البحث عن السراب
الحفريات تحت المسجد الأقصى ومحييـته
Searching for Illusion
Excavations underneath al-Aqsa Mosque and its Surroundings

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4. The Herodian Hall
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Since the entire city of al-Quds was placed under occupation in 1967, the Israeli authorities hastened to fashion excavations beneath and around al-Aqsa Mosque (al-Masjid al-Aqsa) in their quest to achieve the building of «Holy Yerushalayim» (Hebrew for Jerusalem), where in the middle the alleged Third Temple is designated to replace al-Aqsa.

The Occupation could not find traces evident of ever Jewish presence within the area of al-Aqsa during its journey of “Searching for Illusion”. As such, it sought to create evidence for this alleged presence by damaging the present remnants found on the site, and giving it instead Jewish characteristics, that are alien to the culture of al-Quds city.
وتعدّ الجهة الغربية للمسجد العصب الرئيس للمدينة اليهودية التي يبنيها الاحتلال تحت المسجد الأقصى، فهي تحتوي على 19 موقعًا للحفريات، منها 10 نشطة، وأكبر حفريات الجهة الغربية هي شبكة أنفاق الحائط الغربي، وهي تُعدّ أكثر الحفريات نشاطًا وعمقًا لـ الجهة الغربية للمسجد الأقصى، وهي تقع أسفل الحفريات الأخرى جميعًا.

فيما تتركز حفريات الجهة الشمالية لـ الزاوية الشمالية الغربية للمسجد الأقصى، وتحديداً في منطقة المدرسة العمرية الملاصقة لدرب الآلام، وتشمل موقعين تنشط فيهما الحفريات هما موقع بركة القبرة و موقع باب حطة.
In the southern side of the Mosque, the Occupier has been working on building the «City of David.» Along this side, there lie 17 excavation sites, 12 of which are active. The largest and most dangerous of these is the «Herodian Road» which extends to more than 600 meters of distance, linking al-Buraq Square with the southern entrance to the «City of David.»

The western side of the Mosque is considered as the major nerve to the Jewish city, which the Occupation has been keen to build underneath al-Aqsa. It comprises 19 excavations, 10 of which are active. The largest of these is the «Western Wall Tunnels Network», viewed as the most active and deepest of all excavations in that side of the Mosque. It is located at the bottom of all the digging works.

Excavations at the northern side are based in the northwestern corner of al-Aqsa, in the area of al-Umariyyah School, which is adjacent to Via Dolorosa (Darb al-Alam). This side constitutes two active locations, namely, «Strouthion Pool» and «Bab Hittah» excavation sites.
First: Excavations of the Southern Side

Excavations of the southern side of al-Aqsa Mosque are considered the largest and most active. These excavations aim at finding the so-called «City of David,» a city that extends from Ein Silwan «Gihon Spring» in the south, to the walls of al-Aqsa Mosque in the north, along the area of Wadi Hilweh neighborhood in the suburb of Silwan. Zionists claim that King David has built this city when he resided in al-Quds.

Until August 2011, this side contained 17 excavation sites, 12 of which were active while 5 were completed.
1. حفريات القصور الأمويّة «مسار المطاهر»: في 21/6/2011، أعلن الاحتلال رسمياً عن افتتاح موقع أثريّ في منطقة القصور الأمويّة الملاصقة للمسجد الجنوبي. الحفريات في الموقع سكنت قد بدأت في السبعينيات القرن الماضي، واستمرت على مدار العقود الثلاثة الماضية، ومنذ ما يزيد على عام قررت السلطات الاحتلال تجهيز المكان وافتتاحه أمام الزوار تقديرًا من المدينة اليهوديّة التاريخيّة التي يبنيها الاحتلال يُحيط المسجد الأقصى وأسفل منه.

النقطة الأولى: لا يحتوي الموقع على أي بناء أو آثار ذات دلالة واضحة، وإنما مجرد مجموعة من الجدران والأسوار التي اختلف علماء الآثار الصهاينة حول وجهة استعمالها. فيما اعتبر البعض أن هذه الآثار هي لإحدى بوابات المعبد الأول، المذكورة في الروايات التاريخيّة اليهوديّة، فيما اعتبر البعض غرفًا لتخزين الأشياء. في المكان أيضًا آثار رومانيّة وآثار من القصور الأمويّة تمّ تجاهلها تمامًا.

Completed Excavations of the Southern Side

1. The Umayyad Palaces «The Mikves»: On 21/6/2011, the Occupation Authorities officially inaugurated the revamped archeological site of the Umayyad Palaces on the southern side of al-Aqsa Mosque. Excavations in that area started in the seventies of the last century and continued over the past three decades in attempt to change the true identity of the city. Ultimately, the Occupation authorities resolved to restore the place and to officially open it in front of the visitors, as a part of the «Historic Jewish City» that the Occupation is building around and beneath al-Aqsa Mosque. After three decades of construction and restoration works that changed the true identity of the place, the Occupation authorities opened the new site for visitors as a part of the «historic Jewish city» that is being built around and beneath al-Aqsa Mosque.

The site, however, does not contain any clearly marked buildings or relics; rather it is a group of walls and fences upon which Zionist archeologists differ in terms of what they represent. Some of them, like Eilat Mazar, hold the view that these relics belong to one of the gates of the First Temple mentioned in the historic Jewish narrations. Some other archeologists consider it to be the remains of storage rooms. Noticeably, there are roman and Umayyad ruins in the site but they were completely ignored by Zionists identifying the archeological site.
Completed Excavations of the Southern Side

2. Silwan Canal «Hezekiah’s Tunnel»: The canal, which is 533m long and 60cm wide, is located in the Ein Silwan area. It was dug to relay water in an upward direction from Ein Silwan in Wadi al-Nar (Kidron Valley) to the Wadi Hilweh area, which the Occupation calls the «City of David.» The water is then moved to the Ein Silwan complex where the Pool of Silwan (Shiloach Pool) is located. Contrary to Israeli claims asserting that the Jews who lived in the «City of David» have dug the canal, Silwan Canal was dug during the time of the Jebusites, centuries before the Jews came to Palestine.
Completed Excavations of the Southern Side

3. The Canaanite Canal: This canal is divided into two parts. The first and longer part is on the surface of the ground whilst the second part lies underneath the ground and measures 120 meters in length. Its width ranges between 60 and 80 centimeters. This canal stretches from Ein Silwan in the north to Ein Silwan Complex in the south.
Completed Excavations of the Southern Side

4. Birkat Silwan «Shiloach Pool»: This pool is located in the southwestern side of Wadi Hilweh neighborhood. It is the spot where the two canals of Silwan end, and where their water is gathered. This pool was dug during the Byzantine era to collect the water of Ein Silwan.
Completed Excavations of the Southern Side

5. **Water Cistern**: This tank is located in the northwestern neighborhood of Wadi Hilweh. The Occupation authorities claim it used to provide King David’s Palace with water from Ein Silwan «Gihon Spring».
1. قناة المياه الجنوبية: في 25/1/2011، أعلنت سلطة الآثار في دولة الاحتلال عن انتهاء العمل ببناءِ للمياه تصل بين حفريات «مدينة داود» في جنوب المسجد الأقصى والزاوية الجنوبية الغربية للمسجد عند متحف دافيدسون للآثار. وتتصل هذه القناة بجزءها الجنوبية بـ«الطريق الهيرودياني» ليشكلاً معًا مسارًا يربط بـ«مدينة داود» بساحة البراق وهو يُعد أطول الأنفاق التي افتتحها الاحتلال أسفل المسجد الأقصى ومحيطه منذ الاحتلال. ويبلغ طول هذه القناة حوالي 700 متراً تقريباً. ويدعي الاحتلال أنها حُفرت في العهد الهيرودياني. وتسير هذه القناة بطريقها أسفل أسوار البلدة القديمة، وأسفل بيوت السكان المقدسين بِحيّ وادي الحلول.

Uncompleted Excavations of the Southern Side

1. The Southern Water Canal: On 25/1/2011, the Israeli archeology authorities declared the conclusion of works aimed at digging a water canal between the «City of David» south of al-Aqsa Mosque and the «Davidson Museum» on the southwestern corner of the mosque. The southern part of the canal is also connected to the «Herodian Road» which connects the «City of David» and al-Buraq Square. The southern side of this canal is connected to the «Herodian Road» which connects the «City of David» with al-Buraq Square. The 700-meter long canal is said to be the longest tunnel inaugurated by the Occupation authorities that claim it has been dug in the Herodian period. The water canal runs beneath the walls of the Old City and the houses of the Jerusalemites in Wadi Hilweh.
Uncompleted Excavations of the Southern Side

2. The Old City Tunnel: On 8/10/2010, one of the engineering contractors working for the Occupation municipality in al-Quds declared the intentions of implementing a new project that aims at building a gate beneath the southwestern side of the walls of the Old City, between the Moroccan Gate (Bab al-Magharibah) and the Gate of David (Zion). The gate was allegedly intended by the Occupation municipality to be an entrance to a parking lot that would accommodate 600 cars. Ultimately, the current parking space near al-Buraq Square would be used for establishing new residential settlements for the Jews in the Old City. The engineer who made the declaration about the project announced that the excavations would be 9 meters deep beneath the level of archeological relics believed to be in the location.
3. الجدار الكنعاني: يقع هذا الجدار في الطرف الشرقي لحي وادي الحلوة في ضاحية سلوان، ويبلغ طول الجزء الذي ادعى الاحتلال اكتشافه حتى الآن 24 مترًا وارتفاعه 8 أمتار. ويحسب زعم سلطة الاحتلال أن عمر هذا الجدار يبلغ 3700 سنة، ويعود تاريخ بنائه للحقبة الكنعانية، وقد بُني لتأمين الطريق بين القلعة أو القصر الذي كان مركز الحكم في المدينة وعين سلوان. ويعد هذا الجدار حتى الآن أكبر التحصينات المكتشفة في حي وادي الحلوة منذ بدء عمليات الحفر في هذه المنطقة. ويُمول حفريات هذا الموقع جمعية «العاد» التي تُدير، بالتعاون مع الاحتلال، حفريات الجهة الجنوبية غير المكتملة.

Uncompleted Excavations of the Southern Side

3. The Canaanite Wall: This wall is located in the northeastern corner of Wadi Hilweh neighborhood in Silwan. The Israeli Occupation claims finding a part of this wall estimated at 24 meters long and 8 meters high. According to the Occupation's Antiquities Authority, this wall dates back to approximately 3700 years, whereby it was built in the Canaanite era to ensure the passageway between the governance center, and the water spring of Silwan. This wall is considered the largest discovered fortification structure in Wadi Hilweh neighborhood since the beginning of excavations in the southern side. Excavations at this site are funded by the City of David or Elad Association, which manages, in cooperation with the Occupation authorities, all excavation operations south of al-Aqsa.
4. Buildings of the «City of David»: This excavation site is the nearest to al-Aqsa Mosque from the south. It is located in the courtyard adjacent to the Mosque only tens of meters away from its southern walls. Excavations in this site date back to the late eighties of the past century with Benjamin Mazar, the head of the Israeli commission entrusted with finding Temple remnants inside and around al-Aqsa Mosque. Mazar then announced the finding of a series of structures whose foundations date back to the ninth century before Christ. According to Mazar’s claims, the structures were connected through a broad fence containing a gate that was the eastern entrance to the city.

On 2/9/2009, Eilat Mazar -an excavations scientist who works with Elad Association- announced the finding of a wall in the area, 70 meters long and six meters high. Eilat Mazar claimed that this wall dated back to the tenth century before Christ, i.e. to the First Temple period.
5. Excavations at al-Marwani Mosque: On 14/2/2010, al-Aqsa Endowment and Heritage Foundation published a number of photos documenting the cracks and corrosion in the pillars of al-Marwani Mosque in the southeastern corner of al-Aqsa. According to the Foundation’s officials, these cracks came about as a direct result of the excavations underneath the area. It is most probable that this excavation site constitutes a tunnel linking Wadi Hilweh neighbourhood and al-Marwani Mosque as revealed in the «Jerusalem First» plan for developing the «Holy Basin» area that was prepared by Uram Zamoush, the consulting engineer of the Occupation Municipality.

Uncompleted Excavations of the Southern Side

6. The Herodian Road: The Occupation authorities claim that this road was built during the Second Temple period to connect the «City of David» (i.e. Wadi Hilweh neighborhood) to the alleged Temple. The 600-meter road extends from Ein Silawn Mosque to al-Buraq Square. Excavation works on this site began during 2009 and mounted early in 2010. On this issue, Al-Aqsa Heritage Foundation reported on 18/9/2009 intensive excavation works on the western side of Ein Silwan Mosque in the southern area of Wadi Hilweh, noting that tens of excavated dust bags were removed every day. On 29/9/2009, Occupation authorities started establishing an electric network and stairways inside the tunnel. Then, on 2/1/2010, a huge landslide occurred in Wadi Hilweh near Ein Silwan Mosque, leaving an abyss two meters long, one meter wide and a half meter deep. Two days later, the hole became 10 meters wide, urging the Occupation authorities to conceal it by covering the area and preventing citizens from going close to it. The Occupation authorities filled the hole with sand in order to hide it but the landslide reoccurred on 18/1/2010 due to the rain.
7. «Givati Parking Lot»: On 30/8/2011, the Israeli Antiquities Authority announced the discovery of a 2000 year old Romanian figurine during the excavation works at the Givati parking lot south of al-Aqsa Mosque. This unearthing is not significant in its Roman aspect as hundreds of Roman statues and sculptures were discovered at the site over the past century. Rather, the significance of the announcement is in the fact that two years earlier, in August 2008, the Occupation authorities claimed to have found the ruins of a palace from the Second Temple period, that is more than 2000 years old. In particular, there is logical contradiction between these two announcements because recent discoveries from deeper earth layers should belong to earlier historical periods than the higher levls. Excavations at the Givati parking lot began in 2003 thus seeking to establish parking lots for the visitors of the «City of David» three floors below ground level. Soon after being launched, excavation work stopped on grounds of preserving the archeological relics that were claimed to be found by Elad Association. The work was reactivated in 2007 in search for archeological ruins. After a year of working under wraps, the Israeli Antiquities Authority unveiled on 25/8/2008 the discovery of the palace of Queen Helena of Adiabene, an Assyrian queen who converted to Judaism and lived in the Second Temple period, according to Jewish beliefs.
8. **Tzinur Tunnel**: On 29/10/2008, the archaeological expedition financed by Elad Association announced the discovery of a water canal belonging to the First Temple period. The canal was discovered during the excavations in the vicinity of the Water Cistern located north of Wadi Hilweh. According to claims by members of the expedition, the canal was used to transport water to «King David’s Palace» and only a 50-meter section of it had been discovered by the end of 2008. According to the expedition claims, the canal extended north towards al-Aqsa Mosque and south towards Silwan Pond.
9. «King David’s Palace»: In 2005, the Israeli archaeologist Eilat Mazar announced the discovery of a thick, 2-meter deep wall located in the northern road leading to Wadi Hilweh neighborhood. At the time, Mazar claimed that the wall was part of «King David’s Palace.» Mazar’s claims raised wide arguments in the Occupation state, even among Israeli archeologists, many of whom considered the discovery as part of the city walls rather than the palace. But by the end of 2008, Elad Association, the primary founder and director of the expedition work in the area, had dealt with the discovery as part of «King David’s Palace» although repeated archeological expeditions failed over 3 years of excavations to find any further discoveries proving these allegations.
10. الحفريات المقابلة للباب الثلاثي: ١/٠٢/٢٠٠٩، شهدت مدرسة القدس الأساسيّة للبنات الواقعة في الطرف الشرقيّ لضاحية سلوان قبالة الباب الثلاثي المغلق للمسجد الأقصى انهيار أرضيّة أحد صفوفها ما أدّى إلى إصابة ١٧ من طالباتها بجروح ما بين متوسطة إلى طفيفة. وقد كشف الانهيار عن حفرة يتراوح عمقها ما بين ١.٥-٢ م. وحتى خريف عام ٢٠٠٩ لم تكن تفاصيل هذه الحفريات وأهدافها قد ظهرت بعد إلا أنّه من المرجح أنّها تتجه نحو المصلّى المروانيّ الذي يوجد شرق المسجد الأقصى، وذلك بناءً على مقارنة مصائد الحفريات مع مخطّر «القدس أوّلًا» الذي يحوي مشروعًا لحفر نفق أسفل المصلّى.

**English Translation:**

10. **Uncompleted Excavations of the Southern Side**

*Excavations opposite to the Triple Gate:* On 1/02/2009, the first floor in the UNRWA girls school in Silwan facing the sealed Triple Gate of al-Aqsa Mosque collapsed. The collapse, which led to the injury of 17 students, was caused by an excavation hole 1.5 to 2 meters in depth. The details and objectives of excavations were still unclear till the fall of 2009. However, comparing the place of the excavations with the outline of the Jerusalem First plan, it is possible to tell that the hole is anticipated to be a part of the tunnel planned to be dug under al-Marwani Mosque.
11. Warren’s Shaft: This vault was named after the British voyager, Charles Warren, who allegedly claimed to have discovered the door leading to it during his works of excavations in 1867 A.D. Entrance to this tunnel is located on the western side of Wadi Hilweh neighborhood. The Occupation authorities claim the tunnel had been dug long ago during the era of «King David» as an underground path that links the city with Ein Silwan and allows the city residents to reach it during war and siege times. Diggings would continue till the tunnel completely connects Ein Silwan with Wadi Hilweh.
12. Walls and Fortresses: Zionists claim that excavations unveiled the remnants of the outer wall that used to protect the «City of David» in Wadi Hilweh neighborhood. They also claim to have discovered a fort established around Ein Silwan when the «City of David» was built. Excavations continue in all of these sites in search of the alleged ruins of the walls, houses and palaces of the «City of David.»
Second: Excavations of the Western Side

The western side of al-Aqsa Mosque also acts as an active nerve to the Jewish city which the Occupation is building underneath the Mosque. It contains most of the Mazaars (holy shrines that believers often visit), and the road linking the south of this city in Silwan and its north at Via Dolorosa. In addition, most of the city entrances are located there. The western side contains 19 excavation sites, 9 of which are completed while 10 are still active.
1. The Chain of Generations Center Tunnel: The Occupation authorities opened this tunnel on 22/9/2006 after 7 years of excavations and construction work. The tunnel stretches from beneath the ancient Tankazi School to the south. It consists of a group of walkways and rooms that exhibit Jewish history on glass sculptures in a theatrical atmosphere that relies on audio visual effects. This exhibition is considered the first excavation site beneath al-Aqsa Mosque to be run by the Occupation State.
Completed Excavations of the Western Side

2. The Secret Passage: It is a tunnel extending under the northern side of al-Silsilah street and reaching to the bottom of the Western Wall of the Mosque. Zionists claim this road was the lower path to the bridge which used to link the Temple with al-Quds City during the First Temple period.
3. Wilson's Arch: It is a big room with an arched ceiling situated below the ancient Tankazi School in the northeastern side of al-Buraq Square (Western Wall Plaza). The arch was discovered in 1865 by the Englishman Charles Wilson who claimed that it dated back to the Second Temple period and was part of a group of arches on which the bridge linking the Temple with the City was built. However, Jewish archeologists who came after Wilson asserted that the foundations of the arch, rather than the arch itself, were built in the Second Temple period. Nowadays, devout Jews use this chamber as a synagogue and a hall to celebrate special occasions. The Western Wall Heritage Foundation plans to expand this archway in the near future to accommodate a higher number of Jewish devotees.
Completed Excavations of the Western Side

4. The Herodian Hall: This is a large hall located to the west of Wilson’s Arch, under Bab el-Wad neighborhood. The Occupation authorities use this hall to expose a collection of Roman stones and pillars that are, allegedly, remains belonging to the Second Temple period.
Completed Excavations of the Western Side

5. The Large Hall: This hall is located a bit north of the Herodian Hall, on a higher level. As its name indicates, it is the largest of the halls but it does not contain significant remains, nor is it used for praying. It is only a path from which four tunnels emanate. The most important of these is the tunnel that runs along the vicinity of the Western Wall of al-Aqsa Mosque. The Occupation authorities claim that the stones that pedestrians see in this tunnel date back to the periods of First and Second Temple.
Completed Excavations of the Western Side

6. Warren’s Gate: This gate is located at the bottom of al-Qattanin Gate (one of al-Aqsa Mosque gates). It was discovered in 1867 by Charles Warren who claimed that it was a gate of a tunnel extending along the vicinity of the Western Wall of al-Aqsa. According to his theory, the gate used to lead to a staircase leading to the western gate of the Second Temple. In fact, what Warren has discovered was one of the water network canals built beneath the city during the era of Salah Eddine al-Ayoubi.
7. The «Holy of Holies» Synagogue: This synagogue is located to the north of Warren’s Gate and it is part of the Western Wall tunnel. It contains a cabinet for Torah books, seats and other instruments normally used in synagogues. The Jews pray at this site whilst facing the Dome of the Rock, or the Holy of Holies as they claim. The location of this synagogue is the nearest point the Jews can get to the Holy of Holies.
Completed Excavations of the Western Side

8. The Quarry: Al-Mahjar lies almost at the bottom of the Iron Gate (Bab al-Hadid, one of al-Aqsa gates). It is a small chamber in which a collection of stones are exhibited. The Israeli authorities claim that Jews have quarried stones from this site to build the First Temple.
Completed Excavations of the Western Side

9. The Aqueduct: This water canal is a very narrow tunnel stretching from the northern side of Bab al-Nather (one of al-Aqsa Mosque gates) up to al-Umariyyah School. The Occupation authorities claim that Jews have dug the canal during the First Temple period to convey water from the northern part of the city to the Temple to provide drinking water for Jewish pilgrims.
Uncompleted Excavations of the Western Side

1. The Western Wall Water Canal: On 25/1/2011, the Israeli Antiquities Authority announced the completion of the building of a new tunnel beneath al-Buraq Wall (i.e. Western Wall) after 7 years of continuous work. The tunnel is 15 to 20 meters deep, 1 to 2 meters high and 30 centimeters wide. The Occupation authorities claim that this aqueduct forms part of a water drainage tunnel that was built during the Second Temple period. It stretches around 600 meters between Damascus Gate (Bab al-Amud) on the north side to the south side of the Old City. Furthermore, the Occupation authorities claim that the discovery of this water canal is not new but a mere complement to the 19th century discoveries by Charles Warren. This new tunnel is expected to be open for visitors within a year or two after the completion of restoration work and connecting it to the other excavation sites in its vicinity.
Uncompleted Excavations of the Western Side

2. The Roman Bath House: On 22/11/2010, the Israeli Antiquities Authority announced the discovery of the relics of a 1800-year old Roman bath house to the west of the Jewish Quarter. The site contains several bathing tubs and water pipes and has a white mosaic floor. The Antiquities Authority claimed that this facility was used by Roman soldiers who attacked the city during the era of the Second Temple. According to their claims, a bath house of the Second Temple was built in the same place and the excavations were meant to find its relics. While the Roman relics were discovered by accident, their presence in this area contradicts with the Occupation Authorities’ claim that al-Quds was smaller in the Roman era than in the Jewish era.

Uncompleted Excavations of the Western Side

3. Hall of Ages: This underground hall is located to the northwest of Wilson’s Arch west of al-Aqsa Mosque. The Occupation authorities claim that work at this hall started a long time ago but was stopped after the collapse of the ground above it. However, excavations were resumed lately after the walls were reinforced with iron and the ceiling with concrete foam. Until the date of this report, the Occupation authorities had excavated the ground level of the hall up to 6 meters claiming to have found artifacts and pottery from the Roman and Islamic reigns as well as from the First and Second Temple periods. On 5/10/2009, the Occupation authorities announced the near completion of the work in this hall to open it for visitors.
4. The Temple Bath: On 23/9/2009, the Israeli Antiquities Authority announced the discovery of a building 8 meters below the ground, 20 meters west of al-Buraq Wall and 30 meters north of the entrance of the Western Wall’s tunnel network. According to the IAA, this building consists of three large halls built with square stones and was used as a government building during the early years of the Second Temple era. However, it was later changed to a religious bath used by visitors of the Temple. The Occupation authorities claim the Temple Bath is one of the largest buildings discovered in the history of excavations in al-Quds. Excavation woks done at this site are funded by the Western Wall Heritage Foundation, which is a semi-official organization funded by rich and influential Jews in the United States.
5. الطريق الشرقي: بدأت بلدية الاحتلال في القدس بالتعاون مع وزارة البيئة في دولة الاحتلال وسلطة تطوير القدس، في شهر حزيران/يونيو 2011 بمشروع لتنظيف وتأهيل بركة البطركة في الحي المسيحي شرق باب الخليل وإلى جنوب غرب كنيسة القيامة. وكانت هذه البركة التي تبلغ مساحتها نحو 3 دونمات قد تحولت منذ احتلال شرقيّ القدس عام 1967 إلى مكب للقمامة، ولم تلتفت لها بلدية الاحتلال طوال الفترة الماضية بل إنّرها منعت دائرة الأوقاف الإسلامية من تنظيفها وتأهيلها طوال الفترة السابقة بدعوى وجود خلاف حول ملكية أرض البركة مع الكنيسة الأرثوذكسية والكنيسة القبطية.

Uncompleted Excavations of the Western Side

5. The Eastern Road: In June 2011, the Occupation Municipality of al-Quds, in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment and the Jerusalem Development Authority, started a project to clean and restore Hezekiah’s Pool situated in the Christian Quarter, east of the Hebron Gate and south west of the Church of Resurrection (Kanisat al-Qiyamah). Since the eastern side of al-Quds was placed under Occupation in 1967, the pool has been turned to a landfill after the Occupation Municipality had prevented the Department of Islamic Endowments from cleaning and restoring it because of a dispute around the ownership of the land between the Christian Orthodox Church and the Christian Coptic Church.
Uncompleted Excavations of the Western Side

6. The Eastern Water Canal (the Upper Canal): In February 2010, the Occupation authorities announced the discovery of a water canal at the Hebron Gate (Jaffa Gate) west of the Old City during the rehabilitation of the infrastructure in the area. The Occupation authorities claimed that this canal was part of a 13-kilometer waterway which conveyed water from the northern Hebron Hills to Solomon’s Pools south of Bethlehem. Water would then be accumulated in Silwan Pool, Sultan’s Pool and the Ma’man Allah (Mamilla) Pool to be conveyed to the Old City. The section of the canal that the Occupation authorities claim to have discovered stretches from Ma’man Allah Pool west of the Old City and flows via the Jaffa Gate until it reaches al-Quds Castle (i.e. the Castle of King David) and Hezekiah’s Pool in the Christian Quarter southwest of the Church of Resurrection. According to the Occupation authorities, the discovered part of the canal is about 60 centimeters wide, 1.5 meters high and 40 meters long.
7. Excavations in al-Buraq Square: No expansion or restoration projects have been rolled out in al-Buraq Square since its foundation by the Occupation authorities in place of the Moroccan neighborhood. Since then the Occupation authorities have refrained from conducting any development or building projects in the area to avoid any negative reaction that might be triggered. However, this condition changed after the «Israeli Planning and Construction Committee» in al-Quds had approved the preliminary plans for the development of al-Buraq Square. These plans are aimed at rebuilding and restoring the entire area between the western side of al-Aqsa Mosque and Harat al-Sharaf (the Jewish Quarter) covering 7 acres.

The plan includes several projects, most importantly:
1. Adding an underground floor stretching over the entire area containing a special prayer area below al-Buraq Square, a parking lot, educational centers, a police station and a tourist site.
2. Building a permanent bridge in place of the current temporary bridge between al-Buraq Square and the Moroccan Gate.
3. Expanding al-Buraq Square up to the end of the southwestern side of al-Aqsa mosque.
4. Expanding the entrances to al-Buraq Square designated for pedestrians and vehicles alike.
5. Connecting al-Buraq Square and the new floor with the network of tunnels that reaches the northern and southern sides of al-Aqsa Mosque, and is connected to the Western Wall network of tunnels.
Uncompleted Excavations of the Western Side

8. The Western Wall Network of Tunnels: This network is considered the deepest and most active of all excavations in the western side of al-Aqsa Mosque. The network, which is situated below all other excavations, extends in various directions. Thus, while two branches start below the Iron Gate, one of them moves north towards al-Umariyyah School while the other moves south towards al-Buraq Square. A third branch starts below al-Buraq Square and moves east towards Sabil al-Kas which is midway between al-Qibli Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. From below Sabil al-Kas area, this tunnel branches off to the south towards al-Qibli Mosque and north towards the Dome of the Rock. Lastly, a division of the network begins below al-Qattanin Gate and moves east towards the Dome of the Rock.
Uncompleted Excavations of the Western Side

9. The Excavations of Hammam al-Ain (Ohel Yitzhak) Synagogue: These excavations started secretly in 2003 and were uncovered in 2007 after great strides in drilling were made by Ateret Cohanim, the organization responsible for the project. The uncovering of the excavations followed the increase in digging works in the site which led to landslides in Bab el-Wad neighbourhood where the synagogue is located.

Excavations extend from this synagogue in the direction of al-Buraq Square aiming to dig a 200-meter long tunnel connecting the synagogue and the museum intended to be built below the Western Wall tunnel network. They are also intended to set the stage below for future excavations underneath the Muslim Quarter and al-Aqsa Mosque.
Uncompleted Excavations of the Western Side

10. The Jewish Quarter Tunnel: In February 2009, the Western Wall Heritage Foundation began to construct a conveyor belt and an underground pedestrian corridor in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of al-Quds. The 56-meter long corridor links the «Misgav Ladakh» crossroads located in the eastern side of the Jewish Quarter to al-Buraq Square. The project is funded by the National Insurance Institute of Israel and an independent donor, and it is expected to cost 10 million shekels (around $2,611 million). According to the Foundation, the corridor is intended to facilitate the movement of the large Jewish groups between the Jewish Quarter and al-Buraq Square, due to the narrow roads of the Old City.
Uncompleted Excavations of the Northern Side

1. Bab Hittah Excavations: On 8/2/2009, al-Aqsa Endowment and Heritage Foundation released photos which show cracks in the northern wall of al-Aqsa Mosque at the ablution area east of Bab Hittah. The Foundation said that the cracks which extend seven meters were a direct result of the expansive excavations beneath the walls and the ablution area inside the wall. In addition, it is likely that the excavations in this area are connected to the excavations at the Struthion Pool (al-Qubbarah Pool) located westwards.
Uncompleted Excavations of the Northern Side

2. The Struthion Pool: This pool is located in the northwestern corner of al-Aqsa Mosque beneath al-Umariyyah School and has an estimated area of 825 m². The Pool, according to the Israeli authorities, is a public pool which was essentially dug in the Second Temple period as a trench to protect the city from the north. It is likely that the tunnels dug in this area would constitute the northern entrance to the Jewish City under al-Aqsa Mosque.
When Muslims came to this area, they built a mosque on the rock they found there, and which does not have any connection with the Temple. The Crusaders were the ones who gave this rock the name of «Rock of the Temple.» If we were to conduct deeper excavations beneath [al-Aqsa Mosque] area, we would definitely find diverse water wells there. We have already seen and found water canals during our excavation activities that we conducted over the past twenty five years and concluded that there is no temple to be found (Meaning that absolutely NO remnants of such a temple exist). Any excavations would never lead to finding any remnants of the Temple indicating towards [Solomon’s] era.

Meir Ben-Dov, Head of the Hebrew University excavation expedition assigned since 1967 to find the archeological remains of the Temple in al-Aqsa Mosque area and its surroundings.