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## Emek Shaveh's response to Destruction at Mount Ebal

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February 15th, 2021

### **Response to the Destruction of Antiquities at the Iron Age Site of Mount Ebal/el-Burnat**

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**\* We decry the destruction of all antiquities, including the destruction of the outer wall of the site at Mount Ebal \* The association of the site at Mount Ebal with the altar built by Joshua is not accepted in archaeological research \* The wall was destroyed by a contractor who claims it was done by mistake \* The settlers are framing it as nationalistically motivated destruction which serves their campaign to take over sites in Area B**

We highly condemn any destruction of antiquities. In this case we decry the destruction of the outer wall of the archaeological site at Mount Ebal by a Palestinian contractor last week. Many antiquities have been destroyed in the course of development processes and it is the responsibility of the authorities to supervise the work and to prevent such destruction.

Last week, as part work to pave a road from Asira ash-Shamaliya to Nablus, an ancient wall at Mount Ebal was damaged. We regret that the Palestinian Antiquities Authority, whose responsibility it is to supervise the contractors' work in order to prevent such incidents, did not do so, with the result being damage to the site.

Mount Ebal is a site located north of Nablus and access to it is through Area B. The site was studied by Professor Adam Zertal in the 1980's who advanced the theory that the structure at the site is an altar dated to the early Iron Age and that it should be identified with the altar of Joshua, whom the Bible describes as leading the Israelites into Canaan. Professor Zertal's theory was not supported by research and the vast majority of archaeologists rejected it. Some of the theories see a lookout tower on the site, others suggest that even if the site was an altar it is not Joshua's altar, as Professor Zertal proposed. Regardless, archaeology does not deal with biblical figures and cannot prove the presence and activities of figures such as Joshua. Although Professor Zertal proposed a theory which was rejected by the vast majority of archaeologists who have studied the site, it is the theory adopted by the settlers.

Contrary to how the destruction was presented by the settlers, the wall that was destroyed last week was an outer wall and not a part of the main structure. The contractor who paved the road thought it was a terrace and the mayor of town of Asira ash-Shamaliya's said they were unaware that the wall was part of the site. However the settlers, right wing politicians and the [Hebrew media](#) used a clip from a video posted on the Asira ash-Shamaliya's facebook page to claim that destruction was nationalistically motivated even though in the video, the contractor is merely describing his work practices and sharing with the residents the progress in paving the road. Some have gone as far as to claim that the destruction [is akin to ISIS' practices](#). Claiming the video is proof of a nationalistic motive behind the destruction of the wall serves the ongoing campaign to place antiquity sites in Area B under Israeli control.



The site at Mount Ebal

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