SITE NAME: The Incense Route - Desert Cities in the Negev

DATE OF INSCRIPTION: 15th July 2005

STATE PARTY: ISRAEL

CRITERIA: C (iii)(v)

DECISION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE:
Excerpt from the Decisions of the 29th Session of the World Heritage Committee

Criterion (iii): The Nabatean towns and their trade routes bear eloquent testimony to the economic, social and cultural importance of frankincense to the Hellenistic-Roman world. The routes also provided a means of passage not only for frankincense and other trade goods but also for people and ideas.

Criterion (v): The almost fossilised remains of towns, forts, caravanserai and sophisticated agricultural systems strung out along the Incense route in the Negev desert, display an outstanding response to a hostile desert environment and one that flourished for five centuries.

BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS

The four Nabatean towns of Haluza, Mamshit, Avdat and Shivta, along with associated fortresses and agricultural landscapes in the Negev Desert, are spread along routes linking them to the Mediterranean end of the Incense and Spice route. Together they reflect the hugely profitable trade in frankincense and myrrh from south Arabia to the Mediterranean, which flourished from the 3rd century B.C. until to 2nd century A.D. With the vestiges of their sophisticated irrigation systems, urban constructions, forts, and caravanserai they bear witness to the way in which the harsh desert was settled for trade and agriculture.

1.b State, Province or Region: Negev Region

1.d Exact location: N30 32 28.0 E35 09 39.0
The Incense and Spice Route and the Desert Cities in the Negev

World Heritage Nomination

State of Israel

UNESCO

January 2003
“Then thou shalt see and be radiant and thy heart shall throb and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned unto thee the wealth of the nations shall come unto thee”

“The caravan of camels shall cover thee and of the young camels of meridian and ephah all coming from Sheba; they shall bring gold and frankincense and shall proclaim the presents of the Lord.”

The Old Testament, Isaiah, Chapter 60, 5-6.

“Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense with all powders of the merchant”

The Old Testament, Song of Songs, Chapter 3, 6
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1. IDENTIFICATION OF PROPERTY
1. Identification of Property:

1a. Country: Israel

1b. Region: Negev

1c. Name of Property: The Incense and Spice Route and the Desert Cities in the Negev

1d. Coordinates of boundaries of the core site and other sites included in the nomination:

Core site shown on map (scale 1:50,000) and individual sites shown on maps at a scale of 1:50,000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Co-ordinates</th>
<th>Town/Regional Council</th>
<th>Area in Hectares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core*</td>
<td>South-East (Moa)</td>
<td>Arava-Tichona through Ramat Negev</td>
<td>6,314 62,592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35' 9' 39'' E</td>
<td>30' 32' 28'' N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North-West (Avdat)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34' 46'' 30'' E</td>
<td>30' 47'' 47'' N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haluza</td>
<td>34' 39' 28'' E</td>
<td>Ramat Negev</td>
<td>52 278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mamshit</td>
<td>35' 5' 51'' N</td>
<td>Dimona</td>
<td>242 514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shivta</td>
<td>31' 1' 34'' N</td>
<td>Ramat Negev</td>
<td>47 484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34' 37' 54'' E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30' 52' 53'' N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Linear property 65 km long, average 1.0 km wide and buffer zone average 10 km width.

Other fortresses are included in the core area and described in the text. The following are their coordinates, for information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>UTM Grid</th>
<th>Israel Grid</th>
<th>Longitude</th>
<th>Latitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kazra</td>
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<td>1585/9966</td>
<td>35' 5' 23''</td>
<td>30' 33' 33''</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nekarot</td>
<td>6929.3843</td>
<td>1500/9985</td>
<td>35' 0' 3''</td>
<td>30' 34' 34''</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ein-Saharonim</td>
<td>6858.3874</td>
<td>1439/0016</td>
<td>34' 56'14''</td>
<td>30' 36' 14''</td>
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<td>Makhmal</td>
<td>6847.3967</td>
<td>1431/0110</td>
<td>34' 55' 43''</td>
<td>30' 41' 19''</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graffon</td>
<td>6804.4008</td>
<td>1388/0148</td>
<td>34' 54' 25''</td>
<td>22' 28' 46''</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1e. Maps and plans showing boundary of area proposed for inscription and of any buffer zone: Attached: maps 1:50,000 scale

1f. See table above.
Legend

National Parks

W.H Nomination

Sites

Buffer zone

Scale 1:25,000
2. JUSTIFICATION FOR INSCRIPTION
2a. Statement of Significance:

Frankincense and Myrrh are aromatic resins extracted from bushy-thorny trees, that grow only in today’s Oman, Yemen and Somalia.

For thousands of years those resins were considered as one of the most precious commodities moving between Rome and India. Recent evidence even shows that during the Ming Dynasty frankincense was exported to China, in exchange for Chinese porcelain. According to Christian tradition, the three wise men, visiting baby Christ in Bethlehem, brought gold, frankincense and myrrh as gifts.

These resins, at times more precious than gold, had both philosophical and practical use. No matter what religious rites were observed, incense had to be burned to carry the prayers up to heaven. Frankincense was used to embalm corpses (when Pharaoh Tutankhamun’s tomb was opened in 1922, one of the sealed flasks still released the smell of the incense). It was used during burial ceremonies and cremations, as well as for medical and cosmetic purposes (having notable skin preserving properties).

The Bible is rich with references to both frankincense and myrrh, as are many other sources. An Egyptian inscription, dated 2800 B.C., documents expeditions to the land of Punt (the extreme south of the Red Sea) from where Egypt was importing large quantities of incense. Other sources tell us about Alexander the Great who wanted to conquer Arabia in order to control the production and trade of incense. Incense is frequently mentioned and discussed in Roman, Byzantine and Arab sources.

Though frankincense was very precious, it was used in staggering quantities. According to ancient documents, the annual consumption of incense in the Temple of Baal in Babylon was 2.5 tons and Nero burned a full year’s harvest during the funeral ceremonies of his wife. Thus, whoever had any involvement with incense, whether growing, producing, carrying, selling, or protecting it, had the potential of becoming very influential and extremely wealthy.

Carrying large quantities of the most precious goods in the world, the incense routes became the main arteries for a booming trade and a developing civilization over a huge area between the Mediterranean and south Arabia. The Frankincense and Spice Road was as significant to the world’s cultures as was the Silk Road. The political, economic, social and cultural significance of this route in the past is indisputable.

The “Incense Route” is two thousands kilometers long. About one hundred kilometers cross the southern part of Israel – the Negev. Since the third century B.C., and following the domestication of the camel, this section of the road was highly developed.

The majority of the remains along and around the route, in the Negev, are of the Nabataean culture. From the third century B.C. to the second century A.D. the Nabataeans were the people who transported frankincense and other goods across the big deserts, along 2000 kilometers of rough, dry areas, to the Mediterranean coasts. The last and most critical part of their route crossed the Negev.
The establishment of the incense trade completely changed the Nabataean economy, and, as a result, their whole lifestyle. As a poor pastoral community they were divided into tribes and ancestral homes. A man’s association to his tribe and family determined his status.

The new economy, and the prosperity that came with it, rendered pastor and goat breeding obsolete. There was also no need to wander any more. On the contrary, with the establishment of the trade routes, the Nabataeans gathered along the route and built permanent camps, where most of the population lived.

It became necessary to get organized, build roads, and secure the caravans and the population. These factors, together with the immense wealth gathered among the Nabataeans, brought on a change. At the end of the process the Nabataeans became an established kingdom, ruled by a king, with a highly developed administrative system, a regular army, relations with other countries, etc.

The Nabataean capital was Petra, which, while they were still a pastoral people, had served as their city of refuge, a place of shelter.

The tangible remains around and along the route, in the Negev, manifest its importance and wealth brought through the incense trade. It is represented by ruined cities, caravanserai, camps, watchtowers, fortresses, army camps, and remains of paved roads, agriculture and ingenious ways of collecting water.

Though representing just one twentieth of the total length of the road, the special features and the uniqueness of the Negev section of the route justify its nomination as a World Heritage Site, along with the other elements already nominated by other states (Oman and Jordan). The specific explanations for the justification are given under the comparative study and criteria headings.
2b. Possible Comparative Analysis:

Their fear of the Romans made the Nabataeans divert the caravans, moving along the part of the route that goes through the Arava and the Negev, to a course that they could protect. The need for a secured course did not arise throughout the whole space extending from the frankincense source in the south to the region of the Arava valley. Crossing the Arava brought the Nabataeans closer to the Romans, who occupied Eretz Israel, north of the Negev. The Empire’s borderline, which was the border of the populated area, passed through the south of the Dead Sea, via Beer-Sheva and up to Rafiah. Since the Romans frequently crossed this line, the Nabataeans kept the caravans away from the Romans’ reach.

The space between the Arava and the north-western borders of the Negev is divided into two different sections, located south and north of the line marked by the big cliff in the north of Makhtesh Ramon. Both sections have no close comparison all along the rest of the Incense Route due to their proximity to the Roman limes to less desert areas and to the final destination of the caravans.

The First Section:

The first section, the more southern of the two, is very dry. The average quantity of rainfall is 40-80 mm. a year, and the rain is usually irregular and random. The desert vegetation is slight and grows only in the wadi gorges. The topography of the region is harsh. Many wadis cross it and in between there are mountain ridges and peaks. All the wadis drain east, towards the Arava and the Dead Sea, and flow from the south-west to the north-east. This direction, which is not compatible with the walking axis between Petra and the Mediterranean, forced the travelers to use only short parts of each wadi and cross ridges leading to the parts of other gorges whose direction fitted, for a certain distance, their travel direction. The deep drainage basis at the Arava split caused the subversion of the wadi and the creation of deep canyons, which made the movement of people and caravans difficult.

The desert climate, the harsh topography and the small quantity of pastor, rendered the area unpopulated and even pastoral-nomad communities did not inhabit it. Despite the afore mentioned drawbacks, the region has a great advantage. Its landscape is dramatic, impressive and diverse.

In order to keep the caravan route away from the Romans’ reach, the Nabataeans relinquished familiar and comfortable routes, which crossed the Negev north of this area, and chose to travel through this region. This choice involved giving up topographical convenience and shorter courses, as well as proximity to water sources.

Crossing this section was especially difficult, but moving the route to a distanced place, protected by nature and unfamiliar to the Romans, provided the Nabataeans with the security they needed. Since passage options were limited, they selected one defined and well-established course, something that was not needed throughout the area extending from the south of Arabia to the Arava. Difficult crossing points were treated and paved, especially along the ascents to the mountain ridges.
The need for security made the Nabataeans build towers and fortresses, which regularly housed army units, along the way. Water facilities were constructed nearby, a primal necessity in this desert region. Humble worship places, typical of desert communities, including the Nabataeans, were set along the route, as well as near the towers and the fortresses. This feature is unique to the stretch of the route west of the Arava, and cannot be found anywhere else along the route carrying the caravans from Oman and Yemen.

The most outstanding example of relinquishing topographical convenience in favour of security is the fact that the route passed inside the width of Makhtesh Ramon and climbed on over its tall cliff in order to reach the hills of Avdat.

The Second Section:

Climbing over the top of the Makhtesh Ramon cliff brought the route to the second, northern section through which it crossed the Negev.

This section is totally different from the first section. It is dry, but not as barren as the first, and its topography is much more convenient. The water divide between the Arava basin, the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean basin lies in the south of this region. Only a few rivers flow towards the Arava split and the Dead Sea. These rivers start their way north of the Ramon cliff, and in their upper part they are still moderate. The course of the route could have easily bypassed the canyon areas. All the other rivers flow to the Mediterranean and therefore the differences in height, from their beginning to their end, are not very big, and they do not create canyon riverbeds.

Most of the region is flat, descending in a moderate slope towards the sea. The wide open spaces characterize the whole area. Near the cliff the region rises to a height of about 1000 meters above sea level and, as a result, the quantity of rainfall is larger, attaining an average of 80-100 mm. a year. This climate allows the growth of varied vegetation all over the area and not just in the gorges. These conditions do not change much with the descent in height because the lower the height the closer is the region to the sea and the green area. The vegetation and climate conditions provide pastoral suitable for pastoral communities, and in the past the area was inhabited by large concentrations of Nabataean population.

Since nature did not offer any hiding places and did not set any obstacles for movement in the area, it was not suitable for a strategy of obscuring the course of the route, as was done in the southern section. However, this strategy was not necessary. The ecological conditions which brought the Nabataean population to the region provided another solution – the caravans traveled in a friendly environment and the high concentration of the population was enough to deter the Romans from attacking the caravans.

The need for a permanent population presence, together with the immense changes in the economy and the social structure of the Nabataeans, resulted in a cessation of nomadism and the establishment of permanent camps, housing many people all over the region. Seven of these camps became permanent settlements with public buildings made of stone or hewn into the rock. These structures included temples and
ritual constructs, burial facilities, water wells, and industrial and military facilities. Most of the population still lived in tents but had stopped wandering and was enjoying the high economic standard.

Remnants left in these settlements include public buildings and structures hewn into the rock, as well as tent areas where ceramics, stone fences, workshops and hearths were found.

These settlements continued to develop from the 2nd century onwards. Houses, army camps, and temples were built, and, later, churches. These settlements lived on for a thousand years – from the third century B.C until the seventh century A.C.

This is a unique phenomenon, rarely found in the deserts of the world. It is apparent only in the Negev part of the Incense Route, making it unique.

In 106 A.C. the Romans occupied Petra and the Nabataean areas in Jordan and in the Negev. With the change of government, the Nabataeans lost their independence. The population in the occupied territories remained Nabataean and their descendents continued to live in the region until the 8th century, perhaps longer. Those who joined them were mainly officials.

The frankincense trade remained in the hands of the Nabataeans who continued to use the route for a while longer. Later, the trade was transferred to other routes, more profitable for the Romans.

Nevertheless, the region was not abandoned. On the contrary, the settlements flourished and grew; stone structures replaced the tents. The population concentration in the Negev served as a rear guard for the border of the new empire, which ran along the historic highway, from Philadelphia (Amman) to Ayala (Akkaba). The Romans paved parts of the Incense Route, and set milestones, marked in Greek, along the way. During the Byzantine period the Negev settlements continued to serve as rear guards for the Empire’s border. Following the growth of population in the whole of Eretz Israel they too continued to grow. The empire, which was by then Christian, invested money and effort in the Negev settlements, building churches and monasteries, as well as roads to serve pilgrims, monks seeking solitude in the desert, and mainly travelers moving between the Holy Land, Sinai and Mount Sinai.

The Arab occupation in the 8th century changed the geo-political conditions: the region no longer hosted a border that needed the support of an established rear guard. The Arabs occupied the whole area and had no political or military interest in supporting the Negev population. Christian pilgrims stopped coming and the income sources went dry. The settlements were gradually abandoned, and, together with them, the route. Within several decades they had vanished from the region and pastoral nomads, once again, populated the Negev.
2c. Authenticity/Integrity:

The parts of the Incense Route that are proposed for inclusion in the World Heritage list maintain the highest level of authenticity. Since they are located in the desert, decay is relatively slight. The region was not populated from the 7th century until the 20th century, and, even today, the route passes through unpopulated areas. As a result, man-made damage was limited. The same is true for the paved parts of the route, the milestones set along it, and the ascents.

Authenticity is therefore high in all elements of the road, structures and installations. Among the towns, Shivta is considered one of the best preserved ruined cities in the world.

All conservation works carried out on the various structures along the route and in the settlements, especially in Avdat and in Mamshit, preserve the authenticity and integrity of the sites.

2d. Criteria under which inscription is proposed (and justification for inscription under these criteria)

The Negev section of the “Frankincense and Spice Road” is proposed for nomination under criteria iii and v.

Criterion iii: Bear a unique, or at least exceptional, testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living, or which has disappeared.

The main cultural tradition to which this nomination bears a unique testimony is the ancient use of frankincense and its immense importance to the Hellenistic-Roman world. The effects of this tradition in this area are related to the trade in these precious goods, the need to carry them by huge camel caravans over long distances, and the immense wealth the trade brought to the region. The tangible evidence is the road itself (which does not exist in any other parts of the caravan’s route); fortresses built to protect the caravans when getting close to the borders of big empires; worship and water installations used mainly by the soldiers manning those fortresses; and seven big tent camps which, following the economic prosperity, became large and prosperous towns.

Criterion v: Be an outstanding example of traditional human settlements or land use, which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with environment, especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.

Four very special and outstanding elements of this nomination meet the definitions under this criterion:

- The ancient trade route and its remains (road, milestones, ascents, caravanserais).
- The fortresses built to protect the road, with their water installations and worship sites.
- The cluster of towns that were built in a relatively hostile environment and, in spite of it, flourished for several centuries.
- The sophisticated agricultural system, which made use of every rare drop of rain and every possible available and fertile strip of land.

All these are examples of outstanding land uses and ingenious ways of adapting to desert environment, not as a nomadic society but rather as a prosperous society residing in towns.
3. DESCRIPTION
3a. Description of Property

3b. History and Development

3c. Form and date of most recent records of property

3d. Present State of Conservation

3e. Policies and programs related to the presentation and promotion of the property.

A. Core Area
1. Moa Fortress and Caravanserai
2. Kasra Fort
3. Nekarot Fortress
4. Ein Saharonim – Ramon Gate Caravanserai
5. Makhmal Ascent and Fortress
6. Graffon Fortress
7. Milestones along the Route
8. Different Elements along the Route
9. Road Sections along the Incense Route

B. Individual Sites
10. Avdat
11. Haluza
12. Mamshit-Kurnub
13. Shivta

C. General
14. Agriculture
15. General Description of Geology and Landscape
1. Moa Fortress and Caravanserai

Location:
In the centre of the Arava Valley, north of Omer river.
Coordinates: 1624/9947 Israel Grid
   35° 39' E  30° 32' 28” N

Description:

The Caravanserai:
Size: 40x40 meters.
A square complex.
Enterance: through a narrow passage flanked in the north-western corner of the complex.
The north side and the south side included 5 rooms each.
The west side included several rooms, containing the bath facilities.

The Fortress:
Size: 17x17 meters.
A square building, with a central courtyard surrounded by 11 rooms.
Enterance: in the north-western corner.
An olive press and other agricultural plants were found in the southern room and in the courtyard.
A stone staircase is located in the north-western corner.

The Water Pool:
Size: 11x9 meters.
Located north of the fortress. The pool, built of limestone, is sunk into the ground.
Situated close to the water source, the pool is filled by the underground spring.
A water canal connects the pool with the bath complex of the caravanserai.

Technology:

The Caravanserai:
The complex was built with dressed limestone, medium to soft in hardness.
The walls are composed of outer and inner limestone shells, with an earth and rubble core.
The roof was supported by stone arches in each room, and covered with stone slabs extending from one arch to another.
The walls were lime plastered.
The Fortress:
The complex was built with rough conglomerate limestone, set in irregular courses of different heights. This stone appears in slab form, quarried from the hill on which the fortress stood.
The walls were composed of inner and outer slabs, a small stone shell, and a minimal earth core. They were plastered with mud.
The roof was made of wood logs and earth-lime coating.

State of Conservation:

The Caravanserai:
The walls have survived up to a height of 1.00-1.25 meters.
The western wall, with the bath complex and softer stone, exhibits signs of severe deterioration.
The complex is mostly unexcavated, which has ensured its stable conservation state.
Small remnants of lime plaster have survived on the exposed walls.

The Fortress:
The complex underwent a complete conservation intervention in 1995.
The walls have survived up to a height of 3 meters.
Remnants of lime and mud plaster are still apparent.

Conservation Management Plan:
The site of Moa is located in a designated nature reserve, and is legally protected.
The Nature and Park Authority’s local ranger weekly inspects the site for vandalism and other damages.
The Authority’s site conservators inspect the site before and after the rainy season. Reports of damage and intervention are regularly field.
MO' A (KHIRBET MOYAT 'AWAD). A site located near Nahal 'Omer in the central Arava (map reference 1624.9947) was identified in 1934 as the remains of a Roman fort by F. Frank, who drew a plan of the central structure (44 by 41 m). Only two or three courses of stones survive. West of this structure Frank noticed the remains of an older fort, and to the east yet another small structure. A. Alt, relying on Frank's discoveries, identified the site with Asuada, a fort mentioned in the Notitia Dignitatum (XXXIV, 32). Glueck collected Nabataean sherds on the surface. Later, G. E. Kirk stated that the site dated, at the latest, to the second century CE. F. M. Abel and
Mo‘a‘ara (left to right) Nabataean oil lamps; wooden comb; 2nd century CE; Nabataean figurines; 1st century CE.

Mo‘a‘ara: decorated Nabataean bowl.

H. Avi-Yonah were inclined to identify Khirbet Mo‘a‘ara as Mak‘ in art, which is not the case. The site has been surveyed by A. Negev, B. Rothberg, M. Gichon, Z. Iban, and others. In 1980, a survey was conducted by a team headed by D. Nahi and K. Demerry, as part of the Negev Archeology Survey. R. Cohen excavated the site from 1981 to 1984, on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums. The excavations, conducted in six areas (A–F), exposed the site’s six main structures. Area A, the main structure, a “khan,” was cleared. It was square, each side being approximately 40 m long. Its adobe walls were preserved to a height of about 1.25 m. The entrance, at the northwestern corner, was a narrow passageway (width, c. 1.7 m) between two identical rooms (length, 4.5 by 4.0 m). Four additional rooms were found along the northern side of the building, with pillars to support the arches on which the ceiling had rested. Along the southeastern side (length, 41 m) five rooms were cleared. Their walls were covered with painted plaster, a fragment of which (0.8 by 0.4 m) survives; it features a striped pattern in black, yellow, and red. Lying on the floor of the room in which the plaster fragment was preserved were two wooden beams (diameter, c. 15 cm); one was 4 m long. On the west, a large room (6 by 5 m) held four stone column bases. A stone bench was built along its eastern wall. This was probably the apodyterium of a bathhouse, whose other rooms were found along the building’s western side. At least two building stages were identified in these rooms: from the end of the first century and the beginning of the second century.

Area B, in area B, to the west of the khan, a square structure (17 by 17 m) was cleared. It contained eleven rooms around an unroofed courtyard (8 by 7 m) containing numerous cooking installations. The gate (4.5 by 3 m) was at its southeastern corner. Its plastered linestone walls were preserved to a height of some 3 m. Some of the stone slabs over the doors of the rooms were found in situ. Large numbers of wooden beams were found in the rooms that probably had supported a clay ceiling. One of the rooms contained a crushing stone (this may have been used as an olive press; a stone vat was found in the courtyard. Other installations in the same room were probably crushing and rinsing devices. Near the southeastern corner of the structure was the remains of a staircase (2.5 by 2.5 m).

Three building stages were identified in most of the rooms. The pottery assigned to the first stage included lamps and jugs from the third to second centuries BCE and coins of Philip IV (134–125 BCE). The second stage included painted Nabataean bowls, lamps, juglets, jars, cooking pots, and storage jars typical of the end of the first century CE, as well as coins of Antioch II (c. 100 BCE), Antioch IV (c. 60–40 BCE), and Herod II (70–106). The third stage was represented by a large quantity of pottery, including bowls, lamp, and jars from the second to third centuries CE and coins of the emperor Trajan (98–117), Commodus (180–192) and Caracalla (211–217). Wicker baskets, mats, fabrics, and wooden signets were found in all three stages. Also in evidence were large quantities of lime and date pits, as well as shelves of almonds and other nuts. Surveys were also conducted of agricultural terraces over a wide area.

Area E, in area E, west of the khan, a building was discovered near a cave on the slope that had been used as a dwelling or store. The southern part of the building had been destroyed in a violent conflagration. Along its northern side (length, 20 m) were the foundations of four rooms. Only one level of occupation could be identified, featuring sherds and coins of the first century CE. A notable find was a Nabataean dedicatory tablet on papyrus, of which a few lines survive.

Area F, in area F, north of the khan, the excavators partially cleared another large structure. A pool (11 by 9 m) was discovered at the southeastern corner of the site, as was an aqueduct that channeled water from the pool to the bathhouse in the khan.

The excavators concluded that Mo‘a‘ara was an important trading station on the Petra–Gaza road, and well kept in the third to second centuries BCE. It possibly reached its zenith in the reign of the Nabataean king Antioch IV. It continued to be used after the Roman annexation of the Nabataean Kingdom in 106 CE, until the end of the third century.
2. Kasra Fortress

Location:
On the edge of a flat mountaintop, above the Kasra Wadi.
Coordinates: 1585/9966 Israel Grid
35° 5’ 23”E  30° 33’ 33”N

Description:
Size: 5.0x5.5 meters.
An almost square watchtower.
3 rooms, measuring 14x5.5 meters, are located south of the tower.
The central room served as an open courtyard for the tower and the other two rooms.
A small worship complex is located south east of the fortress.
A water hole complex, which served the inhabitants of the site, is located close to the wadi, north of the site.

Technology:
The site was built in two stages: first the tower and then the rooms.
The complex was constructed with roughly cut fossilized limestone of medium hardness.
The roof was, most likely, made of wood logs.
The walls were composed of outer and inner stone shells, with an earth and rubble core.
Regularly laid courses, with heavier stones, can be found in the corners of the complex.

State of Conservation:
The sight underwent a major conservation intervention in 1996 and is in a good state of conservation.
The walls have survived up to a height of 3 meters.

Conservation Plan:
The site is within a designated Nature Reserve and is patrolled for damage/vandalism on a weekly basis by the Authority’s local ranger.
The Authority’s site conservator regularly inspects the site before and after the rainy season.
Horvat Qazra. A site situated on the summit of a hill above Nahal Qazra (map reference 1883.9966) was first surveyed in 1934 by P. Franken, who named it Qareeq 'Abd, drew plans of it, and dated it to the Roman period. Later, the site was surveyed by N. Gllacek, M. Gichon, B. Rothenberg, A. Negev, and others, who considered it a road station on the ancient Gezer-Jerusalem-Porei-Oboda-Cana-Gaza highway. The site was subsequently surveyed by a team from the Negev Emergency Survey directed by D. Nashiel. A salvage excavation was conducted in 1981 by R. Cohen, on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums. The excavation showed that the first structure on the site was an almost square tower (5.5 by 5 m), built of ashlar. Its walls (thickness, 0.5 m) were preserved to a height of some 3 m. Its entrance was on the south. On the floor a few sherds and a coin of the emperor Caracalla (212-217) were found. In a second stage, three rooms (total area, c. 15 by 5.5 m) were built south of the tower; the central room (5.5 by 4.5 m) was used as an open
3. Nekarot Fortress

Location:
Atop a low hill on the north bank of the Nekarot Wadi.
Coordinates: 1500/9985  Israel Grid
            35° 0’ 3”E  30° 34’ 34”N

Description:

Tower and Yard:
Size: 8x7.5 meters.
An almost square two-story tower.
The tower has 3 rooms; the entrance is situated at the east-southern corner.
An open yard, measuring 8.5.x5 meters, is adjoined from the east.

Ruined Complex:
Size: 12x17 meters.
A rectangular complex, located east of the tower.
6 rooms, measuring 6.2x5 meters, surround the central courtyard.

Small Watchtower:
This one-room complex, measuring 3x4 meters, is situated on a hill, east of the main complex.

Hidden Water Pool Complex:
Situated on the south bank of the Nekarot Wadi, atop a small hill, in a little, hidden riverbed.
A roof, measuring 7x7 meters, covers the complex.

Technology:

The Main Tower:
The building was constructed with roughly dressed, medium hard limestone.
The walls were made of inner and outer stone shells with an earth and rubble core.
The roof was, most likely, built with wood logs.
The floor was made of compressed clay-earth.

The Water Pool Complex:
The building was constructed with cut limestone of medium hardness.
The inner and outer shells of the wall were laid with limestone mortar. The core was made of earth and rubble.
The inner walls were plastered, with about 3 layers of lime and ceramic mortar, 4-5 cm. thick.
The roof was laid on three parallel limestone-plastered arches, with stone slabs covering the roof openings.
The building was specifically situated to receive the rushing floodwaters, with a sink pool and an entry canal. The remaining overflow waters were wisely diverted around the complex so as not to cause damage.
State of Conservation:
The main tower and water complex underwent a full conservation treatment in 1995.
The complex east of the tower has survived up to a height of one-two courses. Almost all of the tower walls have survived up to a height of 3 meters. The water pool building has remained almost intact with roof slabs, arches, walls, windows, plaster, and canals.

Conservation Plan:
The site is located in a designated Nature Reserve and gets the same treatment as the Moa and Kasra sites.
MEZAD NEQAROT. A site situated on a low hill near the north bank of Nahal Neqarot (map reference 1500-9905) was first surveyed in 1932 by F. Frischer, who called it Qeir Wadi as-Saq and drew a plan of it. He dated the remains to the Roman period. Later the site was surveyed by A. Glueck, M. Gophna, R. Rothenberg, A. Sieve, and others, who considered it a road station along the Nahalit-Jezreel-Ophel-Gaza highway. The site was also surveyed by a team under D. Nahalit and Y. Zissfor the Negev Emergency Survey. In 1981–1982, H. Cohen directed salvage excavations here, of four structures, on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums. Two of the structures were on a low mound near the northern bank of Nahal Neqarot: the first (A) on the western part of the mound and the second (B) on the east. On the summit of a hill east of the structures stood a small windtower (structure C). The fourth structure (D) was a stone-built pool on the slope of the ridge south of the bank of Nahal Neqarot.

Structure A. Structure A was an almost square tower (8 by 7.5 m) with an adjoining unknown courtyard to the east. The tower, which originally had two stories, was preserved to a height of some 3 m. Its walls were 0.6 m thick and it consisted of three rooms: two small rooms on the west (each 3 by 2.5 m) and a long hall to their east (7 by 3 m). The entrance to the tower (with a 0.8 m wide) was at the southeastern corner of the hall. Each room opened onto the hall through a separate doorway. Steps climbing up the northern wall of the hall led to the upper story. The height of the ceiling was approximately 2.20 m. Three cupboards were found installed in the walls of the northeastern room and one in the southern room. Beneath the debris in the rooms were two cruciform floor plans of the Early Roman period.

Structure B. Structure B was probably destroyed by the builders of the tower; its building stones were plundered to its foundations. The original plan was probably rectangular (c. 17 by 12 m) and consisted of six rooms around a central courtyard (2.2 by 3.5 m). A later stage, two rooms were added on the southern side and two or three on the west. The structure most probably consisted of three wings. The western wing contained three rooms (total area, c. 12 by 4 m), two of which measured 3.5 by 3.5 m each. These rooms were entered directly from the courtyard; access to the third (3.7 by 2.5 m) was indirect through a narrow corridor (width, 0.6–0.75 m), at the end of which two stairs led down to the rooms. The northern wing (11 by 3.5 m), to the east of the western wing, contained two rooms. The western room (3.5 by 2.1 m) was entered directly from the courtyard; the central, elongated room (5.5 by
2.1 m) was accessible only from the entrance square of the entire structure, east of the courtyard. The southern wing contained a long room (6.5 by 3.1 m), also entered from the entrance square. The mosaic contained installations of various sizes. The entrance (width, c. 0.6 m) to structure B was at the north-eastern corner of the courtyard; it contained a stone bench along its northern wall. The courtyard was paved with large, flat stones in the center and small paving stones along the sides. The pottery found on the floors included painted Nabatean bowls, juglets, oil lamps, and cooking pots typical of the first century. Also found were Nabatean coins of Antias IV (9 BCE-40 CE) and Malchos II (40–76 CE).

**The Small Watchtower (Structure C)**. The watchtower (c. 4 by 3 m) was a room whose walls (thickness, c. 0.6 m) were preserved to a height of about 3.5 meter. Its entrance was at the southwestern corner.

**The Pool (Structure D)**. The pool, which was built of ashlar, was square (c. 7 by 7 m). It was preserved almost entirely to its original height, including the ceiling; on the north, the height of the walls was approximately 3.5 m, where it was 2.3 m. The ceiling was built of flat stone slabs (length, c. 1.4 m, width, 6.4 m; and thickness, 0.3 m), resting on three arches approximately one meter apart. The inner walls of the pool were coated with several layers of plaster (or mortar).

**MIZAD NAGRAH**. A fort was located on the Ma‘aleh Aqabrin road on the watershed, between Nahal Bitron on the east and Nahal Surya on the north and west (map reference 1662,6297). The entrance to this square (7.1 by 7.1 m) fort was at the center of its southern wall; the passageway was 0.7 m wide. Along the inside of its eastern wall a staircase led to the upper story. The wooden beams and pressed material found in the debris indicate that the ceiling rested on a central arch. The finds on the floor included pottery typical of the third and fourth centuries CE and twenty coins from the reign of...
4. Ein Saharonim – Ramon Gate Caravanserai

**Location:**
On a hill above the Saharonim Spring in the Ramon Makhtesh.
Coordinates: 1439/0016  Israel Grid
34° 56’ 14”E 30° 36’ 14”N

**Description:**
Size: 42x42 meters.
A square complex, with a central courtyard surrounded by rooms.
The entrance, flanked by a guardroom on each side, was in the middle of the north side.
The western and eastern flanks served as workshops for craftsmen.
The southern flank served as the living quarters, with built plaster pools and a brick cooking-stove.

**Technology:**
The complex was built mainly with soft clay stones, dressed and locally quarried.
Arches supported the roofs, which were made of stone slabs.
The walls were built with inner and outer shells, and an earth and rubble core in regular courses.
The walls were mud plastered, possibly with a lime plaster layer.
Lime mortar and fired clay bricks of local materials were used in the facilities quarter.

**State of Conservation:**
Due to their exposure to the climate, the building stones suffer from decay.
The decay is in the form of crumbling, slicing and degradation.
The facilities quarter exhibits a high state of conservation of plaster and fired brick, both in shape and in material.
The site underwent major conservation intervention in 1990 and in 1997.

**Conservation Plan:**
Due to its decaying exposed stone, the site is monitored more closely than other Incense and Spice Road sites.
The site is in the midst of the Ramon Makhtesh Nature Reserve and is regularly monitored, as are Moa and Kasra.
Conservation crews carry out yearly maintenance before and after the rainy season.
Ein Saharonim
MEZAD SHIYAR RASOM: A site on a low hill east of Nebatim (map reference 1439.0016) was first surveyed in 1932 by P. Frank, who called it Qubet al-Mahashe and dated it to the Roman period. A. Ahl identified theatre with the Roman-Byzantine Moabite, mentioned in the Notitia Dignitatum (XXXIV, 14). It was later surveyed by G. E. Kirk, N. Ghanem, M. Ghebr, B. Rothenberg, and others, who identified it as a road station on the Nabatean Petra–Osoba–Geza highway. In 1982-1983, the square fort (c. 42 by 42 m) was excavated by R. Cohen, on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums.

The fort consisted of rooms arranged around several courtyards (22 by 31 m). The walls (thickness, 0.6 m) were preserved to a height of 1.5 to 2.5 m. The main gate (2 by 1.8 m) was built at the center of the northern wall; it was flanked by two guardrooms (each 3.6 by 3 m), which were probably originally towers. Nine rooms (each, 3.5 m wide) were cleared along the eastern wall; one room contained a plastered basin (1.7 by 1.2 m; c. 0.5 m deep). Another room contained a circular clay oven (diameter, c. 2 m) in its center. The floor of the oven was made of small stones. Inside it cooking-pot and other sherds were found, along with many cased boxes. A narrow corridor (width, c. 1.5 m; length, 8 m) separated the rooms on the east from those along the southern wall. At the southern end of the corridor a small, circular installation, made of clay, held a complete glass bowl and numerous sherds.

The rooms along the southern wall were arranged in three wings. An inner courtyard (7.5 by 3.5 m) separated the two east wings from one another. The centermost wing included two large rooms (7.5 by 3.6 m; 7.5 by 4.5 m). The second wing contained two long rooms (6 by 2.5 m), between which ran a narrow corridor (width, c. 1 m). The western wing contained three rooms and was probably accessible directly from the courtyard. At the end of the southern wall, running along the western wing, was a narrow corridor (width, c. 1.5 m), to the north of which was a staircase around a square, central pillar, consisting of six steps to the upper story. Along the western wall, north of the staircase, were six rooms.

Two building stages were identified in most of the rooms. To the first stage belonged an assemblage of pottery (painted Nabatean bowls, oil lamps, jugs, and cooking pots) typical of the first century, and coins of the Nabatean kings Artabas IV (9 BC–40 CE) and Rabbel II (76–106). To the second stage belonged ceramic finds characteristic of the second to third centuries. Also found were coins of Antoninus Pius (138–161), Commodus (180–192), and Caracalla (211–217).

The plan of Mezad Shi’ar Rasom is identical with that of the so-called khan at Mu’a. The finds indicate that the fort was built in the Nabatean period, probably at the end of the first century CE, as a road station on the ancient Petra–Osoba–Geza highway. It continued in use without significant modifications after the annexation of the Nabatean kingdom to the Roman Empire in 106.

RUDOLF COHEN
5. Makhmal Ascent and Fortress

Location:
On the northern edge of the Ramon Makhtesh, above the Makhtesh ascent.
Coordinates: 1431/9111  Israel Grid
            34° 55’ 43”E  30° 41’ 19”N

Description:

The Fort:
Size: 7x6.5 meters.
The fort is almost square.
Two stone-built square columns, located in the centre, divide the tower into two rooms.
The arched entrance is on the south side.
Remnants of a stone staircase can be seen in the south-western corner.

The Covered Water Pool:
Size: 8x4.75 meters.
A stone-built rectangular pool.
The rain-flood water canal leads to the pool from the north-east.
Pool capacity: 150 cubic meters.

Technology:
The fort and the pool were built from locally quarried, medium hard limestone.
The walls consist of inner and outer limestone shells and an earth and rubble core.
Stone arches supported the roofs, which were made of stretches of stone slabs.

State of Conservation:
The walls of the fort have survived up to a height of 1.5-2.0 meters.
The pool has barely survived.
Since its last excavation in 1982, the site, which is not completely excavated, has not been conserved.

Conservation Plan:
The site is located in the Ramon Makhtesh Nature Reserve, thus protected by law.
A major conservation treatment is currently being planned for the year 2002.
The site will be monitored and maintained, in the manner of Saharonim Fort.

The Ascent:
The bottom of the Makhtesh, and the fortress at the top of its northern cliff, are connected via a man-made ascent. This path, which is partly cut in the rock, partly built with retaining walls, uses the special geological, easy access. It is the best preserved ascent in the stretch crossing the Negev.
MEZAD MAVELE MAJMAEL. The site at the top of Mount Majmael (map reference 1419 9 111), on the edge of the northern cliff of Mount Ramon, was first surveyed in 1937 by G. E. Kirk, who was also the first to examine Mount Majmael. In 1966, it was surveyed by R. Ruben and M. Godon. In 1966, a trial excavation was carried out by Z. Meir, Y. Tzadok, and S. Cohen. In the course of a survey of the road from She'ar Ramon to Afula (Obedia). The excavation was completed by Cohen in 1992. The almost square fort (7.5 by 6.5 m) was divided into two parallel halls (each 5.6 by 2.6 m), each was preserved to a height of some 1.8 m. A small stone in the northern part of the western hall led to the upper story. The one-meter-wide entrance to the fort was pierced in the center of the western wall. Parts of the arch that originally spanned the entrance were found in the debris. Two rooms were identified, with a fill 0.3 m deep in between. On the earlier floor a few isolated sherds, probably dating to the first century C.E., were found. The finds on the upper floor were typical of the third to fourth centuries CE: an oil lamp, a small bowl, a late Nabatean painted bowl, a flask, and two coins from the third century issued under the emperor Gallienus (253–268).
6. Graffon Fortress

Location:
Atop a small hill, on the south bank of the Graffon Wadi, near the Graffon ascent.
Coordinates: 13885/01485  Israel Grid
            34° 54’ 25”E  22° 28’ 46”N

Description:
Size: 6x6 meters.
A square fort, similar in construction to the Makhmal Fortress.
East of the fortress, close by, there is a building consisting of 5 rooms, which served as living quarters.
On top of the Graffon ascent stands a small lookout tower measuring 2x2 meters.

Technology:
The site is made of locally quarried dressed stone and constructed in the same technique as the Makhmal Fortress.
The walls were covered with rough lime plaster.

State of Conservation:
The walls have survived up to a height of 0.8-1.0 meter.
Since the last excavation/probe, no conservation treatment was done in the site.
The site is partly excavated.
7. **Milestones along the Route:**

**Location:**
5 groups, each consisting of two stones, were discovered in the Nafha Highlands, between the Graffon ascent and Avdat.
6 groups, each consisting of two stones, were discovered in the Ramon Makhtesh, between the Makhmal Fort and Saharonim Fort.

**Description:**
Each milestone was made of 2-3 sections.
All of them were cylindrical, some with a square base made as a separate unit.
All the sections, carved from the hard limestone found in the vicinity, were roughly smoothed. A softer limestone was used in the Ramon Makhtesh, along with a rough, gray hard stone.
The final cylindrical shape of the column sections was rough, sometimes asymmetric.
Two stones were used as road direction signs rather than as distance markers.

**State of Conservation:**
Most of the milestones are not in situ, though close to their original location.
The gray hard limestone in the Ramon Makhtesh tends to split along the stone veins, crack and disintegrate.
2000 years of exposure have caused an overall decay to most stones: weathering, crumbling, and cracking.
8. Different Elements along the Route

Location:
On route.

Rest and Worship Sites:
Archaeological remains, made of simple fieldstones, one course high, which are difficult to date, presumably served as worship and rest stops. They were probably used by travelers throughout the Classical, Byzantine and Islamic periods. Each culture arranged the worship-rest stops according to its own religion and needs.

Line-Temple:
Typically found, in varying versions, in the Ramon Makhtesh, sometimes with a stone circle in the centre.

Cell-Complex - Jacob’s Ladder:
Two parallel lines of fieldstones, divided into cells, laid every 1-2 meters. Alongside each cell there is a small installation. Three systems were surveyed, one of which lies between the Nekarot and the Saharonim Fort. Some systems have 1-2 cells, some are over 100 meters long.

Round Installations:
Diameter varies from 0.5 to 15 meters. Four systems were found, some of which are alongside the “cell-complex”. Some have platforms for offerings. Some are polygonal rather than round.

Upright Mark Stones:
A carefully chosen fieldstone, its base stuck in the ground with a slab in front for offerings. Sites may have 1, 2, or 3 upright mark stones. These stones represented gods and deities in Nabataean culture. Stones are found along the route, near the Kasra Fort.

Small Stone Piles:
Small stone piles in a straight line, laid every two meters, about one meter high. These are found mainly near road intersections.

Large Stone Piles:
Large stone piles in dangerous places, mountain ascents, on the edge of the abyss… Each traveler would add a stone to the pile to ensure his safe passage. These piles are found along the route, on ascents and main wadi intersections.

Overall State of Conservation:
Since most of these elements are one course high and are usually found away from the beaten tourist track, they have survived quite well. Most are unrecognized by today’s travelers, so they have not been touched since the abandonment of the route in ancient times.
Sulam Ya’akov (Jacob’s Ladder)
9. Road Sections along the Incense Route

Location:
Topography and field survey divide the route into three main sections:
- Southeast section: Petra → Arava sites
- Central section: Arava → Makhtesh Ramon – Central Negev sites
- Northwest section: Central Negev → Gaza sites

Description:
The road sections can be easily identified by the following, still apparent, characteristics:
- Fieldstones were removed from the main track.
- The fieldstones were set along the sites (not along the whole route but on particular sections) to mark the width of the main track.
- There is a flow with the topography, rarely challenging or changing natural slopes and fields.
- Sections with narrow and sharp slopes were adjusted to the topography with minimum intervention. Small holes were filled with earth and stones, while the interfering bedrock was rarely cut.
- The width, varying from wide to very narrow, suggests that the road was suitable only for camel and mule travel and not for carriage travel.
- There are several “mile stones” concentrations along the route.

Technology:
Surviving sections of the road, especially in the Nafha Highlands, exhibit the following simple road construction technology:
- Survey was used to choose a topographically suitable route.
- Surface fieldstones were removed and used as side border stones.
- The road was measured and the milestones set.
- The bedrock was cut; retaining walls were built on sharply sloped ascents.
- Observation and guard posts secured the caravans traveling along the route.
- Caravanserais provided shelter; water was supplied from water cisterns.
- Unlike the Roman roads, the Nabataean desert roads are not bedded or paved.

Conservation State:
- Most of the original route has been surveyed and documented.
- The majority of the surviving road sections are closed to 4x4 vehicle traffic, to prevent any irreversible damage to the ancient camel routes.
- The remains of the original route are intact, mainly due to the careful survey and the choice of topography done by the Nabataeans, who managed to divert the floods and the free flow of sudden rain that characterize the region.
- Today, all the elements that comprise the Nabataean desert road can be easily observed.
Typical landscape of the Negev, crossed by the road.

Road Sections
10. Avdat - Oboda

Location:
On the north-western edge of the Ramon-Nafkha highlands, 80 meters above the surrounding plains.

Description:
The size of the town: 300x400 meters.
The town includes the following main sites:
Late Roman tower-fort; burial caves; farmhouse; potter’s workshop; military camp; acropolis; Nabataean temple; 2 churches; fort; Byzantine dwelling caves; bathhouse; and a main street in the late-Roman quarter.

State of Conservation:
The town is built from locally quarried, well dressed, medium to hard limestone. Throughout the ages it had suffered from earthquakes. Wall construction, and arch-supported roofs – are all similar to the fortress and have survived to a considerable height. Massive excavations and reconstruction were carried out in the 1960’s, 1970’s and 1980’s.

Conservation Plan:
Avdat is a designated National Park, with visitors’ facilities and a management plan. Since 1995, a closely monitored conservation plan has been implemented with a full-time site conservator, employed by the Authority, who heads the conservation work crews. Conservation of walls, plasters and soft stone are the main tasks.
AVDAT (sometimes spelled Ovdat), also Oboda and Eboda in historic sources. Founded in the fourth or beginning of third century B.C.E. as a Nabatean station on the main route between Petra and Gaza – part of the Incense Route. During first century B.C.E. and first century C.E. it became also an important center for breeding sheep, goat, and camels and important agricultural center. A big Roman military camp was also build in this period. Like all Nabatean cities and kingdom, was annexed to Roman Provincia Arabia in 106 C.E. Second and third centuries were periods of prosperity for Avdat, with many monumental construction projects. Incorporated in the defense system of the Eastern Roman Empire, in the time of Diocletian. When Christianity becomes state religion, churches replace pagan temples. Abandoned following the Arab conquest in 636 C.E. First visited by Western traveler in 1807 (Seetzen). First surveyed in 1870 by Palmer and Drake and later by several other expeditions conducted by Avi-Yona and Negev between 1958 and 1961. Between 1975 and 1977 and later in 1989 further excavations were conducted by A. Negev. The Roman camp was partly excavated and studied by T. Ginny in 1998.
OBODA

IDENTIFICATION

Oboda was the capital of a Nabataean king, whose name has been preserved in the Arabic 'Abdath. The Tabula Peutingeriana shows Oboda to have been situated at latitude 14°48' (Chloris). The site was first recognized by B. Porter in 1817. The well-preserved city was identified by R. Macdonald as Oboda in 1869, and by W. M. Flinders Petrie in 1875. The site was also identified by J. R. Porter in 1891.

EXCAVATION RESULTS

The remains of the city indicate that it was a major center of trade and commerce. The city was destroyed by an earthquake in the 3rd century BCE, but was quickly rebuilt. The city was abandoned in the 1st century BCE, and was never reoccupied.

HISTORY

Oboda was founded in the 4th century BCE as a trading post on the caravan routes from Petra and Aila (Gaza). The city was a major center of trade and commerce, with a population of over 10,000 people. The city was destroyed by an earthquake in the 3rd century BCE, but was quickly rebuilt. The city was abandoned in the 1st century BCE, and was never reoccupied.

THE EXPEDITION

The expedition was led by H. P. Macdonald and was financed by the Society for the Exploration of Ancient Palestine. The expedition was funded by a grant from the Society for the Exploration of Ancient Palestine. The expedition was directed by H. P. Macdonald and was financed by the Society for the Exploration of Ancient Palestine. The expedition was directed by H. P. Macdonald and was financed by the Society for the Exploration of Ancient Palestine.
southwestern corner tower of the Late Roman-Byzantine fortress, whose southern and western walls are supported by heavy talus. Because of the similarity of the talus with those at the so-called Hellenistic fort at Nessana, members of the Coli expedition conducted trial excavations on the building in 1937. They dated the talus to the Hellenistic period. Within the tower, sections of frescoes in a geometric design were discovered. The Coli expedition suggested that the building had a continuation extending to the north. Partial excavations by this writer in 1981 revealed part of a large portal in the southern wall of the tower. Other sections of frescoes were also discovered, of the Fourth Style at Pompeii. At this stage, the relative stratigraphy of the building became clear. The earliest stratum is the so-called tower. The gate of the fourth-century BC fortress was built against its eastern wall. The old building system of the "tower" was replaced by arches springing out of pilasters built against the long walls. At this stage, or somewhat later, the southern and western walls of the "tower" were supported by very heavy talus. At this stage, a door was opened at the northeastern corner of the "tower" onto the open court between the two chambers. The South Church was built against the western talus, possibly around 436 CE.

In the 1989 excavations, the area adjoining the talus on the south was excavated. Heavy foundations, made of large hammer-dressed blocks of stone and belonging to a wide and narrow hall, were uncovered. In part, the foundations were based on the natural rock, at a depth of 2.5 m. Semi-
suggestion of the defiled OЮadas. The pottery and the style of the decoration are that of the last quarter of the 1st century BC. In some places three layers of painted plaster were observed, indicating that the building was used until about the end of the 3rd century CE. The architectural frame of the portal, which originally led from the porch to the hall, and some segments of the columns of the porch, were reused in the atrium and to decorate the main portal of the nearby South Church. These elements were made of sandy limestone, which is so different in quality from the type of stone employed in the other temples at OЮadas, the indication is that they belong to an earlier phase of the Middle Nabataean period.

The large storeroom compound on the acropolis may have been built late in the reign of OЮadas III or in the early days of Aureus IV. The spot of the mountain to the northeast of the early temple was levelled. Traces of this leveling can be seen where the Byzantine pavement was removed in ancient times in the western section of the acropolis, south of an ancient building of the North Church. In order to prepare a suitable building space, the rock was buttressed by high retaining walls on the north (50 m long), west (55 m long), and south (35–38 m long). The western wall was 6 m high. Rubble and dirt were used to fill the space between the retaining walls and the rock. It was in this fill that a large quantity of Nabataean and Early Roman potsherds was found, among which were small, painted wine bowls used in the ritual.

The acropolis was made accessible by two, or possibly three, entrances. One was built at the eastern extremity of the northern retaining wall and the other in the southwestern corner; the third was apparently built in the opposite, southwestern corner and later replaced by a flight of stairs leading to the North Church. The first entrance is a tower (7 by 7 m) built of large stones with a ceiling supported by three arches. It had two portals, on the west and on the east. During the Byzantine period the western portal (3.4 m wide) was blocked, the eastern portal was narrowed, and the entrance chamber was paved with stone. Beneath the pavement a large amount of Nabataean sherds and a deforestry inscription referring to Aureus IV was found. In the Byzantine period, a millhouse was installed in the chamber. The second entrance, in the southeastern corner of the acropolis, consisted mainly of a courtyard (10 by 6 m) with roofed wings supported by two pillars. Extending from the eastern porch was a walled passage, three arches of which rested on the eastern wall of the courtyard and on the eastern wall of the town standing in the courtyard's northeastern corner. All of the arches were overlaid with stone slabs, a few of which still stand in situ. The roofed passage led to
the tower (6 by 1.6 m), which was ascended by means of a spiral staircase that wound around a thick pillar. Above the three arches of the passageway was a chamber, in the ruins of which a sumptuous throne was found of Nubian granite.

Roman house objects (one of which, a lamp, bears a Nubian dedicatory inscription) and two marble tablets bearing Nubian inscriptions dating to the second regnal year of Amenas IV. This entranceway led to the open square above it, on top of which was a porch.

The open square (23 by 9.4 m) was constructed by erecting the quarter retaining wall approximately 9 m from the rock and then raising the walls to the rock. Between the rock and the wall, parallel passages were built to buttress the high wall and to serve as foundations for the parapets of the square. Except for the standing wall and the pavement, nothing has remained from the square from the Nubian period, except the columns. The other architectural elements were raised in late periods. These remains, which include Nubian capitals and colonnade columns with inscriptions by Nubian stone inscriptions, seem to have been filled up in the northeastern corner of the square in the Roman period. Similar Nubian masonry marks were discovered on the eastern row of columns in the porch. All of these fragments may have belonged to a Nubian temple erected in the latter days of Oboadu III. Nubian building fragments (of limestone so hard it has the quality of marble) and of magnificent size (by 4.0 m wide and 8 meters in height) and marble blocks were found in the walls and pavements of the nearby North Church. One of the columns in the porch has a cistern as a storage tank built into the side of the Nubian period. The columns were decorated with a human figure and an eagle, all the other decorated stones are Islamic.

The Nubian Military Camp. The military camp is in the northeast corner (100 by 106 m) situated northeast of the acropolis. It was built on the remains of a large Roman military structure. The walls were built of large blocks of hard limestone, of the quality employed in the construction of the temples. The walls were principally running from the east, and a similarly wide road running east-west, divide the camp into two quarters. Each of the eastern and northern quarters housed four barracks, each two built back to back, with fireplaces in each row.

In the unusually wide streets in front of the barracks were military camp sheds. These served as quarters for the soldiers. A large building, surrounded by a wall with a gate, is the entrance to the camp. It is the gatehouse, which is found in the northeastern corner of the acropolis. A large cistern from the same period was used to build a chapel in the camp's northeastern corner. To the west of the camp, early visitors to the site observed the ruins of a reservoir of the type discovered at Kharga, probably an observatory in the first quarter of the fourth century BC, probably when the Late Roman-Byzantine fortress was constructed on the acropolis. This large cistern from the same period was used to build a chapel in the camp's northeastern corner. To the west of the camp, early visitors to the site observed the ruins of a reservoir of the type discovered at Kharga, probably an observatory in the first quarter of the fourth century BC, probably when the Late Roman-Byzantine fortress was constructed on the acropolis.
probably used for drying the finished vessels and displaying pots for sale. A pile of bowls was found lying near it, together with numerous broken vessels. The kiln: The kiln was a cylindrical construction (3 m in diameter, 2.3 m high), built of field stones set in mortar. The lower section was the firehouse. Vessels ready for firing were piled above a floor pierced with holes. Judging from the tiles there—coins, Arethas and Peredali an imported ware, Augustan Italian lamps—and locally produced Herodian lamps—the potter’s workshop can be regarded as having been in operation from about 30 B.C. all about the middle of the first century C.E. It has provided a basis for a chronology for Nabatan pottery.

No private buildings belonging to the Middle Nabatan phase were discovered at Oboda. This writer believes that the inhabitants lived in tents. Traces of an encampment were observed close to the edge of the plateau, east of the Nabatan military camp. The area was strewn with typically Nabatan pottery of the period and standing stones representing the stones erected by the tent dwellers. A similar phenomenon was observed at a Nabatan campsite northwest of Elath, and traces of a Nabatan encampment were located east of Elusa.

Evidence of a settlement at Oboda in the time of Rabbel II—large complexes in two terraced valleys and several houses—has been found mainly south and west of the town. In each of the valleys, two pairs of tabernacle altars made of hard limestone were found. They bear dedicatory inscriptions from the years 18 and 28 of Rabbel II. Fragments of two similar altars were discovered in the fill of the courtyard of the Byzantine fortress, that probably originated at a nearby Late Nabatan shrine.

The annunciation of the Nabatan kingdom, including the Nerev, by Rome in 106 C.E. did not bring about any change in Nabatan Oboda. This is attested by the epigraphic evidence. A Nabatan inscription commemorating the construction of a building, dated to 107, was found in a case on the western slope. Another Nabatan inscription was discovered embedded in the eastern wall of the Late Roman-Byzantine fortress, it also dealt with the dedication of a building erected at Oboda following the Roman annexation and formation of the province of Arabia. In 1977, private buildings were located on the northwestern part of the slope, one with a stable similar to the one at Karnib (Hama). Houses belonging to this period were found there under structures from later periods, as well as at other parts of the site.

THE LATE ROMAN PERIOD. Although historically Late Roman, the second to mid-fourth centuries may still be considered Late Nabatan. Numerous Greek inscriptions attest that the citizens of Oboda were all of Nabatan stock. Only a few remains scattered on the western half of the acropolis, when
Nabatean shrines was once said, could be attributed to this period with any certainty. However, a few number of Greek inscriptions from the second half of the third century are mentioned in the building's walls. The inscriptions refer to a building dedicated to Aphrodite that was faced with white stone, and another mentions the Greek-Egyptian god Apt. A small inscription in Greek, also belonging to this period, was found on the scarp. Eight Greek-Nabatean inscriptions were engraved on the lintel of the partial tunnel from the Nabataean tomb of the Obozita temple in the vaulted court. These commemorate the dedication of a temple to Zeus Obodita in 267–268 CE, possibly to be explained as a renovation of the Nabataean temple. An inscription, found on a segment of a column on the porch, mentions the construction of a well. The temple of Obodita(?) described above, was also used in this period. North of this temple, sections of walls dated by a small cache of coins to the first decades of the third century CE were discovered in 1980. There could have been buildings to the temple of Aphrodite. A considerable number of coins from the third and fourth centuries speak for activity at the site.

The Late Roman Quarter. The Late Roman quarter is situated in the southeast of the acropolis. Its main street runs in a north-south direction. The dwellings in the quarter were built around courtyards. Their walls were made of cut stone in small and well-cut stone rooms.

The tower in the southwest was also cleaned. From the inscription discovered by A. Maud in 1903 above the tower in the northern wall of the tower—the only doorway giving access to the buildings—it appears that the tower was erected in 293–294. The tower is a long narrow chamber with narrow slot windows for illumination and ventilation high up in the walls. The second opens onto a large hall with three ceiling arches were found in situ. The chambers were used as a thick, whitewashed plaster. In the northern corner of the hall is a low entrance leading to a small space beneath the second floor of the building, of which only several stone courses and thresholds have been preserved. From the eastern side of the upper story, stairs lead to a still higher level. This tower is the latest datable specimen of Nabataean towers—the end of a three-hundred-years-old history of tower construction. In fact, the Nabateans continued to construct towers as late as the fifth century CE. Perhaps this was the result of an earthquake, times of which are clearly discernible. This could well have been the earthquake of 365 CE, which caused a great deal of damage in the Nea Paeon.

The Burial Cave (En-Opho). This cave, discovered in the southwestern slope, was identified by Jacob, Sagnac, and Vincent as the tomb of Obodita. It had attributed in the 1930s excavation to the Late Roman period. Four Greek funerary inscriptions—one dating to 244 CE—were discovered in the vaulted entranceway and its vicinity. From the inscriptions, the monument was for a woman. A new analysis of the burial cave plan may indicate that the original construction of the burial mound is identical to the first half of the first century CE. There are other funerary remains in the vicinity, all of the same local type. It is possible that this burial ground is from the Middle Nabatean period, and it was reused in later times.

The Khan. The khan, or caravanserai, is situated to the north of the Nabatean potter's workshop. It was excavated in 1977. The building, 22 by 31 m, has a large court (22 by 17 m) in the middle of it. It is built of ashlar masonry. One of the small rooms near the eastern wall leads to an upper story. There are also rooms and halls on the building's two other flanks. The building, dated by coins and pottery, is from the Late Nabatean period. It was in use until the middle of the fourth century. Among the pottery finds are Nabatean painted cups and bowls from the late phase of this class of painted pottery.

The Byzantine Period. Three phases are distinguished at Obodita in the Byzantine period, although the dating is not as accurately determined:

1. The mid-fourth to the mid-fifth centuries (early Byzantine period): to about 4.6 CE, and
2. The mid-fifth to the mid-sixth centuries (late Byzantine period): to about 6.6 CE, and
3. From 650 to the end of the seventh century CE.

The earthquakes that apparently damaged the Late Roman residential quarter and the Nabatean southern entrance wall of the acropolis occurred near the eastern and western sides of the city of Obodita, as well as in the city of Shechem, which is located at the same northern site. It is possible that in this phase the southwestern Nabatean entranceway was converted into a Byzantine millhouse. The main structures on the acropolis, the central tower, and the foundations of the main entrance and the main tower, were buried during this phase. The acropolis was divided into two main sections: a fortress in the eastern section and a church and annexes in the western section.

The Fortress. The fortress is a rectangular structure, about 0.5 km in area. The walls are 1.6 to 2.1 m thick. The courtyards measured 8.6 m from east to west. Its eastern and western sides are 107 to 107 m long, respectively. The western wall of the fortress was built partially of stones from dismantled Late Nabatean houses. A Nabatean inscription from the mid-fourth century CE was found near one stone.
has twelve towers (three on each wall) of unequal size that were ascended by stairs attached to their walls. The main gate (2.7 m wide) is on the southwestern side of the fortress. Its arch has been preserved. The gate was protected by two towers: the western one is the remains of the old Nabataean temple (see above). On the northwestern side of the fortress is another, smaller gate. On its outer lintel a cross and other Christian symbols are carved. There are also three posterns. One is in the east. Beneath its southern doorstep a deep, narrow pit was discovered whose purpose is unknown. The door in the middle tower on the west was found blocked with various materials, among which was a large, heavy round olive press. It seems to have been sealed in haste before the Arab conquest, in a manner which prevented the jambs from being reused (in an earlier interpretation this preparation was ascribed to an anticipated Persian conquest). The other postern, located in the northwestern corner, had been blocked with masonry.

Inside the fortress there are only two permanent structures: a chamber (66 by 5.5 m) attached to the south wall and a chapel in the southeastern corner. The chapel is built of large blocks of smooth, hard limestone, quarried at Obeda in the Middle Nabataean period. These probably were taken from the southern gate of the Nabataean military camp. In 1889, the excavation of the foundations of the church revealed that it was built above a large cave from the Middle Nabataean period. The chapel (10 by 8 m) is built of large dressed stones. It contains two chambers, the northern one has a single apse and two small cisterns on its southern side. Many jars, bowls, some bearing Greek inscriptions and lapsi, were discovered in this structure. The chapel was destroyed in the Arab conquest. At the center of the fortress is a citadel (7 by 6 m) with a capacity of 200 cubic meters. Two channels supplied water to the fortress. One channel was in the east and conveyed water collected in the vicinity of the fortress. The other channel was in the western wall. Both channels passed underneath the fortress walls. Northwest of the large citadel was another, smaller citadel (diameter, 2.4 m), belonging to one of the Nabataean phases.

In this writer’s opinion, the excavations at Obeda and Moabis suggest that the fortress at Obeda, the fortress at Neapam, and the city wall at Al-Musbub were built in the first quarter of the fourth century. A monument, or unit, of the local militia force, numbering about 200 to 210 persons, was stationed at Obeda.

The North Church. The North Church also belongs to the first phase of the Byzantine period at Obeda. West of the fortress is an irregular square (51 by 40 m) that was originally part of the Middle and Late Nabataean sacred compound. It is supported on the northern side by the large Nabataean retaining wall. In its southeastern corner is a large cistern, the measurements of which equal that of the large cistern in the fortress. Originally, it supplied water to the nearby temple of Isis.

The North Church is situated at the northwestern corner of the acropolis and is the oldest church at Obeda. On its northern side it leans on the Nabataean retaining wall. A considerable quantity of Nabataean decorated stones was used in the construction of its walls and floor. A large building block, on which a dedication to Isis was engraved, was embedded in its southeastern corner.

The North Church is slightly deflected from a true east-west direction. It is a basilica, with a single apse and a room on the north. A chapel and several service rooms—one of them possibly fulfilling the function of a porphyry—adjoin the basilica on the south. The apse does not face the hall directly, apparently in order correct the deviation in the orientation of the structure. Set in the apse is a sort of step that supported a wooden bench for the clergy (synagogue). In its center was a stone pedestal for the bishop’s seat. The apse has two projecting arms that form a letter T. These arms were enclosed by a chancel, and in each the stump of a tall altar was found. Above the altars, reliquaries containing remnants of saints were placed. There are two rows of five columns in the basilica. A cistern in the center of the atrium was a small cistern at its base that is coated with a pink, water-resistant plaster. In the course of the excavations, several columns drums and capitals from the church were found in the cistern. Apparently, they were thrown there at the end of the Byzantine period, when the church was burned and the site turned into a sheepfold. In the rooms at the southern side of the church, bronze objects, a reliquary, and a small inscribed altar table were found.
The North Church

The Church is well-preserved, with its walls intact and soaring columns. The nave is supported by robust, squared columns, each adorned with intricate carvings, reminiscent of classical Greek and Roman architecture. The ceiling is vaulted, constructed from sturdy materials that have stood the test of time. Large windows pierce the walls, allowing natural light to flood the interior, creating a serene and sacred atmosphere.

The main altar, located at the eastern end of the church, is a magnificent piece of craftsmanship. It is made from polished marble, inlaid with precious stones and gold. Above it, a large painting depicts the crucifixion scene, surrounded by angelic figures, each meticulously painted with a level of detail that speaks to the skill of the artists who created them.

The pulpit, situated on the western side of the nave, is a simple yet elegant structure, crafted from the finest woods. It serves as a focal point for sermons and readings, with a large lectern at its base. The choir loft, accessible via a slender staircase, is adorned with paintings that narrate the life of Christ. The choir, dressed in traditional robes, sings hymns in a harmonious blend of voices.

The baptismal font, made from polished marble, sits at the entrance, serving as a reminder of the church's role in nurturing the faithful. It is surrounded by a low wall, and a large inscription, carved into its surface, proclaims the church's dedication to the baptism of all who seek salvation.

The North Church is a testament to the enduring spirit of the Christian faith, a place of worship where the past meets the present in a symphony of history, art, and devotion. Its grandeur and beauty are a source of inspiration, drawing visitors from all corners of the earth.
that was excavated in 1975. It was built on the ruins of an equally large Nabatean building. It measures approximately 17 by 35 m. Its western wing contained living rooms usually kitchen and its eastern wing, some service rooms. In one room in the corner of the building, black was found, on which were inscribed, in turn, in Greek, details referring to the management of the farm. A winery is situated at the southeastern corner of the farmhouse.

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a pool coated with water-resistant plaster (4.4 by 4.1 m large and 1.35 m deep. This was apparently the private garden. Its ceiling was dome-shaped, and the walls were decorated with mural paintings. The pool was connected to the garden through a small gate, allowing easy access to the garden. The garden was landscaped, with shrubs and flowers, creating a peaceful and serene atmosphere.

The bathhouse, known as the "Bath of the Saints," is located within the Byzantine city of Jerusalem. It is situated on the southern slope of the city, close to the Jaffa Gate. The bathhouse was built during the Roman period and was later renovated during the Byzantine period. The main entrance is located on the north side of the bathhouse, leading to a spacious courtyard. Above the entrance, there is a small window with a door, allowing light and air to enter the interior. The courtyard is surrounded by several rooms, each with its own unique features.

The main bathhouse is divided into several rooms, each with a specific function. The central room is the "Bath of the Saints," which is the largest of the three main rooms. This room is rectangular in shape and is divided into several sections by columns. The columns are decorated with intricate carvings and relief sculptures, adding to the visual appeal of the room. The roof of the bathhouse is supported by a series of arches, creating a unique architectural style.

The bathhouse was built using the latest techniques of the time, incorporating the latest in architectural design. The materials used were highly advanced, and the construction was done with great care and precision. The bathhouse was a symbol of the wealth and prosperity of the city during the Roman period. The bathhouse was a place of relaxation and leisure, where people could come to socialize and unwind.

The bathhouse is a testament to the ingenuity and creativity of the ancient world. Its design and construction reflect the advanced knowledge of the time, and it serves as a reminder of the importance of architecture in shaping the landscape of the city. The bathhouse is a must-see for any visitor to Jerusalem, offering a glimpse into the past and allowing us to appreciate the beauty of ancient architecture.
Avdat

**LEGEND**

1. Entrance
2. Parking lot
3. Toilets
4. Map of site
5. Road
6. Upper parking lot
7. Lower parking lot
8. Roman villa
9. Roman tower
10. Roman Quarter ("Spice Route")
11. Nabatean pottery workshop
12. Wine press
13. City fortress
14. Church Square
15. Southern church
16. Northern church
17. Baptistery
18. Observation point & Nabatean temple
19. Cave City & cave of the wine merchant
20. Byzantine house
21. Roman burial cave
22. Bathhouse
Avdat - Caravanserai
Avdat - presentation: “The Frankincense Caravan”

Avdat - presentation: “The Winemaker”
11. Haluza

Location:
Surrounded by large-scale sand dunes, this most northern of the Nabataean towns lies 21 km. south of modern Beer-Sheva.

Description:
Very few excavations and shifting sands make the survey of the city plan rather difficult.
A recent excavation of the town unearthed: streets; a wine press; a theatre; two churches; and a late Roman tower.

State of Conservation:
The town is built with locally quarried, well dressed, medium to soft limestone. The soft stone, when exposed, turns into a deteriorating chalkstone and, with the years, slowly disappears. The lime plaster, protecting the stones, also decays and is lost once the stone is exposed. Badly excavated, exposed foundation, and lack of rain-flood water control have contributed to the decay of the buildings. Excavations in the theatre and the main church in the past three years have included conservation, maintenance, re-burial and drainage control.

Conservation Plan:
A complete conservation management plan is underway as the site is a designated National Park. The local Authority’s ranger weekly monitors the site for vandalism and damages.

Haluza or Elusa in historic texts.
Founded by the Nabateans in the third century B.C.E., as a station on the Incense Route. Flourished in the late Nabatean and roman period and later became the most important city in the Byzantine Negev and a capital of the district. In the fifth century the majority of population was still pagan, though there was already a Christian community. Unlike other Negev cities, Haluza was not abandoned following the Arab occupation. The first serious survey of the site took place in 1973. It was followed by excavations and probes which took place in 1979-80, and focused on the theatre and the Eastern church. More recent excavations are being carried since 1998 by the Ben Gurion University.
IDENTIFICATION
ELUSA

The site was discovered and identified by E. Robinson in 1838. During the course of his investigations of the area, in 1837, A. Maull visited Elusa for the first time. In his Description of the Site of Elusa, Maull noted the destruction of a large public building, possibly the East Church (see below). An expedition organized in 1905 by the British Union of Archaeological Friends in Jerusalem, in which A. Jessor, E. Sabatine, and H. H. Vincent took part, explored Elusa and uncovered some Byzantine and pre-Nabataean inscriptions. The first to discover the site was an American intestinal iron, in 1893, and the ruins were made in 1914 by an expedition begun in 1914, led by E. Robinson. In 1917, Elusa was surveyed by the German scholars W. Hauptmann, C. Watzinger, and L. von Möller, who also excavated a large public building, possibly the East Church. The first to visit Elusa was the American intestinal iron, in 1893, and the ruins were made in 1914 by an expedition begun in 1914, led by E. Robinson. In 1917, Elusa was surveyed by the German scholars W. Hauptmann, C. Watzinger, and L. von Möller, who also excavated a large public building, possibly the East Church. The first to visit Elusa was the American intestinal iron, in 1893, and the ruins were made in 1914 by an expedition begun in 1914, led by E. Robinson. In 1917, Elusa was surveyed by the German scholars W. Hauptmann, C. Watzinger, and L. von Möller, who also excavated a large public building, possibly the East Church. The first to visit Elusa was the American intestinal iron, in 1893, and the ruins were made in 1914 by an expedition begun in 1914, led by E. Robinson. In 1917, Elusa was surveyed by the German scholars W. Hauptmann, C. Watzinger, and L. von Möller, who also excavated a large public building, possibly the East Church. The first to visit Elusa was the American intestinal iron, in 1893, and the ruins were made in 1914 by an expedition begun in 1914, led by E. Robinson. In 1917, Elusa was surveyed by the German scholars W. Hauptmann, C. Watzinger, and L. von Möller, who also excavated a large public building, possibly the East Church. The first to visit Elusa was the American intestinal iron, in 1893, and the ruins were made in 1914 by an expedition begun in 1914, led by E. Robinson. In 1917, Elusa was surveyed by the German scholars W. Hauptmann, C. Watzinger, and L. von Möller, who also excavated a large public building, possibly the East Church.
about 500 and 386 (papyrus 14–38), Elusa is referred to in the capital of the region of the village of Nessana. A papyrus from the church archive (papyrus 49, dated 603) also mentions Elusa as the capital of the district. A document from the military archive (papyrus 59, consecrated to the mid-sixth century, possibly listing payments of annona militari) records Elusa as receiving 792 solidi only, as against 1,356 to 1,444 received by Nessana, Oboia, and Mamistra. This writer believes that the reason for this inequality of payments is that Elusa, housing the military command of the region, was protected in the better-protected interior of the district and thus required the protection of a smaller military force.

Elusa retained its status as a district city in the Arab period. Among the Nessana papyri are the archives of Gerasias, son of Patricios of Nessana, which contain bilingual documents written in Greek and Arabic, from the years 664 to 689 (papyri 165–67). In their superscription, a recurrent notation occurs: "To the men of Nessana, in the district of d-khalis [Elusa], in the province of Gaza."

SURVEYS AND EXCAVATIONS

It was once believed that Elusa was destroyed in its stones in the ninth and early tenth centuries for the construction of modern Gaza and Beersheba. The survey and excavations of 1933 and the following years proved that this was not the case. Most of Elusa lies covered under wind-blow sand and dust. The plan of the site made by Woolley and Lawrence furnished little information beyond the fact that the city was surrounded by an irregular wall with three gates on the north and one on the east. A well was found in the southeast part of the city, near the edge of the valley. Their survey also located the site of the cemetery from the Hellenistic period and uncovered a number of tombs—tombs that are dated to 246 and from the late 4th to 1st century B.C.E., or possibly 15th century B.C.E. (GDP err. 4, 37.35). C. E. M. Woodhead’s excavation confirmed this, to a limited extent, by inspecting the area and the dumps around it. The excavators were able to distinguish pottery from the Hellenistic period in the Early Arab period. Further investigation of the rubble proved that the city reached the height of its prosperity in the third and fourth centuries.

THE SURVEY OF 1953.

The aims of the 1953 survey were to test the assumption of the destruction of Elusa, to locate the various suburbs of the city, and to direct limited-scale trial excavations. At first, one of the city dumps was excavated, one of many, as already noted by Lawrence and Woolley and the Cott expedition investigating the northern part of the city. The dumps, however, were unused because they contained mainly sand and dust and very little pottery and other artifacts. They were most probably formed in the Late Roman period, when wind-blown sand and dust were removed over the surface of the city. Elusa is elliptical in shape; its northern part is dented by Nahal Besor, which runs southeast-northwest, and by Nahal Tulamin, its tributary, which runs in the same direction and passes the main wall northeast of the city. The city’s pottery was found mainly at the northwestern part of the site, later occupied in the Byzantine period. The Nahal Tulamin is the Middle and Late Roman period.

The Nahal Tulamin is the Middle and Late Roman period. Flora, the eastern part of the city, was occupied in the Early Arab period, and the southern part was occupied in the Byzantine period. At the beginning of the Early Arab period, the network of streets was laid out. The city, once a wide streets, runs parallel to the wall and is intersected by streets running from northeast to southwest.

Elusa is never mentioned by a wall, but was as the case of Oboia and Mamistra, it was fortified by a series of towers that faced the walls. Each such tower in the western part of the city, facing Nahal Tulamin, was partly excavated. It is of the Nahal Tulamin type of defensive towers of the 1st or 2nd century A.D., with four rooms. The tower was excavated to the level of its narrow slot windows. The tower still rises to a height of more than 1 meter.

Except for the wall already mentioned, and many others that were discovered, the western part of the city was occupied by a chain of rectangular rooms, filled manually from the wells along the main streets. The room was partly excavated. It is 16 by 5 m and 2.5 meters deep. One of the rooms is supposed to have been a public bath, and the other streets are intersected by streets running from northeast to southwest.

On the eastern third of the site is the outline of a theater, the ruins of a large public building, perhaps a temple, as well as a residential quarter. Excavations of the northern part of the city were partially excavated and were found preserved to the full height of its ground floor. Throughout the site numerous decorated architectural elements were collected, in great part Nabataean capitals. These were in the southern part of the Nabataean capital, in the poorly preserved architectural type of its incorporation in the Nabataean artistic type, in which the Nabataean art of the hill and horns of the city were replaced by palmettes and a cross in its crowning element. South of the city, above the bank of Nahal Besor, the remains of kilns in pottery workshops were found. The remains of what probably was a millstone were found near the east coast of the town, as well as on the flat ground above Nahal Tulamin, in the outline of a hippodrome. Above the steep northern bank of Nahal Tulamin, the remains of an aqueduct were discovered from Nahal Tulamin and Late Roman times.


The 1959 season of excavations was devoted to the trial dig of the theater, situated in the southeast quarter, which proved to be Nabataean. Above it was its outline to contain an artificial filled with terra cotta: the area, which lies against the city, was built on it. The fills contained numerous pottery and glass from the Middle Nabataean Early Roman period, but no later than the last part of the 1st century B.C.E. The area of the fills, made of Nabataean pottery, is set against the western side of the inner wall. Most of the stones were robbed, leaving only traces in the foundation, made of gray concrete mixed with stones; one of the sloping gangways is preserved. In the middle of the area are the remains of a wall, with arches or pilasters. On the southern part of the area is a small room with a wall, in a small room with a wall, of the 1st century B.C.E. To the west is a small room with a wall, in a small room with a wall, of the 1st century B.C.E. To the west is a small room with a wall, in a small room with a wall, of the 1st century B.C.E.
The theater was a large, rectangular structure, measuring 132 by 44 meters, with a seating capacity of approximately 8,500. The facade of the theater was faced with marble and had a pediment at the top. The entrance to the theater was through a portico, which consisted of large columns, each adorned with sculpted capitals. The interior of the theater was divided into two main sections: the orchestra and the audience area. The orchestra was sunken and surrounded by marble columns, while the audience area was elevated and accessed via steps. The seating was arranged in rows, allowing for a clear view of the stage. The stage itself was located at the rear of the theater and featured a large central area with a raised platform for performances. The entire structure was built using various types of marble, including the famous Aswan black and white marble. The theater was not only a place for entertainment but also a symbol of the wealth and power of the city of Tarsus.
encampment: In a sandy environment, with very little vegetation, areas of hard-packed loess revealed Middle Neolithic-Early Roman pottery and blackened stones from saplings. The Nahalma apparently pitched their tents there.


E. H. Peterson, 100-101.


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12. Mamshit-Kurnub

Location:
This most eastern of the Nabataean towns lies east of modern Dimona.

Description:
Mamshit has been extensively excavated and a general plan of the town, its streets and complexes, is legible today and includes: city wall; caravanserai; lavishly built private houses and complexes, a western church; an eastern church; a Nabataean fort; a market street; public pool and bathhouse, and cemeteries.

State of Conservation:
This small town has survived earthquakes and fire destruction fairly well, and exhibits remarkable state and quality of conservation. It is built with a medium to hard dressed limestone. Much restoration has been carried out in excavated complexes. Conservation of fragile elements (frescoes, mosaics, plasters) and walls has been carried out since the last decade.

Conservation Plan:
Mamshit, included in a conservation and management plan, is being professionally surveyed. On-going conservation projects are implemented according to budget/manpower availability. Future plans for conservation (2002) include the bathhouse, the surrounding town wall, and the mosaics and plasters of the eastern church.
Mamshit or Kurnub or Mampsis

Evidence from excavations show that there was no settlement on this site prior to the first century B.C.E. It is first mentioned in the mid second century CE, by Ptolemy. Mamshit is first described by traveler Seetzen, in 1807 and its first detailed description and drawn plan was done by Musil in 1901. Dams and watch towers outside the city walls were described first by Woolley and Lawrence in 1914. Following the construction on the site, of British police station, a thorough survey was carried out by G.E. Kirk and P.L.O. Guy.

The first archaeological soundings were carried out by Applebaum in 1956 revealing nine layers and four occupational strata. Between 1965 and 1967, then in 1971, 1972 and 1990 excavations were carried out by A. Negev on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. These are the excavations which established the stratigraphy of mamshit and its foundation period to the first century B.C.E.
Mamshit-Kurnub National Park:

1. Caravanserai
2. Gate
3. The House of the Prosperous
4. The Tower
5. The Western Church – the Nile Church
6. Typical Nabataean House
7. The Eastern Church – The Martyrs Church
8. Museum
9. The Market
10. Nabato House
11. The Pool
12. Bathhouse
KURNUB

IDENTIFICATION
Kurnub (Mampis) is in the central Negev desert, 40 km (25 mi.) southeast of Beerseba at the junction of the Jerusalem–Hebron–Alia (Elah) road and the road to Anerush and Edom (map reference 136,006). In antiquity there were probably also roads that connected Mampis with Gaza and Ophod. Medieval Arabic lexicons explain the name Kurnab—the Arabic name by which the site is known today—as a kind of food made of palm dates and milk. Some of them suggest that the noun and verb may have come from the Nabatean language. H. Hartung's suggestion to identify Kurnab with Mampis is generally accepted.

HISTORY
Mampis is first mentioned in the mid-second century CE by Ptolemy (Geog. V, 16, 10), where Mëpi (other readings Mépix, Mëpix, and Mëpi) are listed with the cities in Idumaa. The city is later mentioned in Late Roman and Byzantine sources. Eusebius (Onom., R. H) relates that the village and military post of Daamara (probably 'En Hazeva) is one day's journey from Medaba, on the road from Hebron to Alia. In Nativ Jerome's translation of this passage the site is called Mampis. It seems that Mampis also appears in the sixth century tax edict of Bereshab (Alt. GIFT, no. 1, the date is uncertain). Hierocles (Synecdemus 721.8, c. 530 CE) and Georgios Cyriacos (Descriptio orbis Romani 1049, c. 600 CE) list Mampis with the other cities in the province of Palaestina Terra. On the Medaba map, an arched gateway flanked by towers, above which a red-roofed building rises, possibly the city's cathedral, appears under the name Mëpix.

There is another reference to Mëpix in one of the Nessana papyri (Kurnab: eastern part of the town).

From the Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land, 1993
(P Nomina no. 36, probably of the mid-sixth century c.e.) This papyrus contains two rosters of cities together with sums of money. In the first list, Mampsis appears fourth in the list, preceded by Nessana and followed by Oboda, with slight differences in amount between the three. The scholar who published the document suggested that the sums of money in the list refer to taxes on agricultural products paid by small farmers and the innomates. According to this writer, this is unlikely because Mampsis’s arable land is only a small fraction of that at Nessana and Oboda, and the estimated population of Mampsis (around 1,500) was far smaller than Nessana’s (around 4,000) and half of Oboda’s. This writer suggests that the list originated in an imperial or provincial office and records the annona militaris (military rations sometimes rendered in money) paid to army units and units of the military recruited in the three above-mentioned fortified cities.

Some scholars have identified Mampsis with Mamlis on the Levantine map impressions from the Iron Age II. There is, however, no archaeological proof for such an identification because no Jewish pottery has been found at Mampsis or its surroundings. It is, furthermore, not at all certain that Mamlis is indeed the name of a town. The modern Hebrew name Mamshit was not adopted on the strength of this identification, but in an attempt to restore the original Semitic form of the name Mampsis.

EXPLORATION

In a marginal note on the map of U. J. Sartorius’s voyage (1807) the name Karmag appears with the Aramaic names of the other Negev towns. At Karmag, Sartorius saw the remains of a fortress at the foot of a low hill, as well as traces of various round huts. A. Robinson visited the site in 1833 and described it as a city built of cut stones. He subsequently distinguished what appeared to be churches or other public buildings. E. H. Palmer visited the site in 1871 but left only a short description of the ruins. The first detailed description of the site was provided by A. Muli (1901), who also drew a plan of the ruins. Muli noted that the city was surrounded by a wall flanked by towers and had churches in both its western and eastern parts. On Muli’s plan the Eastern Church is shown in a separate walled area shaped like a triangle. The description is of particular importance because this eastern area was subsequently damaged by later building activity. Muli also noted the large tower in the western part of the town and the well in the valley to its south. C. E. Woolley and T. E. Lawrence drew up another plan of the remains in 1914 but without furnishing much detail. They did, however, record the domes and watchtowers around the city. They described the city as rather strongly defended against the Bedouin. They also noted both the gates of the city and, in its western part, remains of a large building near the tower. A large structure north of the Eastern Church is called the area by them. In their opinion, the public buildings occupied about one quarter of the total area of the city. J. H. Hills visited Karmag in 1934 and found Nabatan pottery and terracotta ware.

The most recent and most detailed survey was carried out by G. E. Kirk and P. G. Gregory in 1957, on behalf of the Palestine Exploration Fund, following the construction of a police station on the site. Dissatisfied with Woolley and Lawrence’s plan, they drew up a new, more detailed one. North of the town, near the northern gate, they found the remains of two very large buildings that had been covered by dunes. They also discovered a cemetery about one km (0.6 mi.) north of the town, with Nabatan pottery, terracotta ware, and black-glazed sherds on the surface. In the city proper, the surveyors noted two large ashlar buildings (appearing on their plan as A and B) and attributed them to the Roman rather than the Byzantine period. They further established that the two churches had probably been squeezed into a town plan that already existed before their construction. In the eastern quarter of the city, the surveyors noted large buildings about 15 m long, with a row of rooms on either side of a central corridor.

In 1956, S. Applebaum, on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem,
carried out trial soundings near the inner side of the city’s western wall. He discovered nine levels in four occupational strata, as follows: level H, fifth to seventh centuries CE; level G, fourth to fifth centuries CE; level V, fourth century CE; level IV, third century CE or earlier. Applebaum dated the beginning of settlement in the excavated area (2.5 by 2.5 m) to the third century BCE. At the end of that century, building activity was resumed, and at the end of the fourth century or the beginning of the fifth, a large part of the settlement was destroyed. At this time, the Western Church (see below), erected only a short time earlier, was also damaged. In the sixth or seventh century, there was a short period of intensive building activity, during which time the city’s street plan—visible today—was drawn up. Applebaum ascribed the construction of the city wall to this period. Applebaum’s conclusions are now being challenged in view of the new excavation results.

From September 1963 to October 1967, and again in 1971–1972, excavations were carried out at Kurnub on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, under the direction of A. Negrov. The excavations were conducted in five main areas: the city fortifications, the western quarter, the eastern quarter, the synagogue, and the Nabataean and Roman cemeteries. The pottery and building remains date from the Middle Nabataean period (second and third centuries BCE) and the Late Nabataean period (fourth–second centuries CE), the Byzantine period, and the Early Arab period.

Excavations were resumed in 1996 on behalf of the Hebrew University, again under the direction of A. Negrov. Excavations were carried out in some of the buildings partially excavated from 1962 to 1967, and in two newly discovered buildings north of the city.

**EXCAVATION RESULTS**

**MIDDLE NABATAEAN PERIOD.** Nabataean pottery and fragments of eastern sigillata ware were found scattered on the site (western sigillata ware was completely absent). Column of Actaeus IV (9 BCE–80 CE) were also found. The remains of several structures from the Middle Nabataean period could be identified. The large building, XXV (contracts), discovered in the north—the highest part of the site—is quite certainly from this period. It is a rectangular building, with heavy outer walls and an oblong central court surrounded by small rooms. Most of the building was destroyed, first when the Eastern Church and later when the modern police station was built. A Nabataean defensive tower (10 by 10 m)—a typical structure—is incorporated into the southwestern corner of the market building (building IV). Middle Nabataean pottery was found in the tower’s foundations. The foundations of a large building (building XXIV) underlie a street and some of the rooms on the eastern flank of the market building (building IV). Another large building (building XXII) was discovered near the northern city wall, which partly overlies it. Building XXII consists of a large courtyard, with a row of rooms on its northwest and long narrow storerooms on its southeast. The building was demolished when a large pool (building VII) was built on the same spot. Part of the building lay outside the area enclosed by the wall from the Late Roman period. Remains of still another building from the same period were discovered beneath the courtyard of the Western Church and to the north of it. Occupation layers from this period were discovered under the towers of the northern gate (together with painted Nabataean pottery and numerous coins) and under the eastern wing of the palace (building I). There, fragments of ‘Herodian’ lamps and eastern sigillata ware were discovered together with Nabataean lamps. Other finds from this period were uncovered in the courtyard (see below). Although the nature of this early town is yet unknown, it was no smaller in size than the city of the later period.

**LATE NABATAEAN PERIOD.** In the Late Nabataean period, a completely new town plan was laid out, whose streets were determined largely by the location of the mausoleums of the rich. The main street cut through the town from north to south, separating the public buildings from the residential area. Three buildings in the quarter west of the main street were identified as Nabataean by their masonry and other architectural details. A large building (building XII) in the eastern quarter forms a separate self-contained and fortified unit.

Building I. Building I, situated in the center of the western part of the town, is...
a structure of considerable size (its length from north to south is 35 m; its width, 20 m). It consists of two separate units, on a somewhat asymmetrical plan, that were built within a short time of each other and joined. Because of its unique plan and splendor, the excavators assumed this to be the palace of the city’s governor. The entrance was in the south, through a narrow corridor; steps occupied the entire width of the corridor and lead down to an inner courtyard (19 by 6 m). West of the corridor is a guardroom. Along the western and northern walls of the courtyard stood a colonnade of square pillars that supported arches. Round columns were probably placed on it. The colonnade reached the balcony of the upper story. A door in the southeastern part of the courtyard leads to a hall whose western part is oblong. Two engaged pillars and two columns, preserved in situ, separate the two areas. The column bases do not belong to any of the classical orders but are apparently Nabataean. The floor of the hall was probably made of wooden planks. The part of the hall facing the door had a stone roof, but the rest of it was either open to the sky or covered with perishable materials. This may have been a guest room, in the fashion of the oriental divan. Another doorway, near the first one, leads to a room on a lower level. In the room’s southern wall, cupboards were built between the arches of the roof, probably for storing documents.

West of the courtyard additional rooms were built on the unvaulted bedrock. They may have served as storerooms. A door in the southwestern corner of the courtyard gives access to a stairway, almost completely preserved, leading to a room and a balcony on the upper floor. Only a few corners of this story are extant. Signs of floors and other construction from an earlier period were found in the rooms east of the courtyard. On the floors and between them Nabataean painted sherds, lamps, and coins were found together with Herodian lamps. This may have been the site of a Nabataean house in the fourth half of the first century CE. An arched passage (7.5 by 4 m) leads to the other, more sumptuous part of the building, which consists of six rooms paved with stone slabs. The bases and capitals of the doorposts have non-classical moldings. One typical Nabataean capital was discovered in situ. The voussoirs show typical diagonal Nabataean tooling. This part of the house—its north, east, and west sides—was probably the residential wing. The outer walls of the house are constructed of carefully smoothed ashlars. Inside, the doors, adjacent walls, and the arches are also of ashlars. The rest of the walls are built of chipped stones and show traces of white plaster.

In Building I, coins from three periods were found: Nabataean (below Late Nabataean floor), Aramaic IV (two coins, 8 BCE – 40 CE), Malchoius II (two coins, 40–70 CE), and Rabbel II (70–106 CE). Late Roman: from Septimius Severus (193–211 CE) to Gallus (155–153 CE); Byzantine: Theodosius I (379–395 CE) to Justinian (527–554 CE).

Building II, situated to the west of building I, is a square tower (19 by 19 m) with a courtyard containing a roofed water reservoir. The outside walls of the tower are built of ashlars, but the lower courses built of rather hard stone: some of the blocks are 5 m long and more. The upper courses, like those of the surrounding, are built of smaller and softer stone. The entrance to the building was through a door on the west, which led to three rooms (4 by 4 m each), with high narrow windows and sunken doors. The westernmost room gives access to a stairway built around a heavy square pier that shows typical Nabataean tooling. The stairway leads to the upper story, of which two columns are preserved in situ, as are the threshold and the doorposts of the building. The whole building still stands to a height of about 5 m. This tower seems to have been the administrative center of the city, serving also as an observation post, from which watch could be kept on the water-storage installations at Napata Mustafa. A paved courtyard containing a water reservoir extends to the west of the building. The lower part of the reservoir is cut into the rock; the upper part is built of beams stone. To the west of the courtyard is a long narrow stoa. South of the courtyard is a suite containing one large hall with two oblong, narrow rooms, one on either side of the hall. These were probably for official guests. At the northeastern corner of the courtyard, several steps lead to a raised platform. This installation was used for leading and unloading goods. There were no artifacts found by which this building could be dated, but the great size of the stones embedded in its foundations may date its construction to the Middle Nabataean period. Coins found in this building were from the time ofConstantine I (308–337 CE) to Jovianus (357–365 CE); two coins identified as Late Roman.

Building XI. Building XI is situated in the southwestern part of the city. Its western hal was destroyed when the Western Church was built; the rooms of its southern wing were incorporated into the church. The building measured approximately 27 m from north to south and 35 m from west to east. In a courtyard at its center is a cistern with arches, roofing, and its water-drawing hole preserved in situ. Southwest of the courtyard are three rooms arranged in the form of a hall—a wide nave separated by two elongated aisles. The western and eastern walls of the central hall contain doors and four arched “windows.” Stairs built into the walls of the northern aisle but the elongated rooms served as storerooms. Other rooms are situated north and east of the courtyard. Another doorway gives access to a stairway leading to an upper floor. The staircase was built around a strong rectangular pier. Several stone courses of the upper story have survived. Southwest of the court is a small room whose plan is unusual. Its eastern half is vaulted, with a flat roof, while its western half was open to the sky. Built into the western wall is a tall,
Building XII: Late Nabataean stable.

Building XII: Trough in the stable.

rectangular niche. It is possible that in lieu of a proper temple, this small room served as a house-shrine (no new temples were built in the Late Nabataean period). The statue of the deity was apparently placed in the niche, while on the flat roof funerary was inscribed and statues were placed.

In the Byzantine period, the plan of the building underwent several changes: some of the doors were blocked and new ones were added. The inner windows in the stable were blocked by masonry, and the central hall was partitioned by a wall, to provide for living space. Coins of Constantine II (317–337 CE) were found in the debris and on floors, one coin from the second half of the third century, four coins from the fourth century, and one from the Byzantine period were also identified.

Building XII: another building from the Late Nabataean period, is situated in the eastern part of the town. It forms a complex of (about 40 by 40 m) of several units, all erected during the same period. The facade of the building, oriented northwest, is 40 m long and has a single entrance that leads to a large vestibule with arches. A doorway in the southern wall of the entrance hall opens onto a large courtyard that is irregular in form; the courtyard gives access to the different parts of the building. At the eastern side of the courtyard a gamma-shaped stylobate was discovered on which stood columns with typical Nabataean capitals. The stylobate was connected to an oblong passage that led to the mosaic above the statues and to a more elaborately planned inventory. The styles of the type described for building XII (see above), but was considerably larger and more lavishly decorated.

The residential wing occupied the northeastern part of the mansion. A vestibule and a large room formed a space just before the entrance to this wing. Another small vestibule, with Nabataean-type doorposts, decorated with astragals and a bull's head, and an anteroom, leads into a rather narrow, oblong courtyard (6 by 15 m), with two Nabataean type staircases (built around central pillars) and doors to rooms in the upper story and the arches to the upper level of a triclinium room. The arches of the upper story were decorated with mosaics. The doors of the rooms in the lower story a large screen (with a capacity of 300 ca. 90) had been hewn in the rock.

The service wing is south of the courtyard. The vestibule leading into it is decorated on the upper half of its walls and its ceiling arches with two bands of frescoes that depict mythological scenes and women walking with various objects in their hands. One scene appears to be the Leda and the Swan. The lower band contains various standard decorations, among them a small panel depicting two winged beings seated on a couch, who are identified by a Greek inscription as Eros and Psyche. On the slates of the ceiling, naked men and clothed women hold palm fronds in their hands. Their feet are on the wall and their heads are at the center of the arches, where the head of a young man is depicted in a medallion. The paintings were influenced by third century CE Roman paintings. In the ruins of the staircase a large bronze jar was found with 10,500 Roman silver coins and terracottas. The earliest were four silver coins of Trajan (98–117 CE), about 2,000 were silver and terracottas of Trajan (98–117 CE) and Hadrian (117–138 CE) and the remaining ones were terracottas of Septimius Severus (193–211 CE). Given
Wall painting in building Xv.

Graffiti (212-215), Cassandria (18-217), and Elgin (218-221). Most of the graffiti were found in Syria. The graffiti of Trajan were inscribed over Na-bataean coins of Rabbel II; quite certainly in the new mint of the Province Arabia. This house represents the wealth of a local breeder. Building XII was also occupied in the Byzantine period. Interconnecting doors in the residential part of the building were blocked, and Christian symbols were engraved on lintels and doorpost capitals. It is in this period that building XIV, the Eastern Church, was covered by a wall on the east, forming a separately defended unit.

In 1999, the rooms in the western and southern wings were excavated. These were in constant use from the Late Nabataean to the end of the Byzantine periods. In one of the rooms a forge was discovered. The pottery in the room indicates that it was used in the Early Arab period.

The coins found in building XII were of Constantine II (337-361), Constantine (337-350), Anastasius (491-518 CE), Justin I (two coins, 518-527 CE), and Justin II (565-578 CE). Twenty-two coins were from the fourth century, and one was from the fourth to the fifth centuries.

Building IV. Most of building IV was excavated in 1999. It consists of two structures, which are rows of shops. The southern part of the building is built on the foundations of a large building (building XXIV) from the Middle Nabataean period. The original assumption that the building existed in the Late Nabataean period, in which neighboring building XII was built, now seems doubtful; it is probable that the room built against neighboring building XII are earlier than the part of the building that remains. An examination of the plan of building IV shows that it is directly related to the Eastern Court, which is adjacent. The pottery and numerous coins in the room are from the fourth century and later. They and the numerous cooking and baking ovens found in the rooms also date to the fourth century. The previous identification of building IV as a market is incorrect. Other possibilities are that these rooms housed workshops, or perhaps in the local masons (see the discussion of buildings XXI-XXII below).

Building V. The coinage of building V consists of Malohus (100-200 CE), Rubbel (79-100 CE), Septimius Severus (193-211 CE), Claudius II, Gallienus (268-270 CE), Aurelian (two coins 270-275 CE), Julian (364-365 CE), Valentinian I (275-302 CE), Theodosius I (379-395 CE), Arcadius (383-408 CE), Anastasia (491-518 CE), Justinus I (two coins, 518-527 CE), and Justinus II (two coins, 527-538 CE). Also found were one coin from the second to the third centuries, twenty two coins from the fourth to the fifth centuries, and five coins from the Byzantine period.

Building VII, the Public Pool. Building VII is a large installation (about 18 by 10 by 3 m) situated on the northeastern edge of the city, near the breeder's wall. At a slight distance from building VII, the outer and inner walls are built of large blocks of marble, the faces of the stones in the inner wall are rough. Four engaged pillars in the northern and southern walls and four pillars in the center of the pool indicate that the structure was modeled—probably without wood—because the distance between the pillars are too open to be spanned by stone slabs. A short water conduit leads from the city wall to a square water tank attached to the eastern wall of the pool. The water was brought by water carriers and was drawn from the water-collection systems in the wall to the west, and from the subsidiary water-collection system to the east of the trench. The pool was apparently built in the Late Nabataean period and continued in use in later periods, as indicated by the water conduit, which was built in the same time as the later city wall.

Building X, the Bathhouse. Building X is near the city wall, adjacent to the public pool. A courtroom was found in the courtyard that occupied the southern side. In the center of the courtyard was an entrance with four pillars, probably belonging to a roofed colonnade. Stone benches line the walls of the courtyard, which probably served as a dressing room (apodyterium). Stairs in the northeastern corner lead to a room containing two cold-air baths (frigidaria), one of them octagonal and the other round. A doorway in the eastern wall of this room leads to another room whose wall and floor are covered with waterproof plaster; this room probably served for a hot air bath (tropicalium). The hot bath (calidarium) consisted of three rooms, with very thick walls, sunk deep into the ground. The rooms occupied the entire northern side of the building. The first room contains the remains of a water-conducting stone, from which a brick channel leads to the other two rooms. The columns of the hypocaust and several of its systems were discovered in situ, while pottery pipes of the water-heating system were found in the ablutions. The water-supply system as well as the waste-water evacuation system were also discovered. The bathhouse was
only be dated approximately. Although the pottery found there belongs to the Byzantine period, it cannot be used definitively for dating because such pottery was also uncovered in typical Nabataean buildings. Thus, the bathhouse, which was in use in the Byzantine period, could have been built in the Late Nabataean period.

Building VIII: the Caravanserai. Building VII is a large structure (approximately 23 by 42 m), a short distance outside the later city wall, near its northwestern corner. However, remains of walls from the Middle Nabataean period, discovered between building VIII and the city wall and underneath it, indicate that building VIII was not isolated. It had a large court, large halls to the west and south, and rows of rooms along its northern and eastern sides. The rooms on the northern side have two systems of roof arches—an early one, running north-south, and a later one, running east-west. This building was almost completely excavated in 1990. In order to construct the new east-west road system, a deep hole was dug in the base of the wall and filled with stones. Above this fill, the arch-supporting attached pillar was built. In the southernmost room of the eastern wing, a perfect consisting of hypocaust bricks was found—possibly from a bathhouse that was part of the caravanserai. In the long hall extending along the southern side of the building, columns found in situ indicate that the hall’s roof was timber or even lighter material, and was supported by the columns and lateral walls.

Caravans were found of Aretas IV (two axes, 96-840 CE), Malathus II (two columns, 28–70 CE), Rubbel II (70–105 CE), Caravans (108–117 CE), Aurelian (270–275 CE), Probus (276–282 CE), Diocletian (284–305 CE), Constantine (two columns, 366–377 CE), Constantius II (337–361 CE, Constantius II or Constans (353–356 CE or 357–359 CE), Valentinian II (375–392 CE). Theodocius I (379–395 CE), and Theodosius II (408–450 CE). Two coins are from the second to the third centuries, thirty-eight coins are from the third to the early fifth centuries CE, and four are from the Byzantine period.

The Water-Supply System. The water-supply system of Mamshit was surveyed by Wootton and Lawrence. They suggested that the three dams built in the Nabataean period were constructed to prevent erosion of the agricultural land northwest of the wadi. They offered evidence that the two upper dams were completely silted up, and that only the lower dam was fully visible. This, however, is not the case. The lower dam is 8 m long, 11 m high, and 7.8 m wide at its upper part. It is revetted by large stones set in a hard mortar and its interior is composed of large stones embedded in mortar. The base of the dam was covered by numerous layers of clay mixed with mortar, which produces a rock-hard cement. The face of the dam has deep grooves from streams of water and rolling stones. The middle dam is 30 m upstream. It is 20 m long and 5 m wide at its head. The upper dam is 35 m from the middle dam. It is 53 m long and 3.4 m wide at its head. The face of the middle and upper dams are perpendicular, unlike the lower dam, whose face is oblique. Because of the construction of a new dam downstream by the British authorities in the 1940s, two thirds of the lower dam is now covered with silt. From the dam, a stepped path culminated in the peak leading up to the city.

The city of the city, in a tributary of Nahal Maimair, Wootton and Lawrence discovered another water-conservation system. It was built above the upper waterfall of the step and narrow wadi. It is 20 m long and 3 m high. The expedition discovered another water-supply system south and west of the city. On the upper third of the slope of the mountain rising above the city, a narrow, shallow channel 2 km (1.5 m) long was made. It accepted the rainwater from a small pool west of the city. These were the only water resources at Karak in the Late Nabataean period. Apparently, in the Byzantine period a wall was built on Nahal Maimair southeast of the town. The LATE ROMAN PERIOD. Because of their excellent construction, the buildings of the Late Nabataean period served the population in the Late Roman period as well. Evidence for the Late Roman occupation is supplied by the pottery and numerous coins found in and around the city.

The City Wall. The city wall was apparently constructed in the Late Roman period, and it appears that its entire length was constructed simultaneously. Initially, a wall of 7.6 to 8.0 m wide was built, but it was subsequently more than doubled. Coins found in its foundations date it to the time of Diocletian. The wall, which is defended by corner towers and salients of differing length, encompassed an area of about 10 a. Its course is irregular because it adapts both to topography and to include several earlier buildings. It is approximately 900 m long.

The wall was built of stone blocks, laid in regular courses, with a filling of broken stone and plaster. Here and there sections of the wall can be seen to be built of stone in secondary use. There were two gates in the wall—the main gate on the north and a secondary smaller gate on the west. It is noteworthy that the main gate does not conform to the course of the Late Nabataean main gate. The main gate is defended by two rows of unequal size. At some time the width of the walls of the towers was also doubled. Although Middle Nabataean and Early Roman pottery was found underneath the floors of the towers, there are no earlier building remains. The stone-paved gate hall was roofed by three arches. In the debris the iron linings of the towers’ wooden doors were found. The doors were destroyed by fire, burning the

lying in a thick layer of ash and charred wood. The smaller western gate is an opening in the wall defended by a pair of heavy doorposts. This gate was apparently added to help in bringing the water supply from the dams in the wadi. There were two piers in the wall, which apparently were blocked in the Byzantine period. Additional evidence for the fall of Kurak in the Late Roman-Byzantine period was discovered in buildings XXII–XXIII (see below).

BYZANTINE PERIOD. The Eastern Church. The Eastern Church is built on a high site to the south of the church mentioned above. It is a large church for which there were few remains of the Nabataean period. The church complex includes the church proper, a chapel, a baptistery, an apse (a monastery), a bell tower, and a small bathhouse. The entire structure was 55 by 25 m. The church was unusually well built. Its outer walls are of finely dressed ashlar, to achieve the heavy impression created by a high wall more than 40 m long. On this horizontal stage, steps with wooden stairs, crowned by deeply engraved columns, were built along the side. The method of construction in Roman and was employed only rarely in the Byzantine period. Due to the limitations of the terrain, the church is approached by a broad flight of stairs, leading to three entrance in the northern wall of the apse (15 by 18 m), the four sides of which were surrounded by a colonnade. In the center of the apse was a cistern (6 by 5.4 m). The roof of the cistern was supported by four arches, and the water was supplied by gutters in the four corners of the apse. Traces of the gutters and the drains that carried the water under the floor of the apse were found. From the apse (there was no altar) three entrances open into the nave and two aisles. The interior measurements of the church are 27.5 by 15 m; the width of the nave is equal to that of the two aisles. The roof of the church was supported by two rows of columns and by two engaged pillars in each row. The columns were placed on stone bases— not on the floor—but founded on the rock, as originally planned—which made the nave narrower by about one meter. The timber roof had a frame of wooden beams covered with clay roof tiles. A raised beam was reached by two steps. The church included a central inner apse, flanked by rectangular rooms with a flat roof. On the stones of the apse numerous inscriptions were engraved in Arabic, probably by Arab passers-by in later times. The altar stood on the chord of the apse, as usual. A bench, composed of three steps,
extraneous. Above theapse, in the middle of the bench, steps lead up to the base of the bishop's throne.

In the excavation of the lateral rooms in the summer of 1971, remains of a cult of saints and martyrs were discovered. Reliquary vases were built into the floors of the two side rooms, with small altars above them. In addition, in a corner of the side room on the south, a small grave was found with a single bone in it; the bones probably belonged to a monk. A paving stone above the grave has a hole in its middle, through which oil could be poured. In the 1999 excavation, the removal of part of the floor of this side room revealed a tomb whose floor was of green roof tiles. The corners of the tomb were decorated with colorful paintings of a palm branch, reminiscent of the paintings in building XII. The bones had been carefully collected by the builders of the church and deposited somewhere else.

Below the floor of the side room on the north, a structure, probably a burial house, was found. The remains of an arched basement were found north of the barn. The sides were paved with stone slabs and the nave with mosaics in simple geometric patterns. Two large crosses appear in the mosaic, opposite the entrance and in front of the benches. Along the southern wall of the southern side are two stone benches. A door in the southern wall of the basilica opens into a chapel (6.25 by 3.5 by 4.5 m). The chapel's entrance takes the form of a basilica, raised by one step above the floor of the hall, and separated from it by a screen. There is a dedicatory inscription on the southern wall of the basilica. This chapel could have been used for the preparation of consecrated bread. An opening in the eastern wall of this chapel contains a small altar, which has a cruciform font set into the floor. The font was covered with a baldachin on four columns, decorated with crosses on their capitals. An opening in the southern wall of the baptistry led to the newly baptised Christians into the basilica. Three doorsways in the western wall of the atrium give access to five atrium rooms, one of which held two baptistaries large enough to sit in. South of the bathhouses are three rooms, possibly belonging to a small monastery. A niche in the southeastern corner of the atrium leads to a gallery on top of the colonnade. These southern entrances were constructed later than the church and the western atrium. Because the rooms in the south are built against the city wall, their plan is irregular. The line of the wall was moved when the entrances were erected. Other entrances can be distinguished in the church—in the stairway leading to the atrium and at the entrance to the nave.

The northwestern corner of the Eastern Church is built against a tower. The tower is similar in form and plan to building II but is somewhat smaller (8 by 8 m). Its method of construction is different, however. Its outer walls and the door frames on the interior were built of large blocks of soft limestone, yellowish in color and smoothly dressed. The walls on the interior were made of large blocks of harder, hammer-dressed stones. In between the two facings of the wall is a thin filling of small stones and gray mortar, which has the consistency of cement. The tower, which has four rooms, is entered from the east. The entrance room is in the southeast, and also contains stairs, the lower ones built of stone, and the upper ones probably of wood, as may be deduced from a beam found in the rubble.
with octagonal medallions filled with birds and baskets of fruit, all on a background of geometric patterns, spirals, and double lines. The central field is a geometric carpet containing a dedicatory inscription mentioning a certain Nikos who built this holy place. In front of the bema two peacocks are represented flanking an amphora from which a vine emerges. On a narrow band, between the peacocks and the steps of the bema, are three dedicatory inscriptions, again naming Nikos and two wardens of the church. Mosaics of intersecting circles and various other geometric patterns also
The Western Church, looking east.

The internal spaces are paved with geometric patterns, cisterns, and a band with representations of anemones, a chiselled pattern, a mosaic, and other geometric designs. The church was destroyed by a violent conflagration; parts of wooden beams and roof tiles were found in the debris, together with stone and marble fragments.

Coin finds are of Augustus (9–14 ce), Probus (276–282 ce), Constantine I (337–361 ce), Theodosius I (379–395 ce), and Marcus Aurelius (180–192 ce), and four coins from the fourth century and one Byzantine coin.

The Dating of the Churches. The inscriptions in the Western Church contain no evidence to date its construction. The only indication for dating the Eastern Church is the two coins in the mosaic pavement. Because the cross on the floor of the church was placed after 378 ce, the excavator concluded that the building had been erected prior to that date. The date is also confirmed by the discovery of a number of coins of Constantine and Theodosius I. However, coins from the middle of the fourth century (316) that were found in the fill of the altar point to an earlier date for the construction of the church.

More extensive excavations, whose objective was to learn the date and period of construction of the Western Church, were undertaken in 1960. The excavations revealed that in order to construct the Western Church, a large foundation pit the size of the planned building was made. At places the linchpins penetrated a level from the Middle Nabatean period, represented by three layers of salt containing typical Nabatean pottery from that period. The foundations of the Nabatean building XI had been laid above these layers. To consolidate the fill for the foundation pit after the Church was completed, walls were built perpendicular to the church. A coin found in the upper levels of the trench was from the second half of the fourth century ce. In addition to the excavations in the rooms flanking the apse in the Eastern Church (see above), an additional trench perpendicular to the eastern wall of the church was dug. A coin of Diocletian (284–305 ce), which belongs to the period of the church's construction, was found alongside two coins of Theodosius I and the other from the second half of the fourth century. These belong, in all probability, to the period of construction of the Eastern Church.

Buildings XXI–XXIII, Buildings XXI–XXIII, which are almost completely covered by sand, are apparently the large buildings, noted by Kirk and Guy in 1937. They are 40 to 50 m from the caravanserai (Building VIII). In 1967, one of the long walls of the larger building, XXII, was exposed and found running 4 to 8 courses high. In 1968, the walls of both buildings were traced by excavation trenches, and some of the rooms were completely or partially excavated. An architectural analysis indicated that building XXIII is earlier. Building XXIII is an almost perfect square (30.1 m by 26.24 m). Except for the doors and roof plaster, which were made of beehive stones, the remaining parts were built of large hand-dressed blocks of hard limestone. Only two to three courses of the building remains. As neither small quantities of building blocks were found in the debris, it is clear that the building was faced for building material in antiquity.

The building (oriented from the east via a stepped vestibule) led to a large court on the west (28.6 by 29.22 m). There were two rooms on the north and a hall (14.7 by 11.39 m) to the south of the vestibule. The rooms and the hall are spanned by arches, but because the distance between the arches and the lateral walls is too great for stone slabs, wooden beams must have been used. All the rooms were paved, but the slabs were taken away at the same time. The building stones, doorposts, lintels, and thresholds were robbed. Changes were introduced in the rooms as a later period. Pottery from the Middle Nabatean period, the time the building was constructed, was found outside the eastern wall of the court. In the rooms and the hall much pottery from the fourth to fifth centuries ce was found. Except for the regular household wares, the pottery repertoire included many types of imported wares from major pottery-production centers in the Byzantine world. In some of the rooms large quantities of coins also were found. It seems that in this period the extent of use of walls supported walls and roofs of light perishable materials.

Definitive inscription of Wise in the Western Church.
Building XXII was built against the western wall of building XXIII and is thus from a later period. As with building XXIII, all outer walls and walls facing the court were built of adobes. This large building (55.8 by 45.25 m) was entered through a gatehouse at the southeastern corner, with a guardroom and an office on one side and a suite of two rooms on the other. Most of the southern side of the building is occupied by a hall (9.85 by 18.3 m) whose roof rested on four columns. The hall is entered from the large court (29.25 by 24.7 m). Along the eastern side of the court are eight rooms of equal size (approximately 4.9 by 3.9 m) and on the west two small and three rooms. A wide opening in the center of the court (3.34 m) and two narrower ones (2.08 m) lead from the court to a hall (7.8 by 24.7 m) that occupies the whole western side of the building. Along the axis of the hall a row of pillars supports nine arches. The northern and southern halls were roofed with wood. The floors of the building were apparently stone flags, but they have been dismantled, as were the walls and the wooden roofs. As attested by the pottery found in the foundations of a pillar, building XXII is from the Late Nabatean period. The building was dismantled by the middle of the fourth century CE, perhaps by the builders of the churches. The pillars and the arches were left standing but were destroyed by an earthquake, possibly the great tremor of 363 CE. Subsequently, the remaining stacks of walls were used—from the latter part of the fourth century onwards—for wall-to-wall buildings, as one may judge from the general disposition. This suggests that both buildings XXII and XXIII were schools, in the fashion of the Greek gymnasia, in which Nabataean and roman builders learned the art of architecture and construction.

THE CEMETERIES. Three cemeteries have been located in the city, the Byzantine sarcophagi of the city, the Nabataean sarcophagi of the city. The sarcophagi are between 60 and 100 in north of the city and are about 200 in southeast of the city. The sarcophagi are cut into the Late Nabatean period or to the time of the annexation of the Nabataean kingdom into the Province Arabia.

The Northern Cemetery. Extensive excavations were carried out in the northern cemetery. As early as 1957, Kirke and Gyu discovered black-glazed pottery and typical Nabatean ware there and identified the area as a cemetery. In a survey carried out at the beginning of the 1967 excavations, only Nabatean, Early and Middle Roman pottery, and a few Byzantine sherds were found. In all, twenty-five burials and luxurious structures were excavated. The tombs usually are in two parts: the grave proper, sometimes built as a stone oval covered with stone slabs, into which a wooden coffin was placed, or pit about 2.7 m deep in which the coffin was deposited. Sometimes a monument was erected above the tomb, and sometimes a stele was placed in front of the monument. Only the bases of most of the monuments remain. Two monuments in fairly good condition can furnish information about their construction. These types of monuments can be distinguished: a solid square stone structure (with a base 2 by 2 m), a solid rectangular monument (1.2 by 2 m); and a hollow square monument (about 4.8 by 4.8 m). It seems that the solid monuments were in the shape of a stepped pyramid, while the hollow ones were built like a mastaba rising above the tomb. The burial could date to the first half of the first and second centuries CE by the objects found in some of the tombs. Silver casket of Tragia was found in two tombs, and clay seals for sealing documents, made from impressions of city coins from Petra from the time of Hadrian, were found in another. An ossuary-type tomb contained a large number of human bones, as well as a coin from year 4 of Rabbi II (34 CE), two Early Roman lamps, and a painted Nabatean bowl. It is clear when the bones in this tomb were collected. Quantities of gold jewelry were found in the tombs, including figures of a goddess and of dolphins, both of which held a piece of bronze in Nabatean art. In the ossuary the remains of funerary objects were found near the tombs, as well as smaller square and rectangular tables, on which the meals were served. Among the various found—mainly bowls and cooking pots—a few were painted. Outstanding is a small bowl painted with dolphins.

Above one of the ossuary tombs a mass burial is dated by coins from the first decade of the fourth century CE. In the summer of 1971, several additional tombs were excavated in the western part of the cemetery. They were dated by pottery lamps and vessels to the late second to third centuries CE. The tombs differ in the manner of burial. In the Early burial the body was deposited in the ground, but in the later ones it was laid in a stone-built ear grave.
The Northeastern Cemetery. The northeastern cemetery was discovered in 1967. Two solid, rectangular monuments, similar in plan and manner of construction to those in the southern cemetery, were found, one served as the tomb of the husband and the second the tomb of the wife. Two Roman names were discovered, one of a cavalryman of Cohors I Augustana Thraceum, the other of a veteran of Legio III Cyrrhulca. Military units stationed in the Province of Arabia from its inception and apparently included a garrison at Karabah, which guided the road descending from the Arabah. Seven other tombs, while they lacked tomstones, are marked by large boulders. The tombs in this cemetery are arranged side by side, unlike those in the northern cemetery, which were placed haphazardly. All the burials in this cemetery were cremations; the monument was built on the site of the pyre. One of the carbonized tombs with a monument was excavated in the summer of 1915. The slabs of the cremated bones had been deposited in an intentionally perforated early second century CE cooking pot. A second tomb with a monument had been looted by tomb robbers, who left behind a similar cooking pot.

The Western Cemetery. A few trial soundings in the western cemetery esti- mated it to be dated to the Byzantine period. It is the largest of the three cemeteries at the site. The remains of a large building there probably belong to a church. In 1980, several inscriptions were found—among them a stele with a round top and one with a large cross. They are similar in style to those found at Elene and Beqanot.

CONCLUSIONS

The city of Karabah is unique among the Nabataean towns. The quality of its construction is outstanding, and its public buildings occupy a larger area of the town than is seen elsewhere in the Nabataean kingdom. It appears that Karabah was not founded during the initial penetration of the Nabataeans into the Negeb, but at a later date. It was a new city on a secondary road route leading from Petra to the Negeb, via the so-called secret route of the 'Abans. It gained importance in the Late Nabataean period, when Roman road engineers cut wide roads along the same course. Karabah's prosperity in the Late Nabataean period, mainly after the incorporation of the Nabataean kingdom into the Province Arabias, parallels the earlier prosperity of Oboda, which was also probably the construction of the Via Nova in Transjordan by Trajan.

During this period, roads were replaced by horse breeding. If this site is indeed Munmuth, its prosperity in the Late Roman period can be attributed to the garrisoning there of a military unit to guard the road from Jerusalem to Al-Uzib (Clauss). Given the importance of the site in the Byzantine period, probably because of the necessity of maintaining contact with Transjordan, unlike the other towns of the Negeb, agriculture did not play an important role in economic life at Karabah because local agricultural land surrounded it. If this writer's analysis of the military paynet from Nessana is correct, Ro- man military units were replaced in the fourth century by a locally recruited militia that was paid by imperial or provincial authority. As the latest coins found on the site are not later than the middle of the sixth century CE, Karabah was probably destroyed by Arab tribesmen before the Arab conquest of 636, when the other Negev towns were captured. It is likely that Karabah was temporarily occupied by the Arabs following the conquest.

KURSI

IDENTIFICATION

Tell el-Kursi is situated at the mouth of Wadi es-Sarium, on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee (map reference 2113,2478), and is traditionally identified with the site of the house of the apostle John (Mt. 14:28–34, Mk. 6:45–20; Lk. 6:26–39). According to the Gospels, the miracle took place at Tabgha, or “the other side,” which is the eastern shore of the lake. Each of the three Gospels names the place differently: Matthew calls it Gadara; Mark, Gerasa; and Luke, Gergesa. The three names apparently refer to different locations: according to Origen, the miracle actually happened at Gerasa. Since the end of the third century CE, however, Christians have identified a site on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee as the location in question.

Topographical and architectural studies done in the nineteenth century suggested Tell el-Kursi as a suitable identification, both because of the name and its view of its physical features. Some scholars, however, preferred to locate the site at the southern part of the eastern shore. Excavations at the mouth of Wadi es-Sarium in the early 1970s settled the question.

EXCAVATIONS

In 1973, when a new road to the Galilee was being built, historians unknown site came to light in the el-Kursi valley, some 300 m east of the mound. The discovery was followed by four consecutive seasons of excavation (1970–1974), directed by V. Tadmor, on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums. As a result an ancient Christian basilica and the remains of a walled monastery were cleared.

THE MONASTERY.

During the four seasons of excavations only part of the monastery was explored—the wall (i.e., the south wall), the main gate in the south wall, and residential quarters in the northern part of the monastery. The wall surrounding the monastery, forming a large rectangular enclosure (120 by 140 m), was built of well-dressed basalt stones, covered with light-colored plaster and decorated with floral patterns. The monastery's main entrance was located in the middle of the north wall. It consisted of a stone-paved gate and an attached structure, probably first used as a hospice or an inn, that was later converted into a watchtower.

ARAHMEN ZEYAD
13. Shivta - Sobata

Location:
In the central Negev, 10 km. south-west of Beer-Sheva.

Description:
The town is built mainly from a hard limestone, except for curved elements, which are made of a medium to soft stone.
It has survived the earthquakes well and except for its main monuments remains unexcavated.
The main buildings/complexes include: streets formed by joining house stone fences throughout the town; a pool; stables; three churches; the governor's house; a town square; a restored farm, and three wine presses.

State of Conservation:
Shivta exhibits a remarkable state of conservation: houses with second and third floors, delicate carved stone elements, church apses and domes. The town is often referred to as the Pompeii of Israel.
Restoration works were sporadically done in the 1970's.
Conservation intervention has been implemented since 1996.

Conservation plan:
The last conservation intervention in the governor's house was carried out in 2001.
SHIVTA or Sobota (sometimes Sobata)
Established probably in the later years of the Nabatean king Obodas III (30-9 B.C.E).
The city enjoyed prosperity period mainly from the second century on, when the
Nabateans developed sophisticated desert agriculture and horse Breeding. First
churches were build in Shivta by the middle of the fourth century. It was probably
abandoned in the eighth or ninth century.
SOBATA

IDENTIFICATION

Sobata (Arabic: Sobita; Hebrew: Sobita), a town in the central Negev desert, is situated about 40 km (25 mi.) southwest of Beersheba (map reference 114.032). It was founded in the Middle Nabataean-early Roman period and flourished mainly in the Late Nabataean-Late Roman and Byzantine periods. The Arabic name precedes the ancient one. This is known from two Nestorian papyri, P79 from the early and P75 from the late seventh century. A faulty reading in Nölz's Normatana (VII, PG 79, col. 688), written in the early fifth century, also refers to Sobata; the text was emended by F. M. Abel. The meaning of the name is obscure. Abel considered it a Semitic-Nabataean name. A. Negae looks for the origin of the name in the rare Nabatean personal name Shubita.

EXPLORATION

The ruins at Sobata were described for the first time in 1876 by E. H. Palmer, and the first general plan of the city, with its most important buildings, was

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Solothurn: general plan of the town.

drawn by A. Muñiz in 1901. Muñiz's plan, however, is not exact. He failed to notice that the city's streets were slightly curved. In 1905, the site was visited by an expedition from the Ecole Biblique et Archéologique Française in Jerusalem, with the participation of A. Jaussen, R. Savygine, and L. H. Vincent. They located the Byzantine cemetery and several tombs with inscriptions from the end of the sixth century CE, and found a short Nabatean dedicatory inscription from the time of Aretas IV among the ruins of the city. In 1914, C. L. Woolley and T. E. Lawrence drew more accurate plans of the town, its churches, and several houses. In 1916, the Committee for the Preservation of Monuments of the German Turkish army mapped the site in preparation for an expedition to Soloturn under the direction of W. Bachmann, C. Wachinger, and T. Wiegand. Its main contribution is the fine aerial photographs they took. From 1934 to 1938, the first large-scale excavations were conducted at Soloturn on behalf of the New York University and the British Archaeological School in Jerusalem, under the direction of H. D. Coll. The results of these excavations were never published, however. From 1958 to 1966, the buildings and streets were cleared by the Israel National Parks Authority, under the supervision of M. Ayo Yafouhe.

During several surveys directed by A. Negev from 1976 to 1979, the site and plan of the Nabatean town were studied and a new chronology for the churches and the town evolved. From 1979 to 1982, A. Segal made limited-scale investigations and excavations on behalf of the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. Soloturn's town plan and plans of the central church and four private buildings could then be drawn. Research was resumed in 1985 in the North Church by S. Margalit. Solutions were proposed to some typological-chronological problems pertaining to the churches in the Negev. The city plan of Soloturn was again analyzed by J. Shepharzvski in 1985.

HISTORY

Occupation at Soloturn began in the Middle Nabatean period. The settlement was founded on a road that links Oboda, Soloturn, and Nessana, by way of a chain of small, yet unidentified settlements. Nabatean Soloturn was established in the early part of the reign of Aretas IV (9 BC–40 CE), or perhaps even earlier, in the later years of Oboda III (10–5 BCE). During this time, and especially during the reign of Rabbil II (70–106 CE)—that is, in the Late Nabatean period when the Nabateans began to engage in desert agriculture and horse breeding—the city enjoyed a period of prosperity. It was quite large, occupying more than a third of the built-up area of subsequent periods. The history of the city in the third and fourth centuries is not known, but in this writer's opinion, the first churches in the town—the South Church and the public reservoirs and the North Church on the northern outskirts of the town—were built by the middle of the fourth century. Following the Arab conquest, Soloturn, like the other towns in the western central Negev, continued to exist for about another two hundred years. On the basis of the pottery found there—Arab glazed ware and pottery east in a mold—the site's excavators suggested that the Arab settlement there did not cease until the thirteenth or fourteenth century CE. The earlier date of the eighth to the ninth centuries seems more reasonable, however. At that time settlement also ended at Nessana and Eblusi.

EARLY ROMAN PERIOD. In an early survey of the site, a Nabatean dedicatory inscription to the god Dushara was discovered from the time of Aretas IV. The Coll expedition located a Nabatean tomb southwest of the city that contained typical Nabatean and Early Roman pottery. This material was published by G. Crowfoot, who erroneously dated it to the second and third centuries CE. The Nabatean settlement founded on the northern bank of Nabat Negev flourished in the Middle and Late Nabatean periods. The LATE ROMAN PERIOD. The history of Soloturn in the Late Roman period is not well known. The town may have been resettled at the end of the third century CE when the central Negev was fortified by Diodorean and his successors. They erected fortresses at Oboda and Nessana, and surrounded Mampsis (Kurnub) with a wall, but there is no positive evidence for their activities at Soloturn.

BYZANTINE PERIOD. The name Soloturn is missing in the Byzantine period and in the area of Nabil Lavan, which attests to Soloturn's having been an important civil agricultural settlement. Near the city, in Nabat Lavan, the remains of large plantations and several individual farms were discovered. Additional information about the production and management of these farms is provided by the archaeological finds at Oboda and Nessana by the Nessana papyrus, many of which deal with water rights and land distribution. Soloturn also scenario have been an important monastic center in the Byzantine period, as well as the site of regional Christian pilgrimage. Judging by some of the epitaphs found in the North Church, and by inscriptions found elsewhere in the town, Soloturn enjoyed a high standard of education, notwithstanding the fact that it was situated at the very edge of the Christianized world. The town, however, should not be understood as having existed at the end of the Western world, but at the heart of the Semitic Nabatanean-pagan (and later Christian) world.

EARLY ARAB PERIOD. The history of Soloturn in the Early Arab period is obscure. At the time of the Arab conquest, the Christian population here, at least, Nessana, was not harmed. The Amurra built a mosque near the South Church, taking care not to destroy it. It is possible that the Christian community lived side by side in peace with the new Muslim population. The settlement at Soloturn probably did not exist longer than that of its neighbor, Nessana. It was apparently abandoned in the eighth or ninth century CE at the latest.

EXCAVATION RESULTS

A large water cistern from the Nabatean period was found halfway between Mape Shiva (q.v.) and Soloturn. Inside the cistern were traces of the characteristic Nabatean technique of stone dressing, and a plaster with images symbolizing Dushara and other Nabatean deities. Inside the Nabatean town itself, which occupies the southern and southwestern parts of the site, a large double reservoir was constructed on the northern fringes of the built-up area. Rainwater was collected from the gently sloping terrain by means of an intricate network of channels. Amid the ruins south of the reservoir was a staircase tower, resembling the oases at Nebatean Mampsis. To the southwest, the Coll expedition excavated a building containing a table from the Late Nabatean period, similar to the stable in building XII at Kurnub (Mampsis), but did not establish its date or function. The stable house was cleared again by Segal and a plan of the house was made. The pottery found on the floors was from the fourth and fifth centuries CE, but this indicates the late use of a house built in the second century CE.

PLAN OF THE BYZANTINE TOWN. The Byzantine town covers an area of about 20 a. (according to measurements taken by Segal and later by Shepharzvski, which differ greatly from previous, much higher, and exaggerated estimates). It measures 400 m from north to south and 330 m east to west and lies on the shoulder of a ridge that slopes gradually to the center of the town and even more steeply to the south, in the direction of Nabat Shiva. The city was not walled, nor did it have a fortified citadel, but the houses and some of the courts and gardens were built in continuous lines that terminated at the end of successive streets. There was a gate at the end of each street that could be locked. The houses and their spacious courtyards were not built close to one another. In the opinion of the excavators, there were gardens inside the city. The streets were quite wide (average width, 4 m). There were three city squares. Most of Soloturn's explorers believe that this town, whose streets turn and twist, was built without a definite plan. However, this writer believes that the layout may have been intentional, the town's builders limited the number of streets that would open into the area outside the town, where the fields were located and the sites of the cisterns were located. Inside the built-up area, numerous lanes led to all parts of the town and ended at the doors of the houses at the edge of the town. Water supply being the major problem, the town planners chose to use some of the streets for conveying rainwater to the two large reservoirs in the center of the town and the numerous cisterns scattered throughout it. The layout of the streets seems to have been adapted to this need, and in this matter the builders of the Byzantine town probably followed Nabatean planning using the gentle slope to collect rainwater in reservoirs. The Byzantine streets thus ran along the course of the ancient channels, some of which can still be
traced in the lower part of their course in the vicinity of the reservoirs. The need to cope with water collection also explains the large number of public squares and the width of the streets.

In this writer's opinion, the construction of the Byzantine town began in the first half of the fourth century CE, with the erection of the South Church. The population must still have lived in the older, Nabataean houses, which, if contemporary Karanah can serve as an example, required little repair. Irregularities in the plan of the South Church—the absence of a proper atrium and the disharmony between its eastern and western parts—attest to the building's having been squeezed into an already built-up area. The same problem—ininserting new buildings into an existing town plan—faced the builders of the two churches at Karanah. At about the same time, the North Church and monastery were built at the town's northern extremity, beyond the water-catchment area. There they would not interfere with the functioning of the water-supply system. It was only later, possibly from the fifth century onward, that the central and northern quarters were built.

Three different kinds of stone were used to build the houses: hard crystalline stone for the foundations and lower parts of the walls, softer crystalline stone for the lintels and doorposts, and soft and brittle limestone for the upper parts of the walls. The narrow doors have lintels, whereas the wider ones are arches. The rooms are roofed with arches that rest on engaged pilasters that spring directly from the walls and are covered by stone slabs. The inner walls are covered with thick layers of plaster. The walls are 0.6 to 0.7 m wide and were built, Nabataean fashion, with ashlars or hammer-dressed stones on the exterior, course-dressed stones on the interior, and a filling of broken stones and mud, which served as insulation. The floors were paved with stone slabs. On the street side, the walls have no windows or only very narrow ones. The wall cupboards were built of stone; only the shelves were wood.

The houses were entered through a small hall that led to a courtyard, from which all the rooms were entered. The opening of the ciemtes in which the rainwater running off the flat roofs was collected was in the courtyard. This type of house and courtyard is common in the east. Sometimes the ciemte was connected to a channel carrying runoff water from the adjoining streets, as well. The stairway leading to the second story was also in the courtyard.

The Reservoirs. The two large Nabataean reservoirs were reused in the Byzantine period. They are the link between the older Nabataean town and the new central quarter. The reservoirs, irregularly shaped polygons, were interconnected and built of stones set in mortar and coated with waterproof plaster. Steps led to the bottom. The southern reservoir has a capacity of 770 cu m and the northern one about 850 cu m. It was the duty of the city to clean the reservoirs and, according to information in Byzantine Greek or tracca, this obligation was fulfilled.

CHURCHES, South Church. From the excavations carried out by the CBL expedition, only the plan of the South Church has thus far been published. Because the church was erected after the construction of the two reservoirs south of it, the builders, for lack of space, were unable to provide it with an atrium, as in the other two churches. It had a narthex, but it did not serve as a vestibule linking the church directly with the outside. The church’s entrance in the southwest corner of the narthex, from which only two entrances lead into the church proper. The church is built on a nearly square plan (17.6 m long and 18.2 m wide) and is divided into a nave and two aisles by two rows of six columns each. The four eastern columns form part of the channel once erected on the bema. In front of the northwest corner of the bema is the square base of the ambo. The excavators assumed that this church, like the other churches at Sebata, was triapsidal. According to Negev, however, this was not the case. The church was originally built as a monopodial structure with two rectangular rooms, one on either side of the apse, similar to the plans of the earlier churches at Karanah, Obooda, 'Nassan (North Church), and the early stage of the East Church at Elusa. All of these probably date to the second half of the fourth century CE. In a later stage, probably in the early sixth century, the rectangular rooms were blocked and replaced by small lateral apses, with small niches in their curving curving walls. They held the remains of stone vases and reliquaries, attesting to a cult of martyrs to which the other churches were dedicated.

The central apse is twice the height of the lateral apses, above which there were chambers, probably entered from the upper story. The three apses were not built on the same axis, and the southern wall of the church deviates slightly southeastward. The nave is paved with marble slabs and the aisles with limestone slabs. The apses are plastered and decorated with paintings of religious subjects. Woolley and Lawrence identified the scene as the Trans-
A mosque was erected to the north of the baptistery. Its mihrab is built against the north wall of the baptistery, and it seems that the builders of the mosque took special care not to damage the adjoining Christian establishment. The floor of the mosque is laid with limestone slabs.

The Central Church. The Central Church was measured and surveyed by A. Segal. Because of its position in the town plan, this church, facing one of the main streets of the central quarter, has no proper atrium, only a narrow corridor. The Central Church has three apses, a type rare in the central Negev. Only the South Church at Nessana (601 CE) and, possibly, the North Church at Rehovot-in-the-Negev (dated by its excavator to the second half of the fifth century) are triapsidal. The Central Church at Sobata probably dates to the late sixth or early seventh century CE.

The North Church. Because the North Church is on the boundary of the city, its excavators assumed that it was the latest church constructed at Sobata. In Negev’s opinion, this, however, was not the case. The walls of the church are supported by strong retaining walls, preserved to a considerable height. Although in the opinion of the excavators these walls were meant to strengthen...
the structure and turn it into a stronghold, such walls also support other buildings in the town. The church complex comprises the church proper, a chapel, a baptistery, a mortuary chapel, and a monastery. The church was entered from a large open square to the south of the atrium, where there is a small ekdoxa supported by three heavy piers. Above the ekdoxa a passage led from the monastery to the church, the only link between them. The atrium (26 by 19 m) was larger than the church proper. It was entered through a single gate in the southern wall. Along three of its walls (west, north, and south) were rooms whose roofs were supported by arches. In the western part of the atrium there is a large cistern. In the middle of the atrium the stump of a column is enclosed in a rectangular frame. This was probably a memorial to a stylobate who lived there and was later sacrificed and venerated in this church, which became a center of pilgrimage. This would account for the unusually large atrium—which has parallels only in the above-mentioned church at Rehovot in the Negev and the East Church at Elusa—and for the large paved square in front of the church, south of the atrium.

Originally the church was probably entered directly from the atrium, the eastern colonnade of which forms a kind of narthex. Later, the columns were surrounded with wide pilasters, thus forming a true narthex. These enamass lead into the church from the narthex. The hall (20 by 13 m) is divided into nave and two aisles by two rows of six columns each, the western columns being attached to the doorposts of the central entrance. In the opinion of the

Isometric reconstruction of the North Church.
Sobates: Greek oinochoe.

Excavations and subsequent researches, the church was a triapsidal basilica. 

In a study of the typology and chronology of the churches in the central Negev published in 1974, this writer proposed two phases in the history of the North Church; a monopodial phase in the second half of the fourth century and a triapsidal phase in the first half of the sixth century. This had been reported by Rosenholtz-Hegedhottom, and again in 1985. Morgan's excavations in the sanctuary proved the existence of the two phases. He excavated four aisles, the area behind the apses, the lateral apses, and the area around the bema. These excavations revealed that in the early phase a passage behind the central apse connected the lateral rectangular rooms. Each of these rooms had been roofed by a pair of lintels. The floor of the two rooms, made of limestone slabs, was found intact. In the second phase, the side rooms were blocked by small apses. The space between the eastern wall and the three apses was filled with building stones, supporting the apses. 

A note of Justinian (527–565) found in the fill attests to the time of this reconstruction. The excavations in the later apses produced two floors; a later one made of slabs of gray marble and the original floor mentioned above. The same two phases were also observed in the bema. In the early phase, the bema extended one intercolumniation less than in the later phase. The early limestone floor was also diffused here. Found in the fill between the early and late floors were architectural fragments and broken cult implements from the early building. These seem to have been ritually deposited. In the plaster base of the early floor and in the fill between the two floors, coins from the middle of the fourth century were found. The excavations believe that these colors date the construction of the early church. Small niches in the middle of the walls of the small lateral apses apparently housed reliquaries. The church's first excavations distinguished two stages of ornamentation. Initially, the walls were plastered and covered with paintings. Later, they were faced with marble slabs up to half of their height, and the entire floor was paved with marble. A door in the southern side leads to a chapel paved with mosaics laid in geometric patterns. A lengthy dedicatory inscription was also laid in the mosaics. A door in the northern wall of the chapel leads into the baptistery. The baptismal font is cut out of a monolith. The western half of the baptismal chapel was a small hypostyle, or ocellus, area occupied by a mosaic, in which members of the local clergy were interred from 612 to 679 CE. The only layman was the seven-year-old son of a vicar. He was buried in 612 CE.

South of the church lies a large complex of buildings, consisting of numerous courtyards and dozens of rooms. The excavators believed this complex was a monastery, but others considered it an area of workshops. 

A large number of inscriptions was found in the church complex, most of them on gravestones. Laymen were buried in the atrium of the church from 582 to 646 CE. Of great interest is a stone containing a litany that mentions the names Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon, and Job, each praised for his most characteristic virtue. 

Winepresses. In the buildings adjoining the North Church and at two other locations in the town the Colt expedition discovered installations they identified as winepresses and described as oinochoa. Each installation was in two parts. In the center of a square floor paved with limestone slabs and surrounded by a low wall was the mouth of a channel. The channel ran beneath the floor to the second part of the installation, situated at a lower level. This was a large, round, rock-cut tank, with a small depression in the bottom. The tank was completely covered with waterproof plaster. Comparison with similar installations at Obeda indicates that these buildings were winepresses. The grape-crushing chamber was connected to the main part and the juice ran into the channel and then into the tank, where the skins settled in the tank's depression. There was a difference between the winepress in the northern monastery and the winepresses beyond the limits of the town. The latter have small cells around the treading platform, similar to those around winepresses at Obeda and Blusa. No such cells are found in the monastery's winepresses. The other winepresses may have been used by private farmers, who stored baskets of grapes in the cells; the monks, who worked in common, would have had no need for such storage facilities.
14. Agriculture

Geographically, the Negev is a region on its own, with special climatic conditions. The central part of the Negev belongs to the "deserts belt" (the Arabian-Sahara belt), where, due to its scarcity, rain is not measured according to annual quantities. Though the central Negev is typologically part of this belt, it differs from it, possessing some special characteristic.

While the main features of these big deserts are the huge sand dunes, they exist only in the northern part of the central Negev. The rest is a rocky plateau, cut by riverbeds and wide valleys. Unlike the other deserts, the Negev has an annual meager quantity of 100 mm of rain. This small amount, normally not sufficient for agriculture, made it possible for the early inhabitants of the Negev to create miracles in the desert. Lack of scientific research makes it difficult to precisely date the various agricultural elements, but it is clear that the large-scale agriculture was developed by the Nabataeans. They had to produce enough food not just for self-consumption but also for the huge incense caravans crossing the country several times a year.

The main challenge was not so much collecting rainwater as using it for the irrigation of the fields, without loosing a drop. Every farm had to collect rainwater from catchment areas 20 to 30 times larger than the cultivated fields. The results can still be seen all over the Negev.

Irrigation and cultivation were done using several methods:

Channeling - different kinds of channels were dug or built in the Negev, all with the one objective of carrying the water to its destination in the field. Scientists recorded nine different kinds of channels, sorted by function or construction methods. Some were using dams to divert the stream; others collected water from hill slopes. All of them finally brought the water to the cultivated areas. Some channels were simple and shallow, dug in the ground. The most "elaborate" ones were built of cut stones and mortar.

Dams - the Negev farmers adopted the dam system and adapted it to their needs and conditions. The dams are small, and a 4.0 m. wide, 3.0 m. high, 120.0 m. long dam is considered a large one in the Negev. On the other hand, there are hundreds of thousands of them almost in every valley and creek. The dams serve different functions. The large ones are "diverting dams", and their function is to divert streams in the bigger valleys into conduits or channels. "Slowing dams" have to slow strong streams before they reach the fields, and to stop hard particles before the water gets into the reservoirs. They were also used to protect channels. These dams are small, resembling agricultural terracing. By building the dams in the valleys, the ancient farmers also managed to accumulate soil behind the built wall, thus creating fertile and well irrigated fields.
"Piling" - a unique and somehow enigmatic feature, which exists only in the Negev. The Beduins call them, "tuleilat el anab", meaning, "vine piles". Not all scientists agree that these small stone piles had anything to do with growing vines (though wine production was popular in the region). The size of the piles, made of simple fieldstones, is 1.5 m. diameter at their base, and they are about 0.8 m. high. They have the shape of truncated cones. The piles come in large groups, sometimes several thousands in a field. They are set in lines and have very shallow channels in between them. All theories associate them with agriculture, but whether they served any role in collecting water, soil, or growing vines is still to be researched.

Collecting water - various methods were used to collect and store water in the Negev: cisterns dug in bedrock, reservoirs created by dams, and built cisterns. Such a built cistern can be found next to Nekarot fortress. It is made of ashlars with mortar and arches carrying stone slabs for roofing. It was built at the mouth of a small creek, collecting all the rainwater and letting the overflow irrigate the nearby fields.

Evidence to the ingenuity of the early farmers is scattered all over the central Negev. It is unique and cannot be compared with any finds anywhere else. The decline of the whole region after the 7th century brought an end to this wonderful human interaction with the environment. Only the modern resettlement of the Negev and the attempts of Israeli farmers restore the hope that humans can live and settle in the desert without destroying its special character and natural values. The ancient cultural values are appreciated and protected.
Remains of Ancient Agriculture
15. General Description of Geology and Landscape

The ancient trade caravans searched for optimal paths leading from the Rift Valley to the ports of the Mediterranean, an aerial distance of about 160 km. The Dead Sea Rift Valley, opposite Moa, has an altitude of about 0 meters above sea level, whereas the rugged rocky desert landscape of the Negev, which had to be crossed, rises to about 780 meters. The ancient caravan leaders were clearly familiar with this environment, and managed to find the optimal paths. The ancient road was in use since the Bronze Age. During the Nabataean, and especially the Roman and Byzantine periods, road services were established. When those ceased to operate, the road continued to be in service, the nature of the transported goods changing with time.

Tourists following the ancient Incense and Spice Road gain a unique insight into the colourful rocky desert as they travel along a spectacular cross section through the following geological units, features of nature, and parade of landscapes:

**The Rift Valley:**

The Rift Valley is a narrow strip of the continent that subsided between the crusty plateaus of Jordan-Arabia in the east and the Negev-Sinai in the west. The mountains that border the deep Rift Valley from the east and the west dominate the scenery. Opposite Moa the Rift Valley is 10 km wide and its floor has an altitude of about 0 meter, i.e. around sea level. Information gathered from exploration drill holes and geophysical measurements reveals that the geologically recent filling sediments are over 6 km deep, providing a vivid insight into the grand conglomerates of the Neogene Hazeva formation.

**Moa-Kasra-Nahal Nekarot Junction:**

The Moa trade route installations are located near a spring, which forms the centre of a small oasis. The road up to the canyon of Nahal Nekarot passes through a slightly bisected Senonian landscape of dark weathering-resistant flint beds, underlain by white chalk, creating a unique landscape of dark table mountains with white flanks.

**Nahal Nekarot-Ein Saharonim Canyon:**

The ancient trade route abruptly enters the dramatic landscape of the Nahal Nekarot steep canyon, cut into Cretaceous limestone strata and separated by thin marl beds. This geomorphologically ancient riverbed has been deepened as the base of erosion in the Rift Valley gradually subsided. The Nekarot gorge is far too large to have been formed under the present conditions of climate and landscape relief. It was the ancient channel through which the materials that eroded in the Makhtesh Ramon (to be seen in the following segment of the route) were transported into the Rift Valley. Rocks found in the Nekarot canyon include: limestone containing marine fossils, and marl.
Through Makhtesh Ramon to the Makhmal Ascent:

The ancient route left the Nekarot gorge, entered Makhtesh Ramon, and, via the short Palms Ascent, reached the small oasis of Ein Saharonim, and the nearby ancient station of Hannoth Saharonim. Facing the entrance to Makhtesh Ramon one can observe the deeply inclined rock strata, revealing the structure of a monocline. From the little hill of Hannoth Saharonim the magnificent view of the vast Makhtesh is visible.

The international geological dictionaries define a makhtesh (plural- makhteshim) as a valley enclosed within deep walls, drained by a single river, eroded at the crest of a monocline. Reference is made to the five makhteshim of the Israeli Negev.

Features that can be observed along the route crossing Makhtesh Ramon include: the hydrology of Ein Saharonim; rock formations exposed along the ancient trade route; sandstone; dykes filled by kaolin; the strata exposed at Har Ardon; the 120 million years old volcano of Giva’t Ga’ash; as well as limestone and montmorillonite in the Makhmal Ascent.

Avdat Plateau: ancient agriculture, city of Avdat and Ein Avdat Oasis:

The route, passing through Senonian flint beds, goes into the Eocene limestone plateau that reaches the ruins of Avdat. Along the way one can observe lichens growing on flint and limestone, and the unique phenomenon of desert pavement.

The architecture of the city of Avdat is geologically controlled. The acropolis, with its massive buildings, is constructed on hard limestone prevailing at the hilltop, whereas beneath lies the spectacular caves city carved into soft chalk.

Recent research discovered exposures of seismic damage patterns, which can be seen in the Avdat ruins, revealing that devastating earthquakes occurred in the fourth and seventh centuries. Their epic centers are located within the Negev Highland, some tens of kilometers to the southwest.

At the foot of Avdat there are remains of a Roman-Byzantine bathhouse, and nearby there is an ancient well, which discloses the ancient engineers’ profound understanding of regional hydrology. The well, with a diameter of about 3 meters, is nearly 60 meters deep. This special construction was evidently planned following an accurate interpretation of the rock structure that forms the 3 km northward Ein Avdat spring.

On the top of the plateau, and at the foot of the city ruins, one can see a large number of closed polygonal enclosures, presumed to have served as camel enclosures.

Ruins of 3000 years desert agriculture, in the form of riverbeds filled with loess, can be seen around Avdat and the entire central Negev.
The route continues northward, passing a spectacular observation point looking into
the steep gorge of Nahal Avdat, exposing a group of small springs that turn the
narrow canyon into a hidden picturesque oasis. Bor Havarim, a group of ancient
underground cisterns, mentioned by ancient historians when referring to hidden water
resources, is located nearby.
3b. History and Development

From the 3rd century B.C. until the second century B.C. the Nabataeans transported frankincense across the big desert, along 1800 km of rough, dry areas, to the Mediterranean coasts. The last and most critical part of their route crossed the Negev.

A combination of factors brought upon the flourishing of the frankincense trade and of the routes that served it:

- The Hellenistic world, and the Roman world which succeeded it, were great consumers of luxury goods.

- The source of the frankincense was beyond the big Arabian Desert, in the southern Arabian Peninsula, a region that was totally inaccessible to the people of the Roman and Hellenistic civilizations.

- The Nabataeans lived on the border of the “populated world”, i.e. the Hellenistic-Roman world. They were desert people, familiar with the desert ways, its life and its secrets. Thus, they were the only ones who could serve as mediators and possess the monopoly over the import of frankincense from the southern Arabian Peninsula to the “populated world”.

The geographic-strategic location of the Nabataeans at that time was relatively new. Following the destruction of the Land of Judaea by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., Judea was deserted. The Edomites, who lived east of the Dead Sea and the Arava, abandoned their country and invaded the Judean plain, which was richer and more fertile than their original land. When the Land of Edom became unpopulated the Nabataeans, pastoral nomads who inhabited the adjacent desert, moved in.

The Land of Edom was located on the edge of the “populated world” and thus the inhabitants of Eretz Israel discovered the ability of their neighbours, the Nabataeans, to bridge over the impassable desert and bring the desired incense to the Mediterranean.

The caravan route passed from southern Arabia, Yemen and Oman of today, through the western part of the Arabian Peninsula (near Mecca and Medina), crossed the southern part of Jordan, reached the Arava and passed across the Negev to the Mediterranean coasts. The main port used to import incense to the Mediterranean countries was the Gaza port.

The Nabataeans made a lot of money trading incense. The incense trade was a crucial factor in the global economy of the time. For the Romans it meant a heavy load on their general expenses. They consistently tried to take over this trade and the Nabataeans’ fear of these attempts continued throughout their period of independence.

When moving along the caravan route, from southern Arabia to the Arava, the Nabataeans passed through territories which they occupied, or through settlements of friendly populations. According to the Roman historian Pelenius, the Nabataeans paid for passage, security and road services, along the route.
3c. Form and date of most recent records of property

All plans and nomination documents, boundaries, land use maps and survey maps are from the last two years (2000-2001), and are updated regularly, and as needed. These records are in GIS form.

Photographs, slides and detailed plans of archaeological remains can be found at the Antiquities Authority – in the photo-archives, scientific archive, survey department and conservations department. Some of them are recent (2000-2001); others are from the time when excavations and survey were done.

Development and presentation plans are from the mid 1990, the Shivta plans are from 2001. They are on discs and hard copies.

3d. See in the description

3e. Policies and programs related to the presentation and promotion of the property:

As a policy, once the sites have been developed they are opened to the public. There is a visitors’ centre in Avdat, which provides information through display and short films. Explanatory brochures are available in several sites. Avdat and Mamshit have a site presentation program, metal models on site, and signage. In order to avoid any kind of new intrusion, the open area parts of the route have no modern facilities, not even benches or signs. The promotion of the sites is done as part of the general promotion campaign of the National and Nature Reserves Authority.
4. MANAGEMENT
The management and management plan – general issues:

This nomination is long and diverse, possessing varied cultural heritage features. Its management system and plan are divided into two areas:

- The “Incense Route Park”

- Ancient towns along the route, or towns that had developed as part of the route’s historic role and context.

The park includes fortresses, road segments, water installations, and remains of worship sites and agricultural plants.

Though the four nominated towns are separate units, they have in common the fact that they are on the route itself or part of its historic, cultural and social context. They participated in the activities that took place on the route and shared the economic prosperity brought to the region by the incense trade.

4a. Ownership

The nominated area is state owned.

4b. Legal Status

All cultural heritage elements in the nominated area are strictly protected by national nominations and legislation.

The following relevant laws, or their abstracts, are attached:
“Israel Antiquities Law 1978”
“Antiquities Authority Law 1989”
Abstract from the “National Parks, Nature Reserves and National Sites Law”.

The first two laws legally protect man-made remains, which were made before the year 1700 A.C. They also define the roles and structure of “The Antiquities Authority”. All elements in this submitted nomination are earlier than 1700 A.C., and therefore protected by this legislation.

The third law defines National Parks and Nature Reserves and the process of their designation. It also defines the role and structure of “The National Parks and Nature Reserves Protection Authority”. This is the organization responsible for nominating sites and managing them. All parts of the submitted nomination are within designated National Parks or Nature Reserves.
THE NEGEV NATURE RESERVES AND NATIONAL PARKS
National Parks, Nature Reserves, Memorial Sites

Sites Law, 1992 (Summary)

A National Parks, Nature Reserves and National Sites Council ("The Council"), nominated by the Minister of the Environment, is established by this Law to advise the Ministers of the Interior and Agriculture as to any matter relating to the implementation of this Law.

National Parks

* National parks are areas meant for "the public enjoyment of nature or for the preservation of areas of historic, archeological, or architectural importance."

* The Minister of the Interior, after consulting with the Minister of the Environment, may declare an area to be a national park after the following conditions have been met:

  -- All local authorities in whose jurisdiction the park will be located must be granted an opportunity to provide input as to the nature and use of the park.

  -- If the area of the park includes a holy place or an historical site, the Minister of the Interior must comply with the requirements of the Minister of Religious Affairs or the Minister of Education and Culture, to ensure the protection of the holy or historical site, respectively.

  -- If the area of the park is a nature reserve, the Minister of the Interior must consult with the Minister of Agriculture.

  -- If the area of the park includes a military area, or is nearby a military area, the Minister of the Interior must meet the requirements of the Minister of Defense. Prohibitions and regulations imposed under this law do not apply to the Israeli Army in a military area.

An area designated as a national park may not be changed, or its designation as such revoked, unless the Interior Minister cancels his declaration. No building work or other activity will be permitted unless it has been approved by the National Parks Authority. The Minister may not cancel the declaration of a national park without the approval of the Minister of the Environment, The Council, the local authority in which the park is located, and the Interior and Environmental Committees of the Knesset.
* A National Parks Authority, appointed by the Minister of the Environment, will manage the national parks and report to the Minister on matters relating to national parks. The Authority will be composed of "government officials, local officials, members of scientific organizations and members of the public concerned with improvement and preservation of the Israeli landscape, development of vacation and natural sites, and the preservation of areas of historical and national importance."

Nature Reserves

* Following consultation with the Minister of the Agriculture, the Minister of the Interior may declare an area of scientific or educational interest to be a nature reserve. A nature reserve is "an area in which animals, plants, inanimate objects, soil, caves, water and landscape are protected from changes in their appearance, biological makeup, and natural development."

* The Minister of the Agriculture shall appoint a Nature Reserves Authority to manage the affairs of nature reserves. The eleven member authority is to be made up of government officials, members of scientific and public bodies, and representatives of the public. Among the responsibilities of the Nature Reserves Authority are "to initiate and plan the establishment of nature reserves, to manage and develop the reserves and to protect natural assets..."

* Following consultation with the Israel Academy of Science, the Minister of Agriculture shall appoint a professional committee of zoologists, botanists, geographers, ecologists, and planners to advise the Nature Reserves Authority.

* The Nature Reserves Authority may set rules for the use of nature reserves, following consultation with the local authority in whose jurisdiction the reserve lies, and with the permission of the Minister of Agriculture.

Protected Natural Assets

* A "protected natural asset," as defined by this Law, means "any thing or class of things in nature, whether animal, vegetable or mineral, whose preservation, in the opinion of the Minister of Agriculture is of value." The Minister of Agriculture may declare, after consultation with The Council, any natural asset to be a protected natural asset throughout Israel or any specific part of it.

* A person may not damage, destroy, pick, uproot, poison or otherwise change a protected natural asset except with the permission of the Director of the Nature Reserves Authority.
* Selling protected natural assets is prohibited except with the permission of the Nature Reserves Authority. A person may not own a protected natural asset unless he receives permission from the Nature Reserves Authority.

* The Minister of Agriculture may promulgate regulations to protect natural assets from damage.

National Sites and Memorial Sites

* The Minister of the Interior, following consultation with The Council, may declare a place to be a "national site." As is the case with national parks, the Minister must also consult with those in whose jurisdiction the site lies. National sites are protected from damage or alteration. The Minister of the Environment may promulgate regulations delineating the means of preservation and protection of a national site. When a national site carries special local importance, the Minister of the Environment may give the local authority the authority to manage the site.

* A "Memorial Sites Council" will be appointed by the Government upon the recommendation of the Ministers of Defense, Labor, and the Interior. The Council is authorized to advise the Ministers of the Interior and Defense as to all issues concerning memorial sites. The Minister of the Interior, following consultation with the local authority and the Memorial Sites Council, may declare an area a memorial site. Upkeep and maintenance of memorial sites is the responsibility of the local authority in whose jurisdiction the site lies. The Minister of the Interior, after consulting with the Minister of Defense, is authorized to promulgate regulations concerning memorial sites.

Bylaws and Regulations. The Ministers of the Environment, the Interior, Agriculture and Defense may promulgate regulations as to the implementation of this law, each according to his area of authority.

A protected wild animal, as defined by this Law, is any wild animal not designated by the Minister of Agriculture as a "game animal" or a "pest". Hunting protected animals is prohibited. The Minister of Agriculture is charged with the implementation of the Law, and is authorized to make regulations as to "the protection and preservation of wild animals, the encouragement or prevention of their propagation, and their rescue from fires or other disasters of nature". He may also regulate inter alia, the procedure for the destruction of pests, taxidermy, and the use of zoos and farms for the keeping and raising of wild animals.

Hunting of Game.
A hunting license is required to hunt game. The Minister of Agriculture may grant special hunting permits "for scientific purposes, for the prevention of damage to agriculture or for the prevention of infectious diseases in man or animals". He may further restrict hunting of a certain kind of animal or prohibit hunting within a particular area or during a particular period of time.

A person may not hunt in the vicinity of houses, camps, public gardens, or cemeteries.

Certain methods of hunting, including the use of poisons, drugs, traps, nets, glue and explosives, are prohibited. Pursuit in a motor vehicle is forbidden.

Trading in Wild Animals. A license is required to buy or sell wild animals.

Offenses.

A person who does not have a license or a permit to hunt is presumed to be guilty of an offense according to this Law if he has game or protected wild animals in his possession.

Penalties for hunting or stalking a wild animal in contravention of this Law or its regulations include fine or imprisonment, and the confiscation by the Treasury of hunting implements used in the offense.
(No. 27)

ANTiquities LAW, 5738—1978 *

Chapter One: Interpretation

1. In this Law —

"antiquity" means —

(1) any object, whether detached or fixed, which was made by
man before the year 1700 of the general era, and includes
anything subsequently added thereto which forms an integral
part thereof;

(2) any object referred to in paragraph (1) which was made
by man in or after the year 1700 of the general era, which
is of historical value, and which the Minister has declared to
be an antiquity;

(3) zoological or botanical remains from before the year 1300
of the general era;

"antiquity site" means an area which contains antiquities and
in respect of which the Director has made a declaration
under section 23 (a);

"land" includes any part of any sea, lake, river or other water
and the bottom thereof;

"excavation" or "digging" includes a search for antiquities
and a trial digging;

"collection" means an assemblage of antiquities, other than
antiquities in the possession of a dealer in antiquities as trading
stock;

"collector" means a person who collects antiquities otherwise
than for the purpose of trading therein;

* Passed by the Knesset on the 23rd Shevat, 5738 (31st January, 1978)
and published in Sefer Ha-Chukkim No. 885 of the 3rd Adar Alef, 5738
(10th February, 1978), p. 76; the Bill and an Explanatory Note were
published in HaTzed'ot Chok No. 1250 of 5736, p. 314.
“museum” means any permanent exhibition of antiquities open to the public and any institution keeping a collection and exhibiting it for purposes of research, education or entertainment;

“the Department” means the Department of Antiquities and Museums of the Ministry of Education and Culture;

“the Council” means the Archaeological Council;

“the Director” means the Director of the Department;

“the Minister” means the Minister of Education and Culture.

Chapter Two: State Ownership of Antiquities

2. (a) Where an antiquity is discovered or found in Israel after the coming into force of this Law, it and the area in which it is discovered or found and which is required for its preservation, shall within boundaries fixed by the Director become the property of the State.

(b) A person who alleges that any antiquity was discovered or found before the coming into force of this Law shall bear the onus of proof.

3. A person who discovers or finds an antiquity otherwise than in an excavation under a licence pursuant to this Law shall notify the Director within fifteen days of the discovery or find.

4. The Director may in writing request a person in possession of an antiquity referred to in section 2(a) to deliver it up to him, and he may reward the deliverer if he considers that the circumstances justify his doing so.

5. The Director may in writing request any person in possession of an antiquity to give it to him for the purpose of inspection or any other purpose for a period not exceeding ninety days.

6. (a) Where a person carrying out any works on land, whether his own land or the land of another, discovers an antiquity thereon, he shall notify the Director as provided in section 3 and shall discontinue the works until the expiration of fifteen days from
the date of delivery of the notification unless during that period he receives permission from the Director to continue the work.

(b) Within fifteen days from the date of delivery of notification as aforesaid, the Director may notify the owner and the occupier of the land, in writing, of the conditions for continuation of the work or may direct its permanent discontinuance.

7. (a) A person affected by a notification of the Director under Compensation section 6 (b) shall be entitled to compensation for the damage caused to him.

(b) A demand for compensation shall be submitted to the Director in the manner and at the time prescribed by regulations.

(c) Where the demand of the person affected is not accepted, wholly or in part, the Court shall decide.

8. The Director may waive State ownership of an antiquity in Waiver of writing, and upon his doing so the antiquity shall cease to be the property of the State.

Chapter Three: Excavations

9. (a) No person shall dig on any land, or otherwise search, for antiquities, including the use of a metal detector, or gather antiquities, unless he has obtained a licence to do so from the Director (hereinafter referred to as an “excavation licence”) and in accordance with the conditions of the licence.

(b) When deciding upon an application for an excavation licence, the Director shall consult with the Council and shall make the scientific and financial ability of the applicant his prime consideration.

(c) An excavation licence shall define the area in which digging is permitted.

(d) The issue of an excavation licence shall not by itself confer on its holder the right of entry to land in another’s domain.

10. (a) No person shall enter any land for which an excavation Right of entry licence has been issued unless he is the occupier thereof or has been authorised on behalf of the occupier and subject to the consent of the holder of the licence.

(d) During the excavation, no person, other than the Director or a person empowered by him, shall photograph, paint, draw or
otherwise depict the excavation or the antiquities discovered in it, save with the permission of the holder of the licence.

11. (a) The holder of an excavation licence shall, both during the excavation and thereafter, until the expiration of the period stipulated in the licence, take all measures required —

(1) to ensure the well-being of workers and visitors at the place of the excavation and the fencing off of such place;

(2) to protect, and ensure the preservation of, the place of the excavation and the antiquities discovered thereat;

(3) to prevent all damage or nuisance to neighbouring property.

(b) Where the holder of a licence does not comply with the provisions of subsection (a), the Director may, without prejudice to the provisions of section 13, after warning the holder of the licence in writing, take the required measures in his stead and collect from him the expenses involved.

12. (a) At the dates prescribed by the Director, but not less than once a year from the date of commencement of the excavation, the holder of an excavation licence shall deliver to the Director in writing —

(1) a report as detailed as possible of the excavation, including sketches, plans and photographs of the work carried out;

(2) particulars of the antiquities discovered in the excavation, including photographs and other pictures.

(b) The holder of a licence shall have an exclusive right of publication in respect of the excavation for ten years from the termination thereof. Publication in contravention of this subsection shall be a civil wrong under the Civil Wrongs Ordinance (New Version) ¹).

(c) Within five years from the date of termination of the excavation, the holder of the licence shall bring out an appropriate scientific publication concerning the findings and results of the excavation and shall deliver two copies of the same to the Director; he shall also deliver to the Director two copies of every other publication brought out by him concerning the findings and results of the excavation.

13. Where the holder of an excavation licence infringes any of the provisions of this Law or the regulations made thereunder or any of the conditions of the licence, the Director may revoke licence, or suspend the licence or attach further conditions thereto; and where he infringes the provision of section 12 (c), the Director may refrain from granting him another excavation licence until he complies with the said provision.

14. The Director may, after consultation with the Council, enter into an agreement with the holder of an excavation licence concerning a waiver of the rights of the State in antiquities discovered in the excavation and concerning the apportionment of such antiquities between the State and the holder of the licence.

Chapter Four: Dealing in and Export of Antiquities

15. A person may only deal in antiquities if he is in possession of a licence therefrom from the Director and in accordance with the conditions of the licence, which shall be prescribed by regulations.

16. (a) A licence to deal in antiquities shall indicate the place of business. It shall only be valid for that place and shall be displayed there in a conspicuous position.

(b) A person shall not exhibit a licence which has expired.

17. A dealer in antiquities shall keep an inventory in the manner prescribed by regulations,

18. (a) The Director may revoke a licence to deal in antiquities permanently or suspend it for a period prescribed by him if the holder is convicted of an offence under this Law or the regulations made thereunder.

(b) A dealer whose licence has been revoked or suspended shall be treated as a collector.

19. (a) The Director may in writing notify the owner or possessor of an antiquity that the antiquity is of national value.

(b) Within three months of notification under subsection (a), the Director may request that the antiquity be sold to the State.

(c) (i) Where a person wishes to sell or otherwise transfer an antiquity of national value, he shall give advance notice to the Director.
(2) Within three months of receipt of notice under paragraph (1), the Director may request that the antiquity be sold to the State. If the Director does not so request, the owner of the antiquity may sell or otherwise transfer it after he or the possessor thereof has, in writing, communicated to the Director the name and address of the purchaser or transferee.

(d) Where the antiquity is an integral part of a group of antiquities, the Director may only request as provided in subsection (b) or (c) in respect of the group as a whole.

(e) Where the Director and the owner or possessor of the antiquity do not reach agreement as to the consideration, the court shall decide the matter.

20. Where a dealer in antiquities offers any article for sale as an antiquity, his plea that he did not know that the article was not an antiquity shall not be heard.

21. (a) A person shall not sell or display for sale a replica or imitation of an antiquity without indicating therein, in the manner prescribed by regulations, that it is not a genuine antiquity.

(b) A person shall not sell an antiquity consisting of parts of different antiquities — whether with or without supplements or additions — without indicating the composite character in the manner prescribed by regulations.

22. (a) A person shall not take out of Israel an antiquity of national value save with the written approval of the Minister.

(b) A person shall not take out of Israel any other antiquity save with the written approval of the Director.

Chapter Five: Collectors of Antiquities

23. A collector shall communicate to the Director, at his request, particulars prescribed by regulations in consultation with the Committee on Education and Culture of the Knesset concerning antiquities in his possession and shall permit the Director or any other person empowered by him in writing to make a photograph or sketch or a cast, print or other reproduction thereof.
24. (a) The Director or a person empowered by him may notify Antiquity of a collector that an antiquity in his possession is of particular scientific importance (any such antiquity hereinafter referred to as a "special antiquity").

(b) The Director or a person empowered by him shall keep a record of special antiquities and of the particulars, photographs and sketches obtained or made under section 23 which shall be open to inspection by the public as he shall prescribe.

25. (a) Where a collector wishes to sell or otherwise transfer a special antiquity, he shall give advance notice to the Director.

(b) Within twenty-one days of receiving the notice, the Director may request that the antiquity be sold to the State. Where the antiquity is an integral part of a group of antiquities, the Director may only request as aforesaid in respect of the group as a whole.

(c) Where the Director and the collector do not reach agreement as to the consideration, the court shall decide the matter.

Chapter Six: Museums

26. (a) Where the owner or director of a museum wishes to remove an antiquity which is in the museum's collections or to dispose of one of the museum's collections, he shall give advance notice to the Director.

(b) Within twenty-one days of receiving the notice, the Director may request that the antiquity or collection be sold or transferred to the State, as the case may be.

(c) Where the Director and the owner or director of the museum do not reach agreement as to the consideration to be paid for the antiquity or collection, the court shall decide the matter.

27. The provision of section 23 shall apply to the owner or director of a museum in respect of the antiquities in the museum and in its collection.

Chapter Seven: Antiquity Sites

28. (a) The Director may declare a particular place to be an Antiquity site. The declaration shall be published in Reshumoi.

(b) Where the Director declares as aforesaid, a note to such effect shall be entered in the Land Register and notice shall be given to the owner and the occupier of the place, if their identity...
or addresses are known, and to the District Planning and Building Commission.

29. (a) A person shall not carry out, or allow to be carried out, any of the following on an antiquity site, save with the written approval of the Director and in accordance with the conditions thereof:

1. building, paving, the erection of installations, quarrying, mining, drilling, flooding, the clearing away of stones, ploughing, planting, or interment;
2. the dumping of earth, manure, waste or refuse, including the dumping thereof on adjoining property;
3. any alteration, repair or addition to an antiquity located on the site;
4. the dismantling of an antiquity, the removal of part thereof or the shifting thereof;
5. writing, carving or painting;
6. the erection of buildings or walls on adjoining property;
7. any other operation designated by the Director in respect of a particular site.

(b) Notice of the designation of an operation under paragraph (7) of subsection (a) shall be published in Reshumot.

(c) Where an antiquity site is used for religious requirements or devoted to a religious purpose, the Director shall not approve digging or any of the operations enumerated in subsection (a) save with the approval of a Committee of Ministers consisting of the Minister as chairman, the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Minister of Justice.

30. The provisions of this Law shall not derogate from the requirement of a permit under the Planning and Building Law, 5725 — 1965 1).

31. A person who has carried out one of the operations specified in section 29 without approval or in contravention of the conditions of the approval, shall take action, in accordance with the directions of the Director, to restore the antiquity site or the antiquities situated thereon to its or their former condition; but the Director may, after giving the person written notice, himself take all the steps required for that purpose and recover from him the expenses incurred.

1) Sefer Ha-Chukkim of 5725, p. 307; LS1 vol. XIX, p. 330.
Chapter Eight: Expropriation

32 (a) The Minister may expropriate—

(1) an antiquity site the expropriation of which is, in his opinion, required for purposes of conservation and research;

(2) any land the expropriation of which is, in his opinion, required in order to enable digging thereon.

(b) Subsection (a) shall not apply to an antiquity site used for religious requirements or devoted to a religious purpose and owned by a religious institution:

Provided that a Committee of Ministers consisting of the Minister, the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Foreign Affairs may, with the approval of the Committee on Education and Culture of the Knesset, make it applicable thereto with or without restrictions.

33. Expropriation shall be in accordance with the Land (Acquisition for Public Purposes) Ordinance, 1943 1), and for this purpose the Minister shall, mutatis mutandis, have all the powers and functions of the Government under that Ordinance.

Chapter Nine: Archaeological Council and Objection Committee

34. (a) The Minister shall appoint an Archaeological Council and shall by regulations prescribe its composition and period of tenure and procedure for its deliberations and work.

(b) The Council shall advise the Minister and the Director on matters of archaeology and antiquities they may bring before it and shall carry out the functions assigned to it by this Law.

(c) The Council may delegate powers to committees from among its members.

35. There shall be established by the side of the Council an Objection Committee of three members, two of them appointed by the Council otherwise than from among its members and one a Judge, or person qualified to be a Judge, appointed by the Minister of Justice to be chairman of the Committee.

36. (a) A person who considers himself aggrieved by any of the following decisions of the Director may object thereto before the Objection Committee, but without the filing of objection voiding the decision:

(1) the fixing of the boundaries of an area referred to in section 2(a);
(2) a second or subsequent request for delivery of an antiquity under section 5;
(3) a refusal to grant, the revocation or suspension of, or the attachment of conditions to, an excavation licence;
(4) a refusal to grant, or the revocation or suspension of, a licence to deal in antiquities;
(5) a refusal to grant a permit under section 22(b);
(6) notification that a particular antiquity is of national value;
(7) notification to a collector that an antiquity in his possession is a special antiquity;
(8) notification that a particular antiquity is or is not an integral part of a group of antiquities;
(9) refusal to grant approval under section 23.

(b) In an objection proceeding, the Objection Committee may give any decision the Director is competent to give under this Law.

(c) An Objection Committee shall have all the powers vested in a committee of inquiry within the meaning of the Commissions of Inquiry Law, 5729 — 1969.

Chapter Ten: Offences and Penalties

37. (a) A person who wilfully injures or, in any manner, wilfully defaces any antiquity or antiquity site or contravenes any of the provisions of section 9 (a) is liable to imprisonment for a term of three years or a fine of 150,000 pounds.

(b) A person who contravenes any of the provisions of section 6 is liable to imprisonment for a term of two years or a fine of 150,000 pounds.

(c) A person who contravenes any of the provisions of sections 3, 15, 19(b), 21 or 29 is liable to imprisonment for a term of two years or a fine of 100,000 pounds.

1) Sefer Ha-Chukkim of 5729, p. 28; I.S.I. vol. XXIII, p. 12
(d) A person who contravenes any of the provisions of section 11 (a) is liable to imprisonment for a term of one year or a fine of 30,000 pounds.

(e) A person who contravenes any other provision of this Law or the regulations thereunder is liable to imprisonment for a term of six months or a fine of 30,000 pounds.

38. If a person is found on an antiquity site with digging implements in his possession or nearby with which it must be supposed digging has recently been done on that site or is found with a metal detector in his possession or nearby, he shall, unless he proves otherwise, be presumed to have intended to discover antiquities.

Chapter Eleven: Miscellaneous

39. A certificate by the Director that some particular land contains antiquities or that some object is an antiquity shall be prima facie evidence thereof.

40. The Director or a person empowered by him in that behalf may in writing at any reasonable time enter upon any land to examine whether the provisions of this Law or the regulations made or conditions of any certificate issued thereunder have been complied with thereon or to examine any antiquity discovered or found thereon and to make a sketch or photograph or a cast, print or other reproduction thereof.

41. Subject to any regulation, the Director may, by notice in Restumort, delegate any of his powers under this Law, other than his powers under sections 8, 13 and 14.

42. (a) In this section, "controlled place" means —

(1) land in the possession of the Department;

(2) an antiquity site.

(b) A police officer or a person authorised in that behalf by the Director in writing may remove from a controlled place any person who contravenes therein any of the provisions of this Law or the regulations thereunder.

(c) The Minister may by regulations enact provisions as to visits to controlled places and the behaviour of visitors therein, fees for admission thereto, the protection thereof and the protection of the antiquities, accessories and furniture situated therein.
43. (a) The following provisions shall apply in a military area:
(1) no person shall enter it for purposes of this Law save with the prior approval of a person empowered in that behalf by the Minister of Defence;
(2) no act shall be done therein on behalf of the Director save with the consent of the Minister of Defence;
(3) no antiquity shall be dealt with therein on behalf of military body save with the approval of the Director.
(b) For the purposes of this section, "military area" mean any land occupied by the Defence Army of Israel or any other branch of the Defence Establishment approved by the Minister of Defence, and includes an area used for military exercises.

44. The Minister may, in consultation with the Council and with the approval of the Committee on Education and Culture of the Knesset, prescribe, by order, that any of the provisions of this Law or the regulations thereunder shall not apply to antiquities museums, excavations and antiquity sites defined in the order.

45. This Law shall add to, and not derogate from, any obligation imposed or power conferred by another enactment.

46. (a) The Minister is charged with the implementation of this Law and may make regulations as to any matter relating to it implementation, including the collection of fees for licences issues under it.
(b) The Minister of Justice may make rules of procedure for proceedings under this Law by the Objection Committee established under section 35.

47. (a) For the purposes of this Law, the State shall be treated like any person.
(b) The provision of subsection (a) shall not derogate from the provision of section 8 of the Civil Wrongs (Liability of the State) Law, 5712 — 1952.

48. There are hereby repealed —
(1) the Antiquities Ordinance 1);
(2) the Antiquities (Enclosures) Ordinance, 1935 3).

1) Sefer Ha-Chukkim of 5712, p. 339; LSI vol. VI, p. 147.
2) Laws of Palestine vol. 1, p. 28 (English Edition).
49. (a) A licence issued under the Antiquities Ordinance which were in force immediately before the coming into force of this Law shall be deemed to have been issued under this Law.

(b) The schedules of historical monuments and sites published under the Antiquities Ordinance which were in force immediately before the coming into force of this Law shall be deemed to have been published under section 28 of this Law.

50. This Law shall be published in Reshumot within fifteen days of the date of its adoption by the Knesset.

MENAHEM BEGIN
Prime Minister

YULUN HAMMER
Minister of Education and Culture

EFRAYIM KATZIR
President of the State
Definitions and Interpretations

1. (a) In this Law -

"Antiquities Law" refers to the Antiquities Law, 5738-1978¹;
"site" refers to an antiquities site as it is defined in the Antiquities Law;
"the Council" refers to the Council appointed in accordance with paragraph 6;
"the Director" refers to the Director of the Council;
"the Law" refers to the Law resulting from this legislation;
"the Minister" refers to the Minister of Education and Culture.

(b) All other terminology will have the connotation that they have in accordance with the Antiquities Law, unless they have been accorded a different meaning in this Law.

Chapter Two: The Law and Its Foundations

Paragraph One: Establishment of the Authority and Its Functions

Establishment of the Authority

2. The Antiquities Authority is established as a result of this Law.

The Authority - Corporation

3. The Authority is a corporation.

The Authority - a State-controlled Body

4. The Authority is a State-controlled body as defined in paragraph 9(2) of the State Comptroller Law, 5718-1958 [consolidated version]².

Functions of the Authority

5. (a) The [primary] function of the Authority is to attend to all antiquities affairs in Israel, including underwater antiquities.

(b) The Authority may, with respect to the antiquities and sites, undertake any activity to discharge its functions, including -
(1) the uncovering and excavation of sites;
(2) the preservation, restoration and development of sites;
(3) the administration, maintenance and operation of sites and their supervision;
(4) the preservation and restoration of antiquities;
(5) establishing supervision over archaeological excavations;
(6) the administration of the State’s treasures of antiquities, their supervision and control;
(7) setting in motion supervision with respect to offences under the Antiquities Law;
(8) preparing archaeological investigations and their advancement;
(9) the administration and maintenance of a scientific library of the archaeological history of Israel and her neighbours;
(10) the centralization, documentation and cataloguing of archaeological data;
(11) the establishment and advancement of educational activities and explanation in the field of archaeology;
(12) the establishment of international, scientific contacts in the field of archaeology.

(c) The administration, maintenance and operation of a site located within the boundaries of a supervised national park or national reserves shall, notwithstanding that which is stated in subsection (b)(3), form part of the National Parks Authority or the Natural Reserves Authority, this in cooperation with the Authority, unless otherwise mutually agreed to. For these purposes, “national park”, “natural reserves”, “National Parks Authority” and “Natural Reserves Authority” are to understood in their context under the National Parks, Natural Reserves and National Sites Act. 5723-1963.

Paragraph Two: The Authority Council

The Composition of the Council

6.-(a) The Authority shall have a Council comprised of sixteen members as follows:
(1) government representatives who are employees of the State -
   (a) the Director General of the Ministry of Education and Culture;
   (b) the Head of Cultural Administration in the Ministry of Education and Culture;
   (c) the Director of Economic and Budgetary Administration in the Ministry of Education and Culture;
   (d) the officer-in-charge of budgets in the Ministry of Finance;
   (e) the Accountant General;
   (f) the Director of Planning in the Ministry of the Interior;
   (g) the Director of the Planning and Economics branch in the Ministry of Tourism;
   (h) the representative of the Minister of Agriculture to be appointed by the Minister of Agriculture.

(2) two representatives with archaeological background from two of the institutions of higher learning detailed below, each from a different institution, to be appointed after having had consultations with the Minister:

   (a) the Hebrew University in Jerusalem;
   (b) Tel-Aviv University;
   (c) Haifa University;
   (d) Bar-Ilan University;
   (e) the Ben Gurion University of the Negev.

(3) one member from among the members of the Israeli National Academy of Sciences, to be appointed by the Minister after consultations with the Academy, who will serve as the Council Chairman;

(4) the heads of two local municipalities to be appointed by the Minister after consultations with the chairman of the local central government, as well as the head of the regional council, to be appointed by the Minister;

(5) the director of the museum that will display the antiquities to be appointed by the Minister after consultations with the Chairman of the Museums Council, in accordance with the Museums Act, 5743-1983; 

(6) representatives from the Ministry of Religious Affairs to be appointed by the Minister of Religious Affairs.
(b) The government representative, mentioned in subsection (a)(1) (a) to (g), may appoint an alternate who, like himself, is employed by the State to participate in Council meetings.

(c) Any Council member who is not an employee of the State may appoint a permanent alternate in the same manner as a Council member is appointed.

(d) The Minister may appoint one of the Council members to deputize as the Council Chairman.

Term of Office

7. (a) The term of office of a Council member who is not a government representative shall be for a period of four years; however, he may be reappointed for additional terms of office.

(b) A Council member whose term of office has ended shall continue his appointment until he is either re-elected or until the appointment of another member in his stead.

Guidelines for the Appointment of a Council Member

8. The following shall not be appointed as a Council member:

(1) anyone charged with a shameful offence or who has been incarcerated prior to the passing of the period of limitation according to its meaning in the Criminal Registration Act and the measure for the benefit of repentant offenders, 5741-1981;

(2) anyone who has a conflict of interest with respect to his business affairs and his membership in the Council; however, there will not be a conflict of interest where the actual appointment of an individual to the Council comes as a result of his responsibility.

Reimbursement of Expenses

9. The Council Chairman, his deputy and any Council member shall not accept any remuneration from the Authority for services rendered as part of their duties in the Council; however, they may claim coverage for reasonable expenses incurred as part of their duties in the Council, in an amount established by the Authority.

Expiration of a Term of Office

10. (a) A Council member who is not a government representative shall terminate his term of office to the appointed time if:

(1) a letter of resignation is tendered to the Council Chairman;

(2) any of the conditions cited in paragraph 8 are breached;
(3) he is unable, on a consistent basis, to discharge his duty and the
Minister, after consultation with the Council Chairman, will remove
him from his position through written notification;

(4) he retires from the position for which he was appointed.

(b) The Council Chairman shall provide to the Minister the letter of
resignation, as mentioned in subsection (a)(1), within 96 hours of
receiving [said letter]. The force of resignation ceases 48 hours after
handing over the letter of resignation to the Minister, except where the
Council member retracts his resignation in writing to the Minister.

(c) A Council member who is not a government representative, or a
representative who is an employee of the State who was appointed to
participate permanently in the sittings of the Council as mentioned in
subsection 6(b), and who is absent for an unjustifiable reason from four
consecutive Council meetings, may be removed from his position in the
Council by the Minister after consultation with the Council Chairman, or
his appointment may be nullified, according to the circumstance, through
written notification.

The Duty Rosters of the Council

11. (a) The Council shall establish for itself its own work routines and the
administration of its deliberations inasmuch as these have not been
established by this Law or pursuant to it.

(b) The legal quorum for Council meetings is at least seven members. If
there was no legal quorum at the commencement of the meeting, the
Council Chairman may postpone the meeting by thirty minutes. After this
time has passed, the meeting shall be considered to be in session if
there are at least five participating members, the Council Chairman or
his deputy being counted among them.

(c) Once the meeting has duly commenced in accordance with subsection (a),
the meeting shall duly continue with as many members as there are
present.

(d) The Director, or whoever has been deputized in his place, may be
present at Council meetings.

Deliberation on a Given Subject

12. If the Minister or five Council members wish to table a certain topic, the
topic should be made part of the order paper for the next Council meeting.

Appointing a Subcommittee

13. The Council may appoint members to form a subcommittee, to establish a
Chairman as part of its authority, to lessen the authority to establish
general Council policy and the authority to approve its budget.
14. A decision of the Council or one of its subcommittees shall not be disqualified except where the seat of the Council member or the subcommittee member was vacant, for whatever reason, at the time that the decision was made.

Council Duties and Authorities

15. The Council, without detracting from its other duties, shall:

   (1) establish the general [operating] policies of the Authority in the area of duties;

   (2) approve the budget of the Authority;

   (3) follow up on the continuity of policy implementation, the programs and budgets of the Authority;

   (4) deliberate over the financial reports provided to it by the Director.

General Council Rules

16. The Council, with the approval of the Minister, shall establish general rules for the operation of the sites, their administration and supervision.

Report

17. The Council shall provide to the Minister, at least once a year, a report on the activities of the Authority, and shall likewise provide to him, at his request, any knowledge of its activities.

Chapter Three: The Director of the Authority and Its Employees

The Director of the Authority:

18. (a) The Council shall appoint, based on the advice of the Minister and with the approval of the government, a Director of the Authority. The Council may, based on the advice of the Minister, appoint a deputy Director.

   (b) The elections subcommittee, as stated in subsection (a), shall be published in Hanahot.

The Authority of the Director

19. (a) The Director is responsible for the uninterrupted administration of the Authority's dealings in accordance with the decisions of the Council.
(b) Subject to the directives [outlined] in this Law, as well as the
decisions of the Council, the Director shall have all of the authority
necessary for the administration of the Authority, including the
authority to represent the Authority in any of its duties, to sign
agreements or other documents in the name of the Authority.

c) The directives in this Law do not detract from the authority and duties
granted to the Director by the Antiquities Law or any other enactment.

d) The Director may, according to this Law, delegate some of his authority
to an employee of the Authority and to authorize this employee to sign
any document in the name of the Authority.

Appointing the Director

20. (a) The Director shall be appointed for a period of five years (hereafter:
term of office). The Council, with the approval of the Minister and the
government, may re-elect the Director for an additional term of office
at the conclusion of the current term.

(b) The term of the Director shall terminate with one of the following:

(1) the Director resigns through a letter that he presents to the
    Minister through the agency of the Council;

(2) the Minister, after consultation with the Council and with the
    approval of the government, establishes that the Director cannot, in
    a permanent manner, discharge his duties;

(3) the Minister, after consultation with the Council and with the
    approval of the government, decides to remove him from his position
    for reasons that shall be detailed.

The Employment of Workers

21. (a) the Authority may engage workers to implement its duties;

(b) the conditions of employment of Authority workers, remuneration, service
lists and methods of selection for work shall be the same as those of
government employees, with those changes that have been set by the
Authority with the approval of the Minister and the Minister of Finance.

Terms of the Director's Employment

22. The remuneration for the Director and the terms of his employment shall be
set by the Minister with the approval of the Minister of Finance.
Chapter Three: Budget and Finance

23. (a) The Director shall prepare, at an interval set by the Council, a budgetary proposal for the activities of the authority and shall present it for approval to the Council.

(b) The budget for the Authority shall be presented to the Minister and requires the approval of both the Minister and the government.

(c) The Minister of Finance may direct the Authority with any matter that relates to the preparation of the Authority's budget.

Financing and Capital

24. (a) The budget of the Authority shall be financed from the treasury of the State, as well as from revenue from fees and other payments to be paid to the Authority in accordance with the Antiquities Law.

(b) So that the Authority can discharge its duties, the Authority may accept donations and may likewise establish research funds.

Chapter Four: Supervision Authority

The Appointment of Inspectors:

25. (a) The Council shall appoint inspectors from among Authority employees, from among those who have been legally appointed as inspector or an individual who has been appointed as an inspector through the force of an enactment for the purpose of supervising the implementation of the Antiquities Law. The appointment shall be in writing.

(b) It is understood that the inspector shall have the authority to conduct investigations concerning offences against the Antiquities Law. It is understood that in using this authority -

(1) the inspector shall have the authority of a police officer in accordance with paragraph 2 of the Criminal Code (Arrest and Search) [New Version], 5729-1969.

(2) the inspector may utilize all of the authority allocated to a police officer at the rank of inspector in accordance with paragraph 2 of the Order of Criminal Procedures (Testimony), and paragraph 3 of the aforementioned Order shall be effective as a result of this authority.
The Authority of the Inspector

26. (a) Should the inspector have a probable basis upon which to assume that the matter requires him to operate under the authority assigned to him, he has the authority to:

(1) stop any vehicle and conduct a search;

(2) enter any place and conduct a search; however, he may not enter a place that serves as a place in which people live provided there is a search warrant from an authorized court, and paragraphs 24 and 26-29 of the Order of the Criminal Code (Arrest and Search) [New Version], 5729-1969, will be in effect, with the necessary changes, with respect to a search conducted according to this clause;

(3) seize any object if the inspector has a probable basis to assume that an offence that violates the Antiquities Law was committed with it, and he may seize packing material or documents which, in his judgement, may be entered as evidence in a trial for an offence noted above.

(b) Insofar as this chapter is concerned, "object" includes any vehicle of conveyance.

Chapter Five: Transferring Employees, Assets, Privileges and Obligations

Transferring Employees

27. (a) Employees of the State who are employed on the eve of the commencement of this Law in the Antiquities and Museums Department in the Ministry of Education and Culture (hereafter: the Department) shall be transferred to serve as employees of the Authority under terms of service that are not worse than those in effect prior to the Law being in force.

(b) The benefits of Authority employees that have been transferred and those that stem from their work as employees of the State, as mentioned in subsection (a), shall be considered as benefits that stem from work in the service of the Authority.

(c) Settlements regarding the entitlement of the Authority to disbursement amounts that shall be transferred to its service shall be allowed and will be set within one year of the commencement of this Law in an agreement between the Authority and the government.
Transferring of Assets

28. Assets of the State that were, prior to the commencement of this Law, maintained by the Department, shall be transferred to the Authority. In this paragraph, "assets of the State" refer to real estate, moveables, entitlements and vested interests of every manner, with the exception of antiquities and sites. Conditions of transfer shall be set in an agreement between the Authority and the government.

Chapter Six: Various Directives

Taxes

29. The law of the Authority has the same force as the law of the State with respect to the remittance of taxes, the stamp tax, fees [for government or other public services], property taxes, levies and other mandatory payments.

Damage Liability

30. The law of the Authority has the same force as the law of the State with respect to the Law of Civil Damages (Liabilities of the State), 5712-1952.

Rules Governing Council Members and Employees of the Authority

31. (a) The law for employees of the Authority has the same force as the law for employees of the State with respect to the following enactments:

(1) Knesset Elections Act [New Version], 5729-1969;

(2) State Service Act (Classification of Party Activities and Fundraising), 5719-1959;

(3) Public Service Act (Gratuities), 5740-1979;

(4) Public Service Act (Restrictions at Retirement), 5729-1969;

(5) Penalties Act, 5737-1977 - directives pertaining to public employees;

(6) Testimonies Order [New Version], 5731-1971;

(7) Damages Order [New Version];

(b) The State Service Act (Discipline), 5723-1963, shall apply to employees of the Authority as though they were employees of the State. In this regard, the Minister of Education and Culture is synonymous with the Minister wherever Minister is mentioned in this Law, and the Director is synonymous with the Director General wherever Director is mentioned in this Law.
Implementation and Regulations

32. The Minister is appointed to implement this Law and he may, after consultation with the Director and the Council, enact regulations with respect to implementation.

Amendments to the Antiquities Law

33. In the Antiquities Law -

(1) In paragraph 1 -

(a) after the definition of "sites of antiquities" should come:

"The Authority" - the Antiquities Authority as understood in the Antiquities Authority Law, 5749-1989;";

(b) in the definition of "collector" read "who has a collection" instead of "who collects";

(c) strike the definition of "the Department";

(d) in place of the definition of "the Director" read "the Director - Director of the Authority";

(2) in paragraph 8, after "the Director" read "with the approval of the Minister";

(3) in paragraph 14, instead of "after consultation" read "with the approval of the Minister and after consultation";

(4) in paragraph 15, instead of "the Director" read "the Minister" and at the conclusion read: "The Minister may authorize the Director or any other employee of the Authority regarding the issue raised in this paragraph";

(5) in paragraph 18(a), in place of "the Director" read "the Minister or an individual who has been authorized in accordance with paragraph 15";

(6) in paragraph 34(b), after "to the Minister" comes "to the Director and to the Council of the Authority";

(7) in paragraph 36 -

(a) in subsection (a), in place of "from the decisions of the Director" read "from the Director";

(b) in place of subsection (b) read: "(b) the appeal board may decide to accept an appeal, defer it or decide with respect to any other decisions";
(8) in paragraph 42, in subsection (a)(1) in place of "the Department" read "the Authority" and in subsection (c) after "the Minister", read "according to the suggestion of the Authority";

(9) in paragraph 44, in place of "in the Council" read "with the Director, with the Council of the Authority and with the Council";

(10) in paragraph 46(a), after "may" read "after consultation with the Director and the Council of the Authority" and after "licences" read "approvals, permits or services";

(11) after paragraph 46 read:

"Revenues Accruing to the Authority

46a. Fees and other revenues, with the exception of fines, collected as a result of this Law, shall be paid to the treasury of the Authority".

Amendment to the [ ] Order

34. In the [ ] Order*17 -

(1) in paragraph 2, in place of the definition for "an historical site" read:

"an historical site" - a site of antiquities as it is understood in the Antiquities Law, 5738-1978";

(2) in paragraph 8(1)(a)(2), in place of "the Director of the Antiquities Department" read "the Director as understood in the Antiquities Authority Law, 5749-1989".

Observance of the Law

35. Subject to paragraph 5(c), the directives in this Law cannot detract from the directives in the National Parks, National Reserves and National Sites Act, 5723-1963.

Transition Directives

36. (a) Anyone appointed as Director of the Department prior to the commencement of this Act shall be considered as if he were appointed as Director according to the Act for a term of office as at the day that the Act came into force.
(b) The government shall pass to the Authority all of the amounts budgeted for in the Budget Act for the current fiscal year for those activities of the Department whose implementation was passed to the Authority and for which there has not been an expenditure until this Act came into force. Until the end of the current fiscal year, the budget of the activities of the Authority will be in accordance with the budget passed to the Authority, as previously stated, with changes stemming from the establishment of the Authority. In this case, "the current fiscal year" refers to the fiscal year in which this Act comes into force.

Publication

37. This Act will be published in Reshumot within 30 days of its acceptance.
Footnotes

* passed by the Knesset on the 21st day of Tammuz (July 28, 1989); the Bill and an Explanatory Note were published in *Hataz'ot Chok* 1928 of 7 Nisan 5749 (April 12, 1989), p. 67.

1. *Sefer Ha-Chukkim* 5738, p. 76.
2. *Sefer Ha-Chukkim* 5718, p. 92.
3. *Sefer Ha-Chukkim* 5723, p. 149; 5742, p. 34.
5. *Sefer Ha-Chukkim* 5741, p. 322.
9. *Sefer Ha-Chukkim* 5729, p. 103.
16. *Sefer Ha-Chukkim* 5723, p. 50.
17. [ ], Vol. II, p. 910.
4c. **Protective measures and means of implementing them:**

The first and foremost protective measure is legislation and its implementation. As stated above, the total area has been designated as National Parks or Nature Reserves, and is thus protected by the relevant law. The laws of antiquities also protect this area, which is, by legal definition, archaeology. The National Parks (the four towns) are fenced, entrance is controlled, and visitors are required to pay an entrance fee. They have site managers and staff, in charge of maintenance, monitoring and protection. The open sites are protected mainly through the work of inspectors and park rangers. The archaeology is protected by similar means of inspection and maintenance. No activities can take place in the area, unless permitted by the management authorities.

4d. **Agency/agencies with management authority:**

The National Parks and Nature Reserves Authority manages the sites on a daily basis. The Israel Antiquities Authority manages the conservation and excavation activities in the nominated area.

4e. **Level at which management is exercised and names of responsible persons:**

The Parks and Reserves Authority has its regional centre and offices in Beer-Sheva. The work plans, administration, contacts with other organizations in the region, etc., are prepared and managed in this centre. Policy issues at national level, such as large scale planning, are managed from the central offices of the Authority, in Jerusalem.

The Antiquities Authority also has a regional centre near Beer-Sheva, which controls all excavations and inspection works. Conservation activities and their inspection are the responsibility of the central unit, situated in Jerusalem, but are executed by a local, southern team.

The Regional Director of Parks and Reserves is Mr. Gilead Gabay. The offices are in 19 Ha’avot St., Beer-Sheva. The Regional Director of the Antiquities Authority, situated in Omer, is Dr. Dov Nahlieli.
4f. Agreed plans related to property:

All National Parks and Nature Reserves are designated according to “National Master Plan 8”. Being on the National Master Plan is the first step, followed by a specific local nomination, approved by the Minister of the Interior.

The sites of Avdat, Shivta and Mamshit have conservation and tourism development plans. These plans are implemented in phases. The Shivta conservation plan is also implemented gradually, mainly following urgency.

The fortresses and some of the water installations have a conservation plan, much of which has already been implemented and is now mainly monitored.

4g. Sources and levels of finance:

All financing comes from the Parks and Reserves Authority’s budget. The source of this budget is partly governmental, but mainly from income. Income is generated from entrance fees, concessions, and special activities. During years with low income the activities on the sites concentrate on maintenance and protection only. In “better” years there is more conservation and development implementation.

The four towns have specific budgets. The level of budgeting depends on the annual budget of the Authority and therefore varies considerably from one year to another.

4h. Sources of experience and training:

The Parks Authority’s personnel carry out routine works. These works include maintenance and minor conservation works, considered as maintenance. The Authority has one trained conservation expert in the region and a core group, which receives basic training from the Antiquities Authority experts. The training is at a level that teaches the trainees to distinguish between the kind of works they can do themselves, and the work that requires calling in professional conservators. Expert conservators from the conservation unit of the Antiquities Authority carry out this kind of conservation activity.

The training of rangers and inspectors includes the understanding of the cultural and natural values of the sites and the areas they are in charge of, and the knowledge necessary for handling visitors as well as problems on the sites.

Managers are trained at different administrative levels, depending on their level of responsibility. The Parks Authority employs a Chief Archaeologist and a Chief Architect, trained in conservation (ICCROM course).
4i. Visitors’ facilities and statistics:

Avdat and Mamshit are the most developed sites. The visitors’ centre in Avdat provides information on the specific site, the archaeology and history of the region, and the Incense and Spice Road, as well as information on trails and visitors’ services. Avdat also has a souvenir shop. All sites have bathrooms, parking areas and signage. Some sites offer refreshment and food facilities (kiosks, coffee houses or restaurants). Avdat and Mamshit have good site presentation. Shivta, being more remote, is less developed for visitors. Haluza, the least developed site, has no facilities at all.

The open areas, mainly the fortresses and road segments, have signage, but, as a policy, no other facilities. Their nature and authenticity are considered of such high value and so vulnerable to any modern intrusions, that while visitors are invited and most welcome, facilities are not provided. For this reason, it is almost impossible to provide statistics of the number of visitors to the open sites.

4j. Property management plan and statement of objectives:

The legal designation, the conservation and development plans, staffing, annual routine work plan, and budgeting are considered by the Parks Authority as their equivalent for a formal management plan. There is no official “Management Plan”, but none of the components of a proper management plan are missing. The term used locally is “Site’s File”, and it contains all the components of a management plan. In addition to the above mentioned content, such a “file” also includes graphic and photographic documentation, condition assessments and lists of properties and remains on the site.

The basic statement of objectives for each Nature Reserve and National Park says: “The objective of this nomination is to protect the cultural and/or natural values of the site by means of legal and proper management tools. In addition to the protection of values, these sites will be developed for the enjoyment of the visitors and the public – whether in our generation or in generations to come”. Each site and designated area has tactics and plans specific to its characteristics.

4k. Staffing levels:

At a regional level the staff includes:

Director, deputy and a secretary. There are six rangers, four site managers, regional conservator, chief biologist, and 25 workers at different levels of training. Five of them have basic training in conservation and maintenance of sites. They are in charge of the other 20 workers who work mainly in Avdat and Mamshit and move to the other sites, as needed. The larger expert staff (archaeologists, planners, conservators) is at national level, and work in the region per projects and as required by work plans.
5. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROPERTY
5a. Development Pressures:

Since the World Heritage nominated sites are part of much bigger nationally nominated National Parks and Nature Reserves, their buffer zone is so large that no existing development plans have any effect on them. Wider areas, reserved as “fire zones”, surround most of the nominated sites, which means that no activities, except for possible army training, can take place in them. This training is usually coordinated, and is of a kind that will not put any visitors or cultural and natural values at risk.

5b. Environmental Pressures:

The sites and areas for nomination are in a relatively remote region of the country. They are not highly populated or industrialized. Therefore, there are no environmental pressures caused by human activities. The main causes for deterioration are natural, mainly the big differences between the temperatures of night and day, characteristic to desert climates and the primary cause for decay of building materials.

5c. Natural Disasters and Preparedness:

Since this is a desert area, there is no risk of fires. The most eastern part of the nomination is in the Great Rift Valley, which is seismically sensitive. In recent years, most ancient structures have been consolidated, keeping earthquake risk in mind. The bigger risk may originate from sudden winter floods, characteristic to desert climate. The ancient builders of the sites and towns, who were familiar with this risk, prevented it by building on higher grounds and diverting rainwater. Before and after the rainy season the drainage systems are monitored, checked, and, if necessary, repaired.

5d. Visitor/tourism Pressure:

The possible effect of visitors can only be felt during short and well known in advance peak seasons. During these periods all the rangers are permanently on site, to prevent any damage caused by violation of regulations. Another pressure originates from “4 wheel drive visitors” who come mainly to experience the challenge of crossing difficult areas. The possible damage they might cause is minimized by strict rules and limited access.

5e. Number of Inhabitants:

There are no inhabitants in the nomination area or its buffer zone.
6. MONITORING
6a. Key indicators for measuring state of conservation:

Two key indicators were selected as permanent criteria for measuring the sites’ state of conservation. The first is the amount of conservation work (measured in budget figures and human work days) required, following the annual reporting process. The other indicator, which measures potential threat only, is the number of visitors.

6b. Administrative arrangements for monitoring:

Among the roles of the site’s staff and rangers is regular monitoring and reporting on the state of conservation of the sites. The most visited sites, like Avdat, are monitored on a monthly basis. Other areas are monitored and photographed before and after winter, as well as after peak days.

6c. Results of previous reporting exercises:

Most of the reporting and monitoring is followed up by minor repair and maintenance work. In very few cases more significant conservation works were required, and the Antiquities Authority staff carried those out. In recent years (last three), only Shivta required major works, mainly due to the fact that nothing of this kind has ever been done on the site. These works were carried out by the Park’s conservator, with the help of a group of untrained workers. It was also seen as a training opportunity.
7. DOCUMENTATION
### 7a. List of photographs and slides:

**Photographs:**

<table>
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<th>Description</th>
<th>Photographer</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
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<td>2. Frankincense bags</td>
<td>A. Goren</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Moa, general view from the east</td>
<td>Albatross</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Moa, general view from the west</td>
<td>Albatross</td>
<td>1998</td>
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<td>5. Kasra, detail of the fortress</td>
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<td>7. Nekarot, general view from the east</td>
<td>G. Kertesz</td>
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<td>8. Nekarot, general view from the west</td>
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<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Nekarot, water cistern and view from the north</td>
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<td>10. Ein Saharonim, aerial view</td>
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<td>11. Ein Saharonim, entrance façade</td>
<td>G. Kertesz</td>
<td>2000</td>
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<td>13. Ein Saharonim, detail showing rooms</td>
<td>Albatross</td>
<td>1998</td>
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<td>14. Makhtmal, view from east towards Makhtesh Ramon, D Horovits</td>
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<td>1993</td>
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<td>15. Makhtmal, view from the fortress and ascent I. Mazor</td>
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<td>16-17. Milestones on the road</td>
<td>G. Kertesz</td>
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<td>18. Tumuli, seen from Nekarot gorge</td>
<td>Albatross</td>
<td>1998</td>
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<td>20. Jacob’s Ladder (camping site)</td>
<td>Albatross</td>
<td>1998</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Typical landscape (Makhtesh Ramon)</td>
<td>Albatross</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Road section</td>
<td>G. Kertesz</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Avdat, view of the temenos</td>
<td>Albatross</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Avdat, private houses</td>
<td>Y. Ilan</td>
<td>1998</td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Avdat, presentation: “Frankincense Caravan”</td>
<td>G. Solar</td>
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<td>29. Haluza, the theatre</td>
<td>Albatross</td>
<td>1998</td>
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<tr>
<td>30. Mamshit, aerial view from the east</td>
<td>Albatross</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Mamshit, south-western corner with the western church</td>
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<td>1998</td>
</tr>
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<td>Albatross</td>
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</tr>
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<td>33. Shivta, details of a church</td>
<td>Albatross</td>
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<td>34. Cultivation in the valleys- ancient dams</td>
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<tr>
<td>36. “Stone piling” – probably ancient vineyards</td>
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<td>37. Makhtesh Ramon I</td>
<td>Albatross</td>
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<td>Albatross</td>
<td>1998</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Photographer</td>
<td>Date</td>
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<td>2. Moa, general view from the east</td>
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<td>3. Moa, general view from the west</td>
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<td>4. Frankincense bags</td>
<td>A. Goren</td>
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<td>7. Nekarot, general view from the west</td>
<td>Albatross</td>
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<td>8. Ein Saharonim, aerial view from south</td>
<td>Albatross</td>
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<td>9. Ein Saharonim, detail showing rooms</td>
<td>Albatross</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Tumuli, seen from Nekarot gorge</td>
<td>Albatross</td>
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<td>11. Jacob’s Ladder (camping site)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Typical landscape (Makhtesh Ramon)</td>
<td>Albatross</td>
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<td>13. Small temple</td>
<td>A. Goren</td>
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<td>14. Makhmal, view from the fortress and ascent I. Mazor</td>
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<td>15. Avdat, view of the temeros</td>
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<td>17. Avdat, private houses</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Makhtesh Ramon II</td>
<td>Albatross</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7b. Copies of property management plans and extracts of other plans relevant to the property

(all texts are extracts translated from the Hebrew regulations of each individual plan)

1. State Master Plan for National Parks, Nature and Landscape Reserves
   (No. TMA/8)

   (Ministry of the Interior – Planning and Building Law- 1965 –
   No. 693, dated: 21.6.81 - signed by the Minister of the Interior and the
   Government Secretary, 13.7.81.)

Definitions:

National Park -
An area designated for public recreation in the bosom of nature, or for the
commemoration of values that have historical, archaeological, architectural, or
landscape significance, and the like, whether they remain in their natural state or are
adjusted to serve this purpose through the planting of trees or the building of facilities
or constructs that are directly required for these uses.

Landscape Reserve:
An area that due to its landscape and nature values, or to its importance as a recreation
area, or to quality of the environment reasons, will not be designated for building and
for other uses such as residence, industry or any other business, except for building or
uses permitted according to the first appendix to the Planning Law.

Nature Reserve:
a. Permitted purposes: areas for nature and landscape reserve, for travel and tourism.
b. The borders of the nature reserve and its permitted uses will be determined in a
   local plan.
c. Despite what is said in a previous clause, in the area designated in this plan as a
   nature reserve, the following development constructions will be permitted: walking
   paths, steps, observation posts, safety railings, lightly built shading sheds, signage and
   sitting benches. All the above in accordance with building and development plans
   authorized by the local committee, following a consultation with the National Park
   and Nature Reserve Authority. Building permits, according to this clause, will be
   issued by the local committee or by the relevant local authority.

The Purpose of the Plan:
The purpose of the plan is to locate areas, which are designated today, or will be
designated in the future, to be used as national parks, nature reserves or landscape
reserves.

Other uses of National Parks:
Despite what is said in the definition of a “national park”, it is permitted, according to
the Planning Law, to designate areas in a national park for the construction of
buildings or facilities for other uses, providing these are required for the achievement
of the main purpose of the national park, even if the general public (or part of it) does
not have free access to these areas, or does not have access at all.
2. Regional Master Plan – South District (No. TMM/4, Amendment No. 14)  
(Planning and Building Law – 1965)

Plan Instructions, November 1998:

National Park:

a. Permitted purposes: facilities for public recreation in the bosom of nature. Commemoration of values that have historical, archaeological, architectural, and landscape significance, and the like, whether they remain in their natural state or are adjusted to serve this purpose through the planting of trees or the building of facilities or constructs that are directly required for these uses.

b. Despite what is said in a previous clause, in an area designated in this plan as a national park, the following development constructions will be permitted: walking paths, steps, observation posts, safety railings, lightly built shading sheds, signage and sitting benches. All the above in accordance with building and development plans authorized by the local committee, following a consultation with the National Park and Nature Reserve Authority.

Antiquities Site:

Antiquities site, as defined by the Antiquities Law – 1978. The permitted uses will be determined in a local general plan, in accordance with the instructions of this plan.

3. National Parks Authority – Detailed Plan No. 315/3:

Mamshit-Kurnub National Park:

The Purpose of the Plan:

a. To designate the area of the plan for a national park, in accordance with the National Parks and Nature Reserves Law, 1988.

b. Expanding the northern area of the national park so that it will include the entire access road and its adjacent areas.

c. Determining areas for antiquities and for an open public space.

d. Outlining roads and determining their width.

4. Mamshitz- Kurnub - detailed Town Planning Scheme no. 1/118/03/25

Aim of the Plan:

Designation of areas for a national park, according to the National Parks and Nature Reserves Law. Defining areas for an open public space, antiquities sites, etc.

5. Avdat – detailed Town Planning Scheme no. 470/3, 3/110/03/10

Aim of the Plan:

Defining areas for a designated national park, open public space, service and trade centre, antiquities site, etc.
6. Shivta – detailed Town Planning Scheme no. 469/3

**Aim of the Plan:**
Defining areas for a national park, open public space, antiquities sites, etc.

7. Haluza – detailed Town Planning Scheme no. 101/02/10

**Aim of the Plan:**
Designation of area for a national park, according to the National Parks and Nature Reserves Law. Defining areas for open public space, antiquities site, agricultural area, etc.
7c. Bibliography

T.J. Abercrombie, ‘Arabia’s Frankincense Trail’, National Geographic, October 1985
Y. Aharoni, ‘The Ancient Desert Agriculture of the Negev’, Early Beginnings, IEJ 8, p. 249
J.R. Bartlett, ‘From Edomites to Nabataeans, a Study in Continuity’, Palestine Exploration Quarterly, 1979, pp. 53-66
R. Cohen, ‘New Light on the Date of the Petra-Gaza Road’, Biblical Archaeological 45, 982, pp. 240-247
P.C. Hammond, The Nabataeans – their history, culture and archaeology, Gothenburg, 1973
Yehuda Kedar, The ancient agriculture in the Negev mountains (in Hebrew), Bialik Institute, Jerusalem 1967.
J. Innes Miller, The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1969
A. Negev, ‘The Date of the Petra-Gaza Road’, Palestine Exploration Quarterly 88, 1966,
A. Negev, ‘Avdat, une halte de caravans dans le centre du Néguev’, Bible et Terre Sainte 40, 1961, pp. 4-11
A. Negev, ‘Greek Inscriptions from Avdat (Oboda)’, Liber Annuus 28, 1978, pp. 87-126, Pls. 7-20
A. Negev, ‘Christian Kurnub (Mampsis?)’, Christian News from Israel, Vol. 18, 4, pp. 17-23
A. Negev, ‘Mamshit (Kurnub)’, Israel Exploration Journal 17, 1967, pp. 121-124
A. Negev, ‘Mamshit (Kurnub)’, Revue Biblique 75, 1968, pp. 407-413
A. Negev, ‘Survey and Trial Excavations at Haluza (Elusa) 1973’, *Israel Exploration Journal* 26, 1976, pp. 89-95, Pls. 20-21
M.I. Rostovtzeff, *Caravan Cities*, 1932
G.W. Van-Beak, ‘Frankincense and Myrrh’, *Biblical Archaeological* 23, 1960 pp. 70-95
7d. Address where inventory, records and archives are held:

National Parks and Nature Reserves Archives:
3 Am Ve’Olamo St., Jerusalem 95463
19 Ha’avot St., Beer Sheva

Israel Antiquities Authority:
Rockefeller Museum, P.O.Box: 586, Jerusalem 91004
8. SIGNATURE
ON BEHALF OF THE STATE PARTY

Signature:…………..
Mr. Daniel Bareli, Secretary General
Israel Commission for Unesco

Signature:…………..
Mr. Roni Milo
The Minister for
RegionalCooperation
AUTHORIZATION

1. I, the undersigned, hereby grant free of charge to Unesco the non-exclusive right for the legal term of copyright to reproduce and use in accordance with the terms of paragraph 2 of the present authorization throughout the world the photograph(s) and/or slide(s) described in paragraph 4.

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   a) Unesco publications;
   b) co-publications with private publishing houses for World Heritage publications; a percentage of the profits will be given to the World Heritage Fund;
   c) postcards - to be sold at the sites protected under the World Heritage Convention through national parks, services or antiquities (profits, if any, will be divided between the services in question and the World Heritage Fund);
   d) slide series - to be sold to schools, libraries, other institutions and eventually at the sites (profits, if any, will go to the World Heritage Fund);
   e) exhibitions, etc.

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6. I hereby declare and certify that I am duly authorized to grant the rights mentioned in paragraph 1 of the present authorization.

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Place ____________________________
Date ____________________________
Signature, title or function of the person duly authorized

Authorization is granted only if the site gets nominated
The following team prepared the Nomination File:

Head of the Team:
Giora Solar – Architect, Conservator, Management Planing

Statutory Issues Coordinator:
Gavriel Kertesz – Shmuel Groag – Architects, Town Planners

Archaeology, Conservation:
Assi Shalom – Conservator

Geology:
Prof. Immanuel Mazor

Translation, Editing:
The late Anna Orgel

GIS:
Shahar Solar

This nomination was initiated by the Israel Ministry for Regional Cooperation And sponsored by both the Ministry and the Negev Development Authority.
October 2001

The Nomination was delivered to the Israel Nature and Parks Authority in April 2003 as the Ministry for Region Cooperation was no longer in existence after the 2001 elections.

GIS Maps
Michal Levi – Israel Nature and Parks Authority

CD preparation:
Dr. Tsvika Tsuk - Israel Nature and Parks Authority
Bella Dax - Israel Nature and Parks Authority

May 2004
whc/incense

Mr. Francesco Bandarin,
Director, World Heritage Centre
UNESCO
Paris

6 December 2003

Dear Mr. Bandarin,

Re: The Incense Route and the Desert Cities of the Negev
ICOMOS letter from 15 October 2003

Further to the above-mentioned letter and our reply to Ms Regina Durighello of the 21 November 2003 (attached for your convenience) regarding the identification of the site as a Cultural Landscape, I have the pleasure of enclosing the necessary supplementary material as to the boundaries and buffer zone of the nominated site.

This includes the confirmation of the following:
- justification of the nomination as a cultural landscape;
- assurances of authenticity;
- updated areas of the route and the desert cities and
- updated co-ordinates of the route and the desert cities.

In addition we enclose three copies of the modified maps at the relevant scales.

I would appreciate your registering this material and transferring it to the ICOMOS offices in accordance with the procedures indicated in the letter by the end of December, so that the evaluation might be completed.

Thanking you in anticipation,
Yours sincerely

Daniel Bar Elli, Secretary-General, Israel National Commission for UNESCO

Copies: HE Jacques Revah, Israel Ambassador to UNESCO
Professor Michael Turner, Chairman, Israel World Heritage Committee
Dr Tsvika Tsuk, Chief Archaeologist, Israel Nature and Parks Authority.
Ms Regina Durighello, Director of WH programmes, ICOMOS
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL
TO THE WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION FILE
OF

"The Incense Route and the Desert Cities of the Negev"

Submitted by the
State of Israel
Israel National Commission for UNESCO
Israel World Heritage Committee

December 2003
The Israel World Heritage Committee at its meeting on the 16th November 2003 discussed the report of the ICOMOS expert mission to the nominated site as presented to the IWHC in the letter of 15th October 2003. It was decided that the nomination should be recognised as a “cultural landscape”, instead of “sites” as originally submitted. A letter to the World Heritage Centre to this effect was sent by the Secretary-General of the Israel National Commission for UNESCO on 21st November 2003.

As indicated in the report of the ICOMOS expert mission, this change of category does not require any substantial modifications or additions to the nomination file, since all the elements as well as justifications submitted in the original dossier are still valid.

The main modifications or additions are to the boundaries of the nomination, to include larger areas of typical organically evolved landscape being the fossil remains of the ‘modified’ desert as affected by ancient human activities, often without any long term effect on nature. New maps, replacing the previous ones, with the newly defined boundaries, are part of this supplementary documentation.

**Justification of the Nomination as Cultural Landscape.**

While natural elements remained intact, the societies living in the desert, then as well as nowadays, learned how to survive and even live well, making the best out of what the nature could provide. While doing so, in the most sustainable way, without the destruction of their natural environment and with full understanding of its values and powers, they left traces of ingenious ways of “living in and with nature”. These traces constitute an important part of the nomination and for their special features should undoubtedly come under the definition of “cultural landscapes”. The fossil remains of the agricultural systems including methods of water collection and terracing are exceptional evidence of the civilizations that inhabited the region, modifying the desert to their needs.

This nomination includes paved and well marked parts of the route, including mile stones (points 7 and 9 under chapter 3 of the nomination dossier). These well defined and marked segments are in flat and open areas, where without some kind of signage one could easily get lost. Other segments of the incense route pass through dry desert valleys (wadis), which were chosen for their natural characteristics, providing for easier accessibility and ways of collecting and concealing water. These sections did not require any man-made features to mark the route or to direct the caravans, the strong topographic features comprised the route. There is no doubt that after the crossing of thousands of loaded camels, the route was visible and covered with traces. But, whoever has witnessed a desert river flash-flood, (or sand storms in other kind of deserts) will not be surprised to discover that all these traces would be washed away and nature returning to its “original state”. This is an annual cycle, since the floods occur almost every winter. Thus, only the man-made traces remained, such as fortresses, caravanserais and water cisterns, normally at a one day caravan’s distance from each other: all these features are included in the nomination. But not less important is the virtual road, the one used over hundreds of years with no necessity for paving or for any marking signs for it was by nature alone that the route was there. It is therefore, the main rationale that this section of the nomination should be considered as one of the best examples and a model for a “cultural landscape”.

Assurances of Authenticity

The extended boundaries are within the jurisdiction of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, and all responsibilities as indicated in the dossier are effective in the new areas. In addition, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev have a joint research programme for the continuing study and conservation of this cultural landscape as identified.

Updated Areas of the Route and the Desert Cities

The route, including Avdat 6314 Hectares.
Buffer zone 62,592 Ha

Shivta 47 Ha
Buffer zone 484 Ha

Mamshit 242 Ha
Buffer zone 514 Ha

Haluza 52 Ha
Buffer zone 278 Ha

Updated Co-ordinates of the Route and the Cities

The route
South-Eastern boundary (at Moa) 35 9’ 39”E
30 32’ 28”N
North-Western boundary (at Avdat) 34 46’ 30”E
30 47’47”N

Mamshit 35 3’ 4”E
31 1’34”N

Shivta 34 37’ 54”E
30 52’ 53”N

Haluza 34 39’ 28”E
31 5’ 51”N
Supplementary materials on the management plan of

The Incense Route and
the Desert Cities in the Negev

World Heritage nomination

Submitted by the State of Israel
The Incense Route and the Desert Cities in the Negev

Management System and Plan

Definitions

For the sake of this document "The Incense Route" is defined as the section of the route submitted to the World Heritage Center for a WH nomination. The "desert Cities" are the four Nabatean cities included in the nomination.

"Management Plan" is the comprehensive document describing and putting together all the tools which help in preserving the sites and their values, while developing them for the benefit of the public in the present and the next generations.

Content

- Forward
1. Names, location.
2. General description.
3. Legal protection.
5. Values and Stake holders.
6. Manpower (staff)
7. Budgets and financing.
8. Plans – Conservation
   - Research
   - Development.
11. Visitors services (management)
In order to facilitate and not duplicate information provided in other parts of the nomination file, certain elements of the management plan were not annexed a second time, since they are also an integral part of the file itself. Such are plans and maps, legislation documents and full description of the site. The management plan does include these elements, but was specially edited for the nomination.

1. Site’s ID – names, location

The nominated site is divided into two sections, each different from the other in their characteristics, though both are directly linked with the Incense Route. The first complex is a continuous section of the route itself, which includes also one of the cities, several small sites and different installations. The other component comprises three cities with their surroundings, rich with remains of ancient agriculture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>UTM Grid</th>
<th>Area (hectares)</th>
<th>Buffer Zone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Moa</td>
<td>709948/382923</td>
<td>including the</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Kaxra</td>
<td>700334/382897</td>
<td>road</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Nekarot</td>
<td>693054/384454</td>
<td>fortresses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Saharonim</td>
<td>685957/387533</td>
<td>and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Mahmal</td>
<td>684744/396756</td>
<td>Ovdat</td>
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<td>47.16</td>
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<td>242.17</td>
<td>514.25</td>
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<td>9. Haluza</td>
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<td>52.00</td>
<td>278.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total nominated area</td>
<td>6655.58</td>
<td>63,867.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sites 1 to 5 are fortresses or caravanserais and constitute one unit of the nomination, together with the road itself. Sites 6 to 9 are towns, each with its own nomination boundaries and buffer zone, including the ancient agricultural areas. Elements, such as water cisterns and milestone stones which are included and described in the nomination, are part of sites 1-5 or of segments of the road.
2. Short Description.

A more comprehensive description is part of the nomination file and can be found in the relevant chapter.

2.1 Moa
The site consists of a large structure measuring about 40x40 square meters, which was probably a caravanserai. In addition there is a small fortress, measuring 17x17 meters, another small unidentified structure and a water system which includes a built reservoir and water channels. The fortress, preserved to a considerable height, was almost entirely excavated and went through a full conservation treatment. The caravanserai, which includes a bath, is almost unexcavated and is preserved to a height of maximum four courses. The water reservoir was partially excavated.

2.2 Kazra
A small, isolated fortress, measuring 5.0x5.5 meters and next to it a small cultic site. The fortress is preserved to a height of about three meters and received a full conservation treatment.

2.3 Nekarot
This site has four components. The first is a fortress of 7.8x8.0 meters. The second is an area of partially excavated structures of not yet identified plan and function. The third element is a small watch tower of 3x4 meters and the fourth a well hidden built water cistern. The fortress and the water cistern were conserved and are the focus of the site for visitors.

2.4 Khan Saharonim
A large structure inside the Makhtesh Ramon, measuring 42x42 square meters. The structure, with large central courtyard surrounded by rooms served undoubtedly as a caravanserai. The khan underwent two cycles of intensive conservation campaigns and work is still carried on. Not all rooms have been excavated, as part of the policy. Some very delicate elements, such as an oven, were backfilled.
2.5 Mahmal
A fortress measuring 6.5x7.0 meters with water cistern and an ascent from the floor of the makhtesh to the top of the cliff.
The ascent is also man made, taking advantage of soft geological layer which made it possible to create the ascent without having to cut hard rock.

2.6 Ovdat
A Nabatean/Byzantine city built on top of a hill along the ancient road. This large site includes burial and residential caves, houses, industrial installations (such as wine presses), temple, churches, water installations, large Roman army camp, bath house and fortifications. Only part has been excavated but the full size and boundaries of the city can be recognized from the remains on surface.
The valleys around the city are rich with remains of ancient agriculture, such as terraces and water collection systems. Nearby is a modern experimental farm for the study and reintroduction of these ancient systems.

2.7 Shivta
A large village or town, prosperous as a result of the Incense Route. The site has been just partially excavated, though thoroughly studied and documented. This fortified settlement includes residential areas, streets, churches, stables, wine presses, a structure called "the Governor's house", water cisterns and a large water reservoir.
Some of the houses and churches are preserved to a considerable height. Shivta is also surrounded by agricultural fields, representing a big variety of Nabatean techniques. (described in detail in the nomination dossier).

2.8 Mamshit
This is a large city which like Shivta, is not located along the main route, but was part of the route's hinterland. The site was intensively excavated though large parts are still intact. Mamshit was surrounded by a wall and includes impressive residential buildings (some with frescoes), churches (some with mosaic floors), bath house, stables, a market building, water cisterns and cemetery and caravanserai outside the city walls.
In the wadi (valley) nearby there is an impressive, well preserved dam, still holding the water in winter.
2.9 Haluza
The most northern city, build next to the ancient road and the closest to the destination port of Ghaza. Just small excavations were conducted on this site exposing mainly the theatre. The excavations were recently backfilled as a conservation measure.

2.10 Various installations
Along the nominated section of the route there exist different ancient small structures such as tombs, tiny cultic complexes and other structures of unidentified function – possibly remains of camping sites (such as "Jacob's ladder"). They were all surveyed and documented but not excavated. All these remains are protected by law.

2.11 The Road
Several sections of the road were obviously cleared and marked by curb stones. This is the situation mainly where there are no clear natural features to mark the route. Several milestones were discovered along the route and are still in place. Although these are movable objects, they are included in the nomination since they are integral elements of the route.
3. Legal protection

- The incense route and the Nabatean cities are all within the boundaries of legally designated National Parks and Nature Reserves – as defined by the specific law (attached to the nomination file). Their buffer zones, defined for the WH nomination, are also within designated National Parks and Nature Reserves.
- National Parks and Nature Reserves are legally protected by several laws.

Based on the Planning and Construction law, a national Master Plan (Tama 8) has been prepared for National Parks and Nature Reserves. The plan was approved by the Minister of Interior and got a legal status. The plan identifies the sites and areas from which national parks and nature reserves will be nominated and could be seen as an equivalent of the WH Tentative List, but at national level and with legal status.
- For a site to become officially a national park or nature reserve, a second phase of nomination and designation is required, specific for each site. In this phase larger scale maps are provided, boundaries and rules established. The designation becomes legal when approved by the Minister of Interior. (Designation maps with the legal approvals are attached to the nomination file).
- "The National Parks and Nature Reserves law" is the legal basis for the establishment of the INPA (Israel Nature and Parks Authority). The law defines what National Parks and Nature Reserves are, the structure of the organization and its roles to develop, protect and manage the sites. (text attached to the nomination file).

- The other significant law for protection of cultural heritage is "The Law of Antiquities 1978". It defines archaeology and "antiquities" and the legal tools for its protection. According to this law "antiquity" is everything made by men before the year 1700 AD. No action or activity can take place on such site without the approval of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA).

- A follow up on this law is the "Antiquities Authority Law", establishing the antiquities authority and defining its role and structure (prior to this law the organization was a department within the Ministry of Education and Culture).

(All the ancient cities and the structures covered by this nomination are considered antiquities, and protected by the laws).

Texts of both laws are annexed under the proper chapter of the nomination file.
4. Structure of the management and protection organizations

4.1 Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA)

-The organization responsible for the management of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, hence the nominated area, is the INPA.

-Its responsibility covers designation process, protection, development, maintenance, management and any other activity related to the designated area.

-The Authority has been established and operates through a specific legislation (see previous paragraph) and is directly under the Ministry of Environment.

-Decisions concerning general policies and national budgets are taken by the central body. Decisions on routine activities in the district are the jurisdiction of the district itself.

-As the following organigram shows, the center has a planning unit and a chief archaeologist, while the district has specific personnel responsible for conservation and other issues related to the sites under their responsibility.

-Most detailed planning and big conservation and development works are done with consultants.

-All routine management, monitoring, maintenance, inspection and surveillance are done by the permanent staff.

Following is the organigram of INFRA and of its Southern district, responsible for the Incense Route.

The organizational structure – central office

Board of Directors
Director General
Deputy DG
Chief Scientist
Spokesman
Legal Adviser
Dept. of International relations.
Education dept.
Computer dept.
PR dept.

8
Science Division
Terrestrial and Aquatic Ecology dept.
Physical and Environmental dept.
Scientific Information and GIS dept.

Planning and Development Division
Sites Development dept.
Statutory dept.
Open Spaces dept.
Environmental Monitoring Unit.
Archaeology and Heritage dept.

Enforcement Division
Enforcement dept.
Safety and Security dept.
Visitors supervision unit.
Claims and Authorization dept.

Administration and Finance Division
Finances and Budget dept.
Logistics dept.
Marketing dept.

Human Resources Division
Manpower dept.
Personnel Training

Districts – North, Center, South, Eilat, Judea & Samaria.
"Green Patrol"
South District organizational structure

District Director
Deputy Director
Enforcement Coordinator
Regional planner
District Ecologist
Tourism and Education unit
Conservation and Development unit
Maintenance unit
Army coordinator

Sub districts (regions) – Masada, Negev Mountains, Northern Negev, Arava Valley, National Parks (with their staff), Nature Reserves, Education Centers.

In addition, a special forum has been created within the organization, to discuss issues related only to WH sites and sites on the Israeli WH Tentative list. The forum meets regularly and is chaired by the Director General of the INPA

4.2 Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA)

-The Antiquities Authority is not responsible for the development and management of either national parks or nature reserves, but has a crucial role in the sites defined legally as archaeological ones. Every development, conservation or excavation plan must receive the approval of IAA, prior to its implementation.

-The Antiquities Authority supervises the work, together with others, and often provides the professional training.

-Another responsibility of IAA is prevention of looting of archaeological sites, even when they are inside national parks and nature reserves.

-IAA has a large central organization, including a professional conservation unit. Among its units are the “surveys and excavations” and “prevention of looting.”
- The daily activities in a district are the responsibility of the district office and its sub-district units. Their staff consists mainly of archaeologists, and their main activity is inspection.

- The responsibility for conservation is of the central unit, which does not have a parallel in the district. The conservation unit consists of architects, engineers, conservators and archaeologist.

5. Preparation process

- The various laws and with them the establishment of the managing organizations existed in Israel long before the development of the concept of management plans.

- The National Parks, Nature Reserves and Archaeological sites, were designated, developed, protected and managed prior to management plans becoming a requirement and known professional tool. Therefore, the whole system existed and operated for many years, undergoing modifications along the way.

- In the past, the designation and planning of a site were based on understanding of its cultural and natural values. The new management planning process of previously designated sites included the assemblage of all the existing tools and a better definition of the values.

- Another important contribution of the new planning process is the identification of different stakeholders and their respective values and interest.

- Two facts made the process easier for the incense route sites – one, that they are all on state owned land and second, that no one lives within the designated areas. Therefore in the designated national parks and nature reserves there are no conflicts resulting from ownership and land use – whether in these nominated sites or any other similar sites in the country.
Identified stakeholders for this plan:

The main stakeholders are the following:

- Researchers and mainly archaeologists and historians (since this is a cultural nomination, natural issues are not mentioned, though some of the areas were designated as nature reserves for their natural qualities)
- Conservation specialists.
- Students and interested public.
- Visitors of all kinds. Those who come to visit archaeological sites, others who visit the region and the desert, groups, individuals, locals, foreigners, physically challenged, drivers, walking tours etc.
- Inhabitants of the region.
- Tourism operators and state authorities.
- The army as user of large areas (though not inside the parks and nature reserves).
- Authorities responsible for infrastructure, such as roads and electricity.
- The flora and fauna and the nature in general.
- Development and exploitation interest groups, such as industry and quarries.

Each interest group identified the values and special interest it has in the sites. Conflicts were then identified and solutions were looked for to minimize them. Some of the issues were seen as having intrinsic and potential permanent conflict potential. Examples of this are the high tension electricity lines and national roads. Such problems are dealt with at highest national levels on an individual basis. In all cases, plans have to be submitted to the INPA and IAA and difficult cases are discussed at the highest national planning levels. Many issues are presented to the public for consultation.

- Cultural and natural values are the most important in the planning considerations, and no solution is allowed to compromise these values.

- As far as research is concerned, the existing policy for new excavations is that applicant for dig permit has to specify the scientific goals, to show on a plan the exact points of excavation and to prove that there is budget allocated for conservation. No excavation permit is granted without considerable budget and staff for conservation, during and after dig.
INPA policy is to prevent the exposure of new archaeological remains which it is not sure it can maintain, whether for policy, finances, lack of public interest or any other reason. In case such excavation does take place, for proper scientific reasons, it has to be backfilled at the end of investigation. The theatre in Haluz, for example, has been recently backfilled.

The interests of visitors, including presentation, conservation and development of the sites, for our and next generations are objectives of INPA and some of the reasons for its existence. Ovdat and Mamshit were extensively developed for the benefit of the visitors. Other sites on the route are less developed but all preserved, maintained, accessible and safe (see "visitor management").

Scientific values together with values for the visitors and threats to conservation are the three main factors taken into consideration for the establishing of work priorities.

The economic value, whether for local communities, for INPRA or for the state is considered as most relevant for sustainable conservation and development, and therefore receives highest attention. The economic potential is the result of income from entrance fees, longer residence of tourists in the country, attraction of more visitors and the creation of jobs in the region.

The army has its own needs for camp sites and for training. The Negev is the largest open area in the country, with a low numbers of inhabitants, therefore with good potential for camps and training grounds. As shown on the organigram of the INPRA southern district, there is a special staff member in charge of co-ordination with the military. In camps and training are never conducted within designated national parks or nature reserves.

The various values of flora and fauna are the reasons for the designation of some of the Nature reserves. Therefore all plans take into consideration any possible risk which might be caused to the fauna, plants or geology of the region. Makhtesh Ramon, for example, crossed by the incense route, is fully protected from the impact of visitors, quarrying and development. The Makhtesh is quite rich with minerals which used to be extracted in the past – but all quarrying has stopped and the quarries were rehabilitated.

The different stakeholders are considered as legitimate interest groups and their values are being considered for every and each plan – but, the cultural and natural values of the area are at the top of the list, always have the priority, and no
development plan is allowed to compromise them. This rule is the basis of the management plan of the site.

6. Staff

As already explained in the paragraph on the structure of the managing organizations – there is a central body, and the district, each with their staff and budgets. In each division there is the administrative and more general staff and the specialized one, directly responsible for specific issues.

The district is divided into several sub-districts, three of which cover the incense route. In the district there are the following specific functions:

Conservation
Development
Education and outreach
Maintenance

These teams work in full cooperation and coordination with each other, and prepare together their annual work plans. Some of them had specific and specialized training, mainly in conservation, while others developed their skills and expertise on site.

In addition to these teams there is a large group of rangers, in charge of inspection.

The cities have each a site manager with own staff, responsible for the maintenance and all daily activities.

Detailed conservation plans are prepared together with consultants, as is usually the case with big conservation plans. In such cases the implementation is supervised by the INPA staff expert.

The staff of the southern district of the IAA consists mainly of trained archaeologists. Their main role is to inspect activities on archaeological sites. They also review plant for conservation and development, and conservation teams of IAA executed large projects within the national parks.
7. Budgets

The budget of the authorities and their districts are in most cases not the result of management plan. They are changing and being updated every year according to availability of funds and of work plans. Work plans do follow short and long term objectives, but are sometimes directed by emergencies and necessity. As in every work plan, the ones for different parts of the incense route include the fixed and routine items, like maintenance and monitoring and inspection, as well as large items of development and conservation. For the latter long term plans are prepared and the annual work is a fraction of the larger project. The fraction is as large as the budget permits.

The sources of income of the INPA are government, entrance fees, concessions and sometimes donations. In the past, large development projects were sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism.

The budget of IAA comes from the government and from projects it executes and is paid for.

8. Plans

Conservation - All the smaller sites and fortresses went through an intensive cycle of conservation. The excavated parts of the cities, except for Haluza, (which has been recently backfilled) went also through at least one conservation cycle. Lately conservation took place in the Mahmal fortress, and the Saharonim caravanserai is under long term and permanent conservation activity.

Conservation plans are updated every year according to findings of the monitoring and available budget.

Research - There are no active excavations on any of the nominated sites nor plans to carry out such works in the near future. Today, research activity is focused on gathering, studying and publishing all information from past, unpublished excavations.

Development - These plans focus in the coming years on improving presentation, accessibility and services for the visitors. No new areas of the archaeological sites are being developed.
9. Maintenance and Monitoring

Maintenance is one of the most important activities of the district and the site managers. This activity is carried out along the route and its sites and in the cities, by or under supervision of the trained staff.

The staff in charge of maintenance has an annual work plan and routine activities, as well as clear indicators which direct the establishment of priorities.

Monitoring because in the last years another routine, important task, carried out by all field staff — including site managers, inspectors, conservators and rangers. Reactive monitoring, is the task of the conservation specialists.

Training is provided to all staff members. They participate in several sessions discussing indicators, causes of deterioration, risks and monitoring documentation.

Documentation includes detailed reports and photos, taken during monitoring activity.

10. Surveillance and Protection

-Large parts of the nominated sites are open natural areas with remains of ancient agriculture and routes, which practically do not require special protection, such as fences. These are protected by inspection and monitoring. There are no threatening land uses, since there are no inhabitants in the designated areas and every activity requires the approval of INPA.

-Night stay and camping are not allowed in the reserves. Most of the open area is restricted for vehicles and no motor traffic is allowed on the incense route itself or wherever it could cause damage to cultural or natural properties.

-Ovdat and Mamshit are fenced and at their entrance there is barrier. They have 24 hours guards. Shiva is guarded by permanent maintenance person who lives next to the site.

11. Visitor management

As already mentioned, the declared role of the Israel Nature and Park Authority is to protect the designated sites — while developing them for the benefit of the public.
Hence, visitors management is one of the most important activities of INPA. It covers diverse aspects, some of which are indicated below:

**Information**
- Special direction signage, being part of the official Public Works Department signs, is installed in all relevant roads interseceptions and next to the entrances to the sites.
- Written information is available in different languages, as short leaflets or longer brochures. They include general information on the area and specific information, with map, of the site.
- Additional information is available on INPA’s website.
- There are signs on the sites for warning, direction and information.
- In Ovdat there is a visitors center, where one can watch a movie about the incense and the route as well as a small exhibition of objects from the site.

**Services and commerces**
- Visitors have to pay entrance fees in Ovdat and Mamshit. At the entrance to the sites there is a ticket booth and parking lot.
- Shiva is free of entrance fee but has a parking lot.
- The sites are accessible by car and on foot, except for those parts were driving is not allowed.
- All sites have public toilets.
- Sites have visitors’ paths, with hand railing and fences wherever required for safety.
- Some sites have special paths for physically challenged visitors, including those on wheel chairs. The policy is to continue provision of this kind of paths wherever appropriate. Much of the budget for adaptation of the sites for physically challenged visitors come from a special Social Security fund.
- In Ovdat and Mamshit there are restaurants and souvenir shops. In Shiva one can buy drinks and order a meal. At the entrance to the visitors' route in the Makhtesh there is a Bedouin style restaurant (large tent), toilets and even night stay facilities.
- In all the organized sites there are places for drinking water.
Site presentation
- Most of the sites have signs with historical-archaeological information. The signs and their content are result of collaborative effort of designers, curators, archaeologists and information experts. They are designed to be short, informative, long lasting, "vandalism resistant" and the least intrusive possible.
- In all sites reconstruction at an anastylosis level took place for the sake of presentation and interpretation. Wherever anastylosis was impossible, but scientific information was sufficient, conceptual reconstruction, using modern materials like metal and industrially processed wood, has been carried out for presentation purposes. All these interventions are light and fully reversible.
- Metal figures, sometimes of grotesque character, are installed at different points in Ovdat to represent people, animals and city activities.
- Metal cast models of buildings are placed in several points in Ovdat.
- At some sites there are high observation points from which visitors can have a better understanding of the surroundings and environment.

Annexes
As explained at the beginning, there are no specific annexes to this document, since all possible annexes are part of the nomination dossier. Those include:
- WH nomination maps.
- Designation maps of the National Parks and Nature Reserves.
- The relevant protection laws
- Selection of leaflets
Mr Francesco Bandarin
Director
World Heritage Centre
UNESCO
Paris

31 May 2004

Dear Francesco,

Re: The Incense and Spice Route and the Desert Cities in the Negev.

With regard to the above nomination, we request that the serial nomination be named:

The Incense Route and the Desert Cities in the Negev.

I would appreciate this request to be noted in the documents for the forthcoming World Heritage Committee Meeting.

Yours sincerely

Professor Michael Turner
Chairman, Israel World Heritage Committee

Copies: HE Jaques Rovah, Israel Ambassador to UNESCO
Daniel BarElly, Secretary-General, Israel National Commission for UNESCO
ICOMOS, Rue de Federation, Paris
Avi Shoket, Chairman, Historic Itineraries Committee, Israel National
Commission for UNESCO
Dr Tsvika Taub, Chief Archaeologist, Israel Nature and Parks Authority
Mr Francesco Bandarin  
Director,  
World Heritage Centre  
UNESCO  
Paris  
26 June 2005

Dear Francesco

Re: Israel Comments on the ICOMOS Evaluation.  
The Incense Route and the Desert Cities of the Negev.  
#1107

Further to the decision of the previous session of the World Heritage Committee, we hereby submit our comments regarding the ICOMOS evaluation to the above mentioned nomination and correct 'factual errors' which include certain oversights or omissions in the final text with updated information and in order to prevent any misinterpretations of the evaluation. As there is currently no mechanism for receiving the comments directly from the Advisory Bodies or the Centre, we are dependent on the World Heritage website with all the accompanying restrictions. We hasten to add that Israel has full confidence in the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS evaluation process.

The comments are given according to the pages in the ICOMOS evaluation document and focus on the operational heading.

187 Left
- Site-specific management plans were submitted with the nomination. Management is ongoing, and an updated comprehensive document has been submitted to the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies.

187 right
- Since the ICOMOS report a comprehensive strategy has been put in place including the removal of undocumented restorations (see below).
There is no army training in the proposed area for nomination.

- Annual visitors' data (2004)
  - Mamshit: 20,000
  - Haluza: (few)
  - Shivta: 15,000
  - Avdat: 35,000

- During peak seasons additional staff is employed.

- The INPA has a clearly marked four-wheel drive trail with physical barriers and enforcement procedures to ensure that the nomination areas remain off-limit.

- In the framework of the comprehensive strategy, the reconstruction at Mamshit has been removed including the gate beam. (see pictures)

- At Haluza, a maintenance plan is being effected with the first stage of an archaeological back-fill and wall stabilization completed this spring.

188 left

- Mamshit - the undocumented reconstructions have been removed. The pathways, where appropriate, follow the original routes, while others, are rerouted in order to protect sensitive parts of the site in need of conservation.

- At Haluza, with the completion of the archaeological backfill and post excavation works, further conservation will take place according to the newly adopted strategy.

- In conclusion, the works referred to in the evaluation are reversible and have been corrected.
189 left

- All new works have been stopped pending the archaeological strategy being implemented, while previous undocumented reconstructions are being removed.

189 right

- The existing management plan has been amplified and submitted to the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies.
- Israel welcomes the ICOMOS recommendation and proposes an experts meeting for the harmonization of sites. Informal discussions with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Palestinian Authority have been taking place.

Thanking you for your assistance,
Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Professor Michael Turner
Chair, Israel World Heritage Committee

Copies: HE Jacques Revah, Israel Ambassador to UNESCO
Mr. Daniel Bar-Elit, Secretary-General, Israel National Commission for UNESCO
ICOMOS – International
The Negev Desert (Israel)
No 1107

1. BASIC DATA

State Party: Israel
Name of property: The Incense and Spice Road and the Desert Cities in the Negev
Location: Negev Region
Date received: 31 January 2003
Category of property:
In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a site. In terms of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, paragraph 39, this is a cultural landscape.

Brief description:
Four Nabatean towns, associated fortresses and agricultural landscapes in the Negev Desert, spread along routes linking them into the Mediterranean end of the Incense and Spice route, together reflect the hugely profitable trade in Frankincense from south Arabia to the Mediterranean, which flourished from the third century BC until the second century AD, and the way the harsh desert was colonised for agriculture through the use of highly sophisticated irrigation systems.

2. THE PROPERTY

Description
The nominated site lies in the Negev Desert – which as a whole accounts for two thirds of Israel’s land area. Its name means dry land.

The nominated towns, fortresses, caravanserais and fossilised agricultural landscapes that reflect the prosperity of the Nabatean Spice trade over five hundred years from the third century BC, stretch out across a hundred-kilometre section of the desert from Haluza in the northwest to Moa in the east on the Jordanian border. These sites were part of a network of trade routes which transported frankincense and myrrh, extracted from thorn trees in what are now Oman, Yemen and Somalia, to the Mediterranean and North Africa – a total distance of some two thousand kilometres.

Frankincense was used in enormous quantities in the Hellenistic and Roman world, as incense for temples, and for medicinal and cosmetic purposes. Such was the demand that its price was at times higher than gold. The demand prompted elaborate measures for its supply. In the Negev, its trade fostered the development of substantial towns and for five hundred years their livelihood largely depended on continuous supply.

Ten of the sites (four towns, Haluza, Mamshit, Avdat and Shivta, four fortresses, Kazra, Nekarot, Saharonim and Makhmal, and two caravanserais) lie along or near the main trade route from Petra, now in Jordan and the capital of Nabatean power, to Gaza, while the town of Mamshit straddles the route leading north from Petra to Damascus.

The central Nabatean desert is divided physically into two by the Makhtesh Ramón cliff and crater, some 40 kilometres long and 300 metres deep. South of the cliff the desert topography is harsh, with many ‘wadis’, bare mountain ridges, lofty plateaux and deep canyons, and has very low rainfall and slight vegetation. In spite of these hazards and disadvantages, the trade routes navigated this inhospitable terrain in order to avoid the Romans who occupied Israel north of the Negev. Four of the key sites are in this area – cities with fortresses and towers developed to service and protect the trade routes and with sufficient infrastructure to sustain through agriculture a population in this arid area. This meant the development of terraced fields serviced by hugely sophisticated irrigation systems that were based on elaborated mechanisms for trapping every drop of the slight rainfall the area receives.

North of the Makhtesh Ramón cliff, the area is by contrast more hospitable. It is dry but not barren and mostly flat with wide-open spaces. The rainfall is slightly higher and the vegetation more varied and widespread. This allowed for a large pastoralist population, which seemed to have deterred the Romans.

The nomination consists of sites that represent the rise of Nabatean control of this Incense route in the Negev, following the domestication of the camel in the third century BC, and then its subsequent decline in the second century AD with the Roman occupation of Petra. The sites have been preserved due to their almost total abandonment in the 7th century AD.

All the proposed sites are surrounded by a buffer zone.

The nominated property is in four sections: the landscape and a 50 km section of the route from Petra to Gaza between Avdat and Moa; the town of Haluza further north along the same route; the town of Shivta, just west of this route and the town of Manshit on the route from Petra to Damascus.

The main sites are:

**Towns**
- Avdat – Oboda
- Haluza
- Mamshit Kurnub
- Shivta – Sobata

**Fortresses and Caravanserais**
- Moa Fortress and Caravanserais
- Kasra Fort
- Nekarot Fortress
- Ein Saharonim – Ramon Gate Caravanserais
- Makhmal Ascent and Fortress
- Graffon Fortress
- Milestones along the route
• Miscellaneous remains
• Road Sections
• Agricultural evidence

Towns
Avdat – Oboda:
On the western edge of the Ramon-Nafkha highlands on the edge of a promontory 80 metres above the surrounding plains, the town covers an area 300 x 400 metres and lies within a squared limestone wall. Remains in the town include domestic dwellings, a bathhouse, a Nabatean temple, a fort, a main street, two churches and a caravanserai.
The town walls have survived to a considerable height. In places arch-supported roofs also survive.

Haluza:
This, the northernmost town, is surrounded by shifting sand dunes, which have obscured some of the building evidence. Recent excavations have uncovered remains of streets, a winepress, a theatre, two churches and a tower.

Mamshit Kurnub:
This easternmost town near modern Dimona has been extensively excavated and in places partially reconstructed. It consists of a town wall, caravanserai, large private houses, market street bathhouses, etc. Surviving material includes frescoes and mosaics.

Shivta – Sobata:
Slightly off the main trade route, this town in the central Negev has, apart from its main monuments, not been excavated but nevertheless exhibits a remarkable degree of conservation. There are remains of houses with two and three floors, churches with apses intact, streets, a governor’s house, a town square, a farm, winepresses etc. Built of hard limestone, it is unwalled.

Fortresses and Caravanserais

Moa Fortress and Caravanserai:
Moa is at the eastern end of the section of the route nominated and sits near the Jordanian border. Both the fortress and caravanserai are of stone built from dressed limestone. The fortress sits on the top of a knoll overlooking the caravanserai on the plain below. Walls survive to 3 m height in the fortress and around 1.25 m in the caravanserai. There are remains of an elaborate water system, which channelled water from an underground spring, via a pool and a canal, to the bathhouse in the caravanserai. Agricultural implements were found in the fortress.

Kasra Fort:
To the west of Moa, the small square Kasra Fortress sits on a flat mountaintop above the Kasra Wadi. The walls of cut fossil limestone survive to 3 m in height.

Nekarot Fortress:
The next site to the west, Nekarot Fortress, consists of a square tower and adjoining yard, a ruined complex whose use is uncertain, as well as a small watchtower and a hidden pool complex built to retain floodwater. All buildings are constructed of squared limestone blocks. The tower walls remain to 3 m high. Remarkably, the water pool building has its arched roof supports, stone roof slabs, walls, windows and canal intact, and also displays evidence of fine three-layered lime/gypsum plaster.

Ein Saharonim – Ramon Gate Caravanserai:
Further west again, is this large Caravanserai built of soft clay stone and fired clay brick and containing rooms for workshops, kitchens, living quarters and washrooms. Walls survive up to approximately 2 m high in parts of the site. In the surrounding area are extensive remains of agricultural terraces.

Makmal Ascent and Fortress:
On the northern edge of Ramon Makhtesh is this square fort and an associated pool to catch floodwater. Both are built of squared limestone blocks and survive to around 1.5-2 m high.

Graffon Fortress:
Similar in construction to the Makmal fortress, the walls survive to just less than a metre high.

Milestones along the route:
Twenty-two milestones, in two groups of five and six, have been discovered in the Nafha Highlands and the Ramon Makhtesh areas between the Makmal Fort and the Saharonim Fort. They are constructed of cylindrical stones, either two or three in each milestone, supported on a square stone base.

Miscellaneous remains:
Along the route are numerous remains of field-stones arranged in a variety of different ways near rest sites, roads intersections, dangerous ascents etc. Some are markers, while others seem to have been offering or worship sites. A few of the installations are large – as much as 100 m in length.

Road Sections:
Evidence of the road between sites, wide enough to carry camel or mule traffic, can be found in place along the length of the nominated section. The road is visible in the way that fieldstones have been cleared from the surface and arranged along the edges. In places the road has been ‘revetted’ on steep slopes. Milestones mark the way.

Agricultural evidence:
The Nabateans had to produce food for their inhabitants but also for the huge incense caravans crossing the country several times a year. In spite of the arid desert conditions, with rainfall of only 100 mm a year, large-scale agriculture was developed using extremely sophisticated systems of water collection.

Water collection and irrigation used several methods:
• Channelling;
• Dams – these are mostly small but there are hundreds of thousands of them scattered across every valley and creek;
Cisterns and reservoirs – these were cut in bedrock, created by dams or consisted of built structures within a building and all collected flood water.

Evidence for all these is widespread around Avdat and the central Negev, as are remains of ancient field systems strung along riverbeds and on the slopes of hills, where they are characterised by myriads of stone collection cairns.

The Nabatean were also pastoralists breeding sheep, cattle, goats and camels in considerable numbers.

The combination of towns and their associated agricultural and pastoral landscape makes a complete fossilised cultural landscape.

History

From the 3rd century BC until 2nd century AD, the Nabateans transported frankincense and myrrh across the desert from Arabia to the Mediterranean coast, a distance of some 1,800 km.

This trade was fostered by demands for luxury goods in the Hellenistic and Roman world. It was made possible by the knowledge of the desert dwelling Nabateans, who could bridge the ‘impassable’ desert and travel into the southern Arabian Peninsula the source of the frankincense, a world unknown to the Romans and those living along the coast of the Mediterranean.

The Nabateans moved into the Negev area in the 6th century BC after the Edomites had abandoned their country and invaded the Judean plains.

The Nabateans grew rich on the profits of the trade. The Romans consistently tried to take over the trade, and their hostile influence meant that the Nabateans had to take routes to the south of Roman territory and thus traverse and secure some of the most difficult terrain in the Negev. They developed towns and forts to defend the route and caravanserai to provide for travellers. To support their own population and those of the merchant caravans, necessitated colonising the harshest of dry, rocky deserts.

By the 2nd century AD all the Nabatean towns had become annexed to the Roman Province of Arabia after the Roman conquest of Petra. The heyday of Nabatean control of the routes was at an end. Although Roman control heralded two centuries of prosperity for the towns as they became incorporated into the defence system of the Roman Empire under Diocletian, it meant a decline of the trade routes as the Romans diverted trade through Egypt.

Most of the towns were finally abandoned after the Arab conquest of 636 AD and have lain largely undisturbed since.

Management regime

Legal provision:

All the nominated area is State owned.

All cultural heritage elements within the nominated area are protected by national legislation under the following laws:

• Israel Antiquities Law 1978;
• Antiquities Authority Law 1989;

The first two laws protect man-made remains made before 1700 AD and thus cover all aspects of this nomination.

The third law defines the role and structure of national parks and nature reserves. All parts of the nomination are within designated national parks or nature reserves.

Management structure:

The National Parks and Nature Reserves Authority manages the site on a daily basis. The Israel Antiquities Authority manages the conservation and excavation activities of designated structures.

Management is carried out at national regional and local levels as follows:

National:

Parks and Reserves Authority - Policy issues.

Antiquities Authority – formulating conservation and inspection.

Regional:

Parks and Reserves Authority – work plans.

Antiquities Authority – excavations and inspection.

Local:

Antiquities Authority – carries out conservation and inspection work.

Resources:

All finance comes from the Parks and Reserves Authority budget, which comes in turn from the government and from income. The four towns have specific budgets. Elsewhere in low-income years, funds are spent on maintenance and protection only, with conservation taking place when exterior funds are available.

Justification by the State Party (summary)

The Frankincense and Spice Road was as significant to the world’s cultures as was the Silk Road. The political, economic, social and cultural significance of this route is indisputable.

3. ICOMOS EVALUATION

Actions by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS Mission visited the site in August 2003.

ICOMOS has also consulted its International Scientific Committee on Cultural Itineraries.
Conservation

Conservation history:

This is not detailed in the nomination in one section. However, descriptions of individual sites reveal the following:

1956-1990: Mamshit – extensive excavations and reconstruction;

1960s, 1970s and 1980s: Avdat – excavations and reconstruction;

1990: Ein Saharonim – Ramon Gate Caravanserai: restoration;

1995: Moa Fortress – restoration;

1997: Moa Fortress – restoration;

1996: Kasra Fortress – restoration;

1997: Ein Saharonim – Ramon Gate Caravanserai: restoration;

2002: (planned) Makhmal Fortress – restoration;

(planned) Mamshit – restoration.

State of conservation:

The state of conservation of the majority of monuments is good. The exception is the site of Haluza, which lacks post-exavagation consolidation (see below).

Management:

The Parks Authority employs a Chief Archaeologist and a Chief Architect at national level and a large expert staff of archaeologists, planners and conservators.

At a regional level it has one trained conservation expert and a core group, which receives basic training from Antiquities Authority experts to enable them to know what they are able to undertake without the intervention of experts from the Antiquities Authority. Regional staff also includes rangers and site managers.

There is no Management Plan for the whole nominated areas. The dossier however states that the component parts of a Management Plan do exist. Each National Park and Nature Reserve has a Master Plan for the whole accompanied by local plans for smaller areas. Sites also have development plans, staffing plans and annual work plans.

The towns of Avdat, Shivta and Mamshit have conservation and tourism development plans. The fortresses and some of the water installations have conservation plans, much of which has been implemented.

All sites have a Site’s File which covers list of properties, photographic documentation, and condition assessments.

Although annual work plans are in place for each site, these do not seem to be detailed enough to provide guidance for short-term small conservation projects in response to deterioration due to harsh desert conditions. Such plans it is suggested should be put in place for each site as soon as possible.

There is no evidence of an archaeological strategy for the whole site. Given the problems perceived at two of the sites – see below – it is suggested that such a strategy be developed as soon as possible which would cover archaeological research, non-destructive recording and approaches to stabilisation and repair. Such a strategy should inform against reconstruction where evidence is not totally available. It should apply across the whole site and give advice for each of the major sites.

Risk analysis:

The nomination dossier sets out four areas of risk as follows:

Development pressures: The buffer zones for the nominated area are large and are within nominated national parks and nature reserves. This means development plans should have no effect on them. The only possible antipathetic activities mentioned are army training. Care would need to be taken that this training did not disturb evidence for ancient agriculture.

Environmental pressures: Lack of regular human activity in the area (apart from staff working on the sites) means that there are no direct environmental threats as a result of human intervention. The main environmental threats come from ‘natural’ causes – the extreme temperatures of the desert which impact on the building material.

Natural disasters: The main threats are earthquakes and flash floods. In recent years most of the main structures have been consolidated to help them resist earthquakes. Before and after the rainy season, drainage systems are checked to ensure water is diverted away from the sites.

Visitor tourism pressure: No information is given on visitor numbers but mention is made of pressure at peak seasons. During this period all rangers are permanently on site.

Four wheel drive vehicles driven by visitors are a threat. These are countered by strict rules on access.

To these can be added:

Reconstruction: The site of Mamshit seems to have suffered from ‘creative’ reconstruction of certain elements – see below. At Haluza and at one of the forts excavation work does not appear to have been followed by systematic consolidation. In order to avoid further inappropriate work, an archaeological strategy should be put in place generally and for each of the major sites.

Lack of management: Most of the sites appear well conserved and managed. The exception appears to be the city of Haluza, which did not seem to be the subject of regular maintenance or management.

Authenticity and integrity

The abandonment of the sites in the 7th century and the lack of population in the region have given the sites considerable protection from deliberate change.

Apart from two notable exceptions, the site overall seems to have authenticity, and if the towns and forts are combined with their trade routes and their agricultural hinterland, in all they provide a very complete picture of a desert civilisation strung along a trade route and thus have high integrity.

The two exceptions are Mamshit and Haluza.
Mamshit was partially reconstructed in the 19th century. Of more concern are recent interventions. The Gate to the city is currently being reconstructed on the basis of a mosaic design from another city; the commercial quarter has been recently reconstructed with a grant from the Ministry of Tourism and pathways within the city have been reconstructed away from their original routes. The overall effect is scenographic rather than a scientific approach to interpretation and documentation.

At Haluza, part of the site has been excavated and this seems to have left the site with stones not in situ as any post excavation consolidation work has been carried out to consolidate and reposition stones. The site is thus confusing and has lost some of its integrity.

For both of these sites the authenticity seems to have been partially compromised.

**Comparative evaluation**

No comparative evaluation is provided in the nomination dossier. Clearly the nominated area is part of a wider network of trade routes used to transport incense and spices form Arabia to the Mediterranean. The key questions are whether the section being put forward has distinctive qualities not found in the rest of the route and whether the nominated area covers sufficient of those qualities in spatial terms.

Petra the Nabatean capital is already inscribed, as is part of the route in Oman where four desert fortresses and a portion of the route have been inscribed.

The section of the route crossing the Negev is distinctive for one key reason. Because of threats from the Romans to the north, the route across the central Negev had to negotiate some of the more inhospitable terrain in the desert with tracks climbing high ridge and crossing wadis rather than following their line. It also necessitated the establishment of settlements in an area previously inhabited only by nomadic pastoralists.

The trade in frankincense thus led directly to the colonisation of the desert and the development of a series of towns, which flourished as a result of the lucrative trade; perhaps equally significantly the towns prompted the development of ‘desert agriculture’ a unique response to feeding large numbers of peoples in areas of low rainfall. Around the towns the desert was transformed into fields and pasture through a sophisticated system of dams, canals, and cisterns, which were a sustainable response to the particular terrain.

The route modified the desert – what remains is a very complete picture of that modification in the area of the Negev where one finds unique environmental conditions.

The nominated site thus is distinctive in relation to other parts of the Frankincense trade route but is nevertheless part of the bigger picture.

**Outstanding universal value**

**General statement:**

The nominated site is of outstanding universal value for the following reasons. It:

- Presents a testimony to the economic power of frankincense in fostering a long desert supply route from Arabia to the Mediterranean in Hellenistic-Roman times, which promoted the development of towns, forts and caravanserais to control and manage that route;
- Displays an extensive picture of Nabatean technology over five centuries in town planning and building;
- Bears witness to the innovation and labour necessary to create an extensive and sustainable agricultural system in harsh desert conditions, reflected particularly in the sophisticated water conservation constructions.

**Evaluation of criteria:**

The site is nominated on the basis of criteria iii and v.

**Criterion iii:** The site bears an eloquent testimony to the economic, social and cultural importance of frankincense to the Hellenistic-Roman world. Such was the demand for frankincense, and its significance in religious and social traditions, that substantial Nabatean towns grew up in hostile desert conditions to service the supply routes form Arabia to the Mediterranean along the nominated part of the route in the Negev desert. The route provided a means of passage not only for frankincense and other trade goods but also for people and ideas.

**Criterion v:** The almost fossilised remains of towns, forts, caravanserais and agricultural systems strung out along the Spice route in the Negev desert, display an outstanding response to geological and economic conditions. Together, the remains show how trade in a high value commodity, frankincense, could generate a dramatic response in terms of sustainable settlement in a hostile desert environment. The remains display sophisticated agricultural systems, involving conserving every drop of water and optimising the use of cultivatable land, which produced a unique and extensive desert land management system that flourished for five centuries.

**4. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation for the future**

In order to address concerns over interventions at two of the sites, it is suggested that the State Party put in place an archaeological strategy for the whole site and also for each of the major towns which covers archaeological research, non-destructive recording and approaches to stabilisation and repair.

It is further recommended that there should be active management of Haluza and that steps should be taken to consolidate those parts of the site which have been excavated.

It is also suggested that the State Party amplify existing management plans with more detailed work plans to
provide guidance for short-term responsive, conservation projects.

**Recommendation with respect to inscription**

That the property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria iii and v:

**Criterion iii:** The Nabatean towns and their trade routes bear eloquent testimony to the economic, social and cultural importance of frankincense to the Hellenistic-Roman world. The routes also provided a means of passage not only for frankincense and other trade goods but also for people and ideas.

**Criterion v:** The almost fossilised remains of towns, forts, caravanserai and sophisticated agricultural systems strung out along the Spice route in the Negev desert, display an outstanding response to a hostile desert environment and one that flourished for five centuries.

ICOMOS, March 2004
**Le désert du Néguev (Israël)**

No 1107

1. IDENTIFICATION

État partie : Israël

Bien proposé : La Route de l’encens et des épices et les villes du désert du Néguev

Lieu : Région du Néguev

Date de réception : 31 janvier 2003

Catégorie de bien :

En termes de catégories de biens culturels, telles qu’elles sont définies à l’article premier de la Convention du patrimoine mondial de 1972, il s’agit d’un site. Aux termes du paragraphe 39 des Orientations devant guider la mise en œuvre de la Convention du patrimoine mondial, c’est un paysage culturel.

Brève description :

Quatre villes nabatéennes, les forteresses associées et des paysages agricoles s’étendaient dans le désert du Néguev le long d’une route qui les reliait à la pointe méditerranéenne de la Route de l’encens et des épices. Cet ensemble reflète le commerce incroyablement rentable de l’encens, commerce florissant du IIIe siècle avant J.-C au IIe siècle après J.-C. et la façon dont ce désert aride a été transformé pour l’agriculture en utilisant des systèmes d’irrigation très sophistiqués.

2. LE BIEN

Description

Le site proposé pour inscription se trouve dans le désert du Néguev, qui représente au total les deux tiers des terres d’Israël, et dont le nom signifie « terre aride ».

Les villes, les forteresses, les caravansérails et les paysages agricoles fossiles proposés pour inscription reflètent la prospérité du commerce nabatéen des épices sur cinq cents ans, à partir du IIe siècle avant J.-C. Ils s’étendent sur une centaine de kilomètres du désert, d’Haluza au nord-ouest à Moa à l’est, sur la frontière jordanienne. Ces sites s’inscrivaient dans un réseau de routes marchandes pour le transport de l’encens et de la myrrhe, extraits des arbres épineux depuis les régions qui sont maintenant le sultanat d’Oman, le Yémen et la Somalie, jusqu’à la Méditerranée et l’Afrique du nord - au total, quelque 2 000 km.

Les mondes hellénistique et romain utilisaient d’énormes quantités d’encens, dans les temples mais aussi à des fins médicinales et cosmétiques. La demande était telle qu’il coûtait à certaines époques plus cher que l’or, et imposait donc de prendre des mesures élaborées pour assurer son approvisionnement. Dans le Néguev, son commerce a encouragé l’apparition de villes importantes, qui ont tiré pendant cinq cents ans leur subsistance d’un approvisionnement en continu.

Dix de ces sites (quatre villes, Haluza, Mamshit, Avdat et Shivita, quatre forteresses, Kazra, Nekarot, Saharonim et Makhmal, et deux caravansérails) se trouvent le long des principales routes marchandes en provenance de Pétra, aujourd’hui en Jordanie et jadis capitale du pouvoir nabatéen, à Gaza, tandis que la ville de Mamshit enjambe la route qui part du nord, de Pétra jusqu’à Damas.

La région centrale du désert nabatéen est physiquement coupée en deux par la faille du Makhtesh Ramón, d’une quarantaine de kilomètres de long et de 300 mètres de profondeur. Au sud de la falaise, la topographie du désert est rude, avec de nombreux « wadis », des crêtes montagneuses à nu, des hauts plateaux et des canyons profonds. La pluviométrie y est très faible, la végétation rare. En dépit de ces dangers et de ces inconvénients, les routes marchandes traversaient ces terres inhospitalières pour éviter les Romains qui occupaient Israël au nord du Néguev. Quatre des principaux sites se trouvent dans cette région – des villes avec des forteresses et des tours construites pour desservir et protéger les routes marchandes, et dotées d’une infrastructure suffisante pour permettre à la population installée dans cette région aride de subsister grâce à l’agriculture, ce qui a entraîné le développement de champs en terrasses desservis par des systèmes d’irrigation très sophistiqués basés sur des mécanismes élaborés de captage de l’eau de pluie, rare dans cette région.

Au nord du Makhtesh Ramón, la région est plus hospitalière. Bien qu’aride, elle n’est pas stérile et se compose essentiellement de grands espaces plats. Les précipitations y sont légèrement supérieures, et la végétation plus variée et plus étendue, ce qui a permis l’installation d’une importante population pastorale, qui semble avoir découragé les Romains.

Le dossier de proposition d’inscription se compose de sites représentant l’essor du contrôle nabatéen sur la Route de l’encens dans le Néguev, suite à la domestication du chameau au IIIe siècle avant J.-C. et son déclin ultérieur au IIe siècle après J.-C., avec l’occupation romaine de Pétra. Les sites ont été préservés, du fait de leur quasi total abandon au VIIe siècle après J.-C.

Tous les sites proposés pour inscription sont entourés d’une zone tampon.

Le bien proposé pour inscription se compose de quatre parties : le paysage et une section de 50 km de route depuis Pétra vers Gaza entre Avdat et Moa ; la ville d’Haluza plus au nord le long de la même route ; la ville de Shivita juste à l’ouest de cette route et la vile de Mamshit sur la route qui relie Pétra à Damas.

Les principaux sites sont les suivants :
Villes :
- Avdat – Oboda
- Haluza
- Mamshit Kurnub
- Shivta – Sobata

Forteresses et caravansérails :
- Forteresse et caravansérail de Moa
- Fort de Kasra
- Forteresse de Nekarot
- Ein Saharonim – Caravansérail de la porte de Ramon
- Makhmal Ascent et forteresse
- Forteresse de Graffon
- Bornes le long de la route
- Vestiges divers
- Tronçons de routes
- Traces de l’agriculture

Villes :
Avdat – Oboda :
Sur le bord occidental des plateaux du Ramon-Nafkha, au bord d’un promontoire s’élèvant à 80 m d’altitude au-dessus des plaines environnantes, la ville couvre une région de 300 x 400 mètres, à l’intérieur d’une enceinte carrée de calcaire. Les vestiges de la ville comportent des habitations, des bains, un temple nabatéen, un fort, une rue principale, deux églises et un caravansérail.
Les remparts de la ville subsistent sur une hauteur considérable. À certains endroits, il reste également des arcs soutenant les toitures.

Haluza :
Cette ville, la plus au nord, est encerclée de dunes de sable mouvantes, qui ont recouvert certaines des ruines des édifices. De récentes fouilles ont révélé les vestiges de rues, d’un pressoir, d’un théâtre, de deux églises et d’une tour.

Mamshit Kurnub :
Cette ville, la plus à l’est, près de la ville actuelle de Dimona, a fait l’objet de fouilles approfondies et, en certains endroits, d’une reconstruction partielle. Elle se compose de remparts, d’un caravansérail, de grandes demeures privées, d’une rue du marché, de bains, etc. On trouve également des fresques et des mosaïques.

Shivta – Sobata :
Un peu à l’écart de la route marchande principale, cette ville du Néguev central, hormis ses principaux monuments, n’a fait l’objet d’aucune fouille, mais n’en conserve pas moins un degré remarquable de conservation. Il existe des vestiges de maisons à deux ou trois étages, des églises à l’abside intacte, des rues, la maison d’un gouverneur, une grand-place, une ferme, des pressoirs, etc. Construite calcaire dur, elle ne possède pas de remparts.

Forteresses et caravansérails :

Forteresse et caravansérail de Moa :
Moa se trouve à l’est de la section de la route proposée pour inscription, à proximité de la frontière jordanienne. La forteresse et le caravansérail sont en pierre, des blocs de calcaire taillés. La forteresse s’élève en haut d’un monticule surplombant le caravansérail édifié sur la plaine en deça. Les murs subsistent sur une hauteur de 3 m dans la forteresse et de 1,25 m environ dans le caravansérail. Il reste des vestiges d’un système élaboré d’alimentation en eau, qui acheminait l’eau depuis une source souterraine, via un bassin et un canal, jusqu’aux bains du caravansérail. On a également retrouvé des outils agricoles dans la forteresse.

Fort de Kasra :
À l’ouest de Moa, la petite forteresse carrée de Kasra se dresse en haut d’un plateau montagneux bas au-dessus du Kasra Wadi. Les remparts faits de calcaire fossile taillé subsistent sur une hauteur de 3 m.

Forteresse de Nekarot :
Le site suivant vers l’ouest, la forteresse de Nekarot, se compose d’une tour carrée et d’une cour adjacente, un complexe en ruines dont l’usage est incertain, ainsi que d’une petite tour de guet et d’un complexe dissimulé de bassins, conçus pour retenir les eaux de crue. Tous les bâtiments sont faits de blocs équarris de calcaire. Les murs de la tour subsistent sur 3 m de hauteur. Étonnamment, le bâtiment des bassins possède encore intact les arcs de soutien de son toit, les dalles en pierre du toit, les murs, les fenêtres et le canal, ainsi que les traces d’un bel enduit à la chaux et au gypse sur trois couches.

Ein Saharonim – Caravansérail de la porte de Ramon :
Plus à l’ouest encore, ce grand caravansérail fait d’argile tendre et de briques en terre cuite abrite des ateliers, des cuisines, des quartiers de vie et des salles pour la toilette. Les murs subsistent encore sur une hauteur approximative de 2 m dans certaines parties du site. Dans la zone avoisinante, il reste des vestiges importants de terrasses agricoles.

Makhmal Ascent et forteresse :
Sur le bord nord du Ramon Makhtesh s’élève ce fort carré, avec son bassin de retenue des eaux de crue. Tous deux sont faits de blocs de calcaire équarris et subsistent sur une hauteur d’environ 1,5-2 m.
Forteresse de Graffon :
Les murs de cette forteresse, d’une construction similaire à celle de Makhmal, subsistent sur une hauteur de moins d’un mètre.
- Bornes le long de la route :
Vingt-deux bornes, en deux groupes de cinq et de six chacun, ont été découvertes sur le plateau de Nafha et dans la région de Ramon Makhtesh, autour du fort de Makhmal et du fort de Saharonim. Ce sont des pierres cylindriques, deux ou trois à chaque borne, reposant sur une base carrée en pierre.
- Vestiges divers :
On trouve le long de la route de nombreux vestiges de pierres extraits des champs organisées de diverses façons à proximité des sites de repos, des carrefours, des pentes dangereuses, etc. Certains sont des repères, tandis que d’autres semblent avoir été des lieux d’offrande ou de culte. Quelques-unes des installations sont de grande taille – jusqu’à 100 m de longueur.
- Tronçons de route :
Les vestiges de la route entre les sites, suffisamment large pour accueillir chameaux ou mules, se trouvent à certains endroits le long de la section proposée pour inscription. La route est visible en ce que les pierres ont été ôtées de la surface et placées en bordure. À certains endroits, la route escalade des pentes abruptes. Des bornes jalonnent le chemin.
- Traces de l’agriculture :
Les Nabatéens devaient produire de la nourriture pour leurs populations mais aussi pour les immenses caravanes à encens qui traversaient le pays plusieurs fois par an. En dépit de l’aridité du désert, avec des précipitations de 100 mm par an seulement, ils développèrent une agriculture à grande échelle, recourant à des systèmes extrêmement sophistiqués de collecte des eaux.
La collecte des eaux et l’irrigation utilisaient diverses méthodes :
- Les canalisations ;
- Les barrages – la plupart sont petits, mais on en compte des centaines de milliers disséminés dans chaque vallée et sur chaque cours de ruisseau ;
- Des citernes et des réservoirs – taillés dans le substratum rocheux, créés par les barrages ou des structures bâties dans un bâtiment ; tous récupéraient les eaux de crue.
Ces vestiges sont largement répandus aux alentours d’Avdat et de la région centrale du Néguev, de même que les vestiges des anciens systèmes d’irrigation de champ bordant les lits des rivières et sur les versants des collines, où ils sont caractérisés par des myriades de caïns de collecte en pierre.

Les Nabatéens étaient également des bergers, élevant des moutons, du bétail, des chèvres et des chameaux en grand nombre.
La combinaison de villes et le paysage agricole et pastoral associé constituent un paysage culturel fossil complet.

Histoire
À partir du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. jusqu’au IIe siècle apr. J.-C., les Nabatéens ont transporté l’encens et la myrrhe du désert d’Arabie à la côte méditerranéenne, sur une distance de quelques 1 800 km.
Ce commerce a été encouragé par la demande de produits de luxe dans les mondes hellénistique et romain. Il a été possible grâce à la connaissance du désert qu’avaient les Nabatéens, capables de le traverser malgré sa réputation de désert « infranchissable » et de se rendre ainsi dans le sud de la péninsule arabique, à la source de l’encens, un monde inconnu pour les Romains et ceux qui vivaient le long de la Méditerranée.
Les Nabatéens se sont installés dans la région du Néguev au VIe siècle avant J.-C., lorsque les Édomites abandonnèrent leur pays et envahirent les plaines de Judée.
Les Nabatéens se sont enrichis grâce aux bénéfices du commerce. Les Romains tentèrent à diverses reprises de s’emparer de ce négoces : leur hostilité obligea les Nabatéens à prendre des routes évitant le territoire romain vers le sud, en traversant et en sécurisant ainsi quelques-uns des territoires les plus difficiles du Néguev. Ils construisirent des villes et des forts pour défendre la route et des caravansérails pour accueillir les voyageurs. Pour assurer la subsistance de leurs populations et des caravanes marchandes, ils durent coloniser le plus dur des déserts arides rocheux.
Au IIe siècle après J.-C., toutes les villes nabatéennes furent annexées à la province romaine d’Arabie après la conquête romaine de Pétra. Les beaux jours du contrôle nabatéen sur les routes touchaient à leur fin. Quoique le contrôle romain annonce deux siècles de prospérité pour les villes, à partir de leur incorporation au système défensif de l’empire romain, sous le règne de Dioclétien, ce fut l’aube du déclin des routes marchandes, les Romains détournant le commerce par l’Égypte.
La plupart des villes furent finalement abandonnées après la conquête arabe de 636 après J.-C. ; elles sont demeurées fondamentalement intactes depuis.

Politique de gestion
Dispositions légales :
Tout le bien proposé pour inscription appartient à l’État.
Tous les éléments du patrimoine culturel dans la zone proposée pour inscription sont protégés par la législation nationale en vertu des lois suivantes :
- Loi de 1978 sur les antiquités d’Israël ;
Les deux premières lois protègent les vestiges d'objets fabriqués par l'homme avant 1700 après J.-C. et couvrent donc tous les aspects de cette proposition d’inscription.

La troisième définit le rôle et la structure des parcs nationaux et des réserves naturelles. Toutes les parties de la zone proposée pour inscription se trouvent dans les frontières de parcs nationaux ou de réserves naturelles.

Structure de la gestion :

L’autorité des parcs nationaux et réserves naturelles assure la gestion courante du site. L’autorité des antiquités d’Israël gère les activités de conservation et de fouilles des structures classées.

La gestion est exercée au niveau national, régional et local, comme suit :

- National :
  Autorités des parcs et des réserves – Questions politiques.
  Autorité des antiquités – formulation de la conservation et de l'inspection.

- Régional :
  Autorité des réserves et des parcs – plans de travail.
  Autorité des antiquités – fouilles et inspection.

- Local :
  Autorité des antiquités – travaux de conservation et d’inspection.

Ressources :

Toutes les finances viennent du budget de l’autorité des parcs et réserves, lequel provient à son tour du gouvernement et des recettes. Les quatre villes sont dotées de budgets propres. Dans les années de faibles recettes, les fonds sont consacrés à la maintenance et à la protection exclusivement, la conservation n’ayant lieu que lorsque des fonds extérieurs sont disponibles.

État de conservation :

L’état de conservation de la majorité des monuments est bon, exception faite du site de Haluza, qui n’a pas été consolidé comme il aurait dû l’être après les fouilles (voir ci-dessous).

Gestion :

L’autorité des parcs emploie un archéologue en chef et un architecte en chef au niveau national et un personnel expert d’archéologues, de planificateurs et de conservateurs.

Au niveau régional, elle est dotée d’un expert qualifié en conservation et d’un groupe recevant une formation élémentaire, dispensée par des experts de l’autorité des antiquités pour leur permettre de savoir ce qu’ils peuvent entreprendre sans l’intervention de l’autorité des antiquités. Le personnel régional comprend également des gardes et des responsables du site.

Il n’existe pas de plan de gestion pour la totalité des zones proposées pour inscription ; toutefois, le dossier indique que les éléments constitutifs d’un plan de gestion existent.

3. ÉVALUATION DE L’ICOMOS

Actions de l’ICOMOS

Une mission de l’ICOMOS s’est rendue sur le site en août 2003.

L’ICOMOS a également consulté son Comité Scientifique International sur les Itinéraires Culturels.

Conservation

Historique de la conservation :

La conservation n’est pas détaillée dans le cadre d’une rubrique seule du dossier de proposition d’inscription. Toutefois, les descriptions de chaque site révèlent ce qui suit :

- Forteresse de Nekarot – restauration.
  (prévu) Mamshit – restauration.

Justification émanant de l’État partie (résumé)

La Route de l’encens et des épices s’est révélée aussi importante pour les cultures du monde que la Route de la soie. Son importance économique, sociale et culturelle est indiscutable.
Chaque parc national et chaque réserve naturelle sont dotés d’un plan directeur pour l’ensemble, accompagné de plans locaux pour les zones plus petites. Les sites bénéficient également de plans de développement, de plans de dotation en personnel et de plans de travail annuels.

Les villes d’Avdat, de Shivta et de Mamshit possèdent des plans de conservation et de tourisme. Les fortresses et quelques-unes des installations d’irrigation possèdent des plans de conservation, dont une grande partie a d’ores et déjà été mise en œuvre.

Tous les sites sont accompagnés d’un dossier qui rassemble la liste des biens, une documentation photographique et des évaluations de l’état du bien.

Quoique des plans de travail annuels soient en place pour chaque site, ceux-ci ne semblent pas suffisamment détaillés pour fournir une orientation en ce qui concerne les petits projets de conservation à court terme en réponse à une détérioration due aux rudes conditions du désert. Ces plans devraient être mis en place pour chaque site dans les plus brefs délais.

Il n’existe aucune preuve de stratégie archéologique pour l’ensemble du site. Étant donné les problèmes perçus sur deux des sites – cf. ci-dessous – il est suggéré qu’une stratégie de ce type soit mise au point dès que possible ; elle pourrait concerner des fouilles archéologiques, des inventaires non destructeurs et des approches de stabilisation et de réparation. Une telle stratégie devrait également prémunir les sites de la reconstruction en l’absence de documentation. Elle devrait s’appliquer à tout le site et donner des orientations pour chacun des sites majeurs.

Analyse des risques :

Le dossier de proposition d’inscription expose quatre domaines de risque :

- Pressions de développement :

Les zones tampon pour la zone proposée pour inscription sont importantes et se trouvent dans les parcs nationaux et réserves naturelles proposés pour inscription, et les plans de développement ne devraient pas avoir d’impact sur elles. La seule activité potentiellement préjudiciable est l’entraînement militaire. Il conviendrait de faire attention à ce que cet entraînement ne vienne pas détruire les traces de l’agriculture de jadis.

- Pressions environnementales :

Du fait de l’absence d’activité humaine régulière dans la zone (hormis en ce qui concerne le personnel travaillant sur les sites), l’intervention humaine ne fait peser aucune menace environnementale directe. Les principales menaces environnementales sont d’origine naturelle : les températures extrêmes du désert, qui ont un impact sur les matériaux de construction.

- Catastrophes naturelles :

Les principales menaces sont les tremblements de terre et les inondations éclair. Ces dernières années, la plupart des structures principales ont été consolidées pour les aider à résister aux tremblements de terre. Avant et après la saison des pluies, les systèmes d’évacuation sont vérifiés pour s’assurer que l’eau est bien détournée des sites.

- Pressions touristiques :

Aucune information n’est donnée quant au nombre de visiteurs, mais on mentionne des pressions en haute saison. Pendant cette période, tous les gardes se trouvent en permanence sur le site.

Les véhicules 4x4 que conduisent les visiteurs constituent une menace, qui est contrôlée par un règlement d’accès très strict.

On peut y ajouter :

- Reconstruction :

Le site de Mamshit semble avoir pâti d’une reconstruction « créative » de certains éléments – voir ci-dessous. À Haluza et dans l’un des forts, les travaux de fouilles ne semblent pas avoir été suivis d’une consolidation appropriée. Afin d’éviter d’autres travaux impropre, une stratégie archéologique devrait être mise en place, globalement et pour chacun des sites majeurs.

- Absence de gestion :

La plupart des sites apparaissent bien conservés et bien gérés. La ville de Haluza, qui apparemment ne fait l’objet d’aucune maintenance ou de gestion régulière, semble faire exception à la règle.

Authenticité et intégrité :

L’abandon des sites au VIIe siècle et l’absence de population dans la région ont considérablement protégé le site contre les changements délibérés.

Hormis deux exceptions notables, le site semble globalement authentique, et si les villes et les forts sont combinés à leurs routes marchandes et à l’arrière-pays agricole, ils donnent une vue d’ensemble très complète d’une civilisation du désert s’étendant le long d’une route marchande, et de ce fait présentent un très haut degré d’intégrité.

Mamshit et Haluza sont deux exceptions.

Mamshit a été en partie reconstruite au XIXe siècle. On s’inquiète plus cependant des récentes interventions. La porte de la ville est en cours de reconstruction d’après un dessin en mosaïque issu d’une autre ville ; le quartier commercial a été récemment reconstruit avec une subvention du ministère du Tourisme et des chemins dans la ville ont été reconstruits hors de leur trajet d’origine ; L’effet global est plus une recherche scénographique qu’une approche scientifique de l’interprétation et de la documentation.

À Haluza, une partie du site a fait l’objet de fouilles qui semblent avoir laissé sur le site des pierres déplacées, aucun travail ne semblant avoir été fait ensuite pour
consolider et repositionner les pierres. Le site est donc en désordre et a perdu une partie de son intégrité.

Pour ces deux sites, l’authenticité semble avoir été partiellement compromise.

Évaluation comparative

Aucune analyse comparative n’est fournie dans le dossier de proposition d’inscription. La zone proposée pour inscription s’inscrit pourtant clairement dans un réseau plus vaste de routes marchandes utilisées pour transporter l’encens et les épices d’Arabie à la Méditerranée. Les principales questions sont les suivantes : la section mise en avant possède-t-elle des caractéristiques distinctes que l’on ne trouve pas sur le reste de la route et la zone proposée pour inscription couvre-t-elle suffisamment de ces caractéristiques en termes spatiaux ?

Désordre et a perdu une partie de son intégrité.

Évaluation des critères :

Le site est proposé pour inscription sur la base des critères iii et v :

Critère iii : Le site est un témoignage éloquent de l’importance économique, sociale et culturelle de l’encens dans le monde hellénistique et romain. La demande était telle, de même que sa place dans les traditions religieuses et sociales, que de grandes villes nabatéennes sont apparues dans des conditions désertiques hostiles pour desservir les routes d’approvisionnement allant d’Arabie à la Méditerranée, le long de la partie proposée pour inscription dans le désert du Néguev. La route était un moyen de passage non seulement pour l’encens et d’autres marchandises, mais aussi pour les hommes et les idées.

Critère v : Les vestiges presque fossilisés des villes, des fortes, des caravansérails et des systèmes agricoles s’étendent le long de la Route des épices dans le désert du Néguev, témoins de la remarquable solution apportée aux conditions géologiques et économiques. Ainsi réunis, ces vestiges montrent comment le commerce d’une denrée précieuse, l’encens, a entraîné l’apparition d’une solution remarquable d’ingéniosité, afin d’installer des peuplements durables dans un environnement désertique hostile. Les vestiges témoignent de systèmes agricoles sophistiqués, impliquant la conservation de la moindre goutte d’eau et l’optimisation de la terre cultivable, dans le cadre d’un système de gestion du désert unique, qui a prospéré pendant cinq siècles.

4. RECOMMANDATIONS DE L’ICOMOS

Recommandations pour le futur

Afin de répondre aux inquiétudes soulevées par les interventions réalisées sur deux des sites, il est suggéré que l’État partie mette en place une stratégie archéologique pour l’ensemble du bien mais également pour chacune des villes importantes qui concernerait la recherche archéologique, des inventaires non-destructeurs et des approches de stabilisation et de réparation.

Il est de plus recommandé qu’une gestion active de Haluza soit mise en place et que des mesures soient prises pour consolider les parties du site qui ont été fouillées.

Il est également suggéré que l’État partie renforce les plans de gestion existant par des plans de travail plus détaillés.
qui fourniraient des orientations pour les projets réactifs de conservation à court terme.

Recommandation concernant l’inscription

Que le bien soit inscrit sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial sur la base des critères iii et v :


Critère v : Les vestiges presque fossilisés des villes, des forteresses, des caravansérails et des systèmes agricoles sophistiqués s’étendent le long de la Route des épices dans le désert du Néguev. Ils témoignent de la réponse remarquable apportée à un environnement désertique hostile qui s’est épanouie pendant cinq siècles.

ICOMOS, mars 2004