

Digging Up Israel

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[The Scriptures demonstrate the claim of Jews to a homeland in the Middle East. Despite the attempts of Muslims to rewrite history, anyone digging in Israel only uncovers more evidence to support that claim.]

Ancient Ruins Find a Role in Modern Political Discourse [Excerpts]

Some Israeli lawmakers are seizing on archeology as a way to fight Prime Minister Olmert's apparent plan to divide the city of Jerusalem.

The Knesset members see archeological digs as the best way to illustrate the link between the Jewish people, Jerusalem and the Land of Israel -- and to mobilize public opinion against the division of Jerusalem.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has indicated that he is willing to divide Jerusalem, keeping Jewish neighborhoods under Israeli control and giving Arab neighborhoods to the control of a future Palestinian state.

In almost every place where archeological digging is taking place throughout Israel, archeologists are uncovering Jewish artifacts and history. But there is no place in the entire country where Palestinian history is unearthed, Amitay told Cybercast News Service on Wednesday.

The more archeological artifacts that are uncovered, Amitay said, the harder it will be for Olmert to gain Jewish support for making a deal on Jerusalem, he said.

Rabbi Nissim Ze'ev from the ultra-Orthodox Shas party, which is currently a coalition partner in Olmert's government, said the stones themselves "testify to the history of the Jewish people in this place." "The Jewish people were here a long time before the Palestinians arrived," Ze'ev told Cybercast News Service. But that is not the way that the Palestinians want to view it. They insist that the Jews arrived in 1948 when the State of Israel was created, he said.

Palestinian officials, starting with former PLO leader Yasser Arafat, have claimed that Jewish Temples never stood on the Temple Mount. In fact, two successive Jewish temples were located there before and during the time of Jesus.

Palestinian denials are seen by many people as an attempt to de-legitimize Israel's right to exist. If the Jewish people have no historical connection to the land, then there would have been no reason to establish a Jewish state here, the argument goes. (See earlier story)

Archeologists also have criticized the Israeli government for failing to stop renovations by Islamic religious authorities on the Temple Mount. They say the renovations have led to the destruction of countless antiquities. (See earlier story)

The lawmakers' visit to the Old City digs "has everything to do with Annapolis and

nothing to do with Annapolis," said Knesset member Arie' Eldad, a member of the rightwing National Union/National Religious Party. "We step on remains of more than 4,000 years of our history. My ability to be part of the Jewish nation is based on the stones that we step on," said Eldad. Olmert has no mandate to give up Jerusalem in the name of the Jewish people, he said.

If Israel turns over more land in the West Bank, it will lead to the creation of a second Hamas state there, he warned. Eldad charged that Israel should not listen to the advice of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, since she has twice pressured Israel into making concessions that turned out to be disastrous. "Her previous advice in this area [was] a fiasco," said Eldad. "Why should we listen this time?"