

UNESCO as ISIS

written by David M. Weinberg | 06.08.2026

Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) are rich with Jewish national heritage sites. It is the Biblical heartland. The physical record of the Biblical narrative lies in the ground with thousands of known archaeological sites (and perhaps thousands yet more undocumented sites), providing incontrovertible evidence that connects the Jewish People to the Land of Israel.

This is precisely why ever since the start of the Oslo process the Palestinian Authority (PA) has acted to destroy archaeological sites in Judea and Samaria – purposefully plundering Jewish antiquities, razing historical Jewish sites, and working in international institutions to erase the Jewish/Israeli identity of such places.

This year the PA submitted a long list of obviously and undeniably Jewish historical sites to the World Heritage List at UNESCO, rebranding the sites as “Palestinian” or “Islamic” heritage locations while expunging any Jewish association to them. UNESCO appears to be slap happily going along with this political looting of Jewish/Israeli history.

Indeed, the bludgeon that the PA and its backers at UNESCO have taken to Jewish heritage sites in Israel is like the sledgehammer that ISIS took to world heritage sites such as Mosul and Nimrud in Iraq and Palmyra in Syria.

UNESCO essentially has become an agency of annihilation, a willing partner in a campaign of systematic Jewish identity erasure. This amounts to cultural genocide.

REMEMBER THAT, according to UNESCO, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem is not really the Temple Mount. Back in 2018 that morally bankrupt international organization passed a series of nonsensical resolutions (proposed by PA dictator Mahmoud Abbas) declaring Jerusalem an exclusively Moslem heritage city and criminalizing Israel’s custodianship of the holy city.

The major vote was taken davka, specifically, on Chanukah, a Jewish holiday that marks the liberation and rededication of the Temple by the Maccabees in the second century BCE. Most European nations, those great paragons of “peace” and

“love” for Jews, went along with that affront, either voting for or abstaining on the denialist resolutions.

They then doubled down on the perfidy by adopting in 2021 a similar resolution in the UN General Assembly which disavowed Jewish ties to the Temple Mount and called it solely by its Moslem name, al-Haram al-Sharif.

At Palestinian urging, UNESCO also has disgracefully declared Hebron and its Cave of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, and Tel Jericho, as “State of Palestine” heritage sites.

Last month, at the cultural-genocide bloody behest of that same so-called “state,” UNESCO declared Sebastia/Samaria – the capital of the biblical Kingdom of Israel – as a Palestinian-associated World Heritage site. This, despite ongoing PA looting of the site (which falls partially in Area A of Judea and Samaria) and its building of homes over the ancient Israelite, Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine relics.

Fortunately, Israel very recently begun to assert its rights at Sebastia by driving off the Palestinian marauders, resuming professional archaeological digs there, and beginning to invest in touristic development of the site.

Now, UNESCO is considering declaration of a series of 22 additional properties in Judea and Samaria as Palestinian cultural assets under the World Heritage Convention.

This outrageously includes sites of core Jewish patrimony like Qumran and its Dead Sea Scrolls, Herodian, Solomon’s Pools and the aqueducts leading to King Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem, Mount Gerizim, the Cave of Chariton, Tel Rumeida in Hebron, and the Hasmonean aqueducts in Wadi Qelt (Nahal Prat) with the Hasmonean palaces at the lower end of the wadi.

All these sites are in Israeli-controlled territory, and none bear a historical or cultural connection under any plausible claim to “Palestinian heritage.” The PA list includes ancient Christian sites as well such as the Saint Hilarion Monastery in Gaza, now politically, ridiculously repackaged as a “Palestinian heritage” site.

And of course, note this too: According to the PA and its UNESCO submissions, none of these sites are in the “Judean” desert or mountains – because using the true historical name of Judea would be an implicit acknowledgment of the Jewish

People's connection to the land.

To wipe away Jewish history, the PA has instead invented new terminology for the territory. Thus, Judea disappears from the narrative, replaced by fabricated labels such as "Al Bariyah - Desert and Monasteries."

THIS JEWISH identity erasure campaign extends from historical denial to physical destruction. The PA owns a clear pattern of archaeological persecution and demolition.

According to the valiant Israeli NGO "Preserving the Eternal," 80% of the 400 or so most significant heritage sites in Judea and Samaria have been damaged by "industrial-scale" Palestinian looting and the use of heavy machinery to bulldoze archaeological sites for roads, factories and "agricultural projects" - read: purposeful bowdlerization of anything Jewish. (The numbers are from a five-year-old report and probably much worse today.)

Three shocking examples pertain to the Temple Mount, Joshua's Altar on Mount Ebal, and Solomon's Pools.

In 1999, the PA-led Wakf conducted vast, illegal construction projects on the Temple Mount and beneath it, willfully destroying centuries of Jewish archaeological treasures. Four hundred trucks full of archaeologically rich soil were unceremoniously dumped by the Wakf into the Kidron Valley. Thousands of artifacts from the Temple periods have since been found through careful sifting of the debris by Israeli archaeologists.

On Mount Ebal near Nablus a large archaeological site identified by the late Prof. Adam Zertal as the altar of Joshua has been imperiled. (See the Book of Joshua chapter 8, where a dramatic ceremony reaffirming G-d's covenant with the Jewish People was held in the area after the early stages of conquest of the Land of Israel).

The PA drew up plans to pave over the site with roads and 24 high-rise housing units, and in 2001 Palestinian contractors ground part of the ancient stone fencing at the site to make gravel for roads.

Recently, Israel halted renewed Palestinian attempts to vandalize the spot, and has approved establishment of a yeshiva and a settlement nearby that also will

protect the archaeological site.

Another infuriating episode relates to the incredible aqueduct identified as King Solomon's water system for Jerusalem. This runs from Hebron through Bethlehem to Jerusalem, including what is today termed "Solomon's Pools" southwest of Bethlehem.

This marvel of ancient engineering, 40 km. long, is described in detail in the Bible, and the description matches the archaeological findings precisely. The pools and aqueducts survived 2,000 years of summer and winter and many invaders and predators – until the arrival of the Palestinian Authority.

In 2022, the PA dug an enormous 1,500 dunam quarry pit at Beit Fajar right through a section of the aqueduct. The quarrying caused irreversible damage to the aqueducts, with some 100 meters of tunnel and approximately 2,000 meters of the aqueduct on either side of the tunnel reduced to rubble.

Only recently has the government of Israel (finally!) stepped-in to prevent further damage to the relics and to develop the site for organized biblical tourism.

THE ISRAELI cabinet has just approved NIS 113 million in government funding for protection and development of 70 Judea and Samaria heritage sites. This budget allocation was advanced by Finance Minister Betzael Smotrich and Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu.

While insufficient given the scale of the challenge, this funding signals a shift in policy. Enforcement has increased, site development and public access have begun, and after decades of neglect and looting, long-buried historical treasures are being uncovered. The discoveries are significant, with the potential to reshape global scholarship on entire historical periods of importance to world heritage.

Some examples: At Hyrcania, near the Jerusalem-Dead Sea highway, a fortress marking the fall of the Hasmonean Kingdom is being revealed as a "mini-Masada," complete with siege systems, underground chambers, inscriptions, and ritual baths.

At the Alexandrion fortress on Mount Sartaba, mentioned in the Mishna in connection with signal fires that inspired today's Yom Haatzmaut torch-lighting ceremony, excavations are producing dramatic new findings too.

Every such archaeological excavation is a victory over Palestinian denialism and UNESCO's ISIS-like efforts at Jewish erasure.

Published in The Jerusalem Post 07.08.2026 and Israel Hayom 08.08.2026

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