Controlling the Narrative:

How National Mythology and Archaeology Shaped Identity in Modern-Day Israel

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Abstract

It's widely acknowledged in anthropology, folklore, and most other disciplines that myth is the backbone of belief. Myth becomes history, which in turn becomes truth, which becomes the bedrock upon which our ideologies and substantive existences are built. The same rhetorical methods that served as a basis for cultural cohesion two thousand years ago work just as well now for binding countries together through national myth. The same act that creates a sense of cohesion also inherently creates a sense of exclusion— the creation of a national founding mythos often creates a myth of exclusion— 'this is *our* land, not theirs.' Archaeology, religion, and the narrative history of cultural cohesion (and division) come together to help explain the way that myth and history interact within the context of state formation and border enforcement. This discussion of narrative, myth, and archaeology's role in crafting identity, history, and national borders points to two main arguments: first; that narrative and storytelling are far more important to history than many believe, and second; that there should perhaps be more oversight and criticism when evaluating the use of archaeology and antiquities departments in governmental affairs. This thesis uses in-depth analyses of actions taken and methodology used at three controversial archaeological sites (the Old City of Jerusalem, the Masada fortress, and Khirbet Qumran) to discuss cultural cohesion and the definition of "homeland" in relation to the modern state of Israel.

Introduction

Every nation has a founding story, a mythos that contributes to national identity and cultural cohesion within its established borders. Whether it's Paul Revere's famous ride and Patrick Henry's "Liberty or death" speech, or Arthur pulling Excalibur from the stone, every extant nation has a myth (or a collection of stories) about how it came to be. Some have a clear basis in truth. Others, like the Greek mythological description for the founding of the city of Athens (in which a goddess is born fully armored from her father's forehead, magically plants a divine olive tree in an argument with a sea god, and eventually declares patronage of the city) … less so.[1] However, in all founding myths, there are a few specific constants, both in the content of these stories and in their purposes. Firstly, founding myths help to create a sense of cohesive cultural connectivity— people can say, 'we all came from this, we are all one people *because* we all came from this.' These myths create a sense of mutual home, a mutual starting point for insiders to a culture— in this case, a nationality.[2]

Secondly, by creating a shared sense of specificity about the founding of a given nation or state, these stories ground the beginnings of a culture not just in a history of geopolitics, but also in a history of belief and iconicity.[3] By gaining a sense of specificity, a more solid foundation is established, upon which a governing body may build a longer-lasting institution. And thirdly, they provide a justification for 'ownership' over an area of land: the act of laying claim to a founding mythology also lays a claim to the land itself, allowing the claimants to erect borders around a

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[1] Albert, Marie-Theres, Roland Bernecker, and Britta Rudolff. *Understanding Heritage: Perspectives in Heritage Studies*. Walter de Gruyter, 2013.

[2] Hill, Jonathan, and Thomas Wilson. "Identity Politics and the Politics of Identities." *Identities* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1080/10702890304336.

[3] Ibid.

nation or state.[4] The same act that creates a sense of cohesion also inherently creates a sense of exclusion— the creation of a national founding mythos often creates a myth of exclusion— 'this is *our* land, not theirs.'

It's widely acknowledged in anthropology, folklore, and most other disciplines that myth is the backbone of belief. Myth becomes history, which in turn becomes truth, which becomes the bedrock upon which our ideologies and substantive existences are built. The same mythopoeic methods that served as a basis for cultural cohesion two thousand years ago work just as well now for binding countries together through nationalist rhetoric— "national myths," so to speak.[5] But what happens when myth and history contradict one another— or when a particular mythos becomes so important and so prevalent that it in fact *overtakes* history in our understanding the question of "what happened" in various regions, which in turn affects the geopolitics of potentially unstable regions? Archaeology, linguistics, and the narrative history of cultural cohesion (and division) come together to help explain the way that myth and history interact within the context of state formation and border enforcement. This discussion of narrative, myth, and archaeology's effect on identity, history, and state formation points to two main arguments: first; that narrative and storytelling are far more important to history than many believe, and second; that there should perhaps be more oversight and criticism when evaluating the use of archaeology and antiquities departments in governmental affairs, because of how easily excavations and their reports can be skewed by underlying agendas (that often stem right back to

[4] Nagel, Joane. "Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture." *Social Problems* 41, no. 1 (February 1, 1994): 152–76. https://doi.org/10.2307/3096847.

[5] Calhoun, Craig. "The Rhetoric of Nationalism." In *Everyday Nationhood: Theorising Culture, Identity and Belonging after Banal Nationalism*, edited by Michael Skey and Marco Antonsich, 17–30. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-57098-7_2.

narrative and identity). Perhaps one the clearest examples in modern history of this development is that of the state of Israel— founded on the basis of cultural cohesion, at the center of a spectacular amount of sociocultural *division,* and with a history based near-entirely on myth, this tiny patch of land in the Middle East is home to a particularly fraught collection of myths and histories relating to the idea of a "homeland."

Homeland Mythology: Nationalist Rhetoric and "Proving" a Mythologized History

In Judaism, that concept of a homeland repeats with slight variations in times of crisis ("extreme Diaspora" to create the concept of a Zion that is appropriate to the crisis contemporary with the myth. Cultural reaction to historical times of suffering can be traced through linguistic shifts in folklore over the course of various translations and popularizations, particularly with regard to the idea of a "homeland." However, in the modern era of globalization, the idea of what constitutes a Jewish cultural homeland has shifted. In tracing the allegorical and historical rhetoric regarding a modern Jewish homeland, one can extrapolate that there are in fact two disparate homelands— the religious homeland, Zion, and a second, less distinct "home" for the culture— one that is still in development even on a conceptual level. But in recent history, the idea of that more metaphysical idea of a homeland has all but disappeared— a phenomenon that coincides directly with a few specific pushes for state development and border enforcement around the modern-day, physical space that we call Israel.[6]

The first time that this idea truly shifted was in the nineteenth century, with Theodore Herzl's writings. Herzl made it known that there needed to be a *state* of Israel and started talking about a

[6] Zerubavel, Yael. *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*. University of Chicago Press, 1995.

physical state as the only true homeland for the Jewish people.[7] This idea was still widely contested for several years though— Herzl was an Austro-Hungarian Jewish Zionist political activist writing in the 1890s. His writings formed the ideological backbone and inspiration for much of the legislature relating to the modern state of Israel (including the Israeli Declaration of Independence). However, it's worth noting that Herzl died nearly fifty years before the current borders were put in place, and committees went through dozens of ideas for where those borders should be drawn (Uganda was considered for a long time) and if they should be drawn at all.[8]

Diaspora Judaism was alive as its own practicing body of the religion, and the idea of needing a physically defined homeland at all wasn't really considered all that essential to Judaism in the first place until the Russian pogroms and the Holocaust occurred practically back-to-back. Herzl's writings were *revived*, and the idea of a physical homeland was brought back into sharp relief as a necessity.[9] We can trace this evolution through looking at Herzl's writings in the context of what other Jewish scholars— and even other Zionist scholars— were writing before, during, and after Herzl's time as a political activist. His language significantly influenced the way that people were talking about that homeland narrative through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, and those influences can be traced through the language of founding documents (and the debates surrounding them) from the current state of Israel.[10] Looking at debate points from the first half of the twentieth century (as documented in newspapers, theological journals, and minutes from debates as recorded by congregation members from flagship synagogues), it becomes clear that the negation of the nonspecific, culturally cohesive version of a homeland

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[7] Herzl, Theodor. "On the Jewish State, 1896," n.d., 2.

[8] Wistrich, Robert S. "Theodor Herzl: Zionist Icon, Myth-maker and Social Utopian." *Israel Affairs* 1, no. 3 (March 1, 1995): 1–37. https://doi.org/10.1080/13517129508719336.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

more or less vanished *because* state formation was on the table as a major debate point.[11] The idea of a literal, physical Zion and the many myths from which it stems became a key turning point in the conversation about state formation and was ultimately a major deciding factor in border placement and enforcement as well.

On paper, it's clear that a primary reason why Israel's borders were placed where they were in 1948 comes down to historical myth, as passed down through generations of Jewish families. From the earliest conversations about where to put a Jewish state, there was a question of whether or not it needed to include Jerusalem— and whether or not it needed to include Masada, a portion of the Dead Sea, and the area that we'd now call Tel Meggido, and of course the Kotel, or the Western Wall in Jerusalem. None of these sites were guaranteed as places that *needed* to be within the borders of a modern iteration of Israel. But each of these sites— especially Masada, the shore of the Dead Sea, and the Kotel— carries with it an enormous depth of cultural history, all linked to myth and generational storytelling that turned out to be so impactful that the magnitude of the stories couldn't be ignored.[12] Additionally, a significant amount of the Christian Zionist support for a Jewish state was so reliant on these sites as a keystone point for their allegiance to the project that the stories couldn't be openly *denied*, either, especially since the area around Jerusalem was well-known for some artifacts indicating biblical accuracy of antiquity. Any Christian claim to the area carried with it a prerequisite Jewish claim, too— all based on stories about what happened at each site, building on one another to create a layer of legitimacy that

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[11] Shelef, Nadav Gershon. *Evolving Nationalism: Homeland, Identity, and Religion in Israel, 1925-2005*. Cornell University Press, 2010.

[12] Bar-Itzhak, Haya. "'The Unknown Variable Hidden Underground' and the Zionist Idea: Rhetoric of Place in an Israeli Kibbutz and Cultural Interpretation." *The Journal of American Folklore* 112, no. 446 (1999): 497–513. https://doi.org/10.2307/541486.

eventually led to the border placement we can find on a map today.[13]

Fig. 1. Map of Israel[14]

However, the certainty in placing Israel where it is was far more certain in 1948 than it would be even fifteen years later. By the 1960s, people had been displaced from the region, grown irritated with international meddling in local affairs, and were deeply irritated with the

[13] Pawson, David. *Defending Christian Zionism*. Anchor Recordings Ltd., 2014.

[14] Map of Israel, GeographyRealm. "Maps of Israel." *Geography Realm*, July 21, 2014. https://www.geographyrealm.com/maps-israel/.

extant border placement. Propaganda wasn't working. The military threat of Israel's very effective army only stirred the pot of building tension.[15] So the Israeli government turned to archaeology, building the importance and authority of Antiquities research and archaeology within the borders of Israel.[16] This move had three major effects: first, an enormous amount of time, resources, and labor were poured into archaeological projects across Israel.[17] Second, most of those projects gained international recognition, and people (mostly Christians) traveled from all over the world (mostly Europe) to help with the excavations of famous biblical and historical sites.[18] Third, every excavation that "proved" one of those generationally-passed-down folktales about Jews having always lived in Israel reinforced the idea that Zion *was* Israel, had always been Israel, and that to budge a border was to displace people from their homeland (never mind that the people living there had displaced others to begin with).[191] Excavating these sites made it possible to use archaeology to reinforce the cultural narrative that had formed the basis for border placement in the first place.[20]

In some cases— the Masada fortress and the Dead Sea Scrolls excavations in particular— the excavation sites were treated and interpreted in a particular way that meshes with state formation and border reinforcement for the express purpose of commingling with geopolitics and national

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[15] El-Haj, Nadia Abu. "Translating Truths: Nationalism, the Practice of Archaeology, and the Remaking of Past and Present in Contemporary Jerusalem." *American Ethnologist* 25, no. 2 (1998): 166–88. https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1998.25.2.166.

[16] Leuenberger, Christine, and Izhak Schnell. "The Politics of Maps: Constructing National Territories in Israel." *Social Studies of Science* 40, no. 6 (December 1, 2010): 803–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312710370377.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Wald, Kenneth D. "Homeland Interests, Hostland Politics: Politicized Ethnic Identity among Middle Eastern Heritage Groups in the United States." *International Migration Review* 42, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 273–301. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2008.00125.x.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

identity.[21] Both sites serve as key examples of how narrative informed archaeology as much if not more than archaeological convention did, and that in turn informed the way that state formation (and arguably *history*) played out, resulting in the current state of Israel that we know today. The specific narratives referenced in the archaeological reports come across as sufficient to outweigh actual events— some archaeologists at the time were so determined to use the excavations to "prove" the legitimacy of the stories, and therefore the legitimacy of the state, that they may have mistreated the site and missed out on potentially useful information along the way.[22] These researchers set out to "prove" the historical value of a myth— but in drawing conclusions before excavating, they may have trimmed down a square peg to better fit into a circular hole. In searching for explicit proof of a founding myth, how much information was glossed over (or skipped entirely) that might have also held value? The question is not only what these researchers may have missed in their quest to 'prove' a myth, but also just how much that idea of a homeland narrative has affected the way that we think about history, culture, and spatial ownership in Jerusalem.

From Zionism to Nationalism: How Rhetoric Shaped The Borders of Modern-Day Israel

The walls of Jerusalem enclose an incredible number of historical sites, each and every one of which is worthy of its own debate in the context of the larger narratives used to sway public opinion. The city has been the basis of several holy wars for good reason—not only does the center of the Old City contain the "City of David" but the surrounding area is also home to the Mount of Olives,[23] which is important to modern and ancient Christian cosmology. The area also

[21] Amossy, Ruth. "From National Consensus to Political Dissent: The Rhetorical Uses of the Masada Myth in Israel." *Rivista Italiana di Filosofia del Linguaggio* 6, no. 3 (2012): 1-15–15. https://doi.org/10.4396/29.

[22] El-Haj, Nadia Abu. "Translating Truths: Nationalism, the Practice of Archaeology, and the Remaking of Past and Present in Contemporary Jerusalem," 168

[23] Gorenberg, Gershom. *The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount*. Oxford

contains the Dome of the Rock, clearly visible from any tall vantage point in the city (particularly the viewing balconies at Hebrew University). The "Golden Dome," as it is colloquially known, was built on the site of the Jewish second temple but is one of the oldest Islamic worship structures in the world.[24] Likewise, the Temple Mount is one of the oldest Jewish structures in the world, associated with both the Binding of Isaac and the physical manifestations of God and the First Temple, but currently functions as a mosque and Muslim pilgrimage site.[25] Even the way that the ancient city is organized (in quadrants: one Jewish, one Muslim, one made up of mostly Armenian immigrants, and one Christian) is defined by who has control of which narrative.[26] Everything boils down to who identifies most with whom, which parts of the land and history they hold onto and claim as symbolic, and why—and it all plays into stories of cultural cohesion (and sort of by default, exclusion—the act of creating an "us" automatically creates a reactive "them").[27]

These narratives are, in the end, still all about cultural cohesion. The whole point of creating these mythologies and then corroborating them through archaeology is to instill in people a sense of belonging to one group, and to one place—the group being the religious or ethnic group, and the place being of course Jerusalem. The topic of ethics in biblical archaeology is an entirely separate question deserving of its own paper,[28] but it is irrefutable that archaeology has been

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University Press, 2002.

[24] Grabar, Oleg. "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem." *Ars Orientalis* 3 (1959): 33–62.

[25] Schein, Sylvia. "Between Mount Moriah and the Holy Sepulchre: The Changing Traditions of the Temple Mount in the Central Middle Ages." *Traditio* 40 (ed 1984): 175–96. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0362152900003913.

[26] Kohl, Philip ed. *Nationalism, Politics and the Practice of Archaeology*. Cambridge University Press, 1995.

[27] Kelman, Herbert C. "The Interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian National Identities: The Role of the Other in Existential Conflicts." *Journal of Social Issues* 55, no. 3 (1999): 581–600. https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00134.

[28] And a number of excellent ones have been written!

weaponized[29] in the creation of national and cultural myths for the purpose of claiming Jerusalem as parts of different cultures—in fact, several archaeological interpretations (those regarding the Temple Mount and the Dome of the Rock in particular) can almost be read as a tug-of-war over Jerusalem on the basis of the "us"/"them" ownership question where Jerusalem is concerned.

[29] I recognize that my use of this term may seem inflammatory and perhaps a bit strong—however, I maintain that this word is also the most accurate choice to describe the true nature of how archaeology has been used in this region. As this paper will go on to explain, various authorities and agencies have used archaeology to force people from their homes, to stake claims on border-adjacent land, and to instate claims of nationhood that actively exclude large groups of people from citizenship and cultural acceptance—using people and social groups as weapons and as weapon fodder, both physically and verbally. That said, the field of archaeology itself is not at fault here—however, the narratives built up around these excavations has led to the kind of incendiary actions that make a word like "weaponize" applicable in this scenario. In Israel in particular, there is a direct connection between rhetoric/law/storytelling and actual military action. Archaeology has often acted as the bridge between these kinds of conflicts, allowing for the construction of a cultural "other" as well as a reinforcement for military nationalistic ideals.

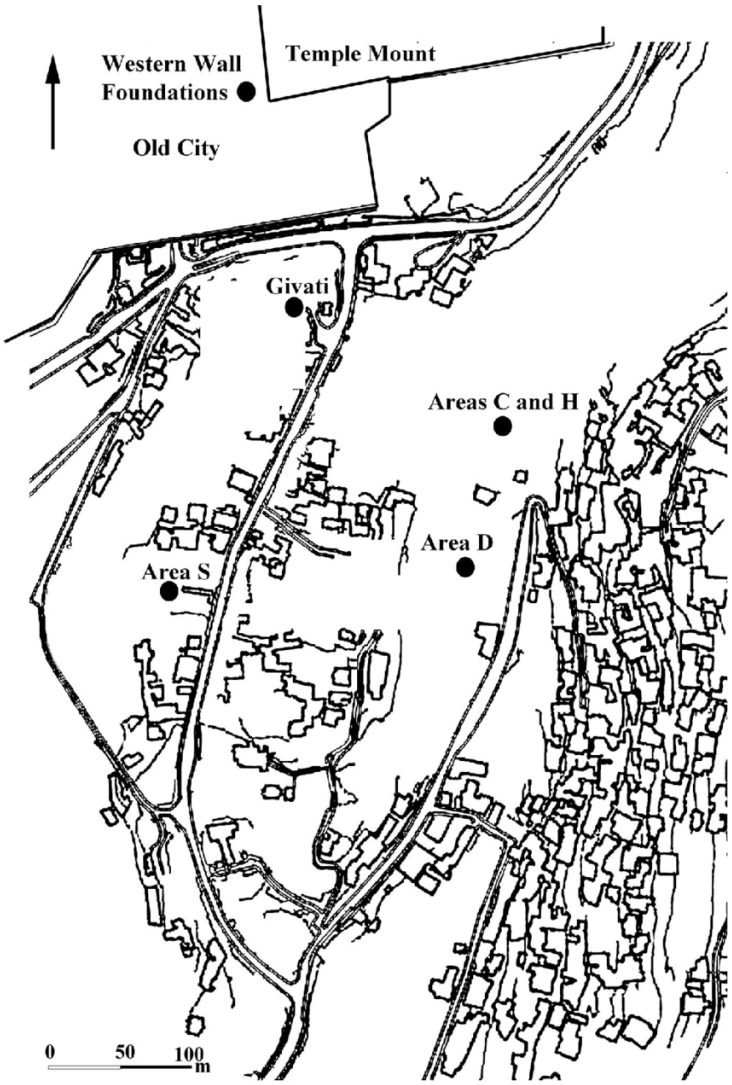

Fig 2. Map of the City of David[30]

The point of creating (and continuing to ensure the longevity and prosperity of) a Jewish State is less about biblical adherence than it is about the idea of a grounding place— a place to belong. Durkheim[31] wrote about the necessity of cultural cohesion and collective identity. What he called "anomie" is undeniably one of the key elements that help construct a rhetorical basis for

[30] Uziel, Joe. "Figure 1 Map of the City of David, Showing the Location of Various..." Accessed April 5, 2021. https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-the-City-of-David-showing-the-location-of-various-excavations-with-Bronze-and_fig1_317369952.

[31] raised Jewish— kind of irrelevant here, but I'm noting it anyway in case I want to come back to it

state formation, border establishment, and all of the conversations that follow. Collective identity, cultural cohesion, and a grounding locale— a "homeland"— with the addition of a story to pull all of these elements together is what creates a homeland narrative, and a homeland narrative, or a founding myth, is what creates the basis for one group making a heritage claim of ownership. That "heritage" is key as well— by including that element, a group may frame themselves less as invaders and more as refugees returning home. This framework is certainly evident with the 1948 establishment of the modern-day state of Israel.

Herzl and the World Zionist Organization

Israel, Theodor Herzl is known as Chozeh HaMedina, or the "visionary of the state[32]." He wasn't the first Zionist theorist, or even activist— any number of politically active Jews before Herzl were supporters of the idea that a Jewish state should exist. However, he did provide a concrete, practical, actionable framework for what that state might look like— one that is quite close to what the modern Jewish state operates on now. However, despite the fact that Herzl is mentioned by name in the Israeli Declaration of Independence[33], he wasn't necessarily talking about Israel as we know it.

At the first Zionist Congress (the first full meeting of the World Zionist Organization, of which Herzl was president) in Basle, delegates from Vienna, Austria, Galicia, Bukobina, Russia, France, Romania, Bulgaria, Servia, and Germany met to discuss the necessary steps for establishing a Jewish homeland. The Basle Program, which suggested Palestine as a home for the eventual Jewish State, was presented and agreed upon at this first meeting in 1897. However, the World Zionist Organization was not all that tightly tied to this location— it was a matter of

[32] Nadav Gershon Shelef, 'Evolving Nationalism: Homeland, Identity, and Religion in Israel 1925-2005," 80
[33] Wistrich, Robert S. "Theodor Herzl: Zionist Icon, Myth-maker and Social Utopian

heritage, yes, but the delegates all agreed that having a Jewish State at all was far more important than ensuring that Jerusalem or Masada fit within its borders. Indeed, only six years later, at the Sixth Zionist Congress, Herzl himself proposed the Uganda Scheme, which replaced the area in Palestine previously up for discussion with Uganda. The British Colonial Secretary at the time, Joseph Chamberlain, suggested instead Usain Gishu, an isolated area in modern-day Kenya.[34] Spurred by the pogroms in Russia and rising antisemitism in Europe, Herzl agreed and brought the idea before the rest of his organization. The Uganda Scheme (now a bit of a misnomer, as Usain Gishu was clearly in Kenya, but the Zionists kept the name) was formally accepted, but caused a rift in the Organization, as some delegates thought that shifting plans was a betrayal of the Basle program, and were concerned about future compromises[35] (following the rift and its resultant arguments, the British withdrew their offer of Kenyan land, resulting in the Uganda Scheme falling through forever).[36] However, it is worth noting that their protests had less to do with the biblically adherent, heritage-honoring insistence that Zion be placed in the specific area of the Levant that the Basle Program suggested and more to do with less religious/ over being in debt to the British, and above all, a refusal to compromise an already agreed-upon plan. Herzl and his organization wanted a Jewish state, but were well aware that a Zionist Jewish state and a biblical homeland didn't have to be one and the same— a thought process that was far from directly aligned with the definition of statehood as defined by modern-day Zionist movements and the current Israeli borders.[37] Like the Jewish thinkers and theorists of old, the World Zionist

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[34] Nadia Abu El-Haj, 30

[35] Leuenberger and Shcnell, 41

[36] Kenneth D. Wald, Homeland Interests, Hostland Politics: Politicized Ethnic Identity among Middle Eastern Heritage Groups in the United States, 21

[37] "The Jews' State: A Critical English Translation - Theodor Herzl - Google Books." Accessed October 22, 2020. https://books.google.com/books?id=jwmzIbNY8gUC&newbks=0&printsec=frontcover&pg=PP2&dq=theodo

Organization held to the idea that the biblical borders need not be the center of the future Jewish state in order to be considered a homeland for the Jewish people— safety and refuge were the point, not biblical claims of heritage.[38]

While dedication to the Basle Program was part of the reason for the later insistence on Israel's current location in the Levant, there were several other factors at play. The Jewish people needed a safe place to go, that much was clear— with pogroms only getting worse and antisemitism on the rise across most of Europe, there was no question that Jewish people were quickly turning into refugees across the continent.[39] However, the development of a Jewish State hardly happened in a vacuum. One must take into account the fact that there were two world wars between Herzl's Congress and the later establishment of modern-day Israel. By 1948, Western attitudes had shifted dramatically towards the state of Europe and the prevalence of antisemitism.[40] Meanwhile, the age of empire was quickly drawing to a close, dramatically limiting the amount of land available for the establishment of new states, while European attitudes soured even further towards an already volatile, mostly Muslim middle east.[41] And of course, Jews around the world were grappling with the questions and uncertainty surrounding the construction of a post-Holocaust religious, ethnic and cultural identity.[42]

By the 1940s, anti-Islam sentiment in Europe had been brewing for a while, especially in

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r+herzl+the+jewish+state&hl=en&source=newbks_fb#v=onepage&q=theodor%20herzl%20the%20jewish%20state&f=false.

[38] Sternhell, Zeev. *The Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State*. Princeton University Press, 2009.

[39] Zerubavel, Yael. "The Death of Memory and the Memory of Death: Masada and the Holocaust as Historical Metaphors." *Representations*, no. 45 (1994): 72–100. https://doi.org/10.2307/2928603.

[40] Bar-Tal, Daniel, and Dikla Antebi. "Siege Mentality in Israel." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 16, no. 3 (June 1, 1992): 251–75. https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(92)90052-V.

[41] Gelvin, James L. *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.

[42] Yael Zerubavel, . "The Death of Memory and the Memory of Death: Masada and the Holocaust as Historical Metaphors," 15

Britain, where many Muslims were starting to travel as a result of British colonial involvement in South Asia. In 1947, the Partition of India split India and Pakistan into two independent dominion states, explicitly along religious lines.[43] The partition displaced more than ten million people, resulted in large-scale violence, and created a distinct atmosphere of hostility that still affects India-Pakistan relations now, more than seventy years later.[44] The Partition bears quite a few similarities to the establishment of Israel in the Middle East: a government (or coalition of governments) imposing external influence and force to erect a border where one previously did not exist, in order to establish a safe space for one religious-ethnic group and intentionally exclude, displace, or otherwise disenfranchise a Muslim population.[45] The similarities only increase when one realizes that the area now known as Israel was only available as an option for a Zionist state because of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, which allowed Britain to occupy Palestine until the establishment of Israel in 1948.[46] Jewish people needed a safe place to go, the British government likely wanted one more Muslim group out of power, and the allies on the winning side of the Second World War were desperate to avoid further conflict with one another. Additionally, countries with significant and influential Christian populations had an ulterior motive in establishing Israel in its current location: according the Christian New Testament, the Jewish people living in the city of Jerusalem is a prerequisite for the second coming of the

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[43] Petrie, Cameron A., Hector A. Orengo, Adam S. Green, Joanna R. Walker, Arnau Garcia, Francesc Conesa, J. Robert Knox, and Ravindra N. Singh. "Mapping Archaeology While Mapping an Empire: Using Historical Maps to Reconstruct Ancient Settlement Landscapes in Modern India and Pakistan." *Geosciences* 9, no. 1 (January 2019): 11. https://doi.org/10.3390/geosciences9010011.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Kohl, Philip L., Mara Kozelsky, and Nachman Ben-Yehuda. *Selective Remembrances: Archaeology in the Construction, Commemoration, and Consecration of National Past.s* 50-78.

[46] Firestone, Reuven. *Holy War in Judaism: The Fall and Rise of a Controversial Idea*. Oxford University Press, 2012.

messiah.[47]

Of course, once the British and Americans started pulling away and a second generation began to come of age in modern-day Israel, a biblical founding narrative wasn't enough anymore— questions of cultural ownership were immediately raised (as they must be, as soon as any two homeland narratives conflict… which they were bound to do, given that most of the delineations within this particular area of the Levant were initially drawn on religious lines). With declining Western influence came a need to defend the newly established border, and to make a stronger case than just biblical stories. Zionists and Israeli nationalists alike turned to archaeology as a source of evidence to better strengthen the rhetoric they were using as the basis for state formation.[48] Archaeology (with particular respect to biblical antiquity) became an arm of the state even before the 1978 establishment of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Starting in the early 1950s, the bourgeoning Israeli government began funding dozens of archaeology projects, all in areas connected to biblical stories or to Jewish historical heritage myths— the same national mythologies that resonate so strongly with Jews around the world.[49]

Even if Israel's borders had been established, they were far from secure. Providing verification and support for those mythologies through the science- and history- backed discipline of archaeology served to legitimize the Jewish claim of heritage, which in turn significantly strengthened Israel's position in the eyes of the rest of the world (particularly important given that its position amongst its neighbors in the Middle East was and remains tenuous at best).[50] Government funded archaeological projects served one more purpose in the name of

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[47] Merkley, Paul Charles. *The Politics of Christian Zionism, 1891-1948*. Psychology Press, 1998.

[48] Kohl, Philip L. *Nationalism, Politics and the Practice of Archaeology*. 100-120.

[49] McGuire, Randall H. *Archaeology as Political Action*. University of California Press, 2008.

[50] Ibid.

sociopolitical messaging: by ensuring that they had a direct hand in the archaeological reports coming out of the country, the early Israeli government was able to establish a consistent story and claim to various key sites and cities throughout Israel.[51] And of course, whoever funded and led the excavation got the final say on what was or wasn't important— which stories were true and which were not. By commandeering the excavations and any evidence pulled from the dirt, the early Israeli government crafted a strong narrative that relied on physical evidence and historical markers just as much as on mythology and belief.[52] Religious fervor combined with archaeological evidence allowed key players in the Israeli government to craft a narrative that left Israel's position as close to unassailable as possible given the instability in its surrounding region.[53]

The Exodus Narrative: How Diaspora Judaism Helps Define Israeli Nationalism

Several ethnographic studies[54] have shown that a majority of modern Jews think of Jerusalem as the center of the holy state of Israel, and that Israel is in turn the birthplace and birthright of the Jewish people. This narrative is, of course, made popular by the Israeli government's discourse on the subject as it relates to modern Zionism, but it goes back to before the fight for an official geographic marker for the state of Israel as we know it today. But as far as the biblical Jews of the Torah were concerned, there *was* no physical, official Zion until the book of Deuteronomy— that's four out of the five canonical Torah books that do not acknowledge an official bordered

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[51] Meskell, Lynn. "Imperialism, Internationalism, and Archaeology in the Un/Making of the Middle East." *American Anthropologist* 122, no. 3 (2020): 554–67. https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13413.

[52] Silberman, Neil Asher. "From Masada to the Little Bighorn: The Role of Archaeological Site Interpretation in the Shaping of National Myths." *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites* 3, no. 1–2 (January 1, 1999): 9–15. https://doi.org/10.1179/135050399793138699.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Reiter, Yitzhak. "Narratives of Jerusalem and Its Sacred Compound." *Israel Studies* 18, no. 2 (2013): 115–32. https://doi.org/10.2979/israelstudies.18.2.115.

Zion. Through the first several crises that theoretically plagued the ancient Jews through the origin story of the religion, the rhetoric surrounding a homeland is remarkably vague, bordering on entirely indistinct. Some scholars, like William Safran, Leonard Rogoff, and Yossi Shain have discussed the implications of the vague rhetoric surrounding this subject and have arrived at similar conclusions regarding the ancient concept of what a God-given home for the Jewish people as a whole really means.[55] These scholars, as well as a few others, agree that through the majority of history, Jews have actually regarded "Zion" as more of a concept that a physical place— the idea was that a homeland could shift, and home was really where the people were, rather than any specific place with restrictive or prescribed borders.[56]

The very nature of an exodus story helps to confirm this ideal— the Jewish people were not born out of a place that was meant to be a homeland. We are not given a specific city where Abraham lived, only the name of a mountain in Moriah where he nearly sacrificed his son.[57] We are not given the specifics of how the Jews arrive in Egypt, only the knowledge that there were already Jews living in Egypt when the harsh pharaoh took over (we aren't even given specific historical contexts to tell us which pharaoh is the one in the story).[58] Today, when modern Jews go through a Passover seder, the Haggadah includes the words, "next year in Jerusalem." However, the story *in* the Haggadah does not discuss Jerusalem. In fact, the Israelites in the Exodus story have never heard of Jerusalem, because *it doesn't exist yet*. "Eretz Yisrael," or the Land of Israel, is discussed, but only as an indefinite area of space that can effectively be defined

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[55] Shain, Yossi. "Jewish Kinship at a Crossroads: Lessons for Homelands and Diasporas." *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 2 (2002): 279–309. https://doi.org/10.2307/798184.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Bible Gateway. "Bible Gateway Passage: Genesis 22:2 - New International Version." Accessed January 12, 2021. https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2022%3A2&version=NIV.

[58] Bible Gateway. "Bible Gateway Passage: Genesis 12:15 - New International Version." Accessed January 12, 2021. https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2012%3A15&version=NIV.

as "a place free of oppression that happens to be near the Sea of Reeds, the desert, and a river."[59] The Land of Israel only gains more definition with a line much later in the Torah (the book of Numbers, and then it's echoed again in Deuteronomy), that the borders of Israel will expand as the people of Israel do.[60] Even this wording is extraordinarily vague, suggesting that the borders are as yet completely indistinct. One can even take this analysis a step further, and note that at the time of the book of Exodus— the slavery and subsequent escape from Egypt being the first true crisis to threaten the Jewish people (and only the Jewish people) as a whole— the idea of a homeland wasn't physical at all, and instead was a myth intended to give the people something to hold onto. A homeland became a patch of land that people *could* call home, as opposed to *the* land that people would and do call home.[61] Even in the book of Deuteronomy, when there is more formal discussion of the borders of the land, there is still an implied fluidity— most researchers, most notably Paul R. Williamson, note that the biblical definition of the Promised Land is *not* specific to one pre-bound locale, and matches up more closely with the idea that the land in which the Jewish people choose to settle would become the promised land, rather than the Jews traveling for decades to find a specific maple out area of land that has been promised and set aside.[62]

This interpretation of the story matches the ways that many religious scholars have interpreted the text of the Torah over the years. Even as specific cities like Jerusalem or Megiddo (or even Kirbet Quiyafeh) grew and became culturally significant and recognizable places on a

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[59] "Shemot (Exodus): Chapter 15." Accessed January 12, 2021. https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/shemot-exodus-chapter-15.

[60] "D'varim (Deuteronomy): Chapter 19." Accessed January 12, 2021. https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/d-varim-deuteronomy-chapter-19.

[61] Meskell, Lynn. "Imperialism, Internationalism, and Archaeology in the Un/Making of the Middle East." 558

[62] "Abraham, Israel and the Nations - Google Books." Accessed January 12, 2021. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Abraham_Israel_and_the_Nations/CmwL9EuYpO0C?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Paul+R.+Williamson+israel&pg=PA5&printsec=frontcover.

map, the debate about of a distinct, bordered Jewish Homeland didn't really become particularly prevalent until after the destruction of the second Temple— until this point, people had believed that Jews could pray just as effectively anywhere, and that one place was not necessarily holier than another for having been steeped in history, unless the literal presence of God blessed the spot.[63] The original intent of the Torah writings seems, in fact, to point to an emotional homeland rather than a physical one as far as religious worship is concerned—the transition from one to the other was an intentional shift, requiring pilgrimage and tithing for "true" worship. However, the destruction of the second Temple was a turning point for a few specific reasons— most notably, that the Jewish people stopped believing in the ability to rebuild a home on that particular plot of land, and thus the idea of the Diaspora was truly born.[64]

Of course, the *idea* of the Diaspora existed before the Temple destruction, but it wasn't exactly the mass ideology of exile that it has become. The Jews who had worshipped at the second Temple were the ones who formed the Diaspora community, and with it, the liturgical interpretations of the scriptures that had already been written. It is in *this* context that we get the idea of identity being tied to a specific place, which makes perfect sense in terms of what Diaspora came to mean, and how that influenced the concept of a homeland.[65] To be 'in Diaspora' implies that there was once a home, and now the people do not, or cannot, live there, which in turn implies that that home has specific borders. This cross-section of history is where we get the idea of a specifically bordered homeland. More than that, this time in history is also where a

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Avni, Sharon. "Homeland Tour Guide Narratives and the Discursive Construction of the Diasporic." *Narrative Inquiry* 23, no. 2 (January 1, 2013): 227–44. https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.23.2.01avn.

[65] Safran, William. "The Jewish Diaspora in a Comparative and Theoretical Perspective." *Israel Studies* 10, no. 1 (2005): 36–60.

significant bit of the discourse relating to monuments and morality surrounding Jerusalem comes from. It is the era of the Temple destruction that led to orthodox Jews praying at the foot of the Temple Mount instead of the Kotel (or the Western Wall), or at the Wall instead of at a synagogue— practices that are still continued today.[66] These sites became monuments, holy places that are considered holier than the already-technically-sacrosanct buildings around them. The idea of being able to pray anywhere, because anywhere could be a homeland, was gone. The definition of "home" transferred from people to a specific place— at least for a while.

Even within Judaism, one must also consider the extreme divide between Diaspora Jews and Israeli Jews—that is to say, the difference between how the city is presented to tourists versus the way that it appears to those who live there. It should come as no surprise that to those who live in the city, the religious significance of Jerusalem as a whole is not nearly as rabid as it is for those who come only to visit, mostly on Birthright trips or other such pilgrimage-oriented programs. Visiting Jews frequently see the entirety of the city as ultimately holy and intrinsically Jewish—an image that has been carefully curated by the primarily Jewish leadership of the country as a whole, and an idea that has been upheld by the religious practice of many Orthodox Jews who live in the area, who actively believe that they are fulfilling a critical religious requirement by living in the 'Holiest of Cities' .[67] A major idea for the founding of the country in the first place was to provide a safe place for Jewish people to go—the only one of its kind in the world, in line with Herzl's vision. The combination of that idea and the sheer quantity of religious sites means that *of*

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[66] Silberman, Neil Asher. "If I Forget Thee, O Jerusalem: Archaeology, Religious Commemoration and Nationalism in a Disputed City, 1801–2001." *Nations and Nationalism* 7, no. 4 (2001): 487–504. https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-8219.00029.

[67] Noy, Chaim. "The Political Ends of Tourism: Voices and Narratives of Silwan/the City of David in East Jerusalem." The Critical Turn in Tourism Studies. Routledge, June 17, 2013. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203806586-10.

course Jerusalem must feel like an extremely Jewish place to be—Israel shuts down on Friday afternoons and during the day on Saturdays, in accordance with the Jewish observation of Shabbat.[68] Frequently, tourists come to visit and watch in wonder as, on a Friday night, Jerusalem grows quiet, except for groups gathering to pray at the Kotel or at various synagogues in the area. It almost doesn't matter that many people who live in Jerusalem consider themselves secular Jews and therefore do not observe Shabbat, or that many people live in the city who are not Jewish at all; the whole city shuts down anyway—not as a result of any particular mandate, but as a matter of convenience and standardization across the city's various social spheres.

In a series of interviews with Jewish American adults aged 20-28, the feeling of "living history" in Jerusalem, with views of historical and biblical locations, and the idea of "walking where the ancients once walked" all created significant sentiments of what subjects described as "awe," "belonging," and "legitimacy."[69] Perhaps these reasons, in addition to a narrative that goes back to the founding of the country, help contribute to the overall feeling that Israel is a place where all Jews can belong. Biblical archaeology as a field started in Jerusalem, and has become increasingly important for Jewish historians, archaeologists, and clergy over the past several decades. However, the concept of biblical archaeology belongs to groups outside of Judaism as well—we must also take into account Christian Zionism, which crosses over a great deal with Diaspora Judaism in terms of significant artifacts and history, but differs fundamentally when it comes to the reasoning behind a need for a Jewish state.[70] It may also be worth noting that where Christian Zionists are concerned, the archaeology and history is important and significant, but there is also a general consensus that it "belongs" to Jewish people as much if not more than to

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[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Gelvin, James L. *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Christians, and is, surprisingly enough, a place of agreement for the two groups (or at least is perceived that way near-universally by the Christian Zionist groups; there are more dissenting opinions on the matter from both Diaspora and Israeli Jews).[71]

The third main group that we must consider is of course Islam— the fairly large group of Arab citizens of Israel and the surrounding countries, from whom originates most of the pushback against the narrative that Israel is a Jewish state, and simultaneous pushback against Christian Zionist movements. These arguments play out on a national political stage, but also in the archaeological and social narratives of the country as well. The primary significant separation here primarily comes down to the idea that the land contained within Israel's borders is as much home to important events in Arab history and Muslim religious contexts as it is to Jewish or Christian ones, and therefore cannot be claimed wholly and exclusively as a Jewish state.[72] It makes sense, then, that in the push to prove that narrative, there have been attempts (of varying degrees of legitimacy) to disprove the existing Jewish-state narrative. Some attempts to discredit the narrative include archaeologists noting farmland stratigraphy layers within areas that have been claimed as sections of biblical sites. These researchers have indicated that though the areas might have served as the stage for events described in the Torah or Bible, they were also home to generations of Muslim farmers, prior to the current authorities in Israel pushing Palestinians out of the area.[73] Other examples of this pushback include looking specifically at the remains of building foundations, looking at the areas that would have been entrances and exits, pointing out

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[71] Gawrych, George Walter. *The Albatross of Decisive Victory: War and Policy Between Egypt and Israel in the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli Wars*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2000.

[72] Yiftachel, Oren, and Professor Department of Geography and Environmental Development Oren Yiftachel. *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.

[73] Silberman, Neil Asher, and David B. Small. *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*. A&C Black, 1997.

that the doors and courtyard designs match traditional architectural designs associated with Islam, not with Judaism, even inside of the walls of the City of David.[74]

The Politicized Archaeology of Jerusalem

Other historical cities have stood the test of time, but few have such fraught, ongoing battles of ownership over the area. Even now, so much social, political, and intellectual (not to mention physical) conflict rages over this one city, constituting one of the longest, most drawn-out holy wars in history, fought between so many groups that alliances and affiliations become intertwined in a way that is near impossible to disentangle. Drawing from a combination of interviews, historical documents, and existing ethnographies, this paper seeks to better understand how archaeology became a key element of modern-day narratives of cultural ownership over Jerusalem. In archaeological and ethnographic research conducted in and about Israel, cultural biases tend to split along three axes.

The first is perhaps the most obvious—the axis of religion. Within religion, the first of the categorical splits to pay attention to is obviously Judaism. A continuous consistent insistence on relying on the religious foundation of Israel as a Jewish state has led to a careful crafting of a Jewish "creation" narrative for the country as a whole—the center of Jerusalem (known colloquially and in some cases, officially, as "The Holy City"[75]) is described quite literally as the City of David.[76] The walls of the ancient Temple Mount are considered to be "holier than those of

[74] Noy, Chaim. "The Political Ends of Tourism: Voices and Narratives of Silwan/the City of David in East Jerusalem." The Critical Turn in Tourism Studies. Routledge, June 17, 2013. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203806586-10

[75] First, 'Anat, and Eli Avraham. *America in Jerusalem: Globalization, National Identity, and Israeli Advertising*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2009.

[76] Greenberg, Raphael. "Towards an Inclusive Archaeology in Jerusalem: The Case of Silwan/The City of David." *Public Archaeology* 8, no. 1 (February 1, 2009): 35–50. https://doi.org/10.1179/175355309X402745.

the nearest synagogues,"[77] and in many cases, people will go to the Kotel (the western wall) to pray rather than attending a synagogue at all. Before one can reach the Kotel though, one must first walk past a series of crumbling Jerusalemite brick walls, each with its own extreme amount of historical significance—every building has a plaque, signed off on by the Israel Antiquities Authority, most of them claiming some degree of biblical significance.[78] There are tunnels that run under the city, one of which is marked off as the one that King David most likely used to sneak into the city. Every other block of the Old City is like this, filled with so much biblical history that it becomes nearly impossible to argue with. Archaeologists, politicians, and religious authorities have worked so hard to make the city feel ancient and significant for modern-day Jews that it is almost impossible not to feel that way about Jerusalem. So much mythology (most of it with a base starting point in biblical or Kabbalistic Judaism) has been built up around places like the Kotel, the Temple Mount, the Walls of the City of David, and the tunnels that run underneath the city itself that it's effectively impossible to see the city as anything but the modern-day continuation of the city described in ancient Jewish texts, thus making the city intrinsically Jewish even in a modern context.[79]

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[77] Gonen, Rivka. *Contested Holiness: Jewish, Muslim, and Christian Perspectives on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem*. KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 2003.

[78] Dueck, Alvin. *Between Jerusalem and Athens: Ethical Perspectives on Culture, Religion, and Psychotherapy*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013.

[79] It's worth noting as well that the City of David ("David's Citadel," to some) was built well over 1,000 years after the famous King David might have lived.

Fig 3. Photo of the Old City[80]

Even within Judaism, one must also consider the extreme divide between Diaspora Jews and Israeli Jews—that is to say, the difference between how the city is presented to tourists versus the way that it appears to those who live there. It should come as no surprise that to the secular residents of the city, the religious significance of Jerusalem as a whole is not nearly as aggressive as it is for ultra-Orthodox practitioners or those who come only to visit, mostly on Birthright trips or other such pilgrimage programs. Visiting Jews frequently see the entirety of the city as ultimately holy and intrinsically Jewish—an image that has been carefully curated by the primarily Jewish leadership of the country as a whole.[81] A major idea for the founding of the

[80] Abrams, Zalman. *Photo of the City Of David. "City of David - Tours of Biblical Jerusalem."* Jerusalem, Israel. 2016.

[81] Noy, Chaim. "The Political Ends of Tourism: Voices and Narratives of Silwan/the City of David in East Jerusalem." The Critical Turn in Tourism Studies. Routledge, June 17, 2013.

country in the first place was to provide a safe place for Jewish people to go—the only one of its kind in the world. The combination of that idea and the sheer quantity of sites that carry with them religious importance means that of course Jerusalem must feel like an extremely Jewish place to be—Israel shuts down on Friday afternoons and during the day on Saturdays, in accordance with the Jewish observation of Shabbat.[82] Frequently, tourists come to visit and watch in wonder as, on a Friday night, Jerusalem grows quiet, except for groups gathering to pray at the Kotel or at various synagogues in the area. It almost doesn't matter that many people who live in Jerusalem consider themselves secular Jews and therefore do not wholly observe Shabbat , or that many people live in the city who are not Jewish at all; the whole city shuts down anyway—not even as a result of any particular mandate, just as a matter of convenience and standardization across the city's various social spheres.

In a series of interviews with Jewish American adults aged 20-28, the feeling of "living history" in Jerusalem, with views of historical and biblical locations, and the idea of "walking where the ancients once walked" all created significant sentiments of what subjects described as "awe," "belonging," and "legitimacy."[83] Perhaps these reasons, in addition to a narrative that goes back to the founding of the country, help contribute to the overall feeling that Israel is a place where all Jews can belong. Biblical archaeology as a field started in Jerusalem, and has become increasingly important for Jewish historians, archaeologists, and clergy over the past several decades. However, the concept of biblical archaeology belongs to groups outside of Judaism as well—we must also take into account Christian Zionism, which crosses over a great deal with Diaspora Judaism in terms of significant artifacts and history, but differs fundamentally when it

https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203806586-10.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid.

comes to the reasoning behind a need for a Jewish state.[84] It may also be worth noting that where Christian Zionists are concerned, the archaeology and history is important and significant, but there is also a general consensus that it "belongs" to Jewish people as much if not more than to Christians, and is, surprisingly enough, a place of agreement for the two groups (or at least is perceived that way near-universally by the Christian Zionist groups; there are more dissenting opinions on the matter from both Diaspora and Israeli Jews).[85] This quasi-friendship between the groups exists, of course, only at the surface—at their cores, these are two mutually exclusive ideologies, as one requires the ultimate destruction of the other in order to claim success.

The third main group that we must consider is of course Islam— the fairly large group of Arab citizens of Israel and the surrounding countries, from whom originates most of the pushback against the narrative that Israel is a Jewish state, and simultaneous pushback against Christian Zionist movements. These arguments play out on a national political stage, but also in the archaeological and social narratives of the country as well. The primary significant separation here primarily comes down to the idea that the land contained within Israel's borders is as much home to important events in Arab history and Muslim religious contexts as it is to Jewish or Christian ones, and therefore cannot be claimed wholly as a Jewish state. It makes sense, then, that in the push to prove that narrative, there have been attempts (of varying degrees of legitimacy) to disprove the existing Jewish-state narrative. These attempts are extensive-- Some instances see archaeologists noting farmland stratigraphy layers within areas that have been claimed as sections of biblical sites, indicating that though the areas might have served as the

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[84] Gelvin, James L. *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.3

[85] Gawrych, George Walter. *The Albatross of Decisive Victory: War and Policy Between Egypt and Israel in the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli Wars*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2000.

stage for events described in the Torah or Bible, they were also home to generations of Muslim farmers, prior to the current authorities in Israel pushing Palestinians out of the area. Other examples of this pushback include looking specifically at the remains of building foundations, looking at the areas that would have been entrances and exits, pointing out that the doors and courtyard designs match traditional architectural designs associated with Islam, not with Judaism, even inside of the walls of the City of David.

The other groups in this area of the Levant that could also sway the narrative according to archaeology include the Druze, Arab Christians, Bahai and of course the generally unaffiliated who claim secularity but have lived in the area for several generations and fall into the general category of Arab citizens of the area.[86] Though some of the archaeological narrative might, and in all honesty probably should address these groups, they do not make up a statistically significant percentage of the population of modern-day Israel to effectively claim a place in the bigger-picture cultural narrative, and as a result are not considered with much weight in this particular study. Some might consider this omission an oversight, but in a discussion about cultural narrative and who controls that story, it arguably makes more sense to focus purely on larger demographics with the audiences and motivations to actively sway the narrative as it is presented today.

The narratives that people are trying to use archaeology to confirm are not limited to just Judaism and Christianity. The walls of Jerusalem enclose an incredible number of historical sites, each and every one of which is worthy of its own debate in the context of the larger narratives being used to sway public opinion. The city has been the basis of several holy wars for good

[86] Hammack, Phillip L. *Narrative and the Politics of Identity: The Cultural Psychology of Israeli and Palestinian Youth*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2011.

reason—not only does the center of the Old City contain the "City of David" but the surrounding area is also home to the Mount of Olives,[87] which is important to modern and ancient Christian cosmology. The area also contains the Dome of the Rock, clearly visible from any tall vantage point in the city (particularly the viewing balconies at Hebrew University). The "Golden Dome," as it is colloquially known, was built on the site of the Jewish second temple but is one of the oldest Islamic worship structures in the world.[88] Likewise, the Temple Mount is one of the oldest Jewish structures in the world, associated with both the Binding of Isaac and the physical manifestations of God and the First Temple, but currently functions as a mosque and Muslim pilgrimage site.[89] Even the way that the ancient city is organized (in quadrants: one Jewish, one Muslim, one made up of mostly Armenian immigrants, and one Christian) is defined by who has control of which narrative.[90] Everything boils down to who identifies most with whom, which parts of the land and history they hold onto and claim as symbolic, and why—and it all plays into stories of cultural cohesion (and sort of by default, exclusion—the act of creating an "us" automatically creates a reactive "them").[91]

"Us and Them": Crafting Cultural Cohesion Narratives

These narratives are, in the end, all about cultural cohesion. The whole point of creating these mythologies and then corroborating them through archaeology is to instill in people a sense of

[87] Gorenberg, Gershom. *The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount*. Oxford University Press, 2002.

[88] Grabar, Oleg. "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem." *Ars Orientalis* 3 (1959): 33–62.

[89] Schein, Sylvia. "Between Mount Moriah and the Holy Sepulchre: The Changing Traditions of the Temple Mount in the Central Middle Ages." *Traditio* 40 (ed 1984): 175–96. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0362152900003913.

[90] Kohl, 120.

[91] Kelman, Herbert C. "The Interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian National Identities: The Role of the Other in Existential Conflicts." *Journal of Social Issues* 55, no. 3 (1999): 581–600. https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00134.

belonging to one group, and to one place—the group being the religious or ethnic group, and the place being of course Jerusalem. The topic of ethics in biblical archaeology is an entirely separate question deserving of its own paper, but it is irrefutable that archaeology has been weaponized in the creation of national and cultural myths for the purpose of claiming Jerusalem as parts of different cultures—in fact, several archaeological interpretations (those regarding the Temple Mount and the Dome of the Rock in particular) can almost be read as a tug-of-war over Jerusalem on the basis of the "us"/"them" ownership question where Jerusalem is concerned.

Any visitor may appreciate the physical beauty of the City of David, as well as its massive, action-packed history of both violent and bureaucratic conflict. But the modern-day iteration of those battles has played out through the discipline of archaeology and history, as much if not more than through physical violence, because of the cultural narratives crafted along the way. In true cultural-anthropological fashion, the question of this history almost doesn't matter as much as the intricacies of the stories people tell to defend their side of the ownership question. If modern-day archaeology is to dominate the story, then the evidence would seem to suggest that Jerusalem should be a Jewish city, owned by Jewish people, and that's certainly the version of the story that Israeli Jews, Diaspora Jews, and Christian Zionists have latched onto with an astonishing amount of ferocity.[92] However, when one separates out that archaeology from its nationalist context, the details leave significant gaps, and those gaps are where defenders of other positions have dug their heels in—leaving rhetorical space for Palestinians to claim that the land is in fact a Muslim city, to be led and occupied by Muslim leaders. Similar claims can be made by some Christian evangelists regarding the land near the Holy Sepulcher. The controversies only

[92] Wald, 281

multiply, the more research one does on the sheer number of cultural mythologies and sources of cultural cohesion (and therefore, inherently, dissonance) that have been built up around Jerusalem—and that's without considering the stacks of mass graves and ceremonial burials visible at the bases of the ruins near the same tunnels that are discussed in the context of the City of David. These graves could belong to any culture (though most likely are Roman in nature, based on nearby clues), but neither the IAA nor any independent academic groups have put significant energy or funding into uncovering them to find out.[93] The most likely reason why? The answers matter little in terms of deciding who really "owns" the city of Jerusalem.

The Relationship Between Archaeology and Nationhood

In the end, the archaeology is crucial to understanding the constant debates between cultures over ownership of the city. However, it is not crucial to the debates themselves. These arguments are deeper-rooted than the technical "truth" or what the archaeological record has potential to believe. The archaeology is a façade for an argument rooted in identity politics and delineations drawn between cultures long before modern archaeology entered the picture. However, the ways in which archaeology has been utilized to prove and subsequently disprove various claims is extraordinarily intriguing. Even if the research that has been done has its flaws, it is worth the deeper look into how the discipline has been used (and possibly misused) in areas where the history is so ancient but at the same time so relevant in a contemporary context of conflict. Perhaps the archaeology is sound, perhaps it is not. In the end, our focus in the context of modern issues should be the question of how that research is used and manipulated in order to tell certain stories, and the answer to that can be found easily enough. It is, in effect, the same argument as that at the basis of the hundreds of holy wars fought over the ancient city—in this case, taking

[93] Zerubavel, 1995

place through papers and journals in the academic sphere rather than through spears or machine guns. Even if there is no objective truth to be gained from archaeological research in this region, the archaeological record has been absolutely key to the development of national and cultural mythologies based around the development of cultural cohesion, designed to bring individual people together within groups, and then drive those groups even further apart, for the end goal of strengthening pre-extant claims over Jerusalem.

The other groups in this area of the Levant that could also sway the narrative according to archaeology include the Druze, Arab Christians, Bahai and of course the generally unaffiliated who claim secularity but have lived in the area for several generations and fall into the general category of Arab citizens of the area.[94] Though some of the archaeological narrative might, and in all honesty probably *should* address these groups, they do not make up a statistically significant percentage of the population of modern-day Israel to effectively claim a place in the bigger-picture cultural narrative. As for how these different biases have affected the archaeology and history itself, one needs to look no further than Yigael Yadin's influence as the lead archaeologist on the popular and widely accepted main narrative in Israel, with particular respect to both Jerusalem and to (somewhat) nearby Masada. Significant evidence suggests that Yadin chose to ignore evidence that would have been helpful in an archaeological context in favor of actively pursuing evidence to support a specific story—that is to say, he started with specific biases in mind and then went out with the intent to prove his own preconceptions, rather than looking for any kind of objective historical truth.[95] There is a lot of logical and political reasoning for why Yadin and the IAA might employ such questionable methodology, controversial and problematic

[94] Hammack, Phillip L. *Narrative and the Politics of Identity: The Cultural Psychology of Israeli and Palestinian Youth*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2011.

[95] Leuenberger, and Schnell. 805-8.

though it might be from an academic perspective: Of course, the desperate want for "proof" of the Jewish ownership over Jerusalem has never been limited to people living outside of Israel's borders. Even today, Israel's population is made up of people who have lived most of their lives surrounded by constant conflict, as well as immediate descendants of Holocaust survivors, now coming of age in very different circumstances than those that their grandparents or parents might have known. Israel still struggles to maintain its own foothold on existence in the modern geopolitical sphere. The idea of a "national mythology," or an origin story, would have been extremely attractive to the Israeli population by the time that Yadin's work was becoming popular—even more so considering that the discipline of archaeology provides some form of legitimacy to the ownership claimed by the Old Testament or the Torah, creating an extra layer outside of those strictly religious texts.[96] Reviving the legend through its history and archaeology was a surefire way of keeping the story alive and maintaining a sense of nationalism in a country under constant threat, where outside forces insist that the people living there had no right to nationhood.[97]

That claim regarding the right to nationhood is an example of the kind of debate about national mythology in which the field of archaeology has been galvanized as a sort of weapon. Where one side purports to have a claim to the land using history or empirics as the background for their claim, the other side of the argument uses the archaeological record to reject that claim and maintain their own foothold in the area.[98] Of course, any claims regarding the archaeological record assume that the research involved in *creating* that record was unbiased and conducted with

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[96] Silberman, Neil Asher. "From Masada to the Little Bighorn: The Role of Archaeological Site Interpretation in the Shaping of National Myths." *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites* 3, no. 1–2 (January 1, 1999): 9–15. https://doi.org/10.1179/135050399793138699.

[97] Kohl, Kozelsky, and Ben-Yehuda. 180-182.

[98] El-Haj, 171.

integrity to begin with—and that is perhaps the biggest issue at the core of modern biblical archaeology, and indeed perhaps the biggest issue regarding national mythologies as well. After all, what is a cultural narrative about belonging but a chance to prove one's own origin story? And when the prize to be won at the end of that battle is the city that many people claim to be "the holiest of holies,"[99] level on descriptive grounds with representations of God, does that reward not incentivize cheating within the narrative as well? Most biblical scholars will, of course, insist that their work is entirely based in proper archaeological practice, but there can be no denying that a majority of scholars in fact began with a specific myth in mind and then set out with the intent to prove that myth, rather than starting at ground zero (so to speak).[100] The same is true for scholars on every side of the split axis of religious affiliation in Israel.Following the establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948, U.S/European support for the new state led to an expansion of any already extant archaeological expeditions through the 1950s and 60s, as well as an influx of even more excavations. Biblical archaeology was already taking place under the British Mandate, but the establishment of Israel created a mass fervor for more— larger sites, larger crews, more areas to explore, more *stuff* to dig up… and of course, more stories to "prove" true.

It's worth considering the economic aspects of archaeology— and equally importantly, the relationship between archaeology, history, and tourism. On the one hand, archaeological expeditions bring in teams of people from other countries (primarily the United States and United Kingdom, in this case), though in all probability that angle wasn't enough to significantly affect the Israeli economy. However, on the other hand, active archaeological digs, particularly biblical

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[99] Zerubavel, Yael. *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*. University of Chicago Press, 1995.

[100] Jongeling, B. *ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY. A Classified Bibliography of the Finds in the Desert of Judah, 1958-1969*. Brill, 1971. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004350083_010.

archaeology, brings tourism with it. As an archaeologist who worked on the Tel Megiddo excavation told me, "when someone says they've uncovered a wall of Solomon's Palace or one of the Temples, and then they can actually back that claim up, even a little, even if they aren't sure yet, the minute they say they think they found it, everyone wants to come and see it." I brushed off that statement the first time I heard it, but he wasn't wrong. The vast majority of the most popular tourist sites in Israel are archaeological sites, nearly all of which have religious significance. Tel Megiddo, the Temple Mount (and the Western Wall, also known as the Kotel), and Masada are particularly popular with tourists.

When I went on a Birthright trip to Israel in 2018 (more on that later, because yes, the name of the program is significant with regard to the kinds of narratives that have been crafted around Jewish identity and Israel-related nationalist/Zionist rhetoric), I discovered that *every* Birthright trip dedicates nearly a full day to Masada, and every trip also necessitates a trip to pray at the Kotel— the western wall of the old Temple in the City of David (a section of Jerusalem which, in theory, houses the site where the biblical King David lived and where he tunneled into the city to avoid a combat which he would most likely lose). When I visited, the City of David was utterly flooded with people— thousands of bodies squished together in narrow alleyways and along wooden constructions that allowed people to traverse rocky ground, going in and out of museum-like cases around bricks and pieces of old friezes and facades. The lines blurred quickly and easily between what was real historical material, pulled from dig sites and treated for long-term light exposure, and what was made of plastic to approximate the authentic materials, what was a real tunnel that King David might have used to tunnel into the city thousands of years ago versus what was a construction made of wood and lined with rocks specifically for tourists like me to walk along and feel like we were 'experiencing history.' It took me longer than it should have to realize

that nearly every single person on these paths— in the entire City of David who wasn't behind a cart, working as a tour guide, or playing music on a street corner— was a foreigner, mostly from the United States and from Europe. I have a distinct memory of looking around and realizing that I could head English, Spanish, Portuguese, German, something I couldn't understand but suspected at the time might have been Norwegian, but the one language I couldn't hear any large group speaking was… well, Hebrew. The sheer amount of money changing hands (entrance tickets to museums, food at carts and stands, translators, tour guides, souvenirs, maps, pamphlets, all for sale at varying prices) just to walk through this space, which operates as a pilgrimage site for thousands, maybe even millions of people around the world, was… staggering.

Antiquities, lest anyone forget it, is an industry. Archaeologists, historians, geologists, theologians, and museum authorities all have to get paid. In Israel, where no ground can be broken on any construction project without first calling the local Antiquities Authority, the local (and sometimes national) government is involved in any archaeological discovery. All of these aspects of historical or archaeological sites contribute to local and national economies, through a combination of religious tourists (and people making pilgrimages— Jerusalem itself houses the Golden Dome, the Temple Mount, and the Holy Sepulchre within a few miles of one another[101]) and international groups' interest in any artifacts that surface through the process of a dig. And of course, the Israeli government's involvement in each and every excavation and discovery provides a near monopoly on biblical archaeology. After all, whoever controls the dig sites controls the narrative. The City of David, the Masada fortress site, and the dig that led to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls are all strong examples of this control at work. Each of these

[101] "Historical Maps and Atlases - Index." Accessed January 12, 2021. http://jewishhistory.huji.ac.il/links/maps.htm.

three cases was a highly publicized archaeological dig that led to a reveal of significant biblical and/or cultural significance to Jewish or Christian Zionist groups around the world. Additionally, each of these cases also coincides with accusations of potential mistreatment of sites in direct effort to match with the narrative that best meshed the government-embraced, academia-endorsed, popular tourism-oriented line.

The Use and Misuse of Archaeology: "Proving" Nationalist Rhetoric

It's worth noting that the excavations of the City of David (the Old City) and of Tel Megiddo started *before* 1948, when the area now known as Israel was under the British Mandate. These excavations took place not as part of a push for Jewish cultural cohesion but rather as the result of European Christian Zionism. Christian biblical archaeologists led many of the first excavations at Tel Megiddo and in the Old City. Christian Zionists (primarily from the U.K) had been using this less-than-academically-sound methodology within archaeological sites in the Levant in service of the establishment of an official Judeo-Christian state. To be clear, "Judeo-Christian" is a term I use hesitantly for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that Christian Zionists cared about establishing a Jewish presence in history, but particularly in the first half of the twentieth century, their goal was to establish a Christian state in the Levant— proving a history of Jewish habitation in the area through biblical evidence was key to proving the reality of *Jesus*, which would be a strong foundation not just for Christian stewardship of the land (as the British Mandate billed itself) but for British sovereignty (inherently Christian, in other words) as well, through the same kind of cultural cohesion narrative as Jewish/Israeli nationalists would later use to push for ownership. That said, their aims had much in common with what Jewish Israeli nationalists would look for later: signs of biblical confluence and physical evidence of biblical stories. Even the reasoning behind these excavations (and museum-like displays) has quite a bit in common with

the way that post-1948 sites were treated-- the sites were chosen not strictly because initial surveys suggested there might be interesting finds or remnants of long-dead civilizations, but rather because tales passed down from one generation to the next among locals indicated similarities with the terrain and with biblical stories. Archaeologists worked to contextualize physical clues within biblical narratives, pushing stories and artifacts together like puzzle pieces and simply forcing them together or trimming edges that fit imperfectly.

The Masada Controversy

This style of treatment is particularly true for the Masada fortress site, near the Dead Sea and the Israel-Jordan border. This site, like Jerusalem's Old City, is also an area of archaeological interest that has garnered significant controversy throughout history. The cultural narrative that many people associate with the site has influenced choices in the "official" history and may have even influenced the archaeological excavations of the site itself. Masada has become a touchstone of religious connection for many Jews, but the site and its history are far more complex than that. The initial 1963-1965 Masada excavations led to multiple discrepancies between the archaeological reports and the initial survey. They seem to ignore potentially important evidence in favor of supporting one specific narrative— one designed to cement a cultural and historical connection to the Masada site, thus increasing support of Israel as a nation from people in the Diaspora. One of the elements that makes the Masada site so interesting in the context of this study, however, is that it has more to do with history and cultural cohesion narratives in the service of state formation.

Awareness of Masada's history and cultural legacy goes back to well before the mid-60s excavation. Titus Josephus Flavius (born Yosef ben Matiyahu) wrote the first version of the siege story to become popular—and popular indeed it became. His narrative, written circa 66-70CE,

details the story of Jewish zealot fighters, *sicarii,* who waged the last battles for the freedom of the ancient kingdom of Judea—a battle against the Romans, a conflict fought valiantly and eventually lost.[102] Josephus's story is a tragic tale of sacrifice, in which the men of the Masada fortress drew lots to decide who would become the "death-givers." These men would kill their own families, burning the storerooms, and desecrating the synagogue, before eventually killing one another, before the Roman legion camped below could get the chance to do so. In Josephus's version of the story, two women and five children (of which he claims to be one) escaped the siege, only to be captured by the Romans as slaves. Josephus converted, and was eventually adopted into the Flavius lineage, intentionally abandoning his Jewish heritage. He published the story of the siege as a part of his "life history," an autobiography that makes a point of highlighting the "generosity" of the Roman legion.[103] Reversed loyalty aside, Josephus's narrative became the story that defined the Masada siege, creating a legend that lasted through the centuries, told in whispered tones among Diaspora Jews over the centuries.[104]

Through various iterations of the story, the temple-desecrators and death-givers became heroes who would rather die than give up their home and their religion.[105] The story particularly appealed to exiled Jews in times of trouble—the narrative was most frequently re-told and re-popularized in times of trouble and heightened antisemitism.[106] Some examples include versions

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[102] Cohen, Shaye J. D. *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Vita and Development As a Historian*. BRILL, Leiden, 2002.

[103] Atkinson, Kenneth. "Noble Deaths at Gamla and Masada? A Critical Assessment of Josephus'accounts of Jewish Resistance in Light of Archaeological Discoveries." *Making History*, January 1, 2007, 347–71.

[104] Magness, Jodi. "A Reconsideration of Josephus' Testimony about Masada." *The Jewish Revolt against Rome*, January 1, 2011, 343–59. **https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004216693_014.**

[105] Green, Arnold H. "History and Fable, Heroism and Fanaticism: Nachman Ben-Yehuda's 'The Masada Myth.' *Brigham Young University Studies* 36, no. 3 (1996): 403–24.

[106] Kolitz, Zvi. "MASADA — SUICIDE OR MURDER?" *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought* 12, no. 1 (1971): 5–26.

from early fourteenth-century England, published not long after the mandate that pushed the Jews out of Britain. Some modern-day biblical researchers speculate that it was written by a Jewish scholar who remained in Britain but in hiding, but the authorship of this particular version of the story remains unknown.[107] Another was written in Ladino in the 1500s, during the time of the Inquisition.[108] Unsurprisingly, the story was re-popularized once more in the 1940s during Hitler's rise to power. It was passed around through Resistance movements in Europe, notably making its way back to the Judean desert before 1948, when the lines that created the borders for the modern-day state of Israel were officially drawn.[109] Of course, Masada was within the borders of Mandatory Palestine, and the Jews already living in the Levant would have expected Masada to become part of an eventual Jewish state. However, the narrative ended up playing into the geopolitics of the area more deeply than many might have expected.

When modern-day tourists and student groups visit the Masada site, they walk the "snake path" before sunrise, following the steps of the zealot soldiers who once defended the mountain fortress. Guides inform visitors about the men who founded the modern state of Israel, who walked in the footsteps of their forefathers and trod the Roman ramp and twisting stone paths of the Herodian fortress under cover of night. These men climbed not for the view of the sunrise at the top, but for fear that they might be shot if they were seen.[110] In the years leading up to the founding of Israel, and as the "never again" mantra gained momentum among the global Jewish community following the Holocaust, the story of the Masada siege and the fortress' last defenders

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[107] Kalimi, Isaac, and Yiṣḥāq Qalîmî. *Early Jewish Exegesis and Theological Controversy: Studies in Scriptures in the Shadow of Internal and External Controversies*. Uitgeverij Van Gorcum, 2002.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid.

[110] "Masada National Park – Israel Nature and Parks Authority." Accessed January 22, 2020. https://www.parks.org.il/en/reserve-park/masada-national-park/.

became newly popular once again. The men who walked through the fortress and killed their friends, peers, and families were deemed not cowards, but brave men who did what had to be done.[111] They protected their faith above all else — a powerful message to people who had just survived the Holocaust and the second world war.[112] In 1944, Shimon Peres (who would later become president and Prime Minister of Israel) led an expedition into the Negev in conjunction with multiple Israeli political groups. That expedition formed the basis for a push to ensure that Masada would located solidly inside the borders of the new state of Israel , as opposed to remaining a part of a future Palestine or Jordan.[113] When Peres joined the Haganah in 1947, an early precursor to the Israeli Defense Forces (I.D.F), he brought his new motto with him: "For Masada." Even today, that motto persists as the rallying cry for the I.D.F.[114]

The Masada site carries extreme cultural significance, both for Israeli citizens and for Diaspora Jews. Guides encourage visitors to imagine themselves in the place of the *sicarii*, as well as the death-givers.[115] The experience of entering the fortress on a sanctioned tour is dizzying. One climbs the stairs at night, in the cold empty desert with the path lit only by a couple of flashlights and maybe a torch. Visitors reach the top just in time to watch the sunrise over the mountains and the desert, as the more religious visitors and most of the guides strap on *tefillin* and begin to pray. The experience is a highly spiritual one for some, and simply a beautiful vista for others. For most, however, it is the realization of a story told time and time again, through

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[111] Spero, Shubert. "IN DEFENSE OF THE DEFENDERS OF MASADA." *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought* 11, no. 1 (1970): 31–43.

[112] Yael Zerubavel, 85-87

[113] Leuenberger and Schnell. 832..

[114] Paine, Robert. "Masada: A History of a Memory." *History and Anthropology* 6, no. 4 (January 1, 1994): 371–409. https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.1994.9960835.

[115] Zeitlin, Solomon. "The Sicarii and Masada." *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 57, no. 4 (1967): 251–70. https://doi.org/10.2307/1453654.

multiple generations, through childhood. Indeed, many Jewish adults do not remember the first time they heard the story; they simply know that they know it. The drive through the desert and the hike to the fortress gates is more than a mere visit. It is a pilgrimage[116]—or at least that is what history has built it up to be (the very fact of Masada's popularity is odd, given that Judaism traditionally downplays most martial or militaristic stories—the fall of Jericho is a footnote. The Maccabean revolt resulted in a minor holiday that has only recently grown popular to offset the commercial success of Christmas, yet Masada is one of the most popular religious tourism destinations in the Levant).

[116] My use of the word "pilgrimage" is intentional here—popular treatment of the site is ritualistic, with visitors rising before sunrise to reach the fortress at dawn, climbing the 'Snake Path,' and praying once they reach the top. Readers fascinated by this particular point may want to check out Sylvia Schein's work in particular, as well as Yehonatan Abramson's and Raphael Greenberg's). In the meantime, however, back to archaeology and its implications.

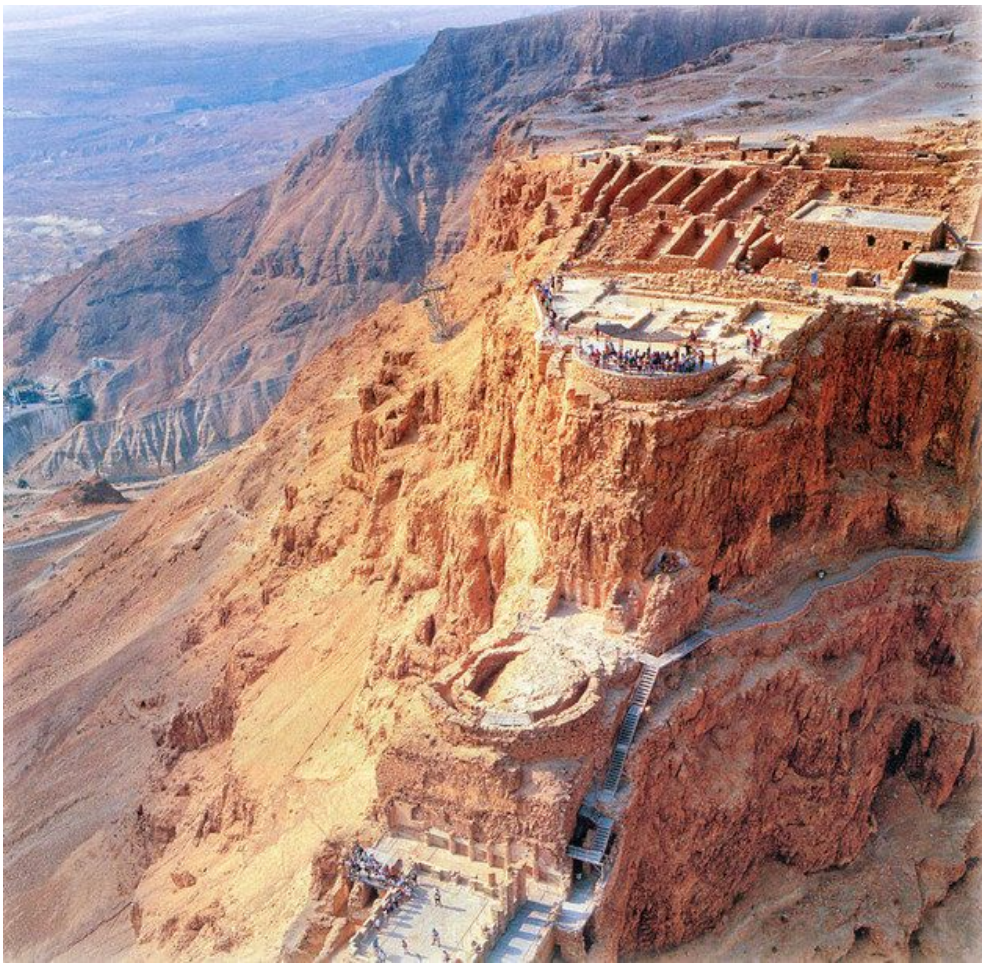

Fig. 4. Photo of Masada[117]

Most of what modern researchers know about the Masada site stems from the archaeological expedition discoveries of Yigael Yadin. The list of primary sources on the subject of Masada is limited. There is Josephus's narrative, which is controversial for several reasons, including Josephus's defection to the Roman forces. The text's autobiographical format, published well after the events of the actual siege, is also problematic. Memory is fallible, particularly when shaded by a change in loyalty. If we choose to rely on more recent, archaeology-based research, then the main primary source would become the initial survey of the Masada site, conducted in the late

[117] Melford, Michael. "Herod's Three-Tiered Palace Cascade (Masada)," Photograph. Tel Aviv, Israel 2018

1950s before archaeologists were even allowed to put shovels into the ground.[118] The survey reveals the physical structural underpinnings of the Masada legends but also offers far more archaeological significance about the site itself. There are water cisterns that connect to a fairly elaborate hydraulic system of Roman design. There is a section of dwelling-spaces that were almost certainly slave quarters. Some spaces functioned as women's quarters, where textile work, cooking, and artistry likely took place.[119] Any of these sections of the survey would have been worthy of close examination, and detailed excavation reports.

However, the only reports from the Masada site easily accessible to the public today are those from Yigael Yadin's archaeological excavations in the mid-1960s (see Fig. 3). Yadin would go on to an illustrious academic archaeology career, followed by a significant political career within the Israeli government. He may have been considering his future political trajectory when he made excavation choices that left some of his contemporary academics puzzled. Most archaeologists would consider a survey like the one conducted in the 1950s and look for a midden pit, a water source, and hydraulics systems to get a sense of how the fortress functioned, who lived there, and how the different layers of the archaeological record all interacted with one another. Yadin took a different approach entirely: he zeroed in on the Masada myth and the Herodian fortress design, looking almost exclusively at the religious and military history of the fortress and paying very little attention to the cisterns, the women's quarters, or the slave quarters.

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[118] Smallwood, E. Mary. "Yigael Yadin: Masada: Herod's Fortress and the Zealots' Last Stand. Pp. 272; 212 Ill., 20 Maps and Plans. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966. Cloth, 63s. Net." *The Classical Review* 17, no. 2 (June 1967): 228–29. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009840X00324441.

[119] Patrich, Joseph. "The Buildings of Masada - E. NETZER, MASADA III. THE YIGAEL YADIN EXCAVATIONS 1963-1965, FINAL REPORTS: THE BUILDINGS, STRATIGRAPHY AND ARCHITECTURE (Israel Exploration Society and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem1991). Xxviii + 655 Pp., 79 Plans, 945 Ill. NIS 240.00." *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 6 (ed 1993): 473–75. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1047759400011880.

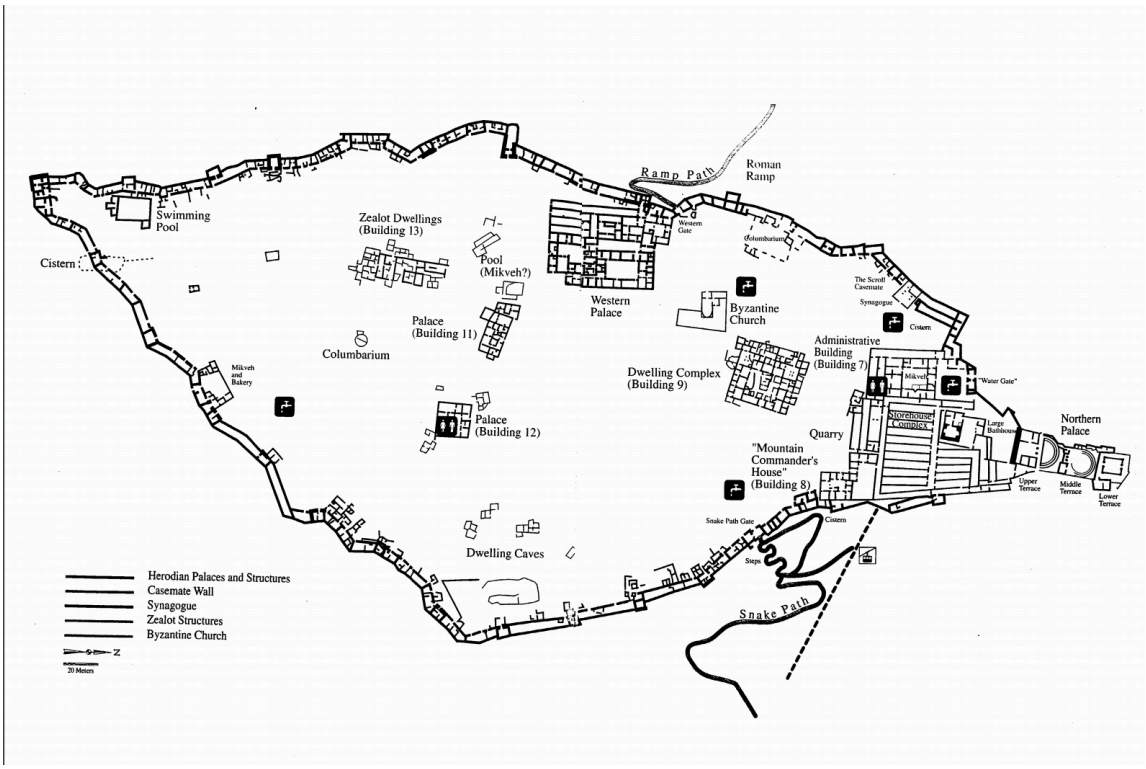

Fig. 5. Map of Masada Excavation Site[120]

Yadin's reports offer extraordinary insight into the lives of the people who lived at the fortress in the middle of the first century C.E. if one assumes, as Yadin does, that the only people who lived within the fortress were "men of fighting age." He goes into extreme detail in his description of the barracks, noting how many men could have fit, what weapons were fashioned in the space (knives, scythes, and bows and arrows, for the most part). His team excavated the synagogue space, marking out where a *mechitzah* might have gone, outlining the space for an altar, for a wall, for benches or pews or chairs.[121] Yadin's report devotes several paragraphs to the

[120] Centre, UNESCO World Heritage. "Masada." UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed April 5, 2021. https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1040/.

[121] Yadin, Y. "Masada and the Limes." *Israel Exploration Journal* 17, no. 1 (1967): 43–45.
———. "The Excavation of Masada—1963/64: Preliminary Report." *Israel Exploration Journal* 15, no. 1/2 (1965): 1–120.

storerooms and the multiple ways in which they might have been ruined—burning, flooding, urination—and then questions how the temple might likewise have been desecrated.[122] He spent months searching for and eventually finding a bowl full of stones, each with a recognizable Hebrew name etched into it. In theory, these rocks were the lots drawn to decide who would be the death-givers, if one accepts the version of the story popularized throughout history.[123]

These rocks are perhaps the root of the most significant controversy of all surrounding Yadin's reports—that he deliberately sought evidence to provide confirmation of the popularized Masada legend, rather than starting at a point of net neutral knowledge and using archaeology to build a case for an evidence-based narrative. Yadin's work at Masada was not low-profile—he published his reports in Hebrew and in English, releasing his findings in archaeological journals around the world, with particular attention to American and British academic and religious journals.[124] At first, readers were delighted that someone had been allowed to break ground at the Masada site. Any knowledge gleaned from the hard rock of the fortress was uncontested and uncontestable, and Yadin's work effectively remained untouchable for the first few years after the excavations began.

It did not take long before other researchers—including people who had never been to the Masada site, and indeed had never set foot in Israel—began to notice discrepancies between the

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[122] Collins, John J. Review of *Review of Masada: The Excavations 1963-1965, , , ; Masada I: The Aramaic and Hebrew Ostraca and Jar Inscriptions, Yigael Yadin, ; The Coins of Masada, ; Masada II: The Latin and Greek Documents, , , ; The Documents from the Bar-Kochba Period in the Cave of Letters: Greek Papyri, ; Aramaic and Nabatean Signatures and Subscriptions, Yigael Yadin*, by Joseph Aviram, Gideon Foerster, Ehud Netzer, Yigael Yadin, Joseph Naveh, Yaacov Meshorer, Hannah M. Cotton, et al. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110, no. 2 (1991): 340–43. https://doi.org/10.2307/3267096.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Hamilton, R. W. "Y. Yadin. Masada: Herod's Fortress and the Zealots' Last Stand. Translated from Hebrew by Moshe Pearlman. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966. Pp. 272. Numerous Illus. (Many in Colour), Incl. Maps and Plans. £3 3s." *The Journal of Roman Studies* 57, no. 1–2 (November 1967): 272–73. https://doi.org/10.2307/299387.

initial survey and Yadin's work. Some critics had never even seen the survey and had issues with Yadin's methodology. A British excavation team working on the Roman encampment about halfway down the mountain from Masada found evidence of nomads in the desert as well as Jewish settlements concurrent with the years that the zealots would have been defending Masada as the last outpost of Judea.[125] Such a finding would indicate that some Jews were peacefully coexisting with the Romans, which did not fit Yadin's narrative. Yadin's reports never acknowledge those findings, although the sites are close enough together that there almost certainly should have been some crossover between the two in the archaeological record. The peaceful desert nomads might not have made their way up the mountain or into the fortress. However, a place as isolated as Masada would have been highly likely to trade with nearby communities for material goods, none of which show up in the archaeological record. Archaeologists from around the world clamored for more detailed work pertaining to the cisterns and the hydraulics of the fortress, as the pipes of the Herodian bathhouse spaces were extraordinarily well-preserved due to the dry desert climate. Such preservation would have allowed excavators to examine key elements of Herodian engineering and design in extraordinary detail, and any well-trained archaeologist (which Yadin certainly was) would have known that information to be true. But Yadin never released his notes on the subject. Indeed, work on the cistern area excavation did not begin until after 2010 (and is still incomplete as of 2020). Other archaeologists, including Biblical researchers with a focus on proving the 1948-bordered Israel to be the true holy land, spent the latter half of the twentieth century uncovering details of ancient daily life and ancient politics through pottery, through textiles, and through ancient, semi-

[125] Richmond, I. A. "The Roman Siege-Works of Masàda, Israel." *The Journal of Roman Studies* 52, no. 1–2 (November 1962): 142–55. https://doi.org/10.2307/297886.

preserved scraps of parchment.[126] Yadin did no such thing at Masada, even though the conditions for preservation were far better on top of a mountain in the desert than almost anywhere else in the region.[127]

The various criticisms of Yadin's work sparked a quiet but persistent debate in the worldwide archaeological community. Through the 1960s, archaeologists from around the world gained access to Yadin's published works, and as Israel gradually opened up its archaeological sites for increased global access, many of these professionals began to push back against Yadin's declarations. A Dutch scholar named Bastiaan Jongeling, who conducted archaeological and historical research in the Negev between 1958 and 1969, wrote about interactions between small societal groupings in the desert—the same nomadic groups and small settlements that the British excavation uncovered. Jongeling expressed concern that Yadin's excavation did not make any reference to other dig sites in the area, or to other scholars' work—Jongeling's own included. Scholars in the United States and Britain echoed that concern, particularly those writing for archaeological journals. Solomon Zeitlin, an archaeologist who worked and researched on behalf of the University of Pennsylvania in the 1960s, was vocal in his statement that Yadin "pushed aside" suggestions from outside consults, and "pursued a variation of truth" instead of pushing for solid archaeological evidence.[128] H. Darrell Lance, whose research (concurrent with Yadin's) was published in the *Cambridge Review,* where he found Yadin's "conclusions… adequately reasoned," but expressed concern on an academic level at Yadin's refusal to allow outside

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[126] Firestone, Reuven. *Holy War in Judaism: The Fall and Rise of a Controversial Idea*. Oxford University Press, 2012 Always include place of publication in book citations.

[127] "Masada and Its Scrolls - ProQuest." Accessed January 22, 2020. https://search.proquest.com/openview/427aed960b0838080e36e567e696a0f8/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=1816616.

[128] Zeitlin, Solomon. "The Sicarii and Masada." *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 57, no. 4 (1967): 251–70. https://doi.org/10.2307/1453654.

researchers onto the Masada site.[129]

Academicians were not the only people to grow irritated with the exclusivity and even carelessness of Yadin's research. Even while the initial excavations were underway, the Masada site's politics were clear. Some criticism devoted to the site was rooted in anger at the mistreatment of Palestinian inhabitants of the land, forced out by the establishment of the Israeli state. Attempts like Yadin's to make Masada a cornerstone of modern Jewish and Israeli existence received significant pushback from various scholars (most notably, Barnet Litvinoff's impassioned case against Yadin's work as published in the *Journal of Palestine Studies*).[130] By the early 1970s, multiple Christian Zionist organizations and publications had sided with Yadin, and staunchly defended his treatment of the site.[131] These articles, or at least the research contained in them, leaked directly over into the world of Biblical archaeology, continuing to perpetuate Yadin's argument. In the years directly following the publication of Yadin's initial findings, articles appeared in the *Israel Exploration Journal*[132] that shared evidence with Yadin's own work in *The Biblical Archaeologist*,[133] which in turn contained articles in common with the *Harvard Theological Review*.[134] By 1975, the Masada site had become a hotbed of academic debate—but confusingly, a majority of those arguments fizzled out with significantly less heated articles around the year 1980. Perhaps the Zionist archaeologists and theologians won the day, or perhaps

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[129] Lance, H. Darrell. "The Royal Stamps and the Kingdom of Josiah." *Harvard Theological Review* 64, no. 2–3 (July 1971): 315–32. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816000032570.

[130] Litvinoff, Barnet. "The Fall from Grace of Zionism." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 10, no. 1 (1980): 185–87. https://doi.org/10.2307/2536502.

[131] Merkley, Paul Charles. *The Politics of Christian Zionism, 1891-1948*. Psychology Press, 1998.

[132] Ben-David, A. "Ha-Middah Ha-Yerushalmit: An Archaeological Solution of a Talmudic-Metrological Problem." *Israel Exploration Journal* 19, no. 3 (1969): 158–69.

[133] Yadin, Yigael. "The Temple Scroll." *The Biblical Archaeologist* 30, no. 4 (December 1, 1967): 135–39. https://doi.org/10.2307/3211021.

[134] Lance, 1971.

Yadin's political influence had grown too great to argue with (which seems unlikely, as there was plenty of criticism of Israel in academic circles); evidence on the subject is unclear. It is worth noting that even as people remained aware of the controversy surrounding Masada and Yadin, the rate of publication about that controversy slowed to a halt within twenty years of Yadin's work on the site.

Even as the voices of criticism against Yadin's research grew louder, the archaeologist in question never swayed from his stance that he was conducting the best research possible, that the Masada legend was true and uncontestable, and that the archaeological record supported his findings and the story. Writers like Nachman Ben-Yehuda have made academic careers from dissecting Yadin's archaeological work, but Yadin's narrative somehow remains the dominant one in the history of Masada.[135] The litany of criticism and questions surrounding Yadin's work eventually died down. Aside from Ben-Yehuda's work, most of the pieces that argue *any* of Yadin's work were published before 1980. Most pieces published afterward are from religious or political journals, which take issue with which country assumes ownership of Masada, as opposed to questioning the archaeological work. Whether Yadin's archaeology was properly handled or a matter of finding evidence to support a nationalist myth did not seem to matter. It is as though people were so eager to believe in the myth that even strong academic voices were willing to fade into the background rather than argue with possibly not-so-solid research that provided the grounding for the story.[136]

So why was Yadin's work deemed so successful? As many sources have noted, his thoroughness seems to have extended only to the parts of the site related to its military history

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[135] Ben-Yehuda, Nachman. *Masada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel*. Univ of Wisconsin Press, 1996.

[136] Wishau, Emma. "Mythmaking of Masada," 2014. https://minds.wisconsin.edu/handle/1793/70256.

from the first century C.E. and surrounding contexts.[137] He did not welcome other ideas, nor was he willing to share his notes with anyone outside of his small and exclusive research team. Yet somehow, Yadin's research prevailed as one of the most important published pieces of archaeology surrounding Israel in the twentieth century. The pieces do not seem to add up, at least not according to the conventions of archaeology and academic publication elsewhere in the world. That said, one must remember that Israeli archaeology in the 1960s-80s existed in a state somewhat isolated from the rest of what would be called "normal" to the academic world.[138]

Yadin's work took place in a version of Israel that looks both similar to and different from the country that exists today. In the 1960s, when Yadin began work on Masada's excavation, Israel was still actively fighting for its footing as a Jewish state in an extremely hostile, primarily Islamic Middle East.[139] Much of the underlying tension from the British colonialist powers drawing the Israeli borders across Middle Eastern land was beginning to boil over.[140] Twenty years after World War Two had ended, the argument that many Jewish people had nowhere else to go was less effective than it had been in 1948. The Israeli government needed a strong justification to maintain the borders of the land that was only tenuously still in their grasp, and they needed support from other governments elsewhere in the world to be able to do so—Israel's political stability has always been dependent on its own military strength and its allies elsewhere

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[137] Silberman, Neil Asher. "Sacrificing Truth: Archaeology and the Myth of Masada." *The Middle East Journal* 57, no. 2 (April 1, 2003): 342.

[138] I find it noteworthy that while Yadin's work and perspective were isolated in that he was one of very few archaeologists operating this way, this phenomenon hardly happened in a vacuum. Other researchers had to have looked the other way—perhaps they, too, were swept up in the stories and the mythology that Yadin made a career of analyzing.

[139] Bar-Tal, Daniel, and Dikla Antebi. "Siege Mentality in Israel." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 16, no. 3 (June 1, 1992): 251–75. https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(92)90052-V.

[140] Ibid.

in the world.[141]

In this context, the need for a narrative like that of Masada makes sense, as does the popularity of Yadin's version of events. Supporters of Israel—most notably, Diaspora Jews and Christian Zionists in the United States and in Britain—would very much have wanted to support Yadin's story, even knowing the complications, controversies, and possible discrepancies associated with it, because providing a historical basis for Israeli ownership of that side of the Negev would have been a significant boon for the struggling Israeli state at the time. Employing Yadin's narrative as the basis for historical Jewish ownership of Masada and therefore, modern Israeli ownership of that border meant some degree of security for Israel's continued existence.[142] For many religious historians, philosophers, and clergymen, proving the Jewish ownership of Masada was just as important as placing the Jewish seat of the Israeli government in Jerusalem—critical to establishing and maintaining a Jewish state, and deeply meaningful in the context of religious tourism and garnering support for Zionists around the world.

Of course, the desperate want for "proof" of the Masada legend was not limited to people living outside of Israel's borders. By the mid-1960s, Israel was populated mainly by people like Peres and Yadin, who had lived most of their lives surrounded by constant conflict, as well as Holocaust survivors and their children, now coming of age in a world where many American and European powers felt that global conflicts around the were dying down. All the while, Israel was still struggling to maintain its foothold on existence. So, the idea of a "national mythology," or an origin story, would have been extremely attractive to the Israeli population by the time that Yadin's work was becoming popular. This theory makes particular sense when one considers that

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[141] Lomsky-Feder, Edna, and Eyal Ben-Ari. *The Military and Militarism in Israeli Society*. SUNY Press, 1999.

[142] Gelvin, James L. *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.

unlike the mythos surrounding Jerusalem, which was grounded in the word of the Old Testament and other strictly religious texts, the history of Masada was grounded at least somewhat in physical evidence.[143] Yadin's narrative plays into the same creation myth as various claims of cultural ownership over Israel, but does wo within the construct of archaeology, structured academic history, and even science.

The story of the Masada siege, after all, goes back to the Romano-Judean wars, and while it was religious, it was not strictly biblical. This[144] key difference meant that Jews could claim cultural ownership of the Masada legend, regardless of their level religious observance. Jews who grew up in Palestine, before the Israeli declaration of statehood, could make an ancestral claim to Masada. People whose families consisted of Holocaust survivors could honor the warriors who chose religion over slavery or death, who had the courage to commit suicide rather than be slain.[145] The Israeli Defense Forces (I.D.F) already had a tradition of hiking Masada before dawn, just as Shimon Peres did back in 1944 and just as visitors to the site do today. Reviving the legend through its history and archaeology was a surefire way of keeping the story alive and maintaining a sense of nationalism in a country where outside forces insisted that the people living there had no right to nationhood.[146] The Masada story was a near-perfect way to combat pressure to surrender the border, and people both inside and outside of Israel latched onto it and held on tight.

Like many Israeli citizens, Yadin spent significant time in the I.D.F. (at that point, the

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[143] Silberman, Neil Asher. "From Masada to the Little Bighorn: The Role of Archaeological Site Interpretation in the Shaping of National Myths." *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites* 3, no. 1–2 (January 1, 1999): 9–15. https://doi.org/10.1179/135050399793138699.

[144] Davies, Gwyn. "Under Siege: The Roman Field Works at Masada." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 362 (May 1, 2011): 65–83.

[145] Amossy, Ruth. "From National Consensus to Political Dissent: The Rhetorical Uses of the Masada Myth in Israel." *Rivista Italiana di Filosofia del Linguaggio* 6, no. 3 (2012): 1-15–15. https://doi.org/10.4396/29.

[146] Kohl, Kozelsky, and Ben-Yehuda. 220.

Haganah) early in his adult life, having left service for university only to be called back before he graduated. By the time Yadin arrived at the site, he had already begun to make the political connections that would launch his future career as a politician and perhaps some of those connections led him to make some of his archaeological decisions. Yadin's work on the Masada site placed him in the limelight as the face of the region's hottest[147] archaeological project. He was the man who uncovered the most culturally significant geographic location in Israel outside of Jerusalem. He was the man who had affirmed the story of ancient Judea's last stand. On top of that, he had connections. His time in the military had led to friendships or at least alliances on both sides of the political aisle. He held the respect of Peres and of David Ben-Gurion (though the latter relationship disintegrated after a few years). Yadin's military rank of *Rav Aluf,* the highest rank one can hold in the Israeli army, made his appointment to the Chief of Staff (and later, Deputy Prime Minister) position an easy one.[148]

By the time Yadin's work on the Masada site was wrapping up, he had already been the star archaeologist for work with the Dead Sea Scrolls, with the Qumran Caves, with Tel Meggiddo, and with Hazor. Every site he investigated became another entry in the list of culturally significant sites with a historical and religious reason why the land should belong to *Israel,* the Jewish state.[149] Between Yadin's military relationships and his subsequent work developing a cultural narrative for Israel, it naturally follows that he would have been crafting that narrative of cultural ownership during his work on Masada. Doing so would have benefitted Israel, and given

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[147] Of course it was hot. Masada is in the desert. Hiking the mountain in the dark, however, can be very chilly thanks to high winds and high altitude.

[148] Miller, Shane. *Desert Fighter: The Story of General Yigael Yadin and the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Hawthorn Books, 1967.

[149] Zerubavel, Yael. "The Multivocality of a National Myth: Memory and Counter-memories of Masada." *Israel Affairs* 1, no. 3 (March 1, 1995): 110–28. https://doi.org/10.1080/13517129508719340.

his political trajectory, it would have benefitted Yadin, if indirectly, through a growing sense of nationalism and Zionism *outside* of the Israeli borders. It cemented Yadin's legacy as a political figure as well as a military and academic one.

Even the fact that Yadin published his writings in English-speaking journals makes sense in terms of his political trajectory. Britain's involvement in the development of Israel as an colonial power frequently gets overlooked because the British *government* was then supporting Jordan, a hostile neighbor to the northeast side of Masada and across the Dead Sea.[150] But a large number of British individuals (most of them Christian Zionists, backed by religious groups, aristocrats, and a few staunchly conservative politicians) remained in Jerusalem for nearly four decades after Israel was fully legally established. For nearly fifty years,[151] unofficial political meetings were held in the King David hotel in Jerusalem—meetings that Yadin attended.[152] By garnering support internationally, Yadin essentially used archaeology to build the podium and platform that would allow him to hold office—and Masada was an enormous part of that process. To some extent, it seems clear that Yadin exploited the contacts he had already made in order to further the political career he had not yet announced.

One has to question why Yadin chose Masada. The legacy and legend of the fortress is not without its complications, which Yadin would certainly have known. Despite the accolades heaped upon the soldiers who defended Judea's last stand and the status that the site now holds, the fact remains that Masada's legacy is highly problematic in several ways. The Jewish rabbinate frowns deeply upon suicide. There is a section of Jewish scripture that openly states that one

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[150] Merkley, Paul Charles. 1998.

[151] Pawson, David. *Defending Christian Zionism*. Anchor Recordings Ltd., 2014.

[152] Gorenberg, Gershom. *The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount*. Oxford University Press, U.S.A., 2002.

should choose one's own well-being over following Judaic law.[153] Synagogue desecration is considered the ultimate betrayal of Jewish values. The zealots atop Masada, particularly the venerated death-givers, violated those ideals.[154] That said, the deeply nationalist men who crafted the Masada myth we know today openly chose to hang their proverbial hats on *that spot* as the basis for cultural ownership of the land. They made Masada a literal hill on which to die. Yet because Yadin's version of events represents the official narrative, the site is riddled with controversy, with historical discrepancies, with mysteries that may never be answered thanks to the now-present archaeological bias towards only searching for the already-suspected at Masada.

In the end, perhaps the doubt cast on Masada does not matter. The site has attained a legacy that seems untouchable today—to the point where even if modern historians never know exactly what happened, everyone knows the story of what people would like to *believe* happened. The site's true story may fall into obscurity, but what remains is its place in modern history. Masada has become a touchstone of modern Diaspora Zionism. Yadin's work served as a masterfully crafted launchpad for an undeniably successful academic and political career. The chosen cultural narrative seems sufficient to outweigh actual events. Perhaps Yadin's failings as an archaeologist matter little in the face of his actions on the grander political stage. Today, Israel owes much of its international support to the narrative crafted by the man who led the excavation of Masada and the people who crafted the story and the rallying cry. Even so, one must ask if anyone wonders about the truth, as they climb the snake path at dawn to shout at the sky.

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[153] Roth, Jeffrey I. "The Justification for Controversy under Jewish Law." *California Law Review* 76, no. 2 (1988): 337–90.

[154] Hoenig, Sidney B. "HISTORIC MASADA AND THE HALAKHAH." *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought* 13, no. 2 (1972): 100–115.

Questions at Khirbet Qumran

The excavation of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Khirbet Qumran is another place where archaeology has been garnered significant controversy surrounding methodology, interpretation, and public reception. Although the site, Khirbet Qumran, was discovered by Bedouin shepherds in 1946, official excavations didn't start until the 1950s, and then were put on hold again until the mid-1960s, when the site was under Israeli control following the fallout of the Six Day War.[155] Like at Masada, Yigael Yadin quickly stepped in and became the leader of the dig at Khirbet Qumran.[156] Thousands of fragments were recovered from more than eleven separate cave sites at Qumran, as well as shards of jars that at one point contained the scrolls— scrolls which, if put together and verified as the Dead Sea Scrolls of myth, would be the oldest surviving Hebrew manuscripts found at a dig to date, a qualification made even more impressive by the fact that the scrolls are written on parchment— though the material is durable, it does deteriorate over time, and is susceptible to the elements.[157] Finding an intact or reparable scroll would be an incredible feat simply for the historical and linguistic value alone, regardless of cultural importance to Judaism or Christianity. The archaeological team working on the dig also uncovered an unbroken storage jar, containing a mostly undamaged scroll. Just past the storage jar, beyond the entrance of the cave, the archaeologists discovered a cave-in (which Yadin deemed likely intentional, as the area behind the caved-in section of the tunnel contained several more jars, lids, bits of cloth wrappings, and tools that matched markings on the jars. The researchers also found rusty pickaxe heads, suggesting that at some point between the discovery of the site and the official start of the

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[155] Taylor, Joan E. "Khirbet Qumran in Period III." *Qumran: The Site of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Archaeological Interpretations and Debates*, January 1, 2006, 133–46. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047407973_007.

[156] "The Qumran Community - Scrolls from the Dead Sea | Exhibitions - Library of Congress." Web page, April 29, 1993. https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/scrolls/late.html.

[157] Joan E. Taylor, "Khirbet Qumran in Period III. 133-135

excavations, looters ransacked the cave, potentially taking the Dead Sea Scrolls or other culturally or historically significant artifacts.

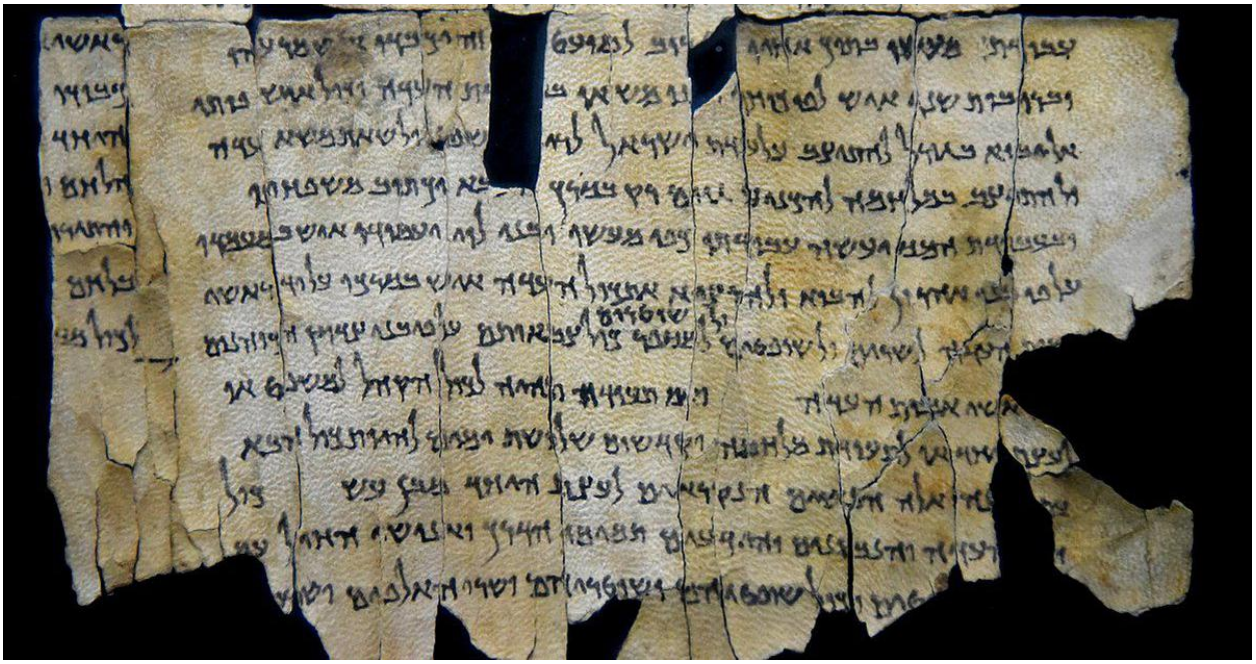

Fig. 6. Image of a fragment of the Dead Sea Scrolls[158]

The possible theft of the Scrolls themselves was just one of many points of controversy. Like Masada, Khirbet Qumran is located on a contested ground area near Jordan— in this case, the West Bank. This fact alone means that the excavations in the 1950s were not carried out by the same people as in the 1960s. But more than that, Jordan has asserted several times over that it is the rightful owner of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the caves, and the area of the site at Qumran. The United Nations considers the West Bank occupied territory, and in 1954, Israel signed a convention forbidding the removal of "cultural artifacts" by foreign occupiers.[159] Israel, in the

[158] Roitman, Adolfo. *The Dead Sea Scrolls*.. Photography, color. Israel Museum Shrine of the Book. Jerusalem, Israel, 2016 https://www.imj.org.il/en/wings/shrine-book/dead-sea-scrolls.

[159] "Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention." Accessed January 12, 2021. http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13637&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

meantime, has placed the artifacts pulled from Qumran in a museum in Jerusalem. These facts alone lend an air of distrust to the circumstances of the excavation. However, the most ardent supporters of protecting the dig's contents' place in Jerusalem have been Israeli nationalists like Yadin and those who trained under him (including Israel Hasson, the current director-general/chairman[160] of the Israel Antiquities Authority), and notably, Christian Zionist groups— some of which have been providing funds for archaeological digs since the days of the British Mandate.[161] The Israeli nationalist approach makes sense, considering the locale of the digs in question: Qumran is a contested ground situation. Of course, Israeli nationalists would want to provide tangible support for their cultural claim to the land— proving a cultural connection, or even just a rallying point for the primarily Jewish citizens of Israel would help to create a stronger justification to hold onto that section of the West Bank. However, the Christian Zionist groups at play have pushed just as hard for the continued examination of the site— not to prove Jewish connections, as at Masada, but rather to prove a *Christian* history within Israel, cementing both a Jewish *and* Christian claim to the land[162] (though of course, proving a Jewish connection inherently creates a connection for Christianity as well, as is the nature of root religions and offshoots).

And once again, just like Masada, questions have been raised from many groups and parties over the years regarding the treatment of the site— particularly discrepancies between initial survey reports, artifacts, and the narrative crafted by putting the artifacts pulled from the ground

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[160] translations for this title aren't consistent—this is my approximation

[161] Finkelstein, Israel. "Bible Archaeology or Archaeology of Palestine in the Iron Age? A Rejoinder." *Levant* 30, no. 1 (January 1, 1998): 167–74. https://doi.org/10.1179/lev.1998.30.1.167.

[162] Indeed, a closer look at some of the Christian Zionist journals from the 50s indicate that they're fine with anyone except for a mostly Muslim country holding onto it…

into museums. How much of the site was passed over in order to prove that the scrolls in question really were the Dead Sea Scrolls? This question is particularly pertinent given that the Scrolls themselves may have been looted. The site was left open without protection from *anyone* for years between its discovery and excavation. Looking at the field notes from Qumran that are publicly available, it is clear that the excavation took place with the specific goal in mind of finding and uncovering the Dead Sea Scrolls.[163] Looking at responses to the Qumran dig (as published in various religious and archaeological journals following Yadin's initial publications about the site), it becomes equally clear that (just like Masada!) while some groups raised objections to the treatment of the site at first, those objections faded into the background as an official narrative began to take shape.[164] By the 1980s, the pushback against the treatment of the site (and the narrative that it helped to solidify) had all but disappeared, at least as far as official publications go[165]). The narrative informed the excavation, so the excavation in turn only strengthened the narrative, which happened to mesh strongly with Christian religious claims and Israeli cultural cohesion narratives/national myths. This process is a key example of how narrative arguably informed archaeology far more than archaeological convention did, which in turn informed the way that border establishment and state formation played out in the area (resulting in the current state of Israel that we know today).

A Questionable Approach to Archaeological Methodology

As with any discipline handling material culture, there are plenty of working theories and

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[163] Harding, G. Lankester. "Khirbet Qumran and Wady Muraba'At." *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, July 19, 2013. https://doi.org/10.1179/peq.1952.84.2.104.

[164] Magen, Yizhak, and Yuval Peleg, "Back to Qumran: Ten years of Excavations and Research, 1993–2004," in The Site of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Archaeological Interpretations and Debates (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 57), Brill, 2006 (pp. 55–116).

[165] Ibid.

opinions as to where these excavations (led by Yadin and others) went wrong. As the previous section of this study explained in some detail, the first issue at work here is the methodology of the excavations themselves. I went to Israel in late 2018 on a trip primarily focused on archaeology. While I was there, I had the opportunity to visit Khirbet Qayafeh (one of the last cities standing during the final conquest of the ancient Judean kingdom, as legend has it, with a view of the valley where David supposedly beat Goliath), Tel Megiddo (in theory, a temple and palace from the days of King Solomon), Masada, and the City of David (including the Temple Mount and of course the Kotel) as well as a few other archaeological sites of potential biblical significance. Multiple tour guides, archaeologists, and a professor at Hebrew University who requested to remain unnamed told me that these sites were chosen for our group to tour specifically because they meshed together archaeology, history, and religious significance— the purpose of the trip, on our Israeli hosts' side, was to show us, the American and Canadian students, that Israel was inherently a Jewish land using the mechanism of archaeology to prove it.

When I asked about the logic behind excavating Tel Megiddo and Khirbet Quayafeh before many of the other prominent archaeological sites around the northern part of Israel, the IAA representatives leading us around the sites told me that they had chosen to excavate (and continue extant investigatory digs) in these locations first specifically because they suspected biblical importance. Looking back through the few publicly available IAA archives (there aren't many) and the pieces of writing disseminated through archaeology journals going back to the early 1950s, it is clear that many of these sites were excavated in the first place not because the land *looked* like it had anything to do with the myths at all—with the exceptions of Masada and

Khirbet Qayafeh, the topography didn't match what the stories described[166]— but because local populations had been telling stories about the ancient events that theoretically occurred there for generations.[167]

Of course, it's not unreasonable to take local stories and generational myths into account when choosing an excavation site— indeed, many anthropologists and archaeologists would claim that it is necessary to do so, and they wouldn't be wrong. The idea of passing down stories and creating mythological representations of history is central to the field of historical anthropology and has been instrumental for historians for hundreds of years.[168] However, the methodological choices surrounding biblical sites in Israel is suspect for a few reasons. Choosing to excavate the sites because it was possible that culturally important myths took place there is one thing. Doing so before even considering surveying the rest of the surrounding topography, specifically on religious grounds, is another. According to Yadin's notes on Masada and Qumran, as well as the published accounts of various biblical digs in archaeology and religious journals,[169] the decision process looked something like this: step one, find a biblical story to prove. Step two, compare living groups' accounts of the same stories to find a dig site. Step three, compare the terrain of that site to the myths in question. Step four, start excavating. Step five, stop the excavation upon finding 'proof' that the site is indeed what it was suspected to be, in order to

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[166] Richardson, Peter, and Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion. *Text and Artifact in the Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity: Essays in Honour of Peter Richardson*. Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2000.

[167] Patrich, Joseph. "The Buildings of Masada - E. NETZER, MASADA III. THE YIGAEL YADIN EXCAVATIONS 1963-1965, FINAL REPORTS: THE BUILDINGS, STRATIGRAPHY AND ARCHITECTURE (Israel Exploration Society and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem1991). Xxviii + 655 Pp., 79 Plans, 945 Ill. NIS 240.00." *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 6 (ed 1993): 473–75. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1047759400011880.

[168] Zerubavel, Yael. *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*. University of Chicago Press, 1995.

[169] Patrich, 55.

place any notable artifacts into a museum. Step six, continue work on the site for surrounding context.

The story first, evidence second, historical context third approach to these sites is of particular concern, as several academicians have pointed out over the years.[170] First and foremost, it's not the traditional archaeological approach that's been standardized almost everywhere else within the discipline. Outside of biblical archaeology, researchers look for historical context first, as compared with local accounts of the site, then slowly and methodically work through the layers to continue *establishing* that historical context, before taking into account living religious stories.[171] Setting out with the intent to prove a religious truth seems biased at best, but more than that, doing so requires pushing aside additional information in order to pursue the favored story, potentially misconstruing or ignoring important evidence along the way.

Masada is a particularly strong example of how this method of handling a site can cause issues with establishing historical context and detail. Yadin's reports show that he went straight for excavating the Snake path, the barracks, and where he suspected the synagogue might be.[172] However, his initial excavation totally ignored the water cisterns, the midden pit, the livestock pens, the women's' quarters, and several small settlements that might have belonged to other cultural groups halfway down the mountain. Each of these elements might have provided social and historical context for the artifacts and ruins found at Masada— and the initial survey pointed out as such. However, once the excavation began, these sections of the site were pushed to the periphery of the investigatory research going on at the site.[173] Similarly, the Qumran excavation

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[170] Silberman, Neil Asher. "Sacrificing Truth: Archaeology and the Myth of Masada." *The Middle East Journal* 57, no. 2 (April 1, 2003): 342.

[171] Ibid.

[172] Ibid.

[173] not literally— no one picked up chunks of the mountain and moved them. That would be spectacularly bad and

took place specifically because archaeologists were looking for the Dead Sea Scrolls. Researchers pushed past multiple stratified layers of dirt without bothering to examine it-- and because the project at Qumran was so staggered, with so many breaks between ongoing archaeological activity, few (if any) artifacts from the process of reaching the Scrolls' layer of stratified soil have been preserved with much care. And that's one of the reasons why archaeological processes require so much care and so much planning to accompany the relative spontaneity of sticking a trowel and a dry brush in the ground at a site. Once an archaeologist excavates down to a layer, they cannot re-investigate everything on top of it. One must excavate from the top down— it's impossible to reconstruct the layers of soil, rubble, and artifacts once they've been broken apart, and the process of digging actively destroys stratification (and therefore context) even as doing so uncovers interesting and important artifacts. The treatment of these sites— first under British archeology groups, then under Yadin, and now under the IAA— is a reminder that as interesting as the information is, none of the external context was preserved, and that very fact betrays the biases of the initial research at these sites, raising the question: how much was passed over or destroyed in the interest of using archaeology to prove these stories?

Following a similar line of thought, another concern with the story-first treatment of the material side of these sites is that of documentation. Outside of the myths that researchers were trying to prove, how much the rest of the excavation— that external context— was actually written down and preserved? The answer, it seems, is very little. A visit to the Israel Museum or to the many exhibitions in the Old City in Jerusalem, or the museum at Masada, will reveal that the pieces of these digs that were considered relevant to biblical stories were preserved and documented with painstaking care. Artifact descriptions in these museums' online archives

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would have garnered significantly more controversy than any points I've raised here.

contain every detail, from small nicks and scratches to variations in handwriting for names scratched into rocks. However, these same museum archives contain next to no information on the archaeological contexts in which these artifacts were found.[174][175] Indeed, the very practice of putting these artifacts into museums carries its own connotations and controversies. By choosing to portray artifacts like fragments of jars and the Dead Sea Scrolls, or the stones that may have been the lots drawn at Masada, researchers and museum officials deliberately put these pieces of history and myth quite literally up on a pedestal, devoid of context outside of religious myth and generational tales. By putting these artifacts into state-sponsored museums, the Israeli government gained the upper hand in establishing an "official" version of these stories, thus cementing the myths and narratives surrounding them into history. Additionally, this same practice supports the projected idea and appearance of "ownership," rather than stewardship, over both land and narrative. Separating artifacts from their contexts is a dubious practice but doing so for the purpose of corroborating a popular myth that neatly aligns with a government party line even more so.

Alternate Interpretations of Materiality

While the 'official' interpretations of the artifacts found at each of these sites have become the ubiquitously accepted ones, they are just that— interpretations. Researchers outside of Yadin's group have drawn conclusions about the artifacts of material culture from the Masada and Qumran sites that have been left out of the museum displays and publicly accessible archives— it should be noted that almost without exception, it is theories that multiple scholars agree hold

[174] "Site | The Israel Museum, Jerusalem." Accessed January 22, 2020. https://www.imj.org.il/en/search/site/masada?f[0]=bundle%3Acollections.

[175] "Masada National Park – Israel Nature and Parks Authoritya." Accessed January 22, 2020. https://www.parks.org.il/en/reserve-park/masada-national-park/.

water but don't match the cultural cohesion narrative that have been pushed to the side.[176] Some of these theories include the following:

Evidence has been found at Masada of cultural groups besides the Roman soldiers camped below the fortress and the Jews living inside of it. The fortress itself is a well-preserved Herodian construction that's gotten relatively little attention in comparison to the quest to 'prove' the apocryphal story associated with the site. Additionally, the excavation of the cisterns is still on going in the year 2021 and hasn't been finished yet.[177] An irrigation system at the top of a mountain in the desert that blends water retention techniques from nomadic cultures in the area and the Roman-style pipes that were already in place should have been one of the first points of interest in the initial excavation.[178] Additionally, Yadin's early notes make an oblique mention to a Latin translation of what might have been a Hebrew Torah… only to never mention it directly again, except for as a footnote on the Qumran excavations of the Dead Sea Scrolls.[179]

The controversy surrounding the treatment of discovered material culture at the Khirbet Qumran site is also worth noting— particularly the related controversy of the Shapira scroll. In 1883, Moses Shapira came across a manuscript with Hebrew inscriptions on it. Shapira, who was born a Jew but had recently converted to Christianity at the time of his discovery, pointed out that the scroll he'd found seemed to lean more towards Christian theology than Jewish. According to

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[176] Briggs, Charles L., and Richard Bauman. "Genre, Intertextuality, and Social Power." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 2, no. 2 (December 1, 1992): 131–72. https://doi.org/10.1525/jlin.1992.2.2.131.

[177] "Frequently Asked Questions – The NEUSTADTER MASADA EXPEDITION." Accessed January 14, 2021. https://masadaexpedition.org/welcome/faqs/.

[178] Davies, Gwyn. "Under Siege: The Roman Field Works at Masada." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 362 (May 1, 2011): 65–83. https://doi.org/10.5615/bullamerschoorie.362.0065.

[179] "Back to Qumran: Ten Years of Excavation and Research, 1993–2004 in: Qumran: The Site of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Archaeological Interpretations and Debates." Accessed January 12, 2021. https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789047407973/BP000005.xml.

him, the scroll seemed to hint at a different interpretation of the book of Deuteronomy (including an extra line added onto the Ten Commandments).[180] Immediately, other scholars began accusing Shapira of forgery— the accusations grew so vicious that Shapira committed suicide in 1884.[181] The 1947 discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran is very close by where Shapira found his scroll—a difference of less than twenty miles) cast significant doubt on the initial charges of forgery, but it was not until 1956 that anyone in academia would publicly refute the claims.[182] The Israel Museum's display of the Dead Sea Scrolls, of course, contains none of this story, and the Shapira Scroll itself has been lost to history— it was sold cheaply, since no one believed that it was legitimate, and eventually records of its ownership slipped away.[183]

The content of the scrolls also raises an eyebrow. Much of the writing on the recovered scrolls is in Nabatean Aramaic— a local derivate of the lingua franca version of Aramaic after the collapse of the Achaemenid Empire— used primarily along the east bank of the Jordan River (and also some parts of Iraq/Syria).[184] The presence of this script might indicate the presence of educated Jewish people in the area, despite what prior thought suggested. Additionally, the writing system is a language derivate shared with the ancient cities of Petra, Bosra, and Hegra— the discovery of another set of scrolls containing the same script should have been an incredibly novel discovery, but no one discussed it in the excavation notes and there is minimal information about the dialect or writing system in the museum exhibitions displaying information about the

[180] "THE SHAPIRA MANUSCRIPT AND THE QUMRAN SCROLLS on JSTOR." Accessed January 12, 2021. https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/24606702?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.

[181] Ibid.

[182] Mansoor, Menahem. The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Textbook and Study Guide, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 215–224

[183] Crown, A. D. "The Fate of the Shapira Scroll." *Revue de Qumrân* 7, no. 3 (27) (1970): 421–23

[184] Harding, G. Lankester. "Khirbet Qumran and Wady Muraba'At." *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, July 19, 2013. https://doi.org/10.1179/peq.1952.84.2.104.

Scrolls.[185] Indeed, neither the permanent displays in Israel nor the traveling exhibitions of the Dead Sea Scrolls catalogue include more than a few examinations of archaeological methods, let alone authorship theories. Such an exclusion almost suggests that the Scrolls are intended to be viewed with no context at all outside of their cultural/religious import.

Yadin claimed that the Essenes who wrote the DSS were self-denying celibate folk who held poverty as a religious ideal, not dissimilar to acetic monks.[186] But the context from which the Scrolls have been removed indicates that the Essenes were probably not Jewish at all but instead represent an inflection point of Judeo-Christian fusion along the path to Christianity.[187] There's also the possibility that the group in question was not poor at all— jewelry and bronze coins were also found at the site, indicating wealth.[188] One alternate line of thinking is that the Judeans/Essenes who hid the scrolls actually had quite a bit of money and may very well have been members of the upper class in their own time. Another theory is that early Christians weren't part of the preservation effort at all, but instead the scrolls were transcribed and spirited way by members of the Judean aristocracy, who carried them twenty miles across the desert to Qumran to escape the Romans— which would explain why some of the things found at the dig don't fully match other artifacts from the surrounding area.[189] In any case, all of these theories are about as sound as the one that became the official description of the site— but they don't suit the state-sponsored narrative nearly as well.

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[185] Yadin, Yigael. "Three Notes on the Dead Sea Scrolls." *Israel Exploration Journal* 6, no. 3 (1956): 158–62.

[186] "Josephus's Essenes and the Qumran Community on JSTOR." Accessed January 14, 2021. https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/27821022#metadata_info_tab_contents.

[187] Newman, Hillel. *Proximity to Power and Jewish Sectarian Groups of the Ancient Period: A Review of Lifestyle, Values, and Halakha in the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Qumran*. *Proximity to Power and Jewish Sectarian Groups of the Ancient Period*. Brill, 2006. https://brill.com/view/title/12334.

[188] Ibid.

[189] Ibid.

Issues with Conservation

Careless treatment of the site itself is also an issue with the scrolls found at Qumran. Because of the numerous transfers of power and property between Jordan, Palestine, Britain, and eventually Israel, the jars and scroll fragments from the Qumran site were moved between museums, labs, and storage units several times over a twenty-year period.[190] The caves at the site itself were almost certainly looted at least once between official excavations, potentially damaging artifacts or shifting the artifacts in ways that have gone largely unquestioned. It took nearly fifty years for anyone to put the scrolls into a temperature or humidity-controlled laboratory— it didn't happen until 1991.[191] The scrolls themselves were treated with adhesive tape, which caused significant damage, ruining much of what might have once been readable text or well-preserved leather and parchment. The context of the jars and scrolls themselves has clearly been tampered with, and yet no one has investigated the consequences in much depth.[192] This lack of interest in the specificities of the scrolls' placement, treatment, and archaeological context is especially interesting because of Qumran's place as a contested ground territory— the Dead Sea Scrolls are, in some ways, symbolic of Israel's grip on land that was originally Palestinian and within reach of Jordanian control. Perhaps one of the reasons why Israeli-funded archaeological groups have not dug as deeply into the locality and circumstances of the scrolls is that doing so might upset the official narrative that has been built up around them— that the self-denying, celibate Essene, Christian-leaning Jews spirited away the scrolls to hide them from the

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[190] Harding, G. Lankester. "Khirbet Qumran and Wady Muraba'At." *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, July 19, 2013. https://doi.org/10.1179/peq.1952.84.2.104.

[191] Popović, Mladen. "Qumran as Scroll Storehouse in Times of Crisis? A Comparative Perspective on Judaean Desert Manuscript Collections." *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 43, no. 4–5 (January 1, 2012): 551–94. https://doi.org/10.1163/15700631-12341239.

[192] Ibid.

Romans, thus ensuring a Judeo-Christian population's survival for a little while longer. This narrative ensured external Jewish and Christian Zionist support for Israeli control over the West Bank territory that includes Khirbet Qumran.

The City of David is also an interesting case regarding the meshing together of cultural cohesion and religious narrative with statehood and tourism (and the choice to preserve a narrative rather than a collection of artifacts). It's become much more difficult in recent years to conduct a reinvestigation or reinterpretation of the Old City in Jerusalem, because the city's modern existence is now tied so closely to that narrative. The city itself is representative of the divide between Jews and non-Jews, as well as Jews and Arabs in the area (one needs only to look at the conflict over the Temple Mount for that to become clear) and also clearly showcases the fragile but longstanding alliances between Jews and Christians (as evidenced by the enthusiastic Jewish Israeli tour guides leading Christian tour groups through 'David's tunnels' straight to the entrance of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre). But more than that, the City of David is practically theme-park-ish in its tourism aspects. Any significant archaeological evidence has been built over with imaginings of what things might have looked like in Davidic or Solomonic times. Plasticky reconstructions of imaginings of what a historic time might have looked like in a biblical context take prevalence over… well, actual history. The whole display, as created and funded by Israeli government funding, *exists* for the purpose of erasure. The City of David's modern, museum-augmented existence creates an interesting conundrum, now that it carries so much significance for current living generations— significance that's only reinforced the air of mythology surrounding the history and of the place. History and significance permeate the area, to the point where it's impossible to separate it from its context… which also makes it impossible to go back through and excavate. Its presence as a tourism and pilgrimage site effectively prevents a clear

understanding of it in its own archaeological history, since shutting it down for further investigation would be practically unthinkable.

Using archaeology as a political tool (which admittedly is something that's been going on forever) effectively skips over most of the actual preservation and investigatory processes in favor of securing and supporting a given, preexisting narrative. Alternate theories of what various artifacts might indicate exist, but the removal of context and the force-fitting into an official narrative makes it extraordinarily difficult to try and establish any of them, since doing so would run so directly counter to the official story. Note also— that prevailing narrative is based more on mutual agreement through cultural cohesion and religious agreement, or *wanting* it to be true, than it is on actual archaeological evidence.[193] But now that it is the standard, generally agreed-upon version of the story, it's near-impossible to overturn.

In Conclusion: The Particular Construction of Israeli Identity Through Narrative

The development of modern Israeli nationalism is especially interesting because it isn't just nationalism built on a model of cultural cohesion or land ownership— it's also built on a model of belief. Religious, Jewish nationalism is in itself unique, given that Israel is the only Jewish state in existence at any point post-antiquity. The key components of founding myths, national myths, and religious narratives all overlap with one another to create a very specific form of nationalism that ties together claims of historical legitimacy, cultural cohesion, and inherited land. It's also worth noting that the version of Israel as presented in mythology— the historical kingdom of Judea, the biblical land of the Israelites, the lands belonging to David and Solomon— served (and perhaps continues to serve) almost as a template for what a modern Jewish state might look like. Using

[193] Nagel, Joane. "Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture." *Social Problems* 41, no. 1 (February 1, 1994): 152–76. https://doi.org/10.2307/3096847.

archaeology to support this specific narrative of ownership and model of nationhood makes even more sense when one takes into consideration the fact that state-funded archaeology projects often treat biblical stories and historical ones as one and the same, particularly if doing so reinforces the extant narratives that support the nation's political aims. This specific, narrow view of nationalism is also quite exclusive and limiting in terms of who is allowed to fit into the narrative— evangelical Zionism and Israeli nationalism exist at the expense of the corresponding Muslim narrative in the same area. The intense focus on biblical myth as a support for Israeli nationality effectively excises Muslim claims to the same space entirely— a point deserving of significant focus, especially considering the geopolitical contexts in which Israel was founded and continues to exist.

Neil Silberman has leveled many a criticism against Yadin, pointing out that the "origin myth of the Israelites" only became a significant aspect of archaeology in the Middle East when Zionist statehood in the area became an option.[194] He also pointed out that the dominant narrative in Israel is now that claim that Judaism and the Israelite people originated in the Levant, continued to live there through several Roman invasions (including the one that led to the great tragedy at Masada), and therefore modern descendants hold the oldest and therefore most legitimate claims to the space that we now call Israel. Silberman notes that when confronted with the actual evidence of the archaeological record, this claim is tenuous at best.[195] There are long gaps between clear instances of the presence of Jews in the area throughout history, suggesting long periods of other cultures having the predominant hold on the land. Modern historians have no way of being certain

[194] Silberman, Neil Asher. "If I Forget Thee, O Jerusalem: Archaeology, Religious Commemoration and Nationalism in a Disputed City, 1801–2001." *Nations and Nationalism* 7, no. 4 (2001): 487–504. https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-8219.00029.

[195] Ibid.

that those long-dead populations practiced a form of the religion that matches with modern Judaism. There is no clear way to indicate that the Israeli Jews alive today originated from those ancient populations at all—or whether or not those lines of biological descent even matter within the context of religious observance and ideology.[196] And yet the narrative persists, highlighting the extent to which archaeology and myth making have permeated the structure of Israeli nationalism.

There are, of course, comparisons to be drawn between this model of nationalism and other countries at various points in history that implemented similar strategies. I compared Israel to India in the discussion of British-influenced states dividing a semi-autonomous nation to cut out an 'undesirable' Muslim population. The definitions of nationalism that evolved in the wake of both the Indian Partition and the creation of the State of Israel also create clear parallels. Indian nationalism developed as a clear concept during the Indian independence movement, specifically as an opposition to Muslim nationalism, and continues to influence Indian politics in the twenty-first century.[197] Additionally, the sentiments that comprise this form of Indian nationalism are based on founding myths and homeland myths as much if not more than on territory or sovereignty.[198] Just as Israeli nationalism is built on Jerusalem and Masada, India's is built on the idea that the Indus River Valley civilization is the birthplace of vast amounts of culture, most

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[196] Silberman, Neil Asher 1950-. *Between Past and Present: Archaeology, Ideology, and Nationalism in the Modern Middle East*. 1. Anchor books ed. Anchor Books. Doubleday, 1990.

[197] Petrie, Cameron A., Hector A. Orengo, Adam S. Green, Joanna R. Walker, Arnau Garcia, Francesc Conesa, J. Robert Knox, and Ravindra N. Singh. "Mapping Archaeology While Mapping an Empire: Using Historical Maps to Reconstruct Ancient Settlement Landscapes in Modern India and Pakistan." *Geosciences* 9, no. 1 (January 2019): 11. https://doi.org/10.3390/geosciences9010011.

[198] Corbridge, Stuart, and John Harriss. *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy*. John Wiley & Sons, 2013.

notably Vedic civilization and the birthplace of Hinduism.[199] Unsurprisingly, archaeology has been used to corroborate these claims as well— in service of the creation of a Hindu and Christian state.[200] This version of Indian nationalism became popular within a few years of the strands of Israeli nationalism discussed here, possibly suggesting a trend in British protectorate areas. Groups established origin stories that did not include Muslim populations, used archaeology to build up support for those stories, and then used them to develop a definition of nationalism that painted Muslims as outsiders and invaders, despite the long histories of Muslim populations in these areas for many years.

Another worthwhile comparison to the treatment of founding myths in Israel is that of Germany. Interesting parallels emerge when one considers the act of reframing popular myths to better match a narrative associated with Nationalism. In the 1930s, Ernest Gellner wrote about German nationalism being rewritten to cut out a less desirable cultural group— in his context, he was discussing the reemergence of religious nationalism for the purpose of excluding other groups.[201] Other scholars have also noted the ways in which fairy tales and historical narratives were rewritten to include (and in some cases exclude) religious details where none had existed before, all to create the idea of a German lineage.[202] While there is little clear documentation or proof of the Israeli government deliberately rewriting narratives, the purpose behind Germans doing so was the same as the ideology of leaning on mythos for a cultural claim. If a dominant nationalist group can gain control of the narrative, then they also get to claim who does or does

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[199] Ibid.

[200] Kelman, Herbert C. "The Interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian National Identities: The Role of the Other in Existential Conflicts." *Journal of Social Issues* 55, no. 3 (1999): 581–600. https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00134.

[201] Ibid.

[202] Smith, Helmut Walser. *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870-1914*. Princeton University Press, 2014.

not belong in that narrative— thus further reinforcing that "us/them" claim that is at the heart of cultural cohesion narratives. Putting such a dichotomy at the center of a national ideology is an effective tool, the morality of which remains to be considered.

Underlying agendas have always been a part of anthropology and archaeology. Like any other discipline in the humanities, researchers in these fields carry biases which may color their work. However, simple bias alone cannot account for the misuse of archaeology and the questionable tactics employed by antiquities departments to create the exclusionary narratives that have formed the backbone of modern statehood in Israel. Founding myths and national myths absolutely entitle cultural groups to the right to defend individual religious spaces or pilgrimage points like what much of Jerusalem has become. But using archaeology to change the historical narrative for the purpose of strengthening a national mythology is a different game altogether.

Using archaeology to support a claim to land isn't a new strategy, nor is it a particularly problematic one. In Israel, the ethical fuzziness only really comes into play when one considers the overlapping cultural claims to an area like Jerusalem, and the implications of skewed state formation as a result of the influence of narrative history regarding homeland. The narrative that we assume to be true for the founding of the modern state of Israel might be biased as the simple result of the agency disseminating it, but for the most part, the narrative has been accepted. But the bigger question is how this narrative became the prevailing story, and the answer to that question comes down to a few specific factors: firstly, fear. It is difficult to underestimate the importance of remembering the sheer fear and uncertainty surrounding the Jewish population in a post-Holocaust context. Forced to reckon with a new understanding of what religion and culture meant, Jews around the world were faced with a desperate desire to have somewhere, anywhere that was safe and that could be called "home" in the wake of the horrific events of the Holocaust.

Secondly, anti-Islam sentiment. One must remember that this specific version of Jewish Israeli nationalism was, like Indian nationalism, born of anti-Islam sentiment in British-controlled areas. Thirdly, timing. The growing prevalence of archaeology as a scientific and historical field combined with an international Christian Zionist interest in biblical Middle Eastern Studies left Israeli nationalists well-poised to manipulate the narrative in their favor.

As for how this narrative gained such prevalence, perhaps timing and circumstance are primarily to blame. But the larger question is not "how did this happen," but rather, "what does this mean going forwards?" There is no question that the popularized myths surrounding the existence of modern-day Israel have had their impact on Jewish identity, Israeli nationalism, and even Diaspora Judaism. Understanding the narrative itself, as well as the structure of its underpinnings, is key to understanding Israel's role in modern geopolitics. Furthermore, these narratives are so pervasive and so important to such a large population that it can only be helpful to understand their history and the logic behind the myths in the context of identity politics in the current era.

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