Where Are the Antiquities?

National Parks between the Old City of Jerusalem
And Area E1

The area designated for the national park – view from ‘Issawiya towards Mount Scopus
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Emek Shaveh is focusing in the role of archaeology in the Israeli society and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We view archaeology as a resource for building bridges and strengthening bonds between different peoples and cultures, and we see it as an important factor impacting the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
Location of the National Parks

The three national parks described in this report form a continuous uninhabited territory stretching from Jerusalem’s Old City walls to the area known as E1. Two of the parks have been declared national parks and one of them is in the process of being designated as one. The most important of these is the Jerusalem Walls National Park, which includes the Old City walls, the areas immediately outside the walls, and the City of David archeological site, spreading over 1,110 dunams (1.11 km² or 274 acres). The Tzurim Valley (Emek Tzurim) National Park is nestled between the Old City, Mount Scopus, and the Palestinian village of A-Tur, covering 165 dunams.¹ The third national park planned for Jerusalem, the Mount Scopus Slopes, will be located on the eastern slopes of Mount Scopus (just below the Hebrew University) between the Palestinian villages of ‘Issawiya and A-Tur, and is slated to cover 730 dunams. Contrary to popular belief, the Old City of Jerusalem is not a national park, though it is a World Heritage Site that contains antiquities of immense importance.²

The Israel Nature and Parks Authority and the Israel Antiquities Authority are responsible for determining which archeological remains should be protected by the INPA, how they should be presented to the public, and what the size of the protected area should be. Although ostensibly of a purely professional nature, in reality their decisions are often guided by political considerations, with far-reaching implications.

The declaration of an area as a national park entails assuming responsibility for the administration of the area, a fact that often leads to a struggle over the rights to the land. This report examines the ways in which antiquities (real or imagined) are used by the Israeli Nature and Parks Authority in order to assume responsibility for a given area, and thereby, de facto, to appropriate it.

¹ The website of the INPA List of declared National parks (in Hebrew)
² More information about the impact of the archaeological activity on the Old City can be found in the report "Between Holiness and Propaganda" published by Emek Shaveh
The Jerusalem Walls National Park

The most important national park in Jerusalem and one of the most important parks in the region, the Jerusalem Walls National Park was established in 1974 and spans 1,100
The park includes the Old City walls, the areas adjacent to the walls from the outside (the border of the park running along the walls at a distance of a few meters from the walls in some places and a few hundred meters in others), the City of David archeological site, located in the Palestinian village of Silwan (in the Wadi Hilwe neighborhood), and on Mount Zion.

The needs of the national park, in particular the development of tourist infrastructure alongside the prevention of residential construction, often collide with the needs of the local residents and impinge upon their daily lives. Notwithstanding, ‘the Jerusalem Walls’ National Park is of great historical and archaeological value. The same cannot be said about the other two national parks situated in Jerusalem.

The Kidron Valley, on the eastern side of the Old City walls, is part of the Jerusalem Walls National Park.

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3 Summary of the meeting of the Committee for the National Parks and Nature Reserves, nr. 134 from May 7, 2009 (in Hebrew)
The Tzurim Valley National Park (Emek Zurim)

The Tzurim Valley National Park is situated on the slopes of Mount Scopus and the Mount of Olives and in the Kidron Valley. It covers an area of 165 dunams northeast of the Old City. It was declared a national park in 1988 for the purpose of creating a green belt around the Old City. The park’s planning principles include the creation of a functional and visual connection to the Mount Scopus promenade, the reconstruction of the ancient pilgrims’ lookout, and a reenactment of the ancient agricultural landscape of the desert-frontier.4

Agricultural terraces and vegetation, including oak trees and olive trees, constitute the main findings in the area of the park. Between the terraces, one can find remains of agricultural structures and water wells hewn in the rock. Some of the terraces may be a few hundred years old, but the valley itself offers primarily a contemporary rural

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4 Summary of the meeting of the Committee for the National Parks and Nature Reserves, nr. 134 from May 7, 2009 (in Hebrew)
landscape of the kind typically found throughout the Judean Hills. In other words, rather than evoking ancient times, the valley simply offers a pleasant green respite from the urban jungle.

The archaeological remains found in the Tzurim Valley National Park are not of such a unique archeological value as to necessitate the declaration of a national park in the area. Since 2005, the “Temple Mount Sifting Project” has been marketed as an interactive activity for students and visitors in the park. The initiative is supported by the El’ad organization (the settler organization that also operates the Visitors Centers at the Mount of Olives and the City of David archeological site). The soil-sifting activity on the site, using soil that was dumped into the Kidron Valley during Islamic Waqf works in the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif in 2003 and 2004, is not an archaeological project, and it is of no scientific value. This project, which purports to uncover remnants from the Jewish Temple or other important Jewish antiquities, yields very little actual material. Moreover, it and can provide no reliable information as to the degree of destruction at the Temple Mount, because the soil is out of its archaeological context. The project is an example of an initiative that mixes the search for antiquities with religious, national, and political interests. The sifting project is the major tourist attraction in the Tzurim Valley National Park, and by bringing Israeli visitors there it strengthens the Israeli presence in East Jerusalem (in the Palestinian neighborhood of A-Tur).

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Agricultural terraces in the struggle over land rights

Many Israelis identify the local landscape of the Tzurim Valley with the ancient biblical landscape. One of the prominent signs of this landscape is its agricultural terraces—rows of stones built horizontally into the slopes of the Jerusalem Hills, the West Bank, and the north of Israel. The purpose of these structures was to enable agricultural activity in mountainous areas. Studies over the years have tried to estimate the historical development of this landscape and the origins of the agricultural terraces. It is very difficult to date when a terrace was built, and there are differences of opinion as to the time of their construction. The generally accepted view is that most of the agricultural terraces are several hundred years old at the very most.⁶

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Despite agreement among scholars that the vast majority of the terraces are not in fact thousands of years old and that they do not constitute the remains of the biblical landscape, popular opinion seems to see them as such and associates them with the Jewish or Israeli heritage. The location of the park near the Old City and the erroneous identification of the local landscape as an ancient biblical one, are the main reasons for which the Tzurim Valley was declared a national park and why it is publically accepted as being of historical importance for the Jewish/Israeli narrative. We firmly believe that the landscape of terraces and olive trees, most of which were planted in recent dozens of years, does not justify the designation of the Tzurim Valley as a national park.

The Mount Scopus Slopes National Park (in planning stages)
The Mount Scopus Slopes National Park is planned to stretch from the Mount Scopus promenade to the west, up to the edge of the land of the Hebrew University, and towards

The Tzurim Valley and the tent of 'Temple Mount Sifting' Project
the area known as E1. The southern section of the territory is provisional land for the Palestinian village of ‘Issawiya. The area designated for the park is about 730 dunam.\footnote{Israel Ministry of Interior web site, notifications regarding the Planning and Construction Law, plan 11092/8}

In order to sanction the area as a national park, the Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA) asked the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) to conduct an archeological survey that would demonstrate the archeological importance of the site. The IAA’s survey states that the slope served as a burial ground during the Roman and Byzantine eras. Various remains of agricultural facilities and quarries were also exposed. The survey was also conducted on the hill known as Ras Tammim, located to the north of the Jerusalem–Maale Adumim Road, on ‘Issawiya’s lands. A number of agricultural facilities and earthenware remains were found in this area, testifying to a past human presence, though none of the remains testify clearly to an ancient presence in the site.\footnote{Eirikh-Rose, “Jerusalem, the Slopes of Mount Scopus, Survey,” Hadashot Arkheologiyot , 122 (2010).}

Evidence of stone quarrying – by definition an archeological site

Two significant sites were uncovered during the infrastructure stage of the construction of the Jerusalem–Maale Adumim road and were subsequently excavated by the IAA. Driving on this road from Jerusalem, immediately after the exit from the tunnel there is a bend in the road, and on the slope of the hill to the right one can see the excavation of

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\footnote{Israel Ministry of Interior web site, notifications regarding the Planning and Construction Law, plan 11092/8}
a large cave. In the cave, stone vessels were found dating from the 1st century B.C.E. to the 1st century C.E. (Second Temple Period). The cave was identified as having been a source of raw materials and stone vessels used in Jerusalem during that period. In Jewish tradition, stone vessels were believed to be impervious to impurities and therefore some people believe that the vessels were used primarily by the city’s priestly class. Another cave was found in the Palestinian village of Hizma, located to the north of ‘Issawiya and sitting on a soft limestone bedrock similar to that found in the area of ‘Issawiya and A-Tur. This cave also served for the excavation and preparation of stone vessels. Further along on the road, a Byzantine church dated to the sixth century was found. The church was converted to a roadside inn (khan) in the early Muslim period (seventh–eighth centuries). As we can see, these findings did not prevent the construction of the road from Jerusalem to Maale Adumim.

A cave for stone quarrying and the preparation of stone vessels

Summary & Conclusions: Clearing the way from the Old City to Area E1

With the exception of the Jerusalem Walls National Park, the archeological sites described in this document have no more archeological value than many other places around Jerusalem. Ancient monasteries, burial caves, and industrial and agricultural facilities have been found in almost every neighborhood and settlement that has been built in and around Jerusalem in the last forty years. In the neighborhoods of Pisgat Zeve, Gilo, Ramot, and others, entire cities and villages from various periods have been uncovered. Ancient settlements were found, for example, in Pisgat Zeve, a
neighborhood to the north of ‘Issawiya that has a similar desert-frontier landscape. Dozens of agricultural facilities, such as wine presses, sentry structures, ancient roads, and more, were found there as well. These sites were excavated by the Israel Antiquities Authority, following which construction was authorized there.\textsuperscript{12} In Prof. Amos Kloner’s Survey of Jerusalem, some 15 archeological sites were documented in the built-up area of Pisgat Zeev East and Pisgat Zeev Center.\textsuperscript{13} Some of the remains were excavated and incorporated into the open areas of the neighborhood, such as Ras at-Tawil in Pisgat Zeev North or Ras Abu-Ma’aruf\textsuperscript{14}, whose remains can bee seen in the entrance to Pisgat Zeev East. In the same survey, some 13 facilities or archeological sites were identified in the area of the park designated on the Mount Scopus Slopes. The findings in Pisgat Zeev did not lead to the designation of the lands of the neighborhood as a national park.

Over one thousand Second-Temple-Period graves have been identified in the neighborhoods adjacent to the Old City alone.\textsuperscript{15} And yet the authorities have authorized the construction of thousands of residential units, the preservation of open areas, and the paving of roads, along with the preservation of some of the antiquities in these neighborhoods. Urban Development alongside the study of the past is common practice throughout Israel, a land that conceals multiple layers of history under its surface. For example, a Byzantine city was recently discovered in the heart of the city of Beer Sheva. In that case, the archeological excavation did not prevent local construction; a balance was found between the protection of remains and the continuation of urban development.\textsuperscript{16}

The archeological survey conducted of the land designated for the Mount Scopus Slopes national park by the Israel Antiquities Authority, at the request of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, reinforces our opinion that the findings identified in the area provide no justification for the promotion of the place as a national park. It seems


\textsuperscript{13} A. Kloner, “Jerusalem Survey — the North-East Area, Israel Antiquities Authority (1992), pp. 20–94.


\textsuperscript{16} N. Hasson, “A Byzantine City at the Feet of the Beer Sheva Central Bus Station” [in Hebrew], Haaretz, November 23, 2011.
the decision to expropriate the area for a national park stems from apparently political considerations, namely, to enable the creation of uninhabited territorial contiguity from the Old City of Jerusalem, through the Tzurim Valley National Park, towards the Mount Scopus Promenade (which is not designated as a national park) and the area of the eastern slopes of Mount Scopus, up to the area known as E1. Such contiguity will enable a “Palestinian-free” connection between Jerusalem and the settlements to the east, and will effectively cut off the southern West Bank from the northern West Bank.

View from the village of A-Tur towards ‘Issawiya
The Palestinian village of 'Issawiya