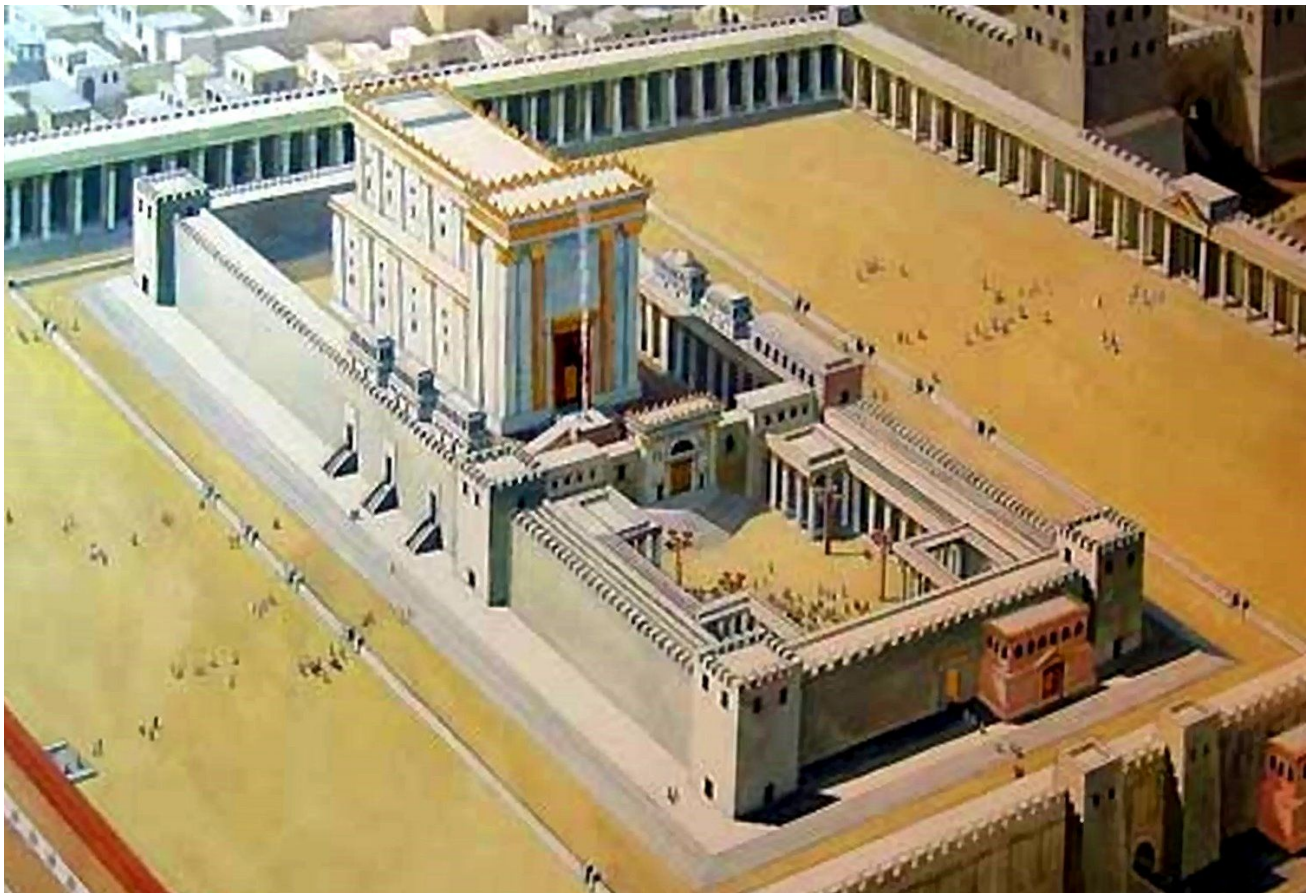


# Archeological Finds In Israel Undermine the ‘Palestinian’ Narrative

by Hugh Fitzgerald



**As is well-known,** Palestinian leaders like to backdate – using their vivid oriental imaginations – the presence of the “Palestinian people” in “Palestine.” Mahmoud Abbas has frequently declared that the Palestinians are direct descendants of the Canaanites, who lived in the Middle East some 4000 years ago. He has made even more extravagant claims recently at the U.N., where he said in late September that the Palestinians had been living in “Palestine” – the “land of their ancestors” – for the past 6000 years. At the kangaroo court of the U.N., any absurdity offered by the Arabs will find a willing audience. But the evidence provided by

archaeologists keeps undermining this narrative of an ancient “Palestinian” presence in the land. That story is [here](#).

*Pundits will tell you that the most dangerous enemies of the Palestinian Arab cause are the Gulf kingdoms that have decided to recognize Israel, or the European countries that are moving their embassies to Jerusalem, or the American politicians who refuse to keep underwriting the Palestinian Authority (PA)’s debts.*

*I disagree. I say that the Palestinians’ most formidable foe is ... archaeology.*

*A 2,000-year-old mikvah (ritual bath) was recently uncovered in the Lower Galilee. Most people probably would never have heard about the discovery if not for the dramatic photos of the entire structure being carried by truck to a nearby kibbutz for preservation...*

*Those Galileans, in other words, were Jews. They weren’t “Palestinians.” The word “Palestine” had not yet been invented. They weren’t Arabs or Muslims – the invasion of the Land of Israel by Muslim fundamentalists from the Arabian Peninsula was still 600 years in the future...*

As all educated people know, the Muslim Arabs arrived in the Land of Israel – which had been known originally as Judea to the Romans, who then renamed it as “Syria Palaestina” and then “Palestine” for short – in the 7th century. They could not have arrived earlier, as Islam itself did not exist until the early 7th century. It was in 610 A.D. that Muhammad claimed to have first received the message delivered by Gabriel; in 613 A.D., Muhammad began to preach that message. It was only after the triumph of Islam in Medina and Mecca that the Arabs swept northward out of Arabia.

How then do the Palestinian propagandists explain away this latest find of a the 2,000-year old mikvah? Do they describe

it as a water trough for horses or camels? Or an early swimming pool? No, they don't bother to comment. As always when a new archaeological discovery of a Jewish site is made, the Palestinians remain silent, hoping that new find will simply pass without notice in the outside world. The PA only regrets that the site was not in Area A of the West Bank, where the PA could simply have destroyed the evidence of an ancient Jewish presence, as they have been doing, whenever they can. How much evidence of that continuous Jewish presence in the Land of Israel (now also known as "Palestine") for the last 3500 years has been destroyed or covered up by the Palestinians or, before them, the Jordanians, is any one's guess.

*To make matters worse for Abbas, the directors of the excavation were Walid Atrash and Abd Elghani Ibrahim. You can tell by their names that they are not exactly Orthodox Jews. The PA will have a hard time getting anybody to believe that Atrash and Ibrahim are agents of a Zionist conspiracy.*

Two Israeli Arab archaeologists directed the excavation of the mikvah. Their devotion to archaeology proved stronger than any desire they might have had to support the "Palestinian" narrative of living in the land for thousands of years by destroying this contradictory evidence. How embarrassing for Mahmoud Abbas and his fellow re-writers of history.

*The mikvah discovery was just the latest in a series of archaeological finds in Israel during the past year, each of which contradicted the Palestinian Arab propaganda narrative.*

*In the Givati Parking Lot excavation in Jerusalem, archaeologists discovered Hebrew-language inscriptions dating back 2,600 years. One was a stone seal with the words "belonging to Ikkar son of Matanyahu." The other was a clay seal impression that read "belonging to Nathan-Melech, servant of the king." They weren't in Arabic. And the names*

*weren't Yasser or Mahmoud... .*

*Meanwhile, excavators from the University of North Carolina discovered two stunning mosaics at the site of a 1,600-year-old synagogue near Huqoq in northern Israel. One depicts a scene from the exodus of the Jews from ancient Egypt. The other shows images based on verses in the Torah's book of Daniel. Note that the mosaics do not show scenes from the Koran. There is nothing Arabic or Islamic or "Palestinian" about them. They are Jewish, they are situated in Israel, and they are 1,600 years old... .*

And, the author Stephen Flatow might have added, it would be another 200 years before a single Arab or Muslim would arrive in Judea (a/k/a "Palestine"), long after either those striking mosaics, or the synagogue near Huqoq that housed them, were constructed.

The Muslim Arabs have done their best to destroy ancient Jewish sites. From 1949 to 1967, when the Jordanians still held the Old City, they destroyed or desecrated all but one of the 35 synagogues, some very ancient, within the Old City. Those synagogues not completely devastated were used by the Jordanians as hen houses and stables filled with dung-heaps, garbage and carcasses. The venerable Jewish graveyard on the Mount of Olives, the oldest Jewish cemetery in existence, was in complete disarray, with tens of thousands of tombstones broken into pieces to be used as building materials, for walls, staircases, and to line the floors of Jordanian army latrines. Large areas of the cemetery were leveled to provide a short-cut to a new hotel. Hundreds of Torah scrolls and thousands of holy books had been plundered and burned to ashes.

Wherever the Jordanians ran across ancient Jewish sites, including archaeological digs, they damaged or destroyed them. Why respect or maintain the artifacts of the "most vile of

created beings"? And why keep the evidence of an ancient Jewish presence in the land if you can get rid of it without being noticed?

Now that Israel has been in control of the West Bank ever since the Six Day War, it not only has prevented further damage being done to known Jewish sites, but Israeli archaeologists, in some cases working with Israeli Arab archaeologists— such as Walid Atrash and Abd Elghani Ibrahim, who were in charge of excavating the 2,000-year old mikvah recently found in the Lower Galilee – have managed since the Six Day War to discover many more Jewish sites. And each site or artifact that is discovered – synagogues, mikvahs, mosaics, oil-lamps, pottery, coins – provides yet another bit of evidence, contributing to our understanding of the 3000 years of that uninterrupted Jewish presence in the land. And all this undermines the narrative of those imaginary 4000, or 5000, or even 6000 years of “Palestinian” history, complete with those Canaanite ancestors of the “Palestinian people,” that Mahmoud Abbas continues to flog, and wants so much that everyone believe.

It would be useful if, at one of those interminable debates about Arabs and Israelis at the U.N. General Assembly, the Israeli ambassador were to come armed with the visual evidence, that is, what Othello, that famous smiter of Muslims (collectively personified as “a malignant and a turbaned Turk”) called “the ocular proof.” Photographs of the most ancient synagogues in Israel, of mikvehs, mosaics, oil-lamps, eating and drinking vessels, pottery, coins, weapons –that is, all the multifarious evidence of Jewish life, clearly labelled with their approximate dates from c. 1500 B.C. on – could then be displayed on a big screen in the General Assembly Hall, as well as on-line. Still better would be if actual artifacts could be brought from Israel for display in the U.N. building. The Israeli ambassador should invite the ambassador of “Palestine” to bring to the U.N. his own material evidence of

the presence of the “Palestinian people” during those “thousands of years” when they “lived in Palestine.” The Palestinian ambassador’s response should be most instructive.

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