the legal status of excavations in Jerusalem in particular, and throughout the occupied Palestinian territory in general. However, it suffices to say that all types of excavation works and transfer of antiquities outside an occupied territory is in violation of International Law.<sup>18</sup>

Under the pretext of "archaeological excavations", the plunder of antiquities, land and underground artefacts have recently escalated. In reality, current "archaeological exploration" is just an integral part of a far reaching political campaign, which affects the Jerusalem area in line with a pre-established, high-level and publicly announced scheme. "Archaeological" activities are concentrated in the area called the "Holy Basin" or "Historical Basin".<sup>19</sup> This area comprises the Old City and its environs. It also encompasses western slopes of the Olive Mount, Silwan, Wadi Hilweh, Al-Buṣtan neighbourhood, and Wadi al-Rababa, extend-

17 On the excavations in Silwan, see Raphael Greenberg, "Archaeology in Jerusalem 1967-2008: Towards an Exclusive Archaeology in Jerusalem: The Case of Silwan/the City of David". *Public Archaeology*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 35-50.

18 Under International Law, Jerusalem, including east and west parts of the city, is an occupied territory. The only international resolution that applies to the legal status of Jerusalem is the Partition Plan of 1947, according to which Jerusalem has a special status under international administration. It is worth noting that all subsequent resolutions have not changed this status, nor have the Palestinian-Israeli agreements concluded since 1993. This is confirmed by the fact that Jerusalem (not only East Jerusalem) is, according to the Oslo Accords, on the list of final status issues. For the sake of argument, even if East Jerusalem is solely deemed to be occupied under International Law, this means that all excavation works conducted after 1967 in the Old City and its surrounding area are unlawful and in violation of International Law.

19 This term was officially used by the Israelis in the Camp David final status negotiations in 2000. In preparatory, informal negotiations, this term emerged in the mid 1990s. It refers to the geographical area mentioned above. Contingent on developments, the extent of this area can be either broader or narrower. The Holy Basin reflects the Israelis' religious and supreme interests. Israel initially agreed to the former US President Clinton's criteria for partitioning Jerusalem by population. Accordingly, Palestinian quarters would be under the Palestinian Authority's control while Israeli quarters would be under Israel's. However, the Israeli negoti-

ing north to Sheikh Jarrah. Israel has repeatedly demanded a full and exclusive control over this area over the course of the final status negotiations.

This “archaeology” campaign is accompanied by a large scale Zionist settlement activity and forced displacement of the Palestinian population. Ongoing activity in this specific area can be demonstrated by extensive home demolitions in Silwan in general, and in the Al-Buṣṭān neighbourhood in particular. Settlement activity has further escalated in Wadi Hilweh.<sup>20</sup> In parallel, the number, size and sites of excavations have scaled up in the same area. This is also the case in the Sheikh Jarrah area, where an entire neighbourhood is being evacuated to accommodate settlers.

In the Old City, settlement expansion is difficult thanks to the increasing awareness of local residents, institutionalised legal defence of properties, mounting challenge of settlers, and renovation and rehabilitation of residential buildings to improve Palestinian housing conditions. The growing dire need for houses has raised the material and moral value of properties and bolstered Palestinian residents’ attachment to their properties. However, settler attempts continue to pose a serious threat to large swathes of the Old City.

In this context, incessant attempts to seize control of real estate in the Old City, using all twisted ways, can be discerned. The most dangerous of these is the attempt taking place at the Jaffa Gate (Omar Ibn al-Khat-tab Square), where efforts are exerted to expropriate the Imperial and Petra hotels, both belonging to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate.<sup>21</sup> It is useful to recall that settler continue to be in control of the Saint John Motel, also a property of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, in the vicinity of the Church of the Sepulchre. This was seized in twisted ways, somewhat similar to those used in the confiscation of the two hotels of the Jaffa Gate. Additionally, desperate attempts are being made to control more properties in the area around the Al-Aqsa Mosque, namely, in the quarters of Aqbat al-Khalidiya, Aqbat al-Qarmi, Aqbat al-Tikiya, Iron Gate road, Al-Wad road, and Chain Gate road. To a lesser extent, similar attempts are also made in the areas of the Remission Gate and Al-Sa’ diya Quarter.<sup>22</sup> The Christian Quarter is no longer immune to these attempts, either. Having abstained from entering the quarter for a long time, Israel broke away from this approach and ators insisted on the specificity of this area.

20 Settlers have managed to seize control of more than 15 properties in Wadi Hilweh. The Jerusalem Municipality and Israeli Antiquities Authority have also expropriated all open spaces. Over one third of the Wadi Hilweh area has been confiscated. Settlement activity in Wadi Hilweh is just a link in the chain of the settlement plan, which is designed to strip the greater portion of the Old City of demographic contiguity with Palestinians around the Old City. This plan is being implemented in the name of the Green Belt, which will encircle the Old City, or under the pretext of archaeology and construction of culture reserves and national biblical parks.

21 In 1967, Israel seized control of the Jerusalem Castle in the same square, claiming that it was a state property. Israel also carried out excavation works in the area. However, when these excavations did not unfold any significant or meaningful discoveries, Israel converted existing buildings, the overwhelming majority of which date back to the Ayyubid, Mameluke and Ottoman periods, into a museum of the history of Jerusalem. Narrating a biased history, this museum expresses the official Israeli narrative and vision of the city’s history. Not far from the Castle, under the same pretext, the Israeli police confiscated the Qishla (Qishlaq) Compound. The Qishlaq Compound was constructed by Ibrahim Pasha, son of Muhammad Ali of Egypt, under Egypt’s reign over Jerusalem (1831-1840). The compound is currently used as an Israeli police station and prison. It houses a surveillance centre connected to cameras installed in every spot of the Old City. Should the settlement enterprise complete in this critical location, a large area of the Old City (Jaffa Gate area) will be transformed into an Israeli Jewish gate to Jerusalem. This is an extremely pivotal gate. In all formal and informal negotiations, Israel attempted to maintain control over the Jaffa Gate area up to the Jewish Quarter through the Armenian Quarter.

22 There are more than 85 settlement outposts in the Old City, outside the so-called Jewish Quarter. Either over or underground, many settlement enterprises seek to connect these settlement outposts to one another, and link them in their entirety to the Jewish Quarter and Al-Buraq Square. In this context, the Israeli Antiquities Authority is playing a central role under the pretext of examining the history of Jerusalem, discov-

seized the Saint John Motel in the Aftimos Market. This was ensued by further attempts to seize control of the Jaffa Gate area.

## Writing the history of Jerusalem

Israeli archaeologists' work in Jerusalem was paralleled by a process to rewrite the history of the city. The process was designed to strengthen the bond between the Jewish, and Israelis in particular, and Jerusalem. Zionism had never dreamed of converting Jerusalem, particularly the Old City, into Israel's capital. However, a historic opportunity arose with the occupation of all Jerusalem in 1967 and Zionism did not hesitate for even a minute to declare "Unified Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel". The adjective "Eternal" was subsequently added to this proclamation. Israeli historians had to grab this theme and elaborate on the demonstration of its historical actuality as well as the history of the existence of the Jews in Jerusalem. To this avail, they used the city's population census of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to prove a Jewish majority in the city for over a century. This issue was of particular interest to Israeli historians.

It can be argued that writing the history of Jerusalem after 1967, and in conjunction with archaeological writings, were marked by the haughty and arrogant spirit of the June 1967 victory. Historiography combined a demonstration of the continuous Jewish history and an underestimation of the roles and relationships between the "goyim" and the city. The "victory" provided a motive that could not be reined in or curbed. Having passed with flying colours, soldiers' resolution and immeasurable happiness were employed. The "emotional" moments, when soldiers and their commanders stood on the ruins of the Moroccan Quarter, dancing hysterically with rabbis, were documented. The ashes of the ravaged Moroccan Quarter had not yet vanished in the horizon, nor had the tracks of bulldozers rested after demolishing the remaining Moroccan houses on the outskirts of the Quarter. At this moment, historians came in and turned the Moroccan Quarter into a platform for many historical works, side by side with a variety of literary and art works.

Interestingly, thought, Israeli critical voices have begun to emerge since the late 1980s. Called as the "New Historians" phenomenon at the time, this movement continued to be marginalised and remained controversial inside Israel, but was celebrated in different circles around the world, particularly in the Arab region. This group of historians only investigated the last years of the British Mandate of Palestine. They focused on the *Nakba* and displacement of Palestinians from their homes. The issue of the New Historians is exciting because they come from the heart of the Israeli society; they graduated from Israel's own schools and universities and primarily relied on Israeli documents in their investigations.

The phenomenon of the New Historians did not shift to "New Archaeologists", nor did it receive the same extensive media coverage. The impact of archaeologists on the public had less weight and understanding them was far more difficult. History aroused many who took an interest in contemporary events, namely, Palestinian refugees and the Palestinian national movement on one hand, and leaders of Israel and many Israeli soldiers, institutions and parties on the other. Limited to a few specialists, nothing in archaeology would provoke public uproar. Popular understanding of the meaning of these transformations remains untenable. However, Israeli voices surely emerged, calling for a critical reinvestigation of archaeological discoveries. Archaeology should not be put at the service of the ruling political authority. These critics have looked at the Old Testament as a collection of heritage folktales, gathered from different countries and cultures of the Mashreq. They have also refused to use the Old Testament as an unquestioned historical source. It is true that this school emerged long ago outside the framework of the region, but it was not far from the idea of the ongoing conflict. However, its impact is now visible on Israeli archaeologists in relation to the history of Palestine in general, and the history of Jerusalem in particular.

Archaeology is among the most important disciplines addressed by Israeli writings on Jerusalem. These

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ering the city's antiquities, and promoting tourism. All these techniques are used to implement the said plan.

publications are informed by an incessant attempt to prove the scriptures of the Old Testament by means of antiquities. This attempt faces difficult problems in aligning archaeological artefacts with these scriptures. The latter are so rich, but archaeological discoveries are weak. So far, anchor points have not been uncovered with a view to demonstrating the relationship between both these components. Despite the enormous body of information gathered after thousands of excavation projects, these cannot be invoked to create even a formal picture.

In light of the relative decline of the role of archaeology in “legitimation”, based on the fact that this role has relatively dwindled and served its purpose, archaeology has been assigned other roles in Jerusalem. Archaeology has been increasingly linked to the settlement movement in the city. In this vein, the majority of current excavation works are funded by settlement movements, driven by a strong motivation for settlement activity in and around Jerusalem.<sup>23</sup>

The importance of archaeological activism should not be overstated. The activity, which archaeology has seen, might undermine the whole foundation of biblical history. However, archaeological activism will not change nor revolutionise the current state of affairs. It might not go beyond academic discussions among a handful of specialists on either side of equilibrium. The biblical narrative has been consolidated and become an essential component of the Israeli society. It would not be adversely affected by any discovery in the archaeology field. Even critics of the biblical narrative have defied the need to use such narrative to justify the existence of Israel. Along this vein, Herzog wishes that “his position is not matched to the argument that refuting the historicity of biblical stories means undermining our historical right to the Land of Israel”. Surely, one reason Herzog rejects this hypothesis is that political findings can be reached, conversely asserting the eligibility of the Israelis, who have not come to Palestine as invaders. The sense of allegiance to the country, prevalent among the young generation, is not hampered by the need to justify the existence of Israel on the grounds of divine promises.<sup>24</sup>

Official and academic Israeli circles were much disturbed by the discovery of the Umayyad governor’s palace. It dismantles their historical theories, which stated that Jerusalem was the capital of the Jews only.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, positions towards this discovery have ranged from an error in history, considering that the Umayyad governor’s palace was a Roman fortress. When this attempt failed, some Israelis attempted to pull down, remove, and refrain from announcing the discovery in the first place. While a 150-year effort of searching for the ruins of the Temple failed, an Islamic “political temple” (other than the Dome of Rock) emerges in such magnitude and significance. As destruction failed, also due to Israeli internal factors, the Umayyad palaces were marginalised, first by abstention from publishing adequate relevant information, and second by a gradual physical demolition and dismantlement of architectural components, especially giant stones. Along this direction, Israeli archaeologists opted for considering these stones as part of remaining stones of the Temple buildings, and that the Umayyad dynasty reused them in the construction of their palaces. Hence, the remaining palaces do not indicate a central activity of the Umayyad dynasty or the significance of Jerusalem. Instead, these palaces are indicative of the Second Temple.

As reflected in Israeli historical and archaeological writings, below is a rather brief review of key components of the history of Jerusalem:

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23 For further details on the link between archaeological excavations and settlement movements, see Nazmi Jubeh, “Jerusalem between Settlement Activity and Excavations”. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 20, 79 (Summer 2009), 39 ff.

24 Gabriel Piterberg. *The Returns of Zionism: Myth, Politics and Scholarship in Israel*, (London and New York, 2008, p. 308.

25 Jerusalem was also the capital of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. Earlier, it was the *de facto* capital of the Umayyad dynasty.

## 1. David and Solomon: A capital, temple and palace

According to the biblical narrative, King David occupied Jerusalem after he had ruled over Hebron for seven and a half years. Gradually, the Canaanite-Jebusite name Ūrsālim turned into Yerushalayim, the designation Israel uses today. Ignoring other names of subsequent periods, this naming practice is part of the selective approach in place. It is true that the name Yerushalayim preceded Hebrew writings and origins, and is believed to trace back to the Canaanite language. However, the name has been politicised as if it is the Hebrew Jewish designation of Jerusalem.

Based on the biblical narrative associated with David, a bridge is being built, establishing a connecting link between Israel, Jerusalem, and the legitimate existence of Israel. Ten years ago, Israel extended that bridge to the present day, celebrating 3,000 years of the history of Jerusalem, turning a blind eye to all histories that preceded this event. The name “City of David” was also recovered from the archaeological campaign, which swept Jerusalem during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Later, the archaeological site of Jerusalem’s ancient ruins became the “City of David”. This is beyond debate now in view of the relevant tremendous body of Western and Israeli writings.

The “City of David” is a key component of the “Israeli national” education system. It is indoctrinated to the Israeli society from across the spectrum, including school pupils, university students, soldiers, retired personnel, men and women. Following dozens of excavation works, the site has been a focal point in the creation of the biblical narrative. Most striking is that visitors see nothing significant, which can corroborate any narrative. However, the biblical narrative is reassembled as if “facts” are clear and tangible: Here David walked. Through this tunnel, David occupied the city. From this spring, he and his army drank. On this rock, he implored the Almighty God. Here were the exquisite gardens, which he made, and so forth. By this narrative, David is turned into a character that narrates and represents history in full detail. If this is yet not enough, films are produced and screened, instilling in the minds of visitors a story that is definitely beyond doubt.<sup>26</sup>

In reality, there are no antiquities that can tell any story. Based on archaeological excavations that took place over 150 years (since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century), in the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC, Jerusalem was nothing but a small village or a modest town of the iron age. It might have had a small fortified citadel, by which it responded to attacks of local enemies. However, it is much less important than nearby sites, which flourished as cities at the same time. If it had been significant in that century, Jerusalem was only as significant as its surrounding areas. Nothing indicates that it was the capital of a neither large nor small state, or enjoyed any ostensible leadership. All indications show that this history was illusionary and that it has been remanufactured in the factory of oriental legends and tales.

In the second stage of historiography, Solomon, son of David, plays another pivotal role. He is the builder of the First Temple. He constructed a great palace and expanded the “City of David” into the capital of a vast empire. Antiquities do not disappear in their entirety, however. No one in the past had an interest in concealing these antiquities. In Islam, David and Solomon are known as prophets. Their traces are sacred. They also play a key role in the Christian religious heritage. Neither Christians nor Muslims have an interest in effacing David and Solomon’s traces. So where have these gone? To date, Solomon’s palace and temple have not been discovered. This is never significant, still. In Israel, historians fill in any potential gap for the narrative to be complete.<sup>27</sup>

In this regard, the history of Jerusalem in advance of the so-called “First Temple period” is left aside. The Old Testament is completely silent on the fate of the city’s population, whom the Old Testament calls the

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26 For more information, visit the webpage of the “City of David”, <http://www.cityofdavid.org.il/en>.

27 In 2005, Israeli archaeologist Eilat Mazar conducted an excavation south of the Al-Aqsa Mosque,

Jebusites, before it had been occupied by David. Also, the fate of their (Canaanite) gods and religious rituals is unclear. So is the impact of the Jebusite civilisation on the Hebrew tribes who, along the lines of the Old Testament, were less developed than the existing civilisation. The Old Testament tells us that Solomon did not find among his people anyone who could provide an architectural or artistic contribution to the construction of the Temple. Therefore, he brought in skilled workers from the city of Tyre.

Nothing, however approximate, confirms the foregoing statement. Nothing remained of the sublime palace and great temple so as to indicate their greatness, or their existence in the first place. Hundreds of books and thousands of articles have been authored on Solomon's Temple, including by Israelis and Jews around the world. Significant contributions were also made by biblical archaeologists. A reading of the latest publications shows that the conclusions arrived at are nothing more than an unrelenting effort to study renowned temples in Palestine, Jordan, and Lebanon in an attempt to imagine the shape of Solomon's Temple. Thanks to these studies, we now possess information on all temples, except for Solomon's Temple.<sup>28</sup>

## 2. The Second Temple

The Second Temple falls in the context of demonstrating the relationship between the Jews and Jerusalem, as well as the continuity of this relationship throughout the ages. Based on the approved description, the Second Temple is a marvellously perfect building. Its beauty and richness are beyond common standards. It was increasingly elegant and magnificent over time. Regardless of historical reality, it implies all forms of nostalgia and longing. Stories are written about it. Modest information are mixed with an inexhaustible nostalgic literature. The Second Temple becomes a Jewish icon, which finds its way into various religious and mundane traditions and customs. It is an incomparable achievement. Its destruction reflects God's punishment of those who went astray.

The "Temple" and "Temple Mount" have turned into an unmatched symbol, a justification for existence and origination, and reason for commemorating Israel throughout the ages of the diaspora since 70 AD, when Roman Titus destroyed the Temple. Surely, it has also played a role in creating the "common" between world Jewry, particularly after much of the "common", such as the Hebrew language and geography, had already faded away, also because the Jews had integrated with different societies. Hence, the Second Temple, and by consequence Jerusalem, were invoked to re-establish unity among the Jews and contribute to the desperate challenge of integration into various societies. The (Roman) goyim destroyed the Second Temple, expelled and prevented the Jews from living in Jerusalem for many centuries in fear of achieving their potential. Therefore, devotion to the story and the central status of the Temple reflect an attachment to the Jewish goal of preventing integration and searching for a geographical spot in which the Jewish identity, which is different from its surroundings, would attain self-fulfilment by will and predetermination.

Against this background, tireless attempts have been made in search of the ruins of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in general, and around the Al-Aqsa Mosque in particular. Albeit political in many aspects, this pursuit is not destitute of attempts to confirm the course of history and emphasise that the Jewish history in Jerusalem is not legendary. As the outcomes of archaeological search were too negligible and not in the

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discovered several courses of embellished rocks, and announced she discovered David's Palace. It is true that many serious archaeologists, some of whom were Israelis, scathingly criticised Mazar, but this did not affect the official narrative, which currently cites to David's Palace. On Mazar's discoveries, see Eilat Mazar, "Did I Find David's Palace?" *Biblical Archaeological Review*, January/February 2006. To review perspectives in opposition of this understanding, see Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher, *David and Solomon: In Search of Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of Western Tradition*, (New York: Free Press, 2006), p. 270.

28 As a model these investigations, see Y. Aharoni, "The Solomonic Temple, the Tabernacle and the Arad Sanctuary", in: H.A. Hoffner Jr. (ed.), *Orient and Occidence*, (Kevelaer, 1973), pp.1-8.

least consistent with the magnified picture of the Second Temple, a nearby site was used instead.<sup>29</sup> Here, the Second Temple is displayed in a different way, using imagination as well as light and sound techniques. Visitors are convinced that the Temple is, down to the last ornamental detail, an absolute reality. Exceeding the capacity of a personal computer by 300,000 times, a computer set is used with technology imported from the United States of America. This technology is used by the US Air Force in flight simulation, or virtual aviation. The computer programme provides a 3D presentation of Jerusalem in the Roman age. Jerusalem is imagined in so full a detail as to envision intricacies of costumes of the local population. However, focus is clearly placed on the Second Temple. Through this historical park, Jerusalem is transformed into a sanctuary of the Temple, rather than a pagan Roman city, as it really was.<sup>30</sup> Visitors watch a documentary film, titled *Where it all began ... and still continues*, drawing a link between David the King and Israel. It gives the impression that 3,000 years had not passed, that there had not been historical periods and different civilisations in Jerusalem, and that Elad settlers had been the inhabitants whom David settled in Jebusite Jerusalem. The narrative is further supported by dozens of Israeli flags, which fly over the site and settler houses. The portion of Silwan, which they managed to seize control of, has been turned into a new biblical quarter.<sup>31</sup>

All elements of the site, which comprises the ancient Ophel Hill and Umayyad governor's palace, have been converted into an archaeological park to serve the said goals. Management of the whole site has been entrusted to an extremist settlement movement, namely Elad, which presents its own narrative of the site.<sup>32</sup> This narrative goes hand in hand with settlement expansion in the Silwan neighbourhood. The Elad settlement association seeks to annex Al-Buṣṭān as it determines that David the King did own this neighbourhood and its gardens. It is planned to evict and displace Palestinian residents from as many as 90 Palestinian buildings in this area. These will be replaced by biblical parks, narratives, and settlers. This way, the Elad settlement association employs archaeology and historical religious narratives, regardless of their historicity and validity, in order to seize control of the land and displace the Palestinian population.

The first thing visitors see in the Archaeological Park are various shapes of how the Second Temple is represented by means of artistic and architectural expressions throughout the age. The Archaeological Park also presents detailed plans of the Temple and a chronology of Jerusalem. Entering this park is like passing through the gates of the Temple. Hence, the viewers are capable of nothing but to scrutinise the details of the Temple, leaving aside any critical view of history. Details take them from pieces of clay, to coins, to shapes and intricacies, to the Bar Kokhba revolt, and to the costumes of the priests and holy tools of the Temple.<sup>33</sup>

29 This site is located south of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in the so-called the Archaeological Park. It is named the Davidson Compound after the wealthy Jew, who donated millions of dollars for construction of this site.

30 On the Archaeological Park, its mission, and the role of Elad settlement association, see Wendy Pullan and Maximilian Gwiazda. "City of David: Urban Design and Frontier Heritage", *Jerusalem Quarterly File*, (Autumn 39, 2009), pp 29-38; Yusef Said al-Natsheh. "The Digital Temple", *Jerusalem Quarterly File*, (October 19, 2003), pp. 53-58.

31 See Raphael Greenberg, "Towards an Inclusive Archaeology in Jerusalem: The Case of Silwan/the City of David", in *Public Archaeology*, , 8.1 (2009), p. 35-50; Yas, J. "(Re)designing the City of David: Landscape, Narrative and Archaeology in Silwan", *Jerusalem Quarterly File* (Winter 2000), p. 17-23; J. M. Cahill and D. Tarler, "Excavations Directed by Yigal Shiloh at the City of David, 1978-1985", in H. Geva (ed.). *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*. Biblical (Archaeology Society, 1994) p. 31-45.

32 All archaeological sites open to visitors in Israel are managed by the Israel Nature and Parks Authority. The Ophel Hill site was under control this Authority, which presented it to the Elad settlement association in the 1990s. Ever since, the Elad association has not only managed the site and presented its own extremist and racist narrative of history, but it has also reshaped the whole area surrounding the site in service of its settlement plans. The Elad association has also deployed armed guards around the site, turning Palestinian's lives in Silwan to hell in an attempt to forcibly transfer them from their homes. See Meron Rapoport. 2006. "The Republic of Elad", *Ha'aretz*, 23 April 2006.

33 Yusef Said al-Natsheh. "The Digital Temple", *Jerusalem Quarterly File*, (October 19, 2003), pp. 53-58.

Other pillars of writing the history of Jerusalem are beyond the scope of this review. In this context, the “Second Temple period” is skipped all the way through to the year 1882. The presentation invokes the First Aliyah (HaAliyah HaRishona) to Palestine, the proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948, and finally the victory in the June 1967 war.

## Conclusion

Jerusalem does not only play a key role in the historiography of Israel, but also in writing the history of the Jews throughout the ages. “Historical reality” does not necessarily play any role in this context. What matters is that history and religious mythology contribute to creating the identity. However, Israel faces a significant problem in light of successive critical studies, which deny a major portion of the components of the imagined history of the Jews. This issue has made Israel act from the inside because it has associated its existence, albeit formally, with historical rights, warding off the fact that it is a Western colonial enterprise.

It seems that Israel has not yet given up to the most recent historical studies, including those published by some Israelis. Along this vein, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been drawing the Israelis’ attention once again to declaring the Jewish heritage list, including heritage sites in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Millions of dollars will be invested in the renovation of these sites as well as organisation of the relationship between the “Jews and their heritage”.

Conflict over Jerusalem can surely be described as conflict over land and territorial sovereignty. However, it is also conflict over the symbols, shape, landscape, and flag hoisted above the buildings and walls of Jerusalem. Furthermore, it is conflict over the narrative. Conflict has escalated, and recently imposed facts unilaterally on the ground, in all the said aspects. It can, thus, be argued that the general situation is coming to an end. This is demonstrated by an incessant activity over the ground in the area surrounding the Old City of Jerusalem with the aim of resolving the conflict over the shape and cultural landscape of the Holy City. More than 50 years to occupation, the fundamental landscape (identity) of the city continues to be Arab. This has accelerated the pace by which a variety of Israeli enterprises seek to alter the landscape of the city and give it a different identity. If it is not Israeli Jewish, that identity will be less Arab.

This activity goes side by side with the extensive Israeli excavations<sup>34</sup> conducted on various sites underneath the city. These are designed to reassemble and delve into the city on one hand, and present a shape that is at variance with the city’s appearance on the other. This will, in the least, reduce the Arab dimensions of the landscape of Jerusalem. It will also promote settlement movements and help Israelis visit the Old City of Jerusalem without seeing Palestinians and their landmarks as much as possible. Of course, the process is also in conjunction with an Israeli biblical narrative of the history of Jerusalem. This narrative reveals everything, which is potentially relevant to Judaism and its history, even if it means that parts of Jerusalem are demolished and others constructed to be compatible with and in service of that narrative. If antiquities do not serve this purpose, and most often they do not, advanced technology supported by sound, light, and fanciful figures can be used in place of tangible archaeological artefacts, leaving the viewers with the impression that they are in contact with history and its absolute facts. The narrative is further corroborated by quotations from the Old Testament, historians of the Empire of Rome, and historians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe.

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34 Excavations are addressed in an earlier article. See Nazmi Jubeh, “Jerusalem between Settlement Activity and Excavations”. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 20, 79 (Summer 2009), 39 ff.