

Emek Shaveh - About Us

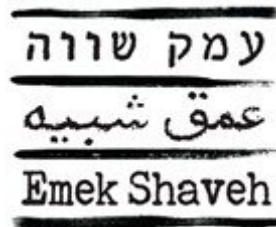
Tuesday 13 February 2024, by [Emek Shaveh](#) (Date first published: 13 February 2024).

Emek Shaveh is an Israeli NGO working to defend cultural heritage rights and to protect ancient sites as public assets that belong to members of all communities, faiths and peoples. We object to the fact that the ruins of the past have become a political tool in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and work to challenge those who use archaeological sites to dispossess disenfranchised communities. We view heritage site as resources for building bridges and strengthening bonds between peoples and cultures and believe that archaeological sites cannot constitute proof of precedence or ownership by any one nation, ethnic group or religion over a given place.

The archaeological artefact tells a complex story which is independent of religious dictates and traditions. Listening to this story and bringing it to the wider public can enrich our culture and promote values of tolerance and pluralism. We believe that the cultural wealth of this land belongs to the members of all its communities, nations and faiths. An archaeological site is comprised not only of its excavated layers, but also its present-day attributes - the people living in or near it, their culture, their daily lives and their needs.

We view the practice of archaeology as an endeavor that can benefit the common good. The various means of involving local communities in work on the site in or near which they live, whether it is managing its heritage, engaging in joint excavations, developing the site, or devising tours that combine visits to the site with an introduction to the local community — strengthen a community's relationship to its wider environment, yield economic dividends and can bring about significant social change.

We believe that becoming familiar with the complex and diverse history revealed through archaeological research can teach us something essential about ourselves, and cultivate an appreciation of this country's vast cultural diversity, in the past and present.



Our work:

- Maintaining regular contact with communities living in or near sensitive archaeological sites in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Israel. We monitor archaeological activities in these areas including infringement of Palestinian property rights and cultural heritage rights. We document these issues in reports, press releases and position papers for policy makers and the general public.

- Protecting heritage sites from development and construction plans for the benefit of the public. We file objections with planning and construction committees and launch public campaigns and take legal measures against the transference of ancient sites to private foundations with economic, religious or nationalist agendas who exploit archaeology in the service of these interests.
- Public advocacy with decision-makers, the media and the general public thorough tours, lectures, meetings and conferences to help raise awareness to the political use of archaeology as a means for taking over lands and historical narratives. We promote a pluralistic discourse that reveals the diversity of the cultural heritage of this country, and Jerusalem in particular, and work to cultivate a perspective that considers archaeological sites as the shared heritage of all the communities and peoples living in this land.
- We conduct community excavations designed to strengthen a local community's relationship to an archaeological site and to their local heritage. Community excavations increase environmental and social awareness and can strengthen cooperation between different communities living side by side within or near cultural heritage sites.

Professional and Ethical Principles that guide our work as Archaeologists and Heritage Professionals:

- <• We believe that heritage sites can be used to promote understanding between members of different nations, cultures and groups, and should not be used as a means to claim ownership or historical rights over a given site.
- Archaeology in general, and in Jerusalem in particular, reveals the rich and diverse fabric of human history, which has universal appeal.
- Archaeology tells an independent story about human existence, culture and achievements. It is not selective nor is it subservient to sacred texts.
- Each archaeological stratum contributes to the understanding of history. Archaeology does not rank cultures hierarchically.
- An archaeological site is comprised not only of historical layers, but is significant in the present-day lives of people who live in or near it, and may form a central part of their culture and daily lives.
- We are not interested in proving links between modern ethnic identities (e.g. Israeli, Palestinian, or European) and ancient peoples (e.g. Phoenician, Judean or Crusader).
- Because archaeology offers an independent view of human and social origins, it is inherently critical of all historical narratives.
- When the archaeological and textual narratives overlap, each serves to illuminate the other: both are interpretive and neither one represents an absolute truth.
- As archaeologists expropriate public property, the use they make of this property must be justified, particularly to the public whose property was expropriated.

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P.S.

- Emek Shaveh. 13 February 2024:
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