



A R I E L

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## *World Heritage in Israel*

Conservation of World Heritage has its beginnings at the League of Nations in the 1920s, when the member countries proposed the establishment of a fund for the protection of heritage. There was little progress up to 1939 when the world was engulfed in the turmoil of war. It was only in 1972, after the impact of post-war reconstruction, that UNESCO managed to table the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. The World Heritage Convention (WHC), as it is known, has two distinct components; these being the protection of the world's *cultural* and the world's *natural* heritage. The UNESCO World Heritage Centre coordinates Convention activities and administers the World Heritage List, which presently includes cultural sites, natural sites and mixed sites including cultural landscapes. To date, there are 730 listed sites in 125 countries. Of these, 563 are cultural, 144 are natural and 23 are mixed. Sites are inscribed on the World Heritage list after they are nominated by the country in question and are evaluated by representatives of the advisory bodies to the Convention.

The Grand Canyon retraces two billion years of the earth's history. The Galapagos Islands inspired Charles Darwin in his theory of evolution. Moenjodaro tells the story of an ancient civilization; Völklingen Ironworks the one of

industrialization. The Island of Gorée is a reminder of slavery, the citadel of Haiti a symbol of liberty, built by slaves who had gained their freedom. These epochs of history together with monuments like the Taj Mahal, Stonehenge and the Pyramids and historic cities like Fez and Sa'ana make up the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.

There are three advisory bodies, the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in Paris, which is the advisory body for Cultural Heritage; the International Centre for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Gland, Switzerland, which is the advisory body for Natural Heritage; and the International Centre for the Conservation of Cultural Property (ICCROM) in Rome, which advises on training.

With the expanding growth of sites around the world, the WHC is now evaluating the various heritage groupings and representation by type and region. This will be the basis for a broader discussion and evaluation of the future aims of the Convention following its first 30 years of activity. The acid test for inscription on the World Heritage List is the issue of universal significance and authenticity. There are six sub-criteria under the heading of "Cultural Heritage" and three under "Natural Heritage." The first five Cultural Heritage criteria deal with aspects of architecture





PROPOSED UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN ISRAEL

PREVIOUS PAGE: THE INCENSE ROUTE

ABOVE AND LEFT: THE SMALL CRATER (*Makhtesh*)



ABOVE: CAESAREA

RIGHT: ACRE - THE OLD CITY

(SEE ALSO FRONT COVER)

OVERLEAF: PART OF THE RAMPARTS  
OF JERUSALEM'S OLD CITY TOWARDS  
MOUNT ZION





icance while the sixth refers to the intangible aspects of the proposed site. The three natural criteria encompass the major stages of the earth's history, ongoing ecological and biological processes and natural habitats for in-situ conservation and bio-diversity.

But what does universal significance really imply? Many people around the world may not consider the spirituality of Jerusalem, for example, to be a universal focal point. There is a need to engage in dialogue to define how we want to present ourselves and how we are to be understood within the global context. An example of such a dilemma can be taken from a recent World Heritage meeting. In discussing the Belgian city of Bruges for nomination to the World Heritage List, the intangible sixth criterion was considered as a basis for inclusion because of the role of Bruges in the inception of the Flemish school of painting. The delegate from Thailand, however, intervened with the comment that he did not think this to be a point of universal significance, but rather only of regional significance to Europe.

In August 1999, the Government of Israel decided in favour of signing the World Heritage Convention and in January, 2000, Israel ratified the Convention, becoming the 158th and one of the last countries to become a signatory to the Convention. This unfortunate delay was due to the political ramifications of the inscription of Jerusalem on the World Heritage List in 1981 by the Kingdom of Jordan.

As a result of Israel joining the WHC, it is clear that conservation attitudes in Israel toward itself and toward the rest of the world must change. We need to develop new ways of thinking, learn new skills and integrate them with knowledge to be

assimilated from outside our cultural borders. During the two years that have elapsed since ratification, we have tried to establish the basis for Israel's position in the Convention by establishing the Israel World Heritage Committee, preparing a tentative list of sites and nominating sites for inscription. In this way we hope to encourage a dialogue with other professional disciplines and with other countries.

When an international convention is signed, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs will normally pass it to the relevant ministry for compliance. If it concerns taxation, for example, it will be sent to the Treasury for compliance; if it concerns agriculture, it will be dealt with by the Ministry of Agriculture. But who does Heritage belong to? This then was the first issue: deciding which government ministry should take responsibility. This is a crucial question because of the numerous overlapping areas – from the Ministry of the Environment with its responsibility for the Nature and Parks Authority; the Ministry of Education with its responsibility for the Israel Antiquities Authority; the Ministry of Tourism with its interest in all sites; the Ministry of Culture and the responsibilities of the Council for the Preservation of Sites, and the Ministry of the Interior with its overall responsibility for planning.

Serendipitously, the Israel National Commission for UNESCO (INCU) took the Convention under its wing, under the aegis of the Ministry of Education. Thus the Israel World Heritage Committee (IWHC) was formed. The INCU has numerous subcommittees encompassing a wide variety of subjects in education, science and culture, with each committee developing its own pattern of work. The IWHC has developed a practice of co-

option and decision-making by consensus; it attempts to bring together all concerned authorities and activists from all walks of life under one umbrella. Once a nomination has been adopted, the IWHC recommends it to UNESCO on behalf of the State of Israel.

The Israel Antiquities Authority and ICOMOS formed the first committee core group. The Nature and Parks Authority was then co-opted, together with the Ministries of Environment, Tourism and Interior. Local non-government organizations involved in the various issues were invited, such as the Society for the Protection of Nature, Friends of the Earth/Middle East, the Israel Architects Association – Heritage Section, and the Council for the Preservation of Sites. The Committee is always open to other groups involved in the protection of heritage in Israel. The Israel Lands Administration has joined the IWHC as the agency charged with implementing the comprehensive land policies of the government. DOCOMOMO, an NGO concerned with the documentation of the architecture of the Modern Movement was recently accepted as a member of the Committee.

During this intensive period of activity, we have supported the preparation of the UNESCO/World Heritage guidelines for the management of archaeological sites. These guidelines will form part of a manual on the management of World Heritage sites around the world, which will be of both general and local Israel interest. Some dozen other activities were planned in Israel as part of the 30th anniversary of the 1972 World Heritage

Convention. These included the inauguration in December, 2001 in Helsinki of the first two Israeli sites inscribed by the World Heritage Committee: Masada and the Old City of Acre.

Our first obligation was to present to the UNESCO/World Heritage Centre a Tentative List enumerating the potential sites that Israel proposes for inclusion on the World Heritage List. A booklet listing 23 sites was presented to UNESCO in June 2000. This Tentative List is reviewed from time to time.

In drafting the list, the Israel World Heritage Committee turned to each of the participating ministries, authorities and NGOs, who were asked to submit independently a list of proposed sites. At this stage no contact was made between the bodies. The Council for the Preservation of Sites, proposed sites like the buildings of Tel Aviv and Tel Hai,\* reflecting their mandate for the modern period. Other sites like Masada and Acre were proposed by the majority of the bodies. We then started to appreciate exactly how each group interpreted the term “universal significance.”

We tried to look at the exercise as the conceptual idea of a window looking into Israel. In other words, we asked, “What is “cultural heritage” within the Israeli context? How should we present it? What are the relevant issues? What is a good balance? It attempts to take into account the various beliefs and attitudes of all the peoples, past and present, who have touched a particular site. This approach means that we become *Custodians of Place* and all its history. What is important is not the existence of any particular period of

\* Tel Hai in the Northern Galilee, founded as an outpost in 1918, was overrun by Arab attackers in 1920. It has become an icon of Jewish self-defence.



history, but the threads of time running through to the present. We would not expect the Italian government to take responsibility for the Roman sites in Caesarea or Beit She'an, and in the same way, we would not claim sovereignty over Jewish cultural sites in other countries. However, it would be reasonable for us to ask for recognition, to propose cooperation and technical assistance, and to develop joint activities and dialogue. But in the final analysis, each state is custodian of its own sites.

We then attempted to present as wide a range of sites as possible. The sites of Israel are shown on a map that does not indicate political limitations as it is our belief that cultural heritage transcends boundaries. The sites are presented according to geographical region, from north to south: the Galilee, the valleys of Beit She'an and Jezre'el, the Coastal Plain, Jerusalem and the Judean Hills, and sites in the Negev.

Starting with the Galilee, the first site was Tel Dan at the source of the Jordan River. With the world's earliest known use of the brick arch; this site is proposed under the sub-group of technology. Next are the early synagogues in the Galilee, representing the design and use of the first metaphysical space. This is not monumental architecture, but it is the cradle of monotheistic prayer and therefore we believe it to be of universal significance. So many times as architects we think, "Well, it is not architecturally important," but this is not the issue; it is the cultural heritage that is crucial in this context.

The Galilee journeys of Jesus and the Apostles are indicated as part of a World Cultural Route from Jerusalem to Rome. There was much discussion concerning the inclusion of Nazareth, but the

problem is that there are few authentic remains to identify the site, thus it did not meet one of the key criteria for inclusion. We suggested using the journeys of Jesus, a cultural route encompassing the Sea of Galilee, Tiberias, the Mount of Beatitudes and Mount Tabor, and thus including the city of Nazareth, as one route.

The Old City of Acre has already been inscribed as a listed site. Next is the Sea of Galilee and its ancient Judeo-Christian sites such as Capernaum, Tabgha and Magdala. Hurvat Minim on the shores of the lake is specifically identified; while this site is not impressive, it is important as one of the first sites of the Moslem 'Umayyad period. It could also be part of a serial nomination that would be linked to the first 'Umayyad palaces of the early Moslem period in this part of the world.

There were reservations by the Israel Antiquities Authority in identifying the Horns of Hittim as an independent entry. This was the site of the final epochal defeat of the Crusaders in the Holy Land by Saladin in 1187. The scene is wonderful and redolent with atmosphere – it gives a sense of actually being there, with the roar of the battle taking place. This is presently part of a cultural landscape including Arbel, Nebi Shweib, the holy site of the Druze community, and the Horns of Hittim as a single entity.

The valleys of Beit She'an, Jezre'el and the Coastal Plain represent the central area of Israel. They include the complex of Bahá'í buildings and gardens in Haifa, the prehistoric sites of 'Ubadiah, Sha'ar Hagolan and Mount Carmel. 'Ubadiah is the first "hunter-gatherer" site discovered outside Africa, and Sha'ar Hagolan is an "early-farmer" site. Both prehistoric sites are in close proximity to one another.

Deganya and Nahalal were the first communal settlements of the modern Zionist enterprise. Deganya, founded in 1909, was the first kibbutz, and Nahalal, founded in 1921 was the prototype moshav.\* They were first proposed by students in my course "Introduction to Conservation" in the Department of Architecture at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem. My immediate reaction was one of amazement, but I agree that there is a persuasive and convincing argument. We all know of the Utopias proposed in various countries over the centuries, but when we find them actually being translated into physical form, into patterns that are part of town planning, they become quite special. This is evidence of the discussion and consultation that generates the dialogue and mutual persuasion of universality in the first stage of the process of nomination of a World Heritage site.

Beit She'an is proposed as part of the Roman group of ten cities, the Decapolis, and its continuous settlement from early times including a tel and Roman-Byzantine city. Caesarea is an example of a site that might not achieve World Heritage standing on its own as an archaeological site, but its harbour, the complex water systems of its hinterland and its overall cultural significance should make it deserving of inclusion.

I would like to dwell for a moment on the proposal of the Bauhaus buildings in Tel Aviv. Modern heritage is now coming into its own. In the past three years, several nominations in the sphere of modern heritage have been made under

the World Heritage Convention, adding to Brasilia's nomination in 1987 the Bauhaus buildings of Dessau and Weimar, Germany, in 1996; the Reitweld-Schroeder House in Utrecht, Holland; the Horta houses in Brussels, Belgium; the Tugendhat House by Mies van de Rohe in Brno, Czech Republic. A modern heritage site must also meet relevant criteria. Is it an icon of the style? Is it the first of its type? Is it the principal building by the architect? We have asked ICOMOS, the Israel Architects Association, DOCOMOMO and the Schools of Architecture to evaluate 20th century architecture in Israel so as to help us to delineate exactly what we perceive as essential criteria in the evolution of Israeli architecture.

It is my opinion that the nomination of the Bauhaus buildings in Tel Aviv is one of the most important nominations on the entire Israeli list. To put World Heritage in the middle of Tel Aviv will highlight and change the perception of what heritage really means, both professionally and publicly. Had we waited another year, there might well have been little left and if we had done it a year earlier the historic preservation plan for Tel Aviv would not have been in place. We believe that other countries looking at the evolution of ideas and the transportation of cultures will also be sensitive to our nomination.

Jerusalem is a site with a story of its own. We proposed that the existing Old City and its ramparts, which is already inscribed, be extended to include Mount Zion, thus creating a coherent

\* A kibbutz was traditionally a communally-run settlement with no private ownership of property, while a moshav is a community of privately-owned dwellings but with various levels of communal mutual labour and help. However, both systems, but particularly the kibbutz, are now undergoing serious structural changes.

experts from IUCN, ICOMOS, the World Heritage Centre and the World Bank to make the site recommendations of this world serial nomination. These are all sites for which we are custodians together with our neighbours.

The last group represents Cultural Routes – the movement of ideas and goods between the world's civilizations. Here we identified the Incense (or Spice) Route and Nabatean settlements, the *Via Maris*, the narrow-gauge Ottoman railways, and the pilgrims' routes – in the footsteps of Abraham, Jesus and Mohammad. Routes can take many forms and patterns, but the idea is to generate thinking about cultural heritage as something that is not restricted to particular boundaries and is free of nationalism, thus seeing the concept of World Heritage not as *casus belli*, but as consensus.

We are now looking to establish an integrative heritage policy, and to create another value level which until now, has not existed in Israel. We have local, district and national sites, but we have never thought about something broader – and now we find ourselves managing world sites. We are creating this new pyramid so as to gain a greater understanding about these sites, a structure and criteria that will affect all the facets of heritage and their universal significance. This process is underway, with two sites inscribed, and two others, the Makhteshim Country and Mount Zion as an extension of Jerusalem, in the process. We have also proposed another three sites for this year – the biblical tels, the Incense Route and the Bauhaus buildings of Tel Aviv. With the decision of the World Heritage committee to evaluate only one site per country per year, the Tel Aviv proposal is being evaluated this year.

Once sites are inscribed on the World Heritage List, a programme of monitoring, management and maintenance needs to be developed. This will represent the combined effort of the authorities; site managers and ICOMOS becoming the independent professional monitoring force for the IWHC. This involves an entirely new relationship between the various authorities and NGOs as additional activities become necessary, and with them, a need for new skills which we must all learn.

To jump-start the programme, the Israel National Commission of UNESCO together with its WHC partners, has invested over one million shekels over the past two years in publications, professional activity and nomination proposals. This considerable investment demonstrates how much effort everyone on the commission has committed toward World Heritage. The energy invested needs to filter down and become part of something greater, establishing Israel in its rightful position for the identification, stewardship and protection of World Heritage.

Now is the time to think about criteria, how to link local narratives to World Heritage, and then connect back and incorporate it into the country's day-to-day planning and design activities. World Heritage should be integrated in national planning through the various policy outline plans, while the language and definitions of sites, landscapes and routes will identify the uniqueness of our heritage and its significance to the world.