



THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN

(THE BAPTISM SITE COMMISSION)

**NOMINATION OF THE BAPTISM SITE, BETHANY
BEYOND THE JORDAN “AL-MAGHTAS”**

**FOR INSCRIPTION ON THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST
JANUARY 2014**

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Executive Summary

Site description: The Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) is located in the Southern Jordan Valley on the east side of the Jordan River around 9 km north of the Dead Sea and is part of the District of South Shunah in the Governorate of Al-Balqaa. The site is located a few kilometers to the east of the oasis and ancient site of Jericho and ca. 50 km west of Amman, the capital of Jordan, at coordinates 35°32'50" East; 31° 50'12" North. The site covers an area of 533.7 hectares where five archaeological sites dating back to the Roman and Byzantine periods have been discovered. The precise limits of the archaeological remains are undetermined, although all identifiable cultural traces are included in the protected area. The site is protected by the Law of Antiquities of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as well as by the Jordan Valley Authority Law and their respective amendments, including a buffer zone where activities are limited to farming and to a bird nesting protected area. The buffer zone of the site covers an area of 773.2 ha.

The site is characterized by two distinct archaeological areas, Tell el-Kharrar, also known as Jabal Mar Elias (Elijah’s Hill), and the area of the Churches of St. John the Baptist near the Jordan River. Although early occupation is known in the area, the main period of use and occupation of the site was between the 5th and the 8th century AD, with some structures still in use as late as the 15th century. The complex includes churches, chapels, a monastery, hermit caves, pilgrim stations, water collection systems, and pools, all associated with its use for the commemoration of the baptism of the Lord Jesus by John the Baptist, and with its performance by Christian pilgrims. Besides this major event in the Christian belief system, the site is also associated with episodes of the life of prophet Elijah (Elias), of St. John the Baptist, and of Saint Mary the Egyptian, who lived here a life of repentance.

Excavations conducted at the site since 1997 have revealed extraordinary features witnessing the use of the site in conjunction with the rite of baptism, including unique architectural elements, such as a major church built on piers to protect it from the floods of the Jordan River and the remains of the Chapel of the Mantle, built over four piers above the waters of the river. These peculiar features find confirmation in the accurate descriptions of pilgrims and early travelers who

witnessed the existence of these buildings when still in use, between the 6th and the 11th century.

After excavations and consolidation of the archaeological remains conducted without introducing modern materials, the site was opened to the public, allowing also pilgrimages and ceremonies to take place there. Many Christian denominations have recognized officially the site as being the true location of the Baptism of Jesus, and the visit of two popes (John Paul II in 2000 and Benedict XVI in 2009, to which one must add also the programmed visit of pope Francis II in 2014) provides an indication of the importance that the Catholic Church attaches to the site.

Some modern infrastructures have been provided to serve the needs of the visitors. These are mostly concentrated around the visitor centre, situated away from the archaeological area, to which one can access only via minibuses. The site is under the management of the Baptism Site Commission, an independent administrative body. The Commission has recently prepared a Site Management Plan which will provide the required elements for the sustainable conservation, protection, maintenance, interpretation, and presentation of the site. In the course of the preparation of the plan, a conservation assessment has identified the factors, natural and man-made, that affect or may impact the site if not properly managed. A series of policies and strategic actions have been identified to minimize impact while allowing visitors and pilgrims to enjoy the site in its authentic and untouched setting. The construction of several structures to perform religious services and allow pilgrims to stay in the vicinity of the site have been allowed, once the absence of archaeological remains or of negative impacts such as visual pollution have been proven. These structures will also relieve the pressure on the site itself, especially at times of increased visitation, such as at the time of Epiphany or at Easter.

Justification for inscription: The site is being nominated under criteria (iii), (iv), and (vi). According to these criteria the Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas):

iii) bears unique testimony to the cultural and religious tradition of baptism and the importance it holds in the Christian belief system;

(iv) exhibits outstanding examples of buildings and architectural ensembles which illustrate a fundamental event in the history of one of the world’s great religions;

(vi) is directly associated with the Christian tradition of the baptism of Jesus, an event of universal significance. It is also associated with characters and events of high significance for all Abrahamic religions.

The comparative analysis with major pilgrimage centres directly associated with major religious events, such as Patmos in Greece (associated with the writing of the Gospel and the Apocalypse by Saint John), Bethlehem in Palestine (associated with the birth of Jesus), or Lumbini in Nepal (associated with the birth of Lord Buddha) show that the Baptism site, besides having an intangible spiritual value derived from its association with the lives of Jesus and of Saint John the Baptist, and for being the place where Christianity originated, has also tangible values due to the presence of installations, features, and buildings dedicated not only to the commemoration, but also to the performance of baptism, marking an extraordinary coincidence between tradition, belief system, and physical remains.

The integrity and authenticity of the Baptism Site derive from archaeological remains which can be correctly interpreted thanks to their state of preservation, along with accounts of pilgrims, travelers and historians over the centuries, and with the religious texts and belief system of the Christian community. The site meets the test of authenticity under several criteria, especially form and design, as the structures were specifically designed to perform baptism and perpetuate the tradition allowing pilgrims to be baptized in the same location where the baptism of Jesus took place. The location and setting of the site is particularly evocative and authentic to its original aspect, close to the Jordan River and among a thick grow of natural reeds. The association of the site to a fundamental event in the Christian belief system, that of the baptism of Jesus, hence to the very origin of Christianity in this location, means that the use and the function of the site and the structures found there are authentic since they all relate to ritual practices conducted to commemorate that event since at least the Late Roman / Early Byzantine period. For all these reasons the spirit and feeling at “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) are particularly powerful, as each single archaeological remain and the entire physical landscape are imbued with the beliefs of the pilgrims who come to the site to witness in person the root of their faith.

Section 1: Identification of the Property

1.a Country:

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

1.b State, Province or Region:

South Shunah District / Governorate of Al-Balqaa

1.c Name of Property:

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

1.d Geographical Coordinates:

Geographical Coordinates to the Nearest Second:

35°32'50" East; 31° 50'12" North (UTM-36N)

1.e Maps and Plans:

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Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

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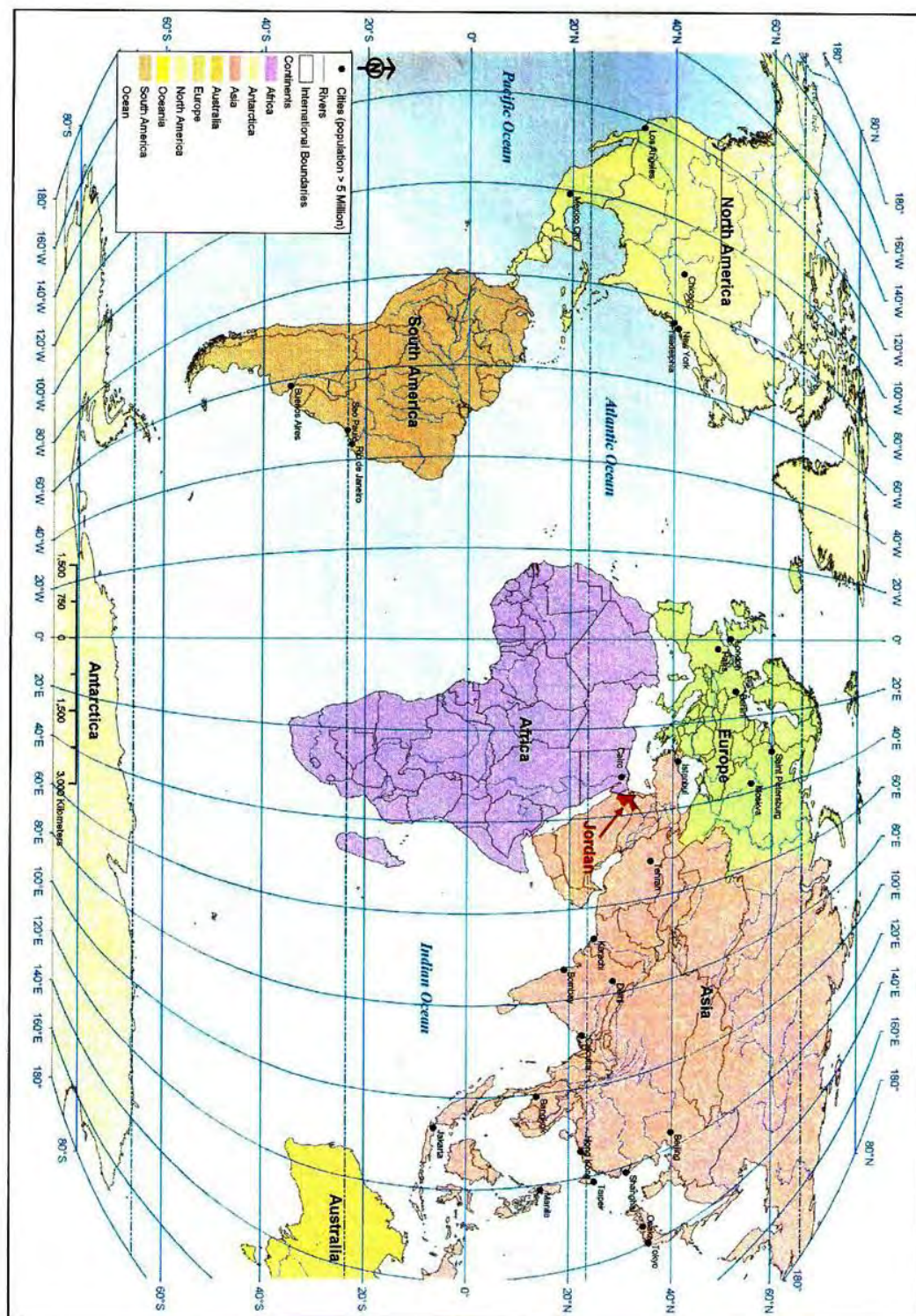


Fig. 1: Map of the world showing Jordan

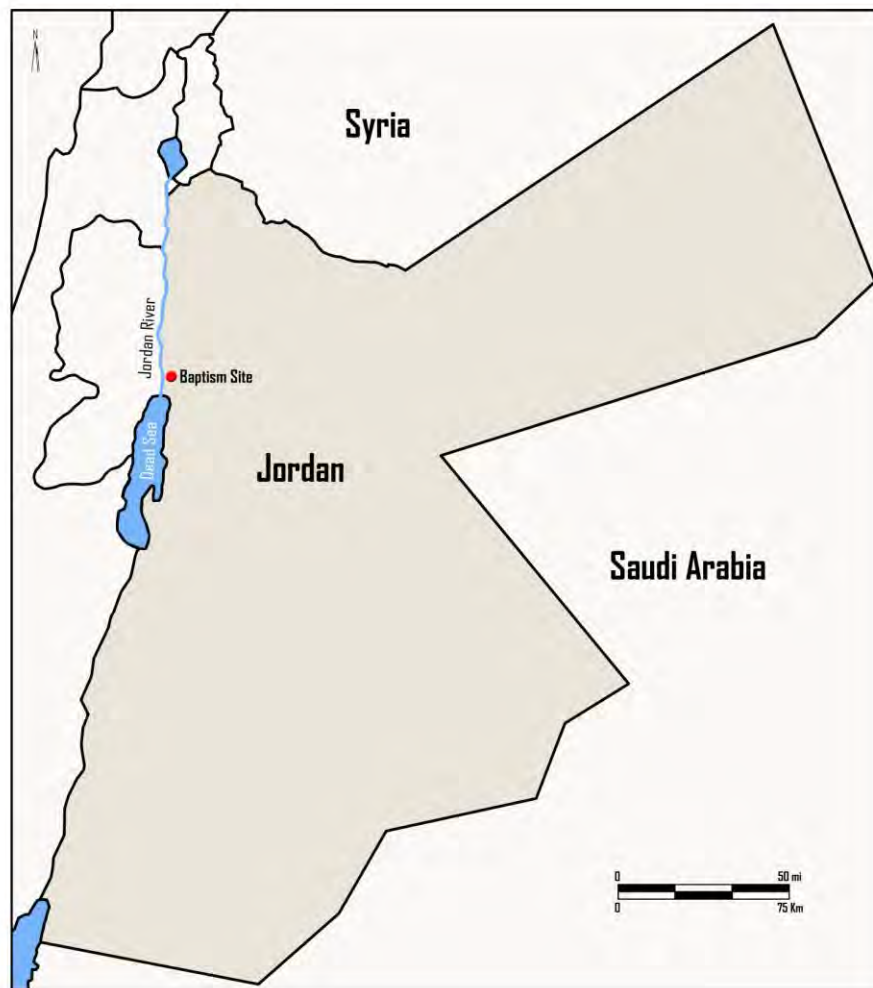


Fig.2: Map of Jordan showing the location of the Baptism Site

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)



Fig. 3: Map of the Region with Sites Related to the Baptism Site

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

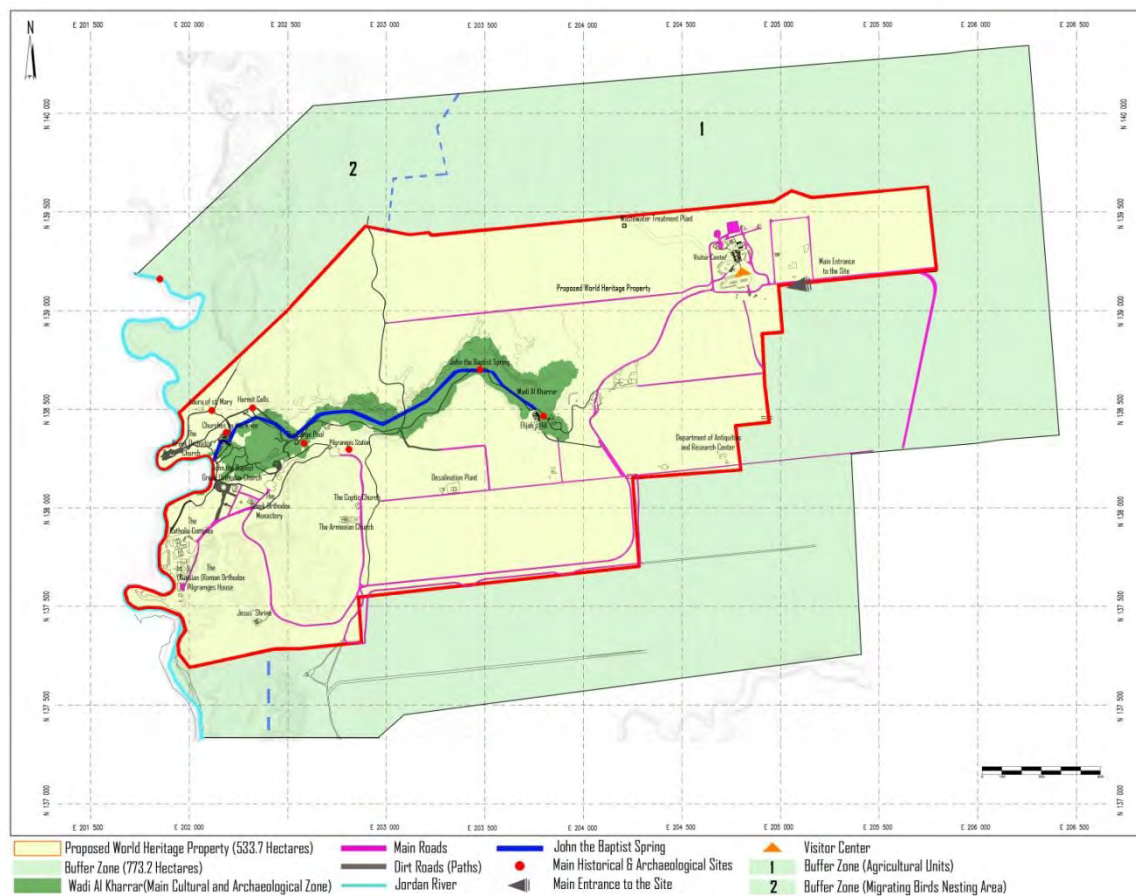


Fig. 4: Map of proposed world heritage site and buffer zone



Fig. 6: Detail of the byzantine madaba mosaic map showing the Baptism Site

1.f Area of the Nominated Baptism Site East of the Jordan “Al-Maghtas”

Area	Size in Hectares
Area of Nominated Property	533.7 hectares
Buffer Zone	773.2 hectares
Total	1306.9 hectares

Section 2: Description

2.a Description of Property

The Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)¹ is located in the southern Jordan Valley, just north of the Dead Sea. The Jordan Valley is the broad fertile zone (up to 16 km east-west) between Lake Tiberias and the Dead Sea where many archaeological sites represent an unbroken history of occupation starting with the origins of settled life up to the present. The Baptism Site was near a crossing point between the east and west sides of the Jordan River and was populated especially from the Roman period (1st century BC) into the Mamluk period (15th century AD).

The Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) is within the floor of the Jordan Valley (the *Ghor*) in an area about 2km wide extending from the area around a spring (Al-Kharrar spring) on the east down the gradual slope of the Wadi Al-Kharrar stream to the west to the bed of the Jordan River (the *Zor*).

The archaeological remains are clustered at Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah’s Hill) near the Al-Kharrar spring in the east and along the Jordan River in the west. The fenced core area with possible undiscovered archaeological remains covers a surface of 533.7 ha, with the buffer zone (773.2 ha) beyond.

Tenure and Land Use

The by-law of the Jesus Christ Baptism Site Board number 48 for the year 2001 and its amendments identified the plots of land at the site, to which some plots belonging to the Jordanian government were added. A legal agreement was concluded with the Jordan Valley Authority to keep all the pieces of land surrounding the site as a Farm Unit².

¹ Al-Maghtas means “the immersion” in Arabic, thus providing also a reference to baptism in the toponomastic of the site.

² Farm Unit: A plot of land which the Authority designated as one single unit, irrigated from the waters of an irrigation project in the Valley and used for agricultural purposes including livestock raising and fishery (Source: Jordan Valley Development Law).



Fig.7: Aerial view of the Baptism Site and the Jordan river

Archaeological Remains

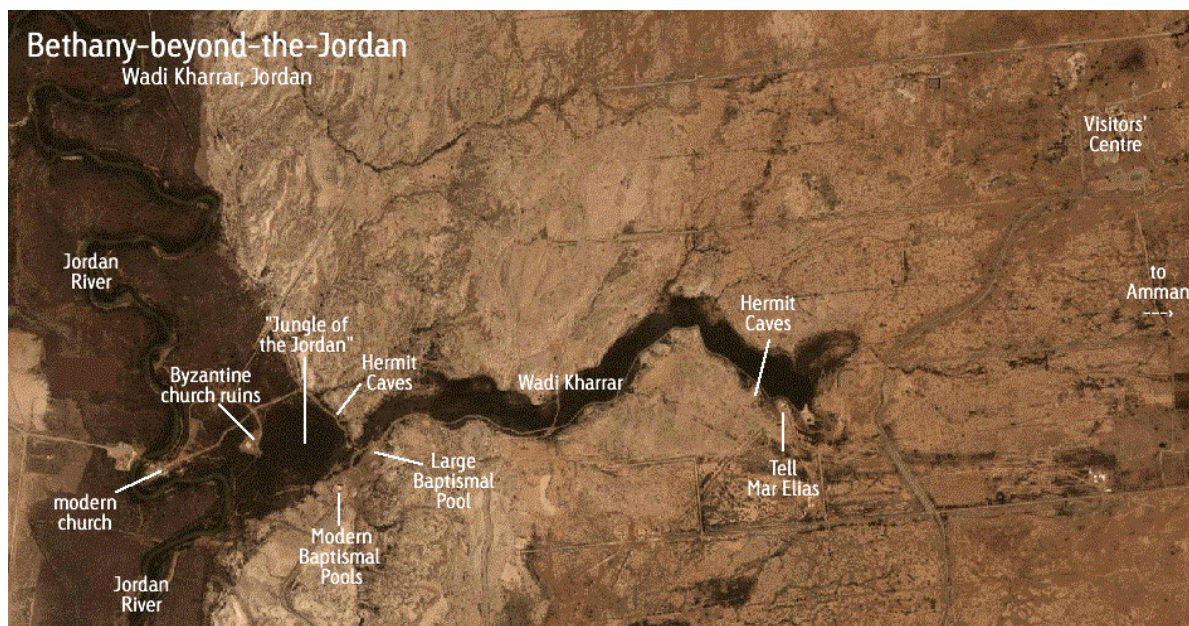


Fig. 8: Satellite photograph of the area of the Baptism Site

Archaeological investigations have uncovered mainly Roman and Byzantine remains distributed over the *qattara* hills and terraces extending from the floor of the Jordan Valley (the *Ghor*) until the Jordan River bed (the *Zor*). The principal remains extend from Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah's Hill) down to the east bank of the Jordan River 2 km to the west. These remains include a major basilica church, several small churches and chapels, water pools of various sizes and other water installations with large plastered pools and a ceramic pipeline. Caves and cells, where monks lived and performed their religious rites, were found on the western face of the *qattara* hills north of the site. Other settlement remains were attested east of the Baptism Site on the route to Mount Nebo. All these archaeological discoveries are of high cultural and religious/spiritual significance for Christians, Muslims and other believers.

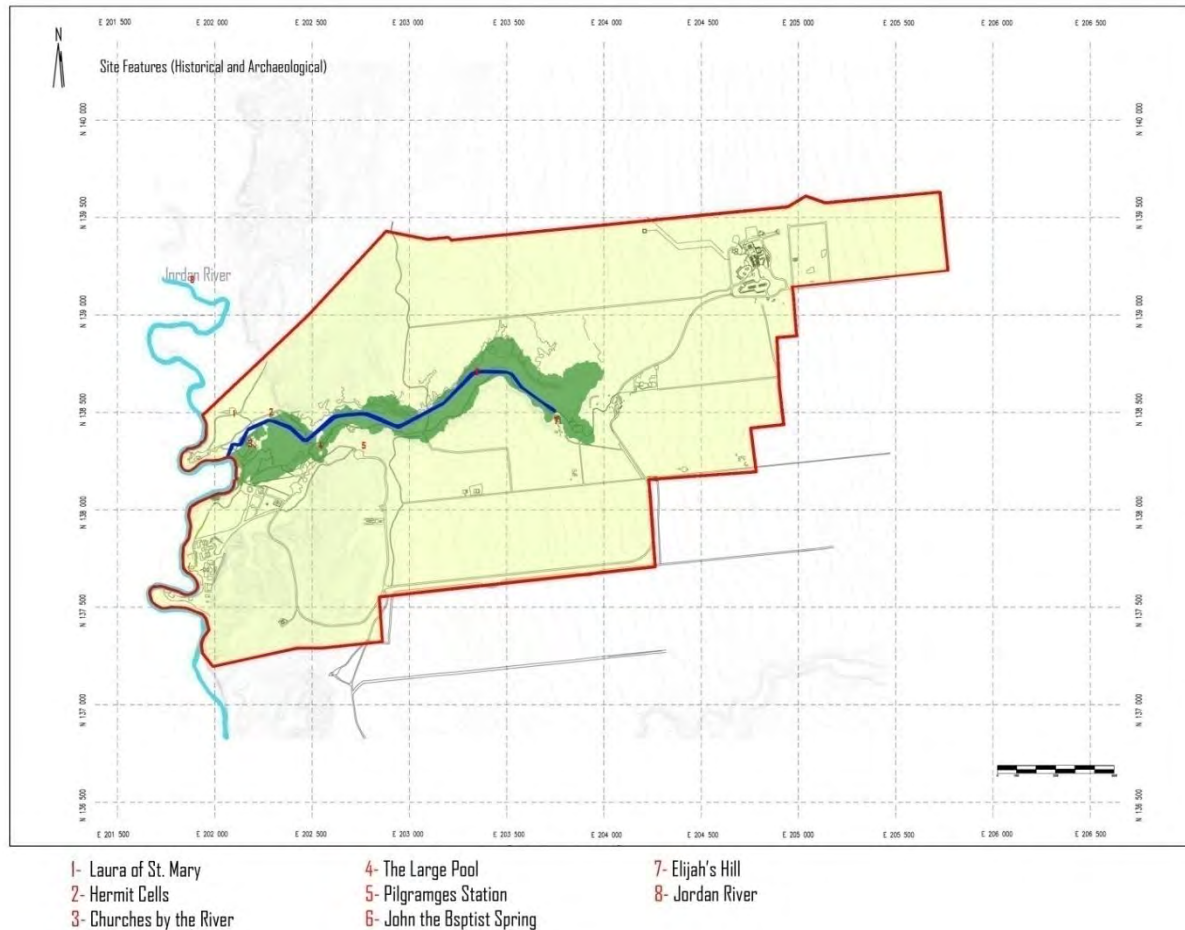


Fig.9: Site features- historical and archaeological layer

The archaeological evidence shows that the site was first occupied during the Late Chalcolithic Period (ca. 3500 BC), represented by a small village farming community. The next period of occupation dates from Hellenistic times (2nd-1st century BC), but the major occupation dates to the Roman and Byzantine periods (1st-7th centuries AD). The site was used during the time of Christ and John the Baptist and on a much larger scale during the Byzantine period, once Christianity was declared as the official religion of the Roman Empire in the early 4th century AD. These dates depend largely on pottery assemblages, coins, epigraphic and historical documents.

The archaeological remains from the Byzantine period can be divided into four main components:

1- Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah's Hill)

2- The *Zor* area

3- The caves

4- The tombs

1: Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah’s Hill)

The Al-Kharrar Valley is the modern name for the ancient “Sapsaphas” that appears on the Madaba mosaic map from the 6th century AD. The site is located two kilometers east of the Jordan River, west of the village of Kafrein, which is across from the famous site of Jericho on the west side of the Jordan River. At the beginning of the Al-Kharrar Valley is Tell Al-Kharrar or Elijah’s Hill (Jabal Mar Elias in Arabic), where tradition locates where the Prophet Elijah ascended to heaven (2 Kings 2:6-14) and where a monastic complex was built in the Byzantine period. In 1881 the archaeological explorer Conder mentioned a site called Ain Al-Kharrar or “Murmuring Spring” as a small spring close to the Jordan River. He stated that the site is “in the jungle at the edge of *Zor* near the lower bed of the Jordan River” (Conder 1882: 9). In 1975 the archaeologists Ibrahim, Sauer and Yassine visited Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah’s Hill) during their survey and dated the site to the Early Roman, Late Roman, Early Byzantine and Late Byzantine periods.



Fig.10: Elijah’s Hill as it was in its pre-excavation state in the early 1930s, photographed by Father Abel

The Tell is a small hill consisting of white Lisan marl mixed with red soil and was occupied during the Roman and Byzantine periods. Excavations revealed the presence of three churches, three caves, three baptismal pools and a circular well built of well-cut sandstone ashlars, in addition to an outer wall which surrounded the hill. Two entrances were used to access the site. The main components of the hill can be identified as the Monastery of Rhetorios built in the 5th century, based on the dedicatory inscription found in the apse of the northern church by the presbyter and abbot named Rhetorios.

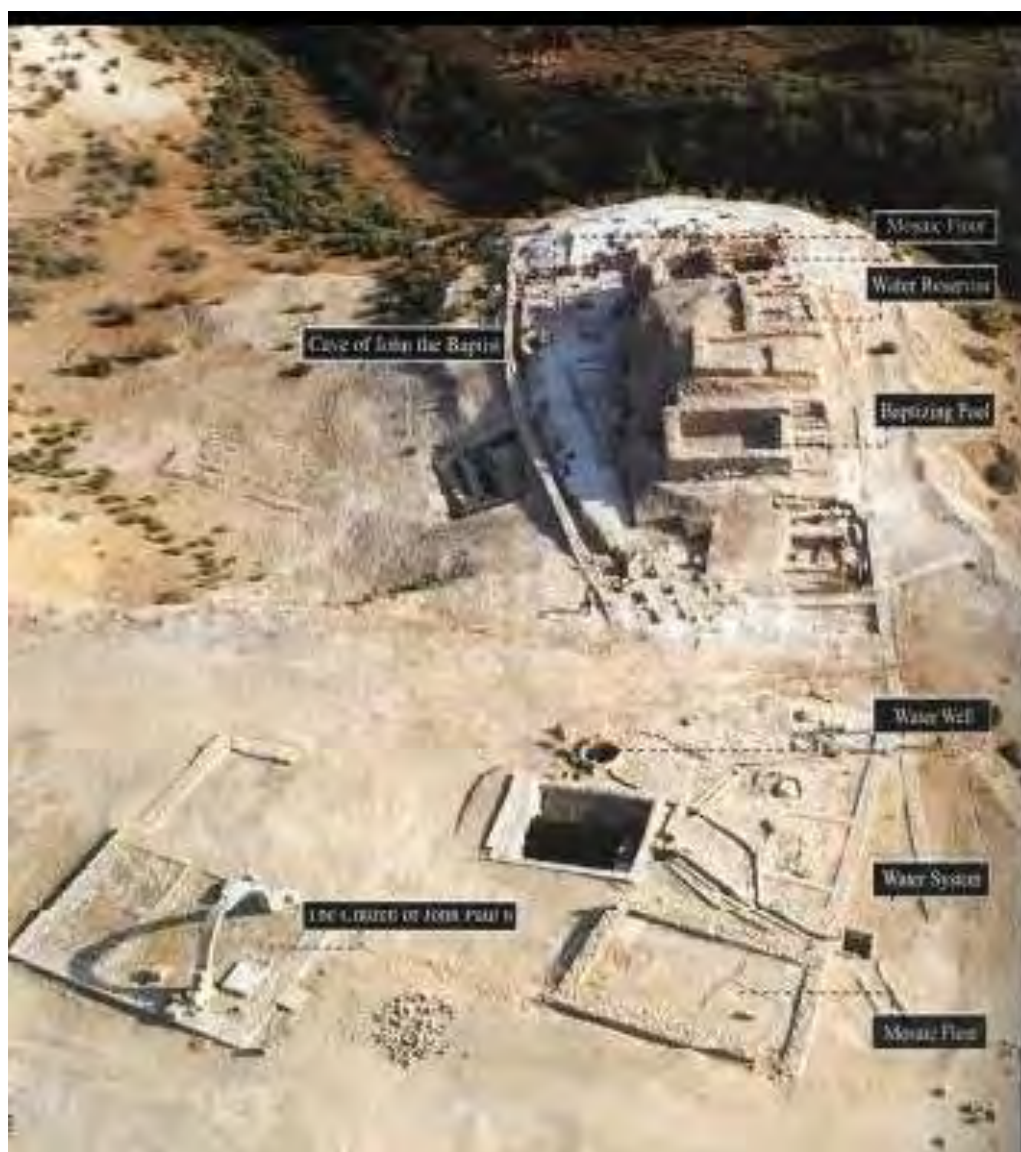


Fig.11: Aerial photograph showing the site of Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah's Hill)

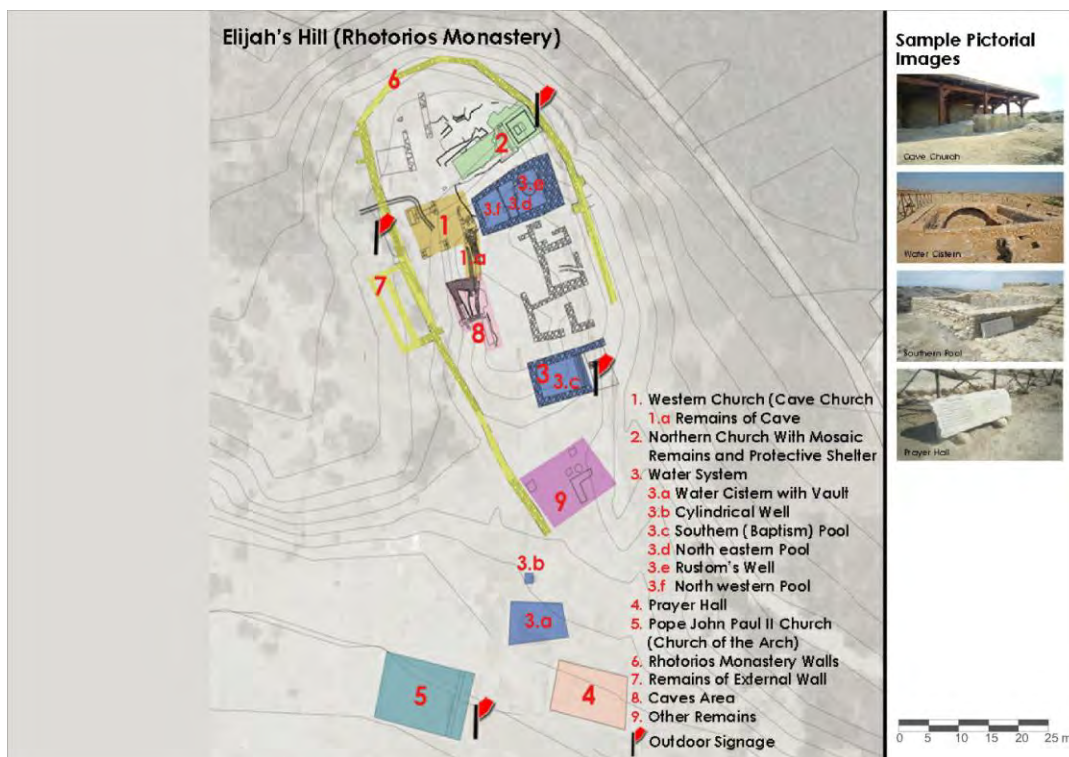


Fig.12: Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah's Hill)



Fig.13: The 5th-6th Century mosaic floor of the Church of Pope John Paul II (Church of the Arch)



Fig.14: Aerial view of Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah's Hill)



Fig.15: Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah's Hill) After the excavations showing the architectural remains

1- The Northern Church

The church consists of two sections: the chancel area, which measures 4.20m N-S x 4.15m E-W, and the nave, which measures 8.85m E-W x 4.15m N-S, (see figure 16). The chapel has two entrances, one located in the northern wall 0.70m wide and the other located on the western side. What distinguishes this church is the Greek inscription found inside. The floor of the church was covered with a colored mosaic floor composed of a frame and crosses with geometrical designs. Pillars along the northern wall of the church were designed to support the roof. No roof tiles were recovered from the excavations, pointing to the possibility that the roof consisted of wooden beams. The internal walls of the church were covered with a layer of smooth white plaster. Other buildings associated with the church near the northern wall were severely damaged by natural factors during later periods. The available recovered material suggests a late Byzantine date. A Greek inscription found on the mosaic floor set in the apse reads “By the help of the grace of Christ our God the whole monastery was constructed in the time of Rhetorios, the most God-beloved Presbyter and Abbot, may God the Savior give him mercy.”

2- The Western Church “Cave Church”

A second church was constructed after the western Lisan marl slope of the hill was cut away and a retaining wall was built. The church, known as the Western or Cave Church, measures 13m x 13m and consists of two parts. The well-preserved apse, an old cave, was cut into the natural rock and located under the northwestern pool. A lamp niche was dug in its southern side. The remains of the entrance in the chancel screen are still visible. The other part of the church consisted of four bases built of well-dressed sandstone ashlar forming a nave and two aisles, making the church a basilica type. The roof and the arch system were demolished, and only remains of arch springers were found. The floor was covered with colored mosaics that unfortunately were destroyed, although the nearby mosaic floor of the Northern Church was still preserved. Only fragments with remains of gray lime mortar were found during the excavation. Some of these fragments show designs of crosses that decorated the floor. Pottery sherds indicated a late Byzantine date.

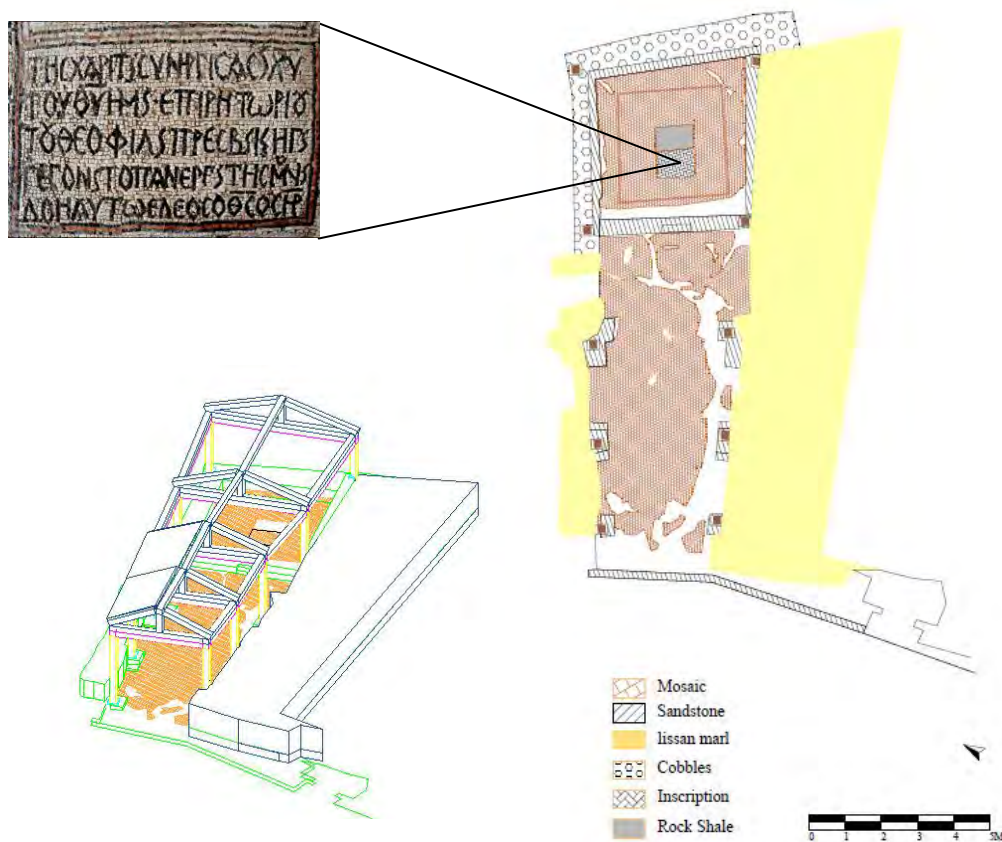


Fig.16: Aabove:Baptism Site, Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah’s Hill), Rhetorios Monastery, Northern Church.
below: (left) a detailed plan for the the Northern church. (right) 3D shot for N.C.



Fig.17: The Western Church

3- The Mosaic Floor

The excavations uncovered a small building that measures approximately 6m x 6m located north of the Western Church and west of the Northern Church. What remains of the site is the colored mosaic floor, decorated with floral designs. The mosaic floor is in a poor state of preservation due to natural factors and erosion. The walls of the structure were built of fieldstones. Unfortunately, only the foundations are still in situ. The function of this structure should probably be interpreted in association with the nearby churches.



Fig.18: The mosaic floor of the Northern Church

4- Church of the Arch / Church of Pope John Paul II

Excavations conducted in Area C to the south of Tell Al-Kharrar uncovered a structure built of well-dressed sandstone blocks. The general shape of the structure is rectangular, its dimensions are approximately 13.5m E-W and 9m N-S. Many parts of this building have disappeared, especially the upper courses, the walls and part of the floor, with only limited portions still preserved. What remains are a few stones resting on a lime-plastered surface overlying carefully prepared rubble stones and gray to dark ashy mortar that resembled the bedding cement of the structure.

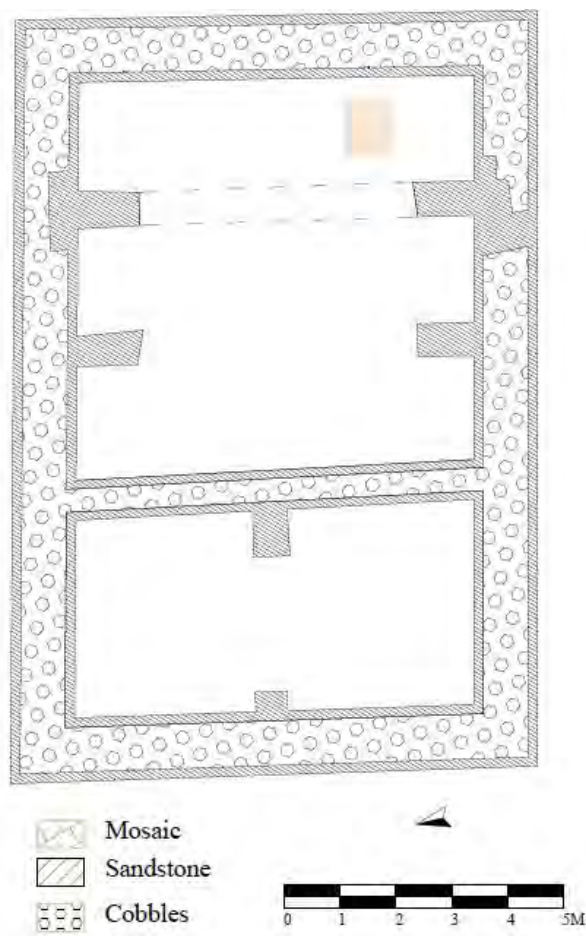


Fig.19: above:The Church of the Arch / Church of Pope John Paul II. below: a detailed plan for Church of Pope John Paul II

The colored mosaic floor with cross marks depicted on it was largely destroyed and removed, and only a small portion in the southeastern corner of the church is still in situ. The fill contained fragments of lime with some mosaic tesserae still adhering to it. Impressions on the mortar bedding and the springs of arches indicate that a system of arches was used to support the roof of the structure. It is clear that the structure represents a small chapel located near the southwestern corner of Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah’s Hill). The chapel had three arches to support the roof.



Fig.20: The 5th-6th Century mosaic floor in the Church of Pope John Paul II

5- The Water System

Water was carried to the pools in pipes through settling basins before emptying into a cistern (6.4m x 3m) with a total capacity around 100 cubic meters. The cistern was roofed by a vault system and had a white mosaic floor on top. The water system is located between the prayer hall and the nearby small chapel. The water was carried to the system in ceramic pipes through settling basins before emptying into a cistern and a well connected with water channels.

Archaeological investigations revealed the presence of ceramic pipes and aqueducts leading to the east of the Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” to

bring water from sources and springs in that location. Numerous springs are still feeding the area, such as 'Ayn al-Kharrar (John the Baptist spring) which is located in Wadi al-Kharrar, and other springs to the east such as 'Ayn Salim, 'Ayn al-Fawara, 'Ayn al-Hammam and others. The need for more water for daily life and other cultic purposes was behind the construction of the water system.

The ceramic pipe, partly preserved at Elijah Hill, reached the site near the prayer hall, where a medium size settling tank had been built. The water then continued its course through a stone aqueduct and poured its water into two small settling tanks and afterwards directed to the pool and via another branch to the cistern, while a third branch goes to the north-eastern side.

The cistern (6.30m long x 4.30m wide with a total capacity of approximately 100m cube) was dug out of the natural lisan marl rock, it is the largest reservoir discovered at the site, built during the fifth and sixth centuries AD. Well-cut sandstone ashlar were used to build its inner sides, while a thick layer of lime was added and covered by smooth layer of plaster to prevent any seepage. The cistern was roofed by a vault system and carried a white mosaic floor on top. A canal feeds a cylindrical well (3.25m in diameter x 5.40m deep with a total capacity of approximately 45m cube), is located near the northwestern corner of the cistern dating from the Byzantine period.



Fig. 21: Part of the reconstructed water canalization system that took water into the main cistern and onto the monastic complex on Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah's Hill)



Fig. 22: The 12 meters deep well at the top of Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah's Hill) in the center of the northeastern pool



Fig. 23: The cylindrical well at Tell Al-Kharrar



Fig. 24: Water cistern at Tell Al-Kharrar

6- The Pools

Three rectangular pools (3.8m x 3m and 4.3m x 2.3m and 5.3m x 3.7m) are located on the northern edge of the tell. The first one is located on the lower southern slope, dating to the Late Roman period during the 3rd-4th centuries AD. The other two pools are located on the top of the northern edge of Tell al-Kharrar (Elijah Hill). Rectangular in shape, the southern pool had an inner staircase on the eastern side, and four steps extending along the full width of the pool. Pilgrims would descend into the pool to be baptized.



Fig. 25: One of the three pools on Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah's Hill), with steps leading down into it

The two northern pools are almost square in shape and also date from the same Roman period. Ashlars were added near the southwestern corner of the northwestern pool in later periods, possibly to form a staircase going down into the pool. The pools received their water supply through aqueducts.

Excavations under the damaged floor of the pool revealed a well dating from the Early Roman to Late Byzantine periods. Circular on top, it is built of well-cut sandstone ashlar.



Fig. 26: The Northwestern pool at Tell Al-Kharrar

2: Churches of the *Zor* Area (Near the Jordan River)

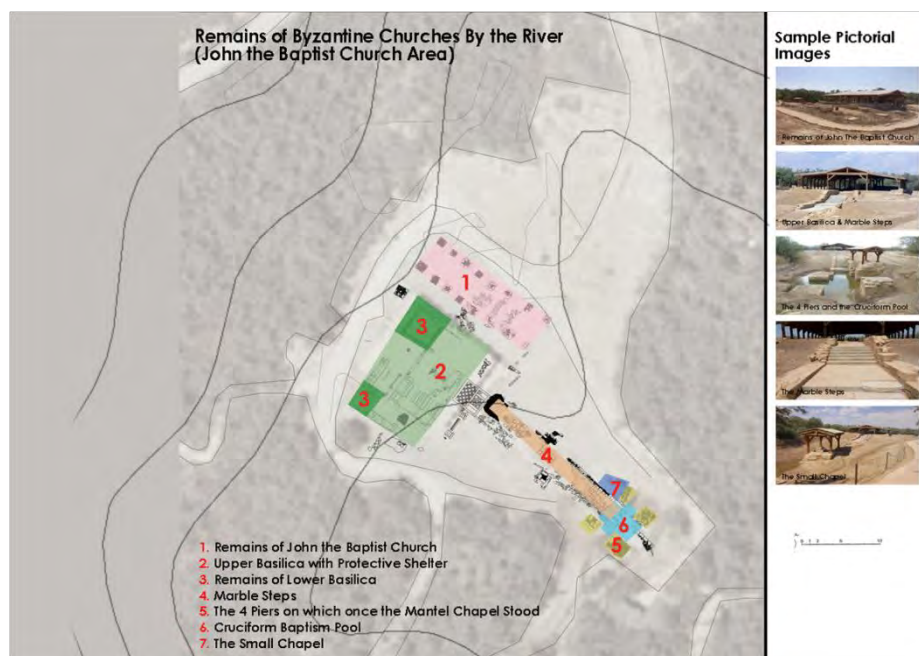


Fig. 27: Remains of Byzantine Churches by the Jordan River (Church of St. John the Baptist)

1- Pillared Hall / Church of St. John the Baptist

The pillared hall is built on sandy soil at an absolute level of -394.81m, compared to the lowest level of the site at -385.00m and the level of the Jordan River on 15 January 2003 of -402.00m. The remains of a set of stone pillars running east-west and north-south are evident. They consist of nine in the east-west direction (total length of the church 25.15m), and possibly six in the north-south direction (total length 25.80m). The existence of that many pillars is evidenced by:

- The remains of foundations for two pillars along the south wall of the Basilica Church
- The distances between the north-south piers
- The material and mortar used
- The dimensions of the foundations
- The level of the extant foundations.

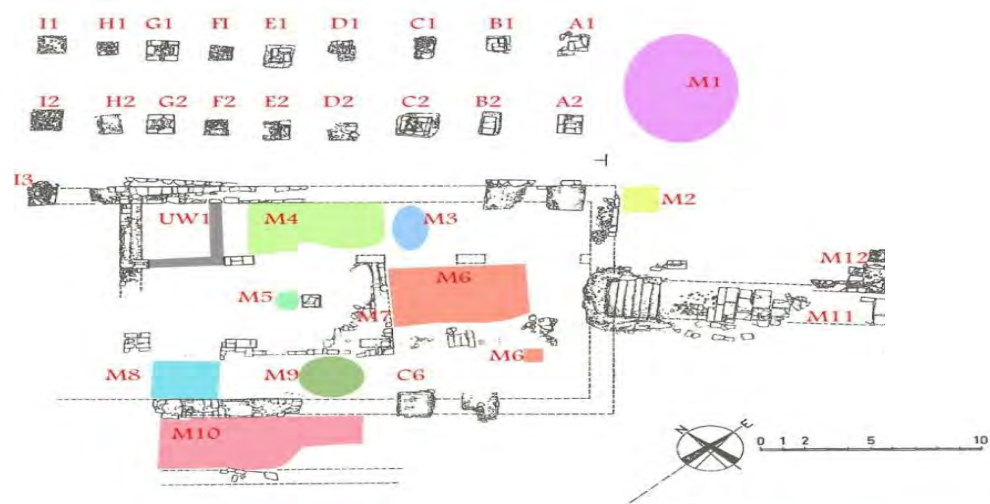


Fig. 28: Plan of the Church of St. John the Baptist.

The foundations vary in size but they are constructed of fieldstones of average size bound together by a cementing material of gray color with plaster remains noticed at the surface of some of the foundations. The pillars also vary in size. Sandstone ashlar were used in building the outer sides of the pillars, whereas the core consisted of field stones and cementing material. The pillars were raised to a minimum height of 2.5m judging from the remains of one of them.

Some fragments of white, medium-sized mosaic tesserae were also found. We can therefore conclude that these sets of pillars were designed to carry or support a large platform that, in turn, might have supported or formed the elevated floor of a monastery, basilica or other structure. The lack of a floor supports the identification of the set of pillars as the substructure for an elevated building. This seems to be the Church of St. John the Baptist built by Emperor Anastasius (491-518 AD).

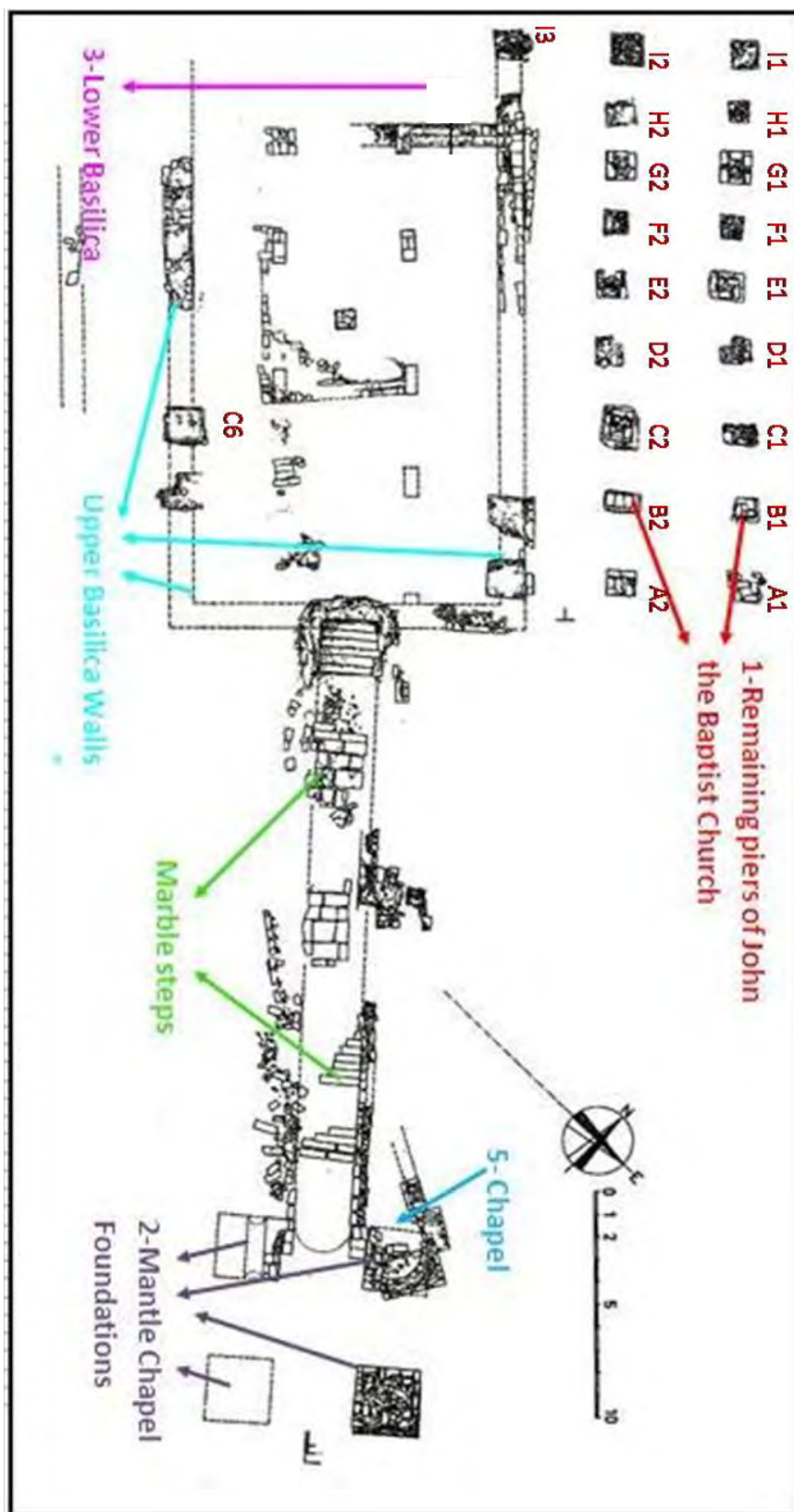


Fig. 29: Plan of the area of the Church of St. John the Baptist



Fig. 30: Churches built in memory of the Baptism of Jesus after the 5th century AD.



Fig. 31: The Church of St. John the Baptist, remains of the first Church

2- Lower Basilica Church

Test trenches in the western parts of both northern and southern aisles of the Basilica uncovered marble floors of various geometrical shapes and colors, generally tilting towards the west with fallen ashlar directly over the southwest part of the marble pavement. Parts of the southern wall of the Lower Basilica could also be seen in those trenches. Since the sections formed by the difference in height between the floor levels of the second and the third churches, about 2m in its westernmost parts included mixed material such as marble fragments, ashlar, pottery, etc., and since the walls of the Basilica were partly built of the remains of the Lower Basilica, it can be assumed that the Basilica overlaid the remains of the Lower Basilica and made use of those remains to strengthen its foundation. Since the floor tilts to the west, floods from the west must have caused the destruction of the Lower Basilica by undermining its foundations. This is an indication that the main course of the river was probably just west of the Lower Basilica. Floods would also be the cause of the destruction of the Basilica itself, since most of its western parts have vanished. The Lower Basilica has not been completely investigated because it would have been inappropriate to excavate through the floor of the Basilica to expose the complete remains of the lower Basilica.

3- Basilica Church

The Basilica was built at a ground level higher than the surrounding remains, so relatively little remains of it. The building had a minimum length of 27m and a width of 15.80m. A plan of part of the Pillared Hall and of the Basilica shows an interior width of 13.38m (the interior dimension of 15.80m equals 50 standard early Byzantine feet measuring 0.315m each). Since the basilica was partly built over the remains of earlier structures (the Lower Basilica and the Pillared Hall), its construction made use of those remains as foundations, especially for its northern and southern walls. Elsewhere, the foundations are of fieldstones of medium size, well-cemented with a grayish lime mortar, the height varying according to the original topography. The existing external walls indicate that they were built of sandstone ashlar forming both the inner and the outer faces, with a mixture of fieldstones and sandstone pieces cemented together forming the core of the walls. Those have an average width of 1.10m.

Rectangular piers with sections measuring 1.30 x 0.58m and 1.42 x 0.58m supported the roof. The westernmost standing piers are spaced 3.42m apart. Certain blocks at foundation level can be interpreted as infrastructure for more piers. The clear width of the nave is 5.12m and the widths of the south and north aisles are 3.45 and 3.63m respectively. Features in the central aisle include the sandstone foundations for the chancel screen, a rectangular apse measuring 7.6m long (N-S) and in its center the altar (0.80m²), made of sandstone (remaining marble slabs on both its western and southern sides indicate it was revetted with marble). West of the altar are the remains of a mosaic floor of medium-sized, colored tesserae; among the motifs, a vase with two handles and flowers can be noted. On the east corner of the vase a rosette is depicted, north of the altar there was a marble floor of geometrical design (opus sectile). The marble has totally vanished but the underlying mortar (of grayish color) retains the impressions of the pattern. The remains of a wall foundation of an apse built of sandstone indicate the extent of the rectangular apse. In both the northern and southern aisles, only the floor bedding survives, with some remains of a mosaic floor in the eastern part of the northern aisle showing a geometric motif with large colored tesserae.



Fig. 32: Remains of the lower basilica Church



Fig. 33: The basilica church from the south west

4 - The Marble Steps

A flight of marble steps lead from the Upper Basilica down to a cruciform baptismal pool. They were probably constructed around 570 AD. The steps have been restored but the original parts are easily distinguished visually from the restored parts. One has to take into consideration that the level of the Jordan River changes throughout the year, and during certain parts of the year, this pool still has water in it. Two stone walls on both sides of the stair give it support.

The stairs are essential structures at the eastern part of the third-phase Basilica. The stairs were separated from the Basilica for about 1.5m probably following floods or an earthquake. The stairs are 2.50m wide and consists of 22 black marble steps and have a marble panel at the bottom installed as a landing for those who wished to use the stairs to descend to the water in the baptismal pool at the bottom (Waheeb 2009: 17-18).



Fig. 34: The marble steps

5 - The Four Piers and the Chapel of the Mantle

The flight of marble steps led down to a cruciform baptismal pool where four large piers were also constructed. The superstructure that the piers once supported is no longer extant, but it is assumed to have been the Chapel of the Mantle, commemorating the spot where Jesus took off his garments before being baptized.

Three piers are extant; the fourth, SE pier has almost totally vanished, but can be assumed by reason of symmetry, and excavations carried out in the summer of 2002 uncovered a few ashlar and fieldstones scattered in its presumed location (Mkhjian and Kanellopoulos 2003: 14).

Sandstone ashlar, about 0.30m high, were used to construct the outer faces of the piers, which had a core densely filled with fieldstone and sandstone pieces well cemented with a lime mortar. At the lower parts of the existing piers grayish plaster covering them is still well attached (total thickness of 15-20mm) with hundreds of cross marks incised all over them. Inscriptions were also noted on the southern part of the NW pier.

"A study of the arch stones found in the center of the four piers indicated that they belonged to arches of about 1.8m in radius, knowing that the distance between the piers is about 3.50-3.60, we could conclude that they belonged to arches and vaults on top of the piers. Remains of a large arched gateway with doorjambs, each 1m wide, are in the western pair of piers. The clear opening of the gate is 2.50m, thus corresponding to the width of the staircase that leads from the four piers to the basilica (the third church)" (Mkhjian and Kanellopoulos 2003: 14).

The French pilgrim Arculfus came to the site at around 670 AD. He narrates:

"Right at the river's edge stands a small rectangular church which was built, so it is said, at the place where the Lord's clothes were placed while he was baptized. The fact that it is supported on four stone vaults makes it usable, since the water, which comes in from all sides, is underneath it. It has a tiled roof. This remarkable church is supported, as we have said, by arches and vaults, and stands in the

lower part of the valley through which the Jordan flows.”(Wilkinson 2002:190-191)

His description matches what has been found, confirming that a chapel was built on four stone vaults, above the water, and in the location where, supposedly, Jesus left his garments before being baptized. About 50 years later Willibald seems to have seen the same chapel, or the nearby basilica, as he speaks about a church built on stone columns (Wright 1848:17; Mkhjian 2005: 403).

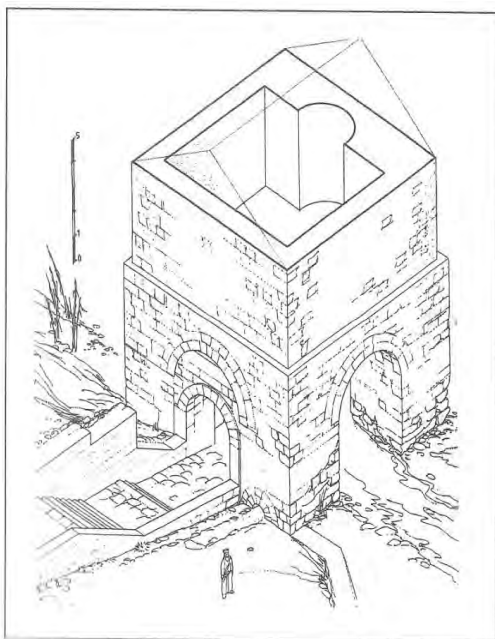


Fig. 35: Hypothetical Reconstruction of the Piers Supporting a Chapel (Chrysanthos Kanellopoulos)

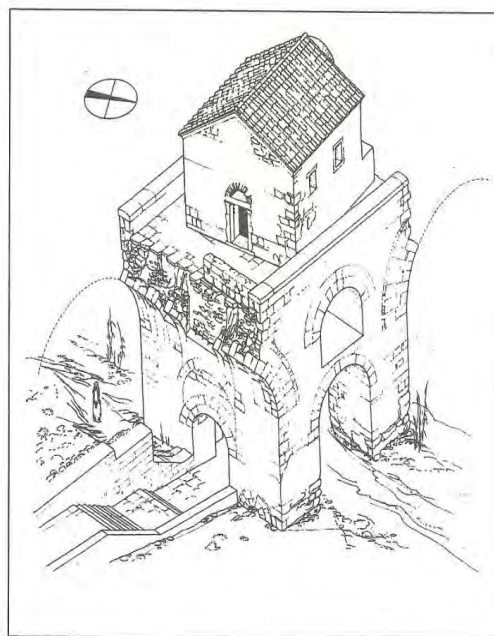


Fig. 36: Hypothetical Reconstruction of the “Small Chapel” Built on the Piers of an Older, Ruined Bridge over Wadi Al-Kharrar (Chrysanthos Kanellopoulos)



Fig. 37: The marble steps leading to the cruciform baptismal pool, the four piers on which the Mantle chapel once stood and the small chapel

6 - The Small Chapel

Around the 12th century AD a small chapel was built on the remains of the NW pier. The existing remains of the Chapel show that it was built using materials similar to all the other churches. There is only one course of sandstone wall remaining in its northern and northeastern parts (Mkhjian and Kanellopoulos 2003: 14). However, these remains are enough to assume a Chapel about 3.05m wide and 5m long. In the middle of the northern wall an entrance, 1.6m wide, led to the Chapel in which only the whitish bedding of the pavement now remains. The northern wall is 0.60m thick and was built using sandstone ashlar (0.30m high) on the outer and inner faces. The core of the wall is densely filled with boulders and sandstone pieces that are well cemented. The apse is enclosed within the rectangular external walls and is almost semicircular (0.95m deep, 2.25m wide) with the eastern wall about 0.85m thick. The apse floor is around 0.15m higher than the floor of the nave. Again, only the whitish bedding of the floor remains in the apse.

In the center of the chancel screen there is a reused white marble capital with sandstone ashlar around it. The architects made use of the best-preserved NW pier as the main foundation for the Chapel. But it is important to note that the chapel was not built parallel to the pier walls. In other words, the Chapel is oriented almost exactly east-west, and was larger than the pier (Mkhjian and Kanellopoulos 2003: 15). Hence the following can be deduced:

- Floods and/or earthquakes had destroyed whatever superstructure the four piers carried, and debris filled the area. Archaeologists assume that the four piers were the foundation of a chapel of the mantle that stood over the four piers and no longer exists today. After the destruction of the Chapel of the Mantle, a smaller chapel was built on the ruins of the NW base (pier).
- The baptistery area below the structure of the four piers was no longer in use.
- The staircase had partially collapsed and was covered by alluvial deposits.
- The Basilicas had also been destroyed; a reused marble capital at the center of the chancel screen and other reused stones can be seen in the southern section of the Chapel.



Fig. 38: The small chapel



Fig. 39: The baptismal pool and small chapel

7 - Laura of Saint Mary of Egypt

This structure is located 50m east of the Jordan River, with the Lisan marl cliffs off to the east. Systematic excavations revealed an architectural complex consisting of four rooms. This building was mentioned by F.M. Abel, who in 1930 suggested that the rooms were used by Saint Mary or built after her death in the Byzantine period. Occupation in this complex continued into the Ottoman period. The measurements of the rooms vary from one to the other but the outer shape is rectangular, and the date of the pottery found confirms that the complex was built in the Byzantine period.



Fig. 40: The remains of a room in what may have been the *laura* of St. Mary of Egypt

8 - The Large Pool

A large pool was uncovered during the excavation in the lower area of Bethany Beyond the Jordan flanking the Jordan River, called the “Zor” area. This large stone-built and plastered pool measures over 25meters x 15meters, and might have been used for group baptisms in the Byzantine period.

A well-built canal directed water into the pool from a nearby spring to the North, and carried water out of the pool’s Southern wall. Material recovered from the pool dates the structure to the Byzantine period, during the 5th – 6th centuries A.D.



Fig. 41: The Large pool

3: The Caves (Hermit Cells)

A cluster of monks' caves are located ca. 300m from the Jordan River and were carved into the qattara hills overlooking the *Zor*, the Jordan River and the western side of the Jordan Valley. These caves were accessible from the western and southwestern sides by ropes, ladders or staircases which have been demolished. The caves were difficult to reach from the east as they are located in the middle of a steep cliff. These caves have semicircular niches carved in the eastern side that served for prayer and remind one of a typical design of a Byzantine church (Reuben and Taylor 2010: 71). One of the caves measures 5m x 4m and its height rises up to 2m. Each cave has a bench at the entrance and was divided into two chambers. According to Waheeb, one of the rooms served for living and the other for prayer. The pottery from inside the caves and around them date to the Byzantine period (Waheeb et al. 2011: 182).

Hermits used these caves as places of pious devotion, as dwellings, meditation and for prayer. Prayer niches were carved into the eastern walls of the two caves, perhaps as an indication of the caves being converted into a church or chapel. Monks used to inhabit in those raised cells without accessible means except

wooden ladders. Many ancient texts from the Byzantine and Crusader eras mention the presence of Christian hermit monks living in caves and cells in this area, alongside springs.

Three other caves at the same level are close to the settlement at Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah’s Hill) and its spring. One of the small churches built on the hill functioned as the apse of a Byzantine church (Waheeb et al. 2011: 177).

These caves were also mentioned frequently in the records of early pilgrims and travelers starting in the 5th century AD. They were described by Waheeb et al. 2011:

“The area of the caves was reshaped by Byzantine architects and a retaining wall was erected to prevent any collapse or erosion, in addition, a wide wall was constructed in front of the first and second caves to provide space for those who used the area, while the church was built on the third cave. A point about the dating of the churches on top of the hill that have cross motifs in the floor mosaics is that there was an edict by the Emperor Theodosius II in 427 AD that prohibited the use of the cross and other Christian symbols in pavements, which would be walked on. This is relevant in the context of the tradition that St Helena decreed that a sanctuary to the prophet Elias should be built on the hill long before 427 AD. The entrance area was made by building three arches and a wall that surrounded the whole hill, sometimes supported by buttresses, especially on the western side opposite the cave. The buildings around the caves from the south, north, west and on top of the hill over the caves represent a complete Byzantine monastery that was established in the fourth century AD and flourished during the sixth century AD.”

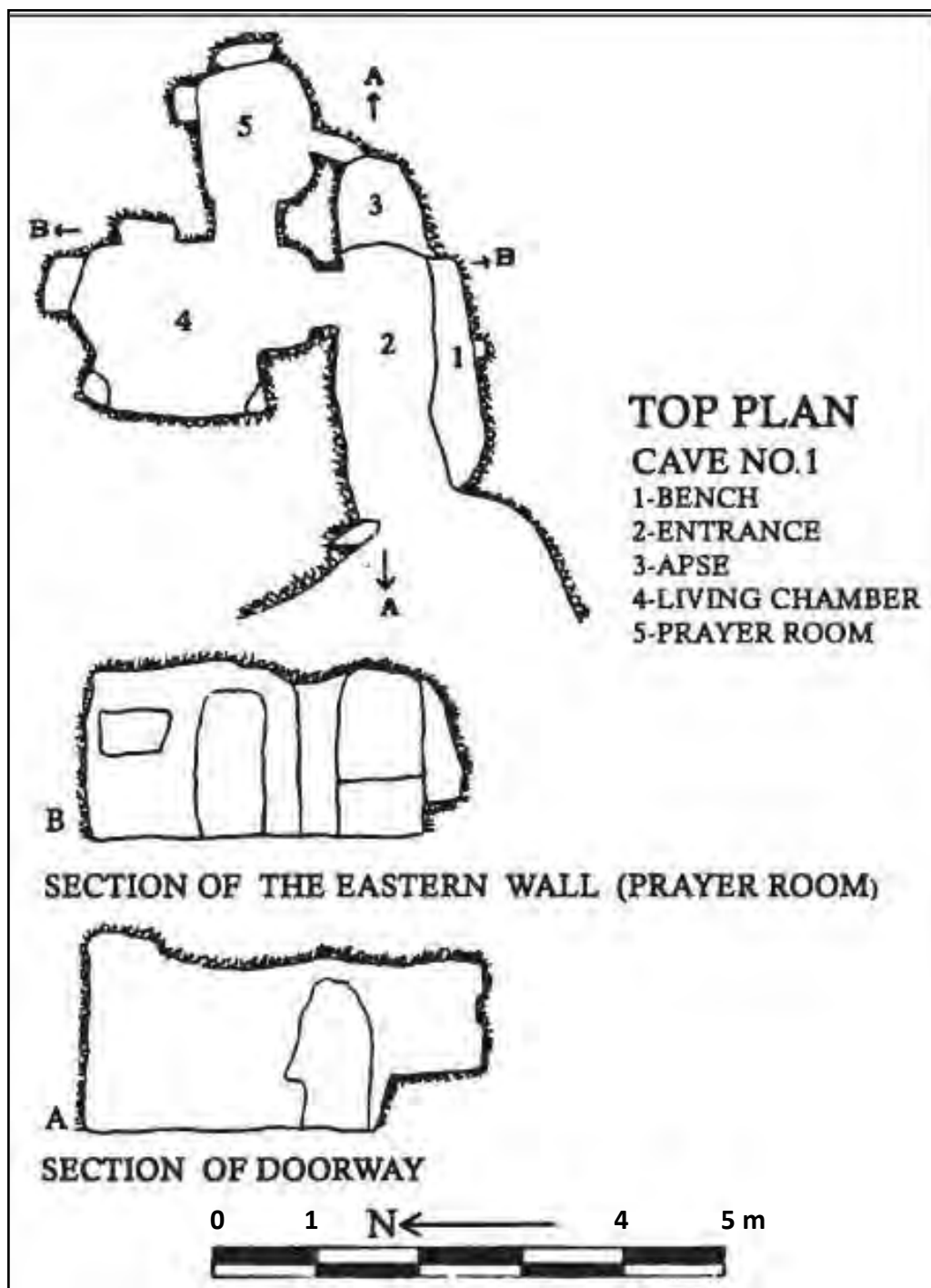


Fig. 42: Cave No. 1

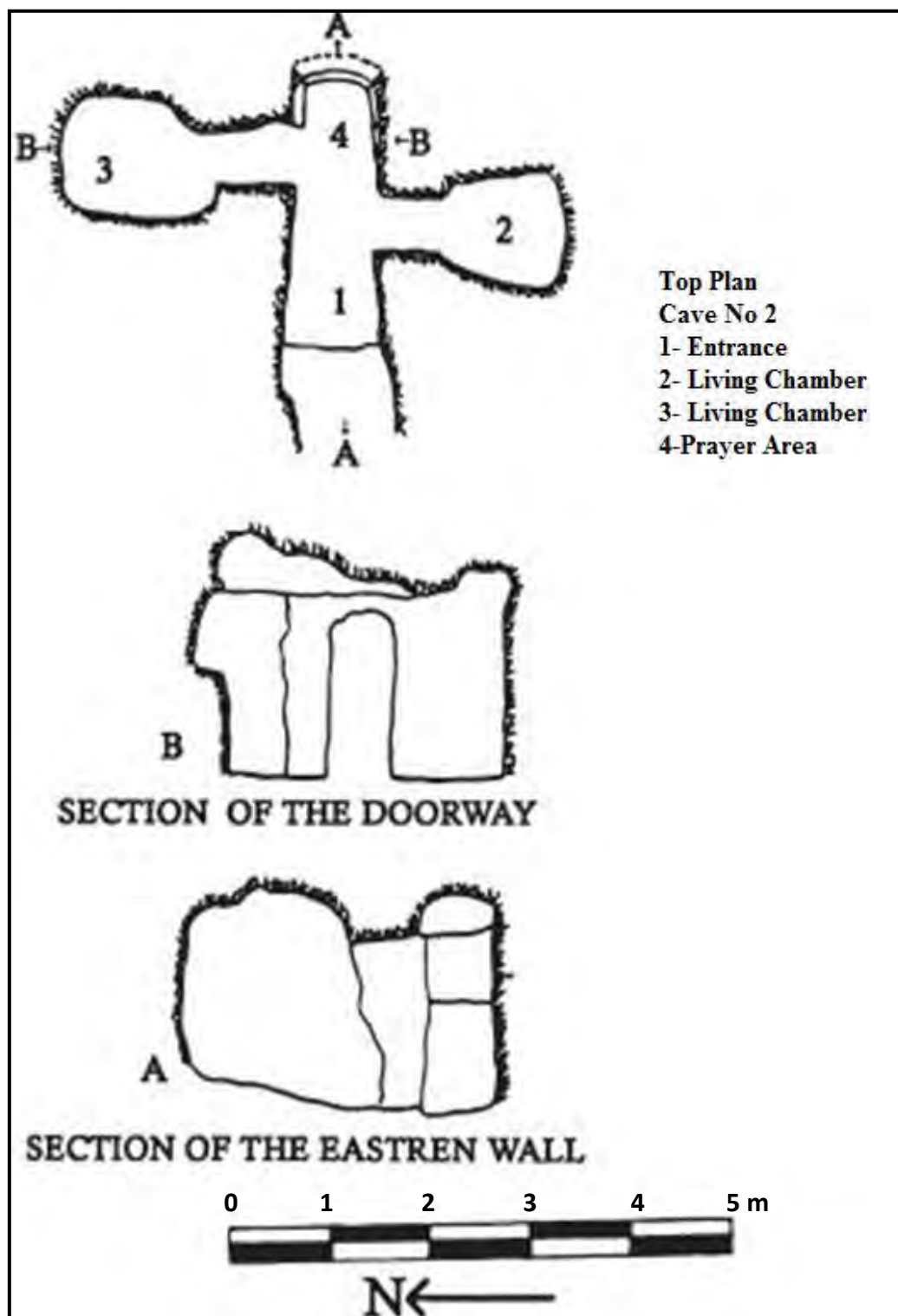


Fig. 43: Cave No. 2



Fig. 44: The interior of a cave



Fig. 45: Cave cells

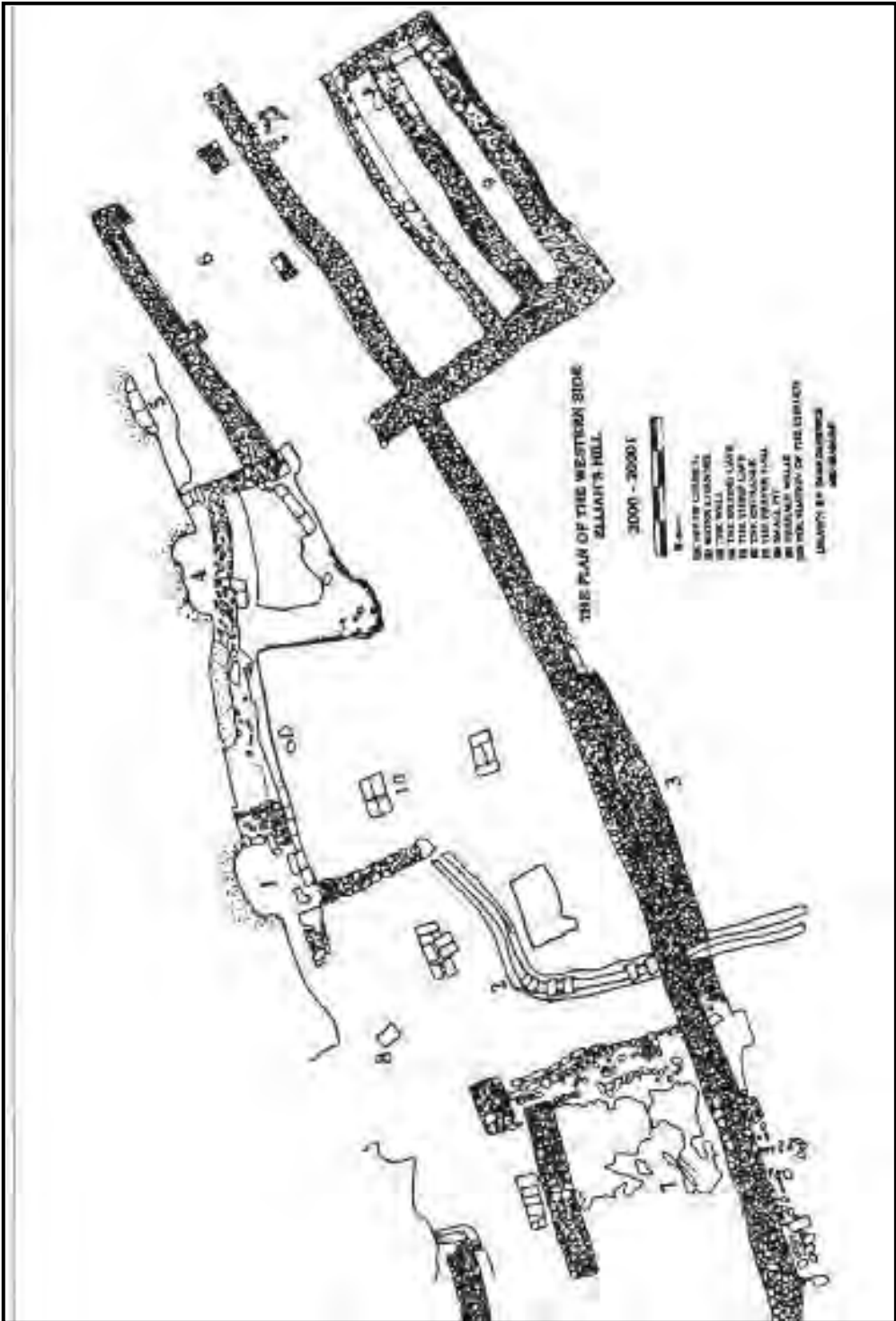


Fig. 46: Top plan of the church built around the third cave on Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah's Hill) using the cave as its apse

4: The Tombs

A number of tombs were identified adjacent to the churches or within them, seemingly indicating a close relationship to the monks and their families. Burying associated persons close to churches or inside them was a common practice in the Byzantine period. Most of the graves were rectangular in shape with vertical sides designed to receive a single outstretched body. The length of each shaft was roughly adjusted to the height of the person buried.

Skeletal remains of six male individuals between 25-40 years of age and a child 7-10 years old were retrieved in 1998 and 2000 at the Baptism Site. According to the researchers they were in bad health and their teeth were in bad condition “all individuals of Tomb 1 and Tomb 2 suffered from the same infectious disease and possibly died as a result of it (Nabulsi 2009: 66). The burials were dated to the Byzantine to early Islamic periods (5th-7th century AD).

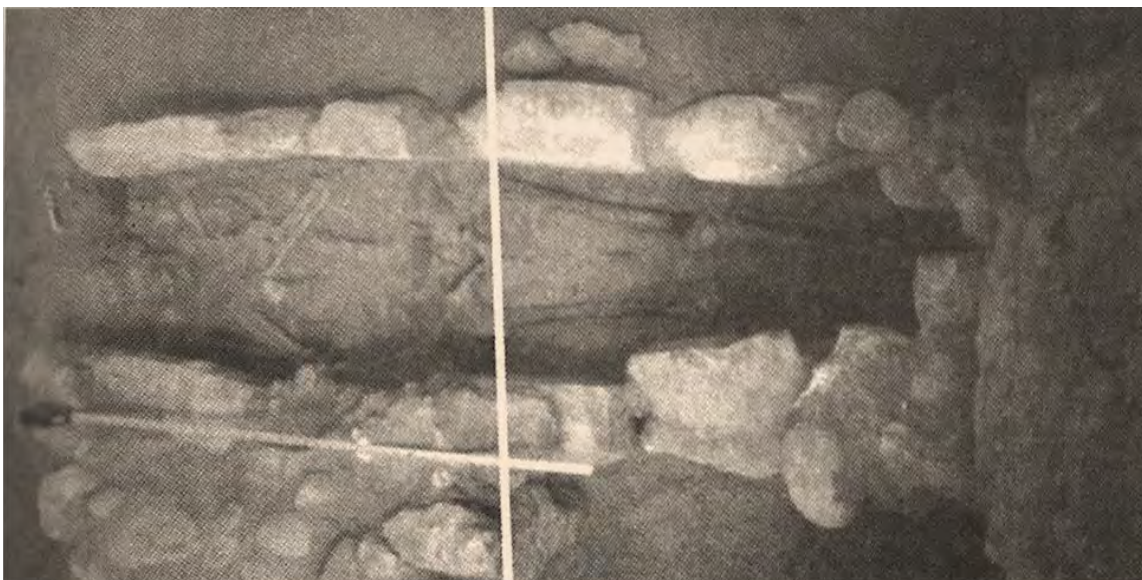


Fig. 47: Tomb 1 burial

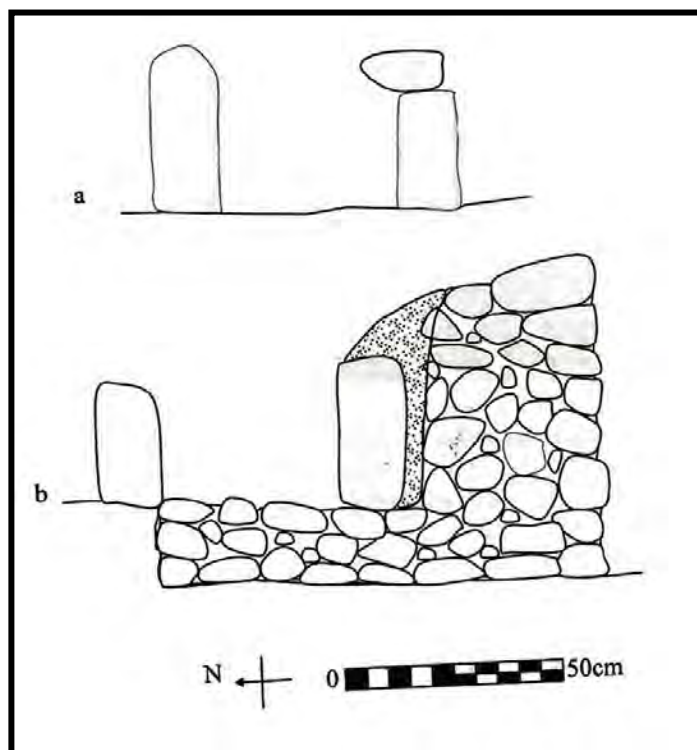


Fig. 48: Top view of tomb 1

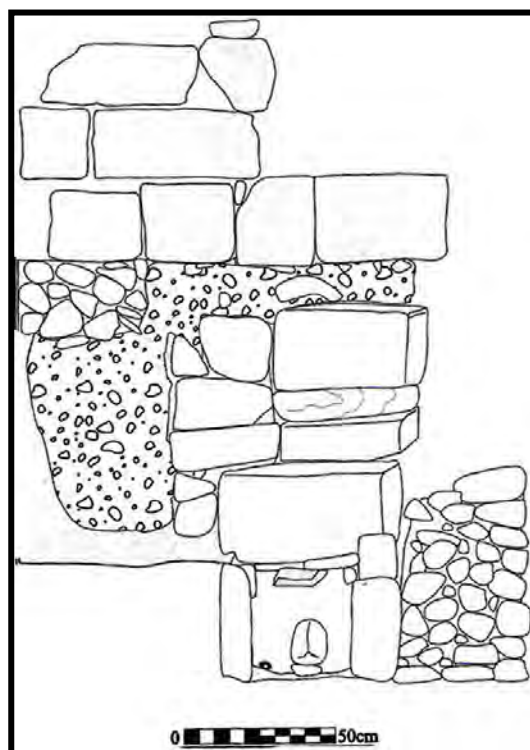


Fig. 49: Cross section of tomb 1

Archaeological Finds

The discoveries made during the course of the excavations include several churches with relatively well preserved mosaic floors with colored geometric designs of lozenges and crosses dating from the 5th and 6th centuries AD. Churches and associated structures and facilities continued to be built in the Early and Middle Islamic periods.

These early Christians established infrastructure, including elaborate water channels, reservoirs and pools for ritual purposes and to serve visiting pilgrims. They brought water to the site from nearby valleys and springs by ceramic pipes connected to cisterns and to large and medium-sized tanks.

Roman and Byzantine Corinthian capitals were found within and around the churches. Some of these capitals were observed and recorded by early travelers like the French Father Abel. Other capitals appeared in the course of excavations.

They were made of marble or other stone. Other finds include large crosses carved in marble.

A large number of copper coins were recovered in various locations during the excavations. Some of these coins date from the Early and Middle Roman periods (1st century BC-3rd century AD). The majority of the coins can be dated to the Late Roman and Byzantine periods (4th-7th century AD). Other coins with Arabic script were struck in the Early Islamic period (7th century onward).



Fig. 50: Roman capitals reused in the Byzantine churches



Fig. 51: Crosses carved in limestone and marble found at the upper basilica

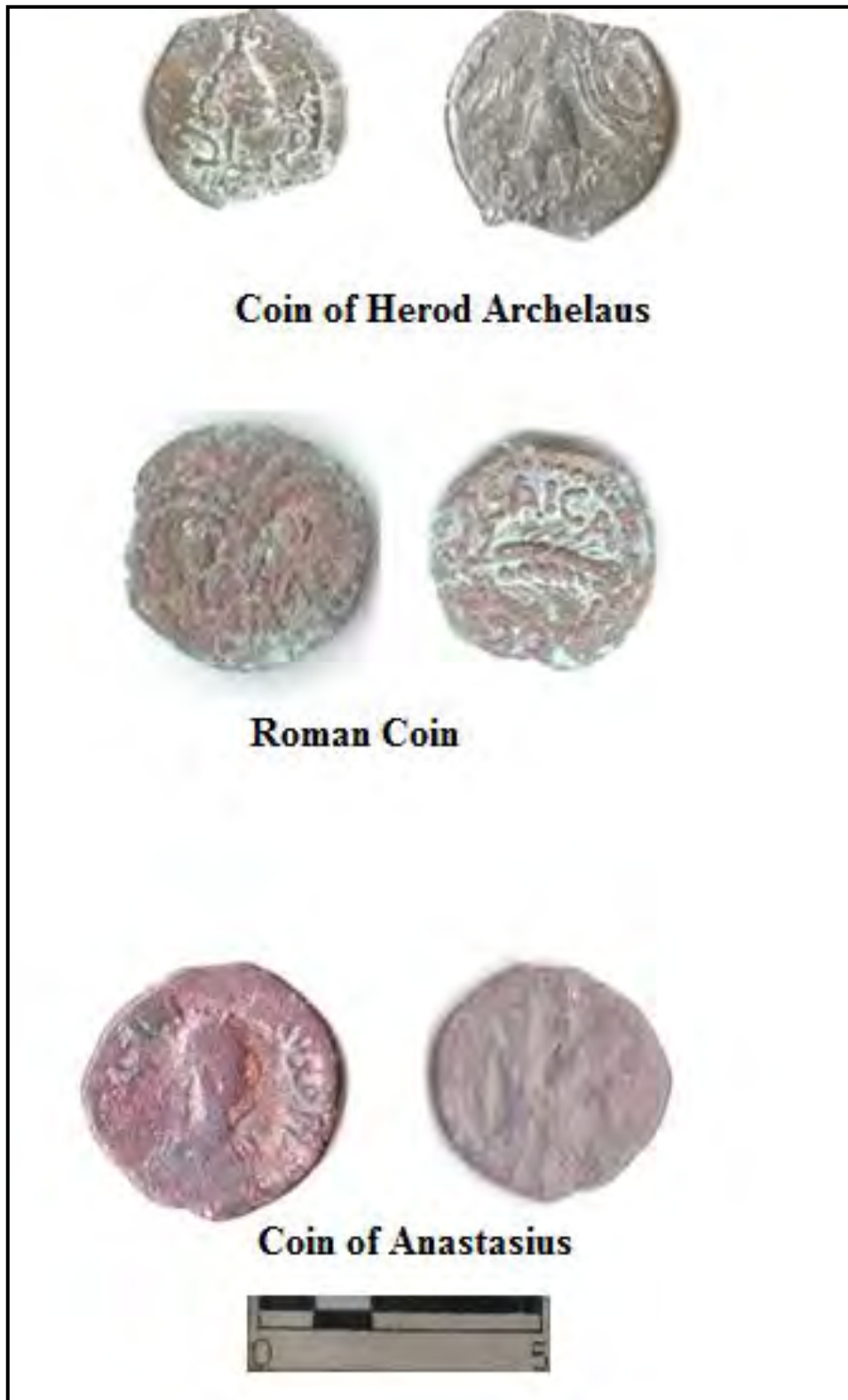


Fig. 52: Coins



Fig. 53: Coins

The Pottery

Pottery is well represented in all the excavation areas of the Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) through the Roman, Byzantine and Islamic periods. While there are some cult objects, the majority of the pottery finds show a large variety of forms and sizes representing daily use by the people who were living at the site or visiting it.

The earliest pottery pieces date from the Hellenistic and Roman periods in the second/first century BC and were found in connection with Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah’s Hill). The pottery includes oil lamps, cooking pots, globular juglets, bowls, amphorae and stone cups. Pottery from the Byzantine period (fifth – seventh centuries AD) was found in and around Tell Al-Kharrar used by the monks who settled in the region and constructed cells, chapels, churches and monasteries (Abu Shmeis and Waheeb 2002: 568).

The pottery indicates that the site was reused or substantially reconstructed during the Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid and Mamluk periods. The pottery includes reddish-orange ware and interior glazed vessels as were found at Khirbet el-Mafjar in Jericho to the west of the Baptism Site. Other examples of Early and Middle Islamic pottery include jugs, storage jars, bowls, cooking pots and oil lamps. A pottery pipe was inscribed with cursive Arabic script (without diacritical dots). Other sherds were glazed while some were painted with geometrical designs.



Fig. 54: Roman and Byzantine pottery

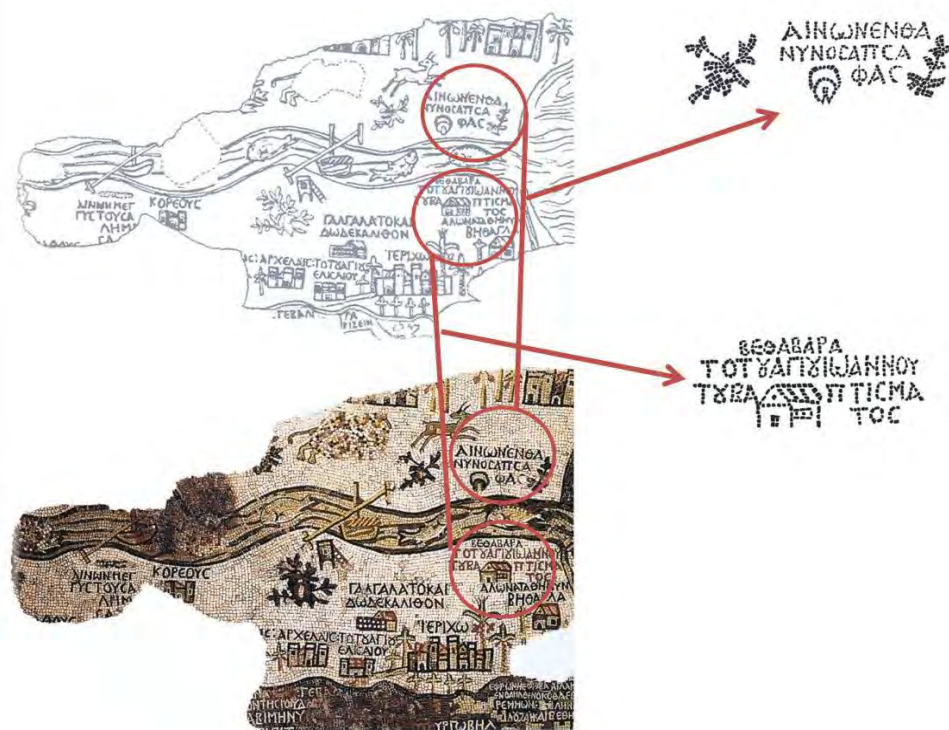


Fig. 56: The portion of the Madaba mosaic map showing the location of the Baptism Site, indicated on the map as “Aenon where now is Saphsaphas”, and also “Bethabara the place of crossing of John to the east of the river”

Information obtained from pilgrimage literature, starting in the 3rd century AD confirms the location of the Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) to be east of the Jordan River. The Onomasticon of Eusebius reflects the first witness of the Christian practice of baptism here. The same practice is attested by other travelers and pilgrims in the Byzantine period, such as the Bordeaux Pilgrim (ca. 333 AD) (Wilkinson 1999:33), Theodosius (ca. 530 AD) (Macpherson 1895; Wilkinson 2002:112), the Piacenza Pilgrim (ca. 570 AD) (Stewart 1890; Wilkinson 1999:136) and John Moschus (ca. 615 AD) (Wilkinson 1999:137).

Pilgrims and travelers continued to visit the Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) and bathe in the Jordan River after the Arab-Muslim conquest of the region (from the mid-7th century AD) (MacDonald 2010: 91-97). These include Arculf of France (670 AD) who gave an accurate description of the small church (reported above). During the first half of the eighth century Willibald, Bishop of Eichstätt in Germany, mentioned the church standing on four vaults.

Epiphanius (second half of the seventh-first half of the eighth century AD) also referred to a large church at the bank of the river, a mile west of the monastery of John the Baptist on Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah’s Hill).

The Baptism Site continued to receive travelers and pilgrims during the Crusader and the Ayyubid-Mamluk periods. The Russian Abbot Daniel came to the site in 1106-1107. He gave a detailed description of the wildlife of the area where Christ was baptized, which “*is distant from the river Jordan as far as a man can throw a small stone*”. Even though the buildings and caves were disintegrating, the stories associated with the location were still remembered. Indeed, in 1187 John Phocas wrote about the cave of John the Baptist, on the east side of the River Jordan which, he said, was “not capable of containing a well-built man standing upright”; another cave “in which the prophet Elias dwelt when he was carried off by the fiery chariot”; and he recalled the story of St. Mary the Egyptian being visited by the monk Zozimus (Reuben and Taylor 2010: 96-97).

During the Ayyubid-Mamluk period or later the churches and other major buildings must have been destroyed as a result of natural causes, but the place was remembered by pilgrims and other travelers such as the German monk Felix Fabri who visited around 1484 (Reuben and Taylor 2010: 97). Christian pilgrims continued to come to the Jordan River later throughout the Ottoman period from both the east and the west of the river, perpetuating the tradition of baptism in the Jordan.

Travellers and archaeologists have visited the area during the last 150 years, such as W.F. Lynch in 1856, R. Conder in 1881, R. Abel in 1932, G. Lankester Harding in 1950s and Moawiyah Ibrahim jointly with Khair Yassine and James Sauer in 1976. The other authors concentrated their description on Tell Al-Kharrar (Tell Mar Elias or Elijah’s Hill), which according to the pottery dates to the Early Roman to the Late Byzantine periods (Ibrahim et al. 1988).

Extensive field work was carried out by Mohammad Waheeb starting in 1996. He presented the results of his work in two books: *The Great Discovery – Jesus Baptist Site* (Amman 2009) and *The Discovery of Bethany Beyond the Jordan “Site of Jesus Baptism”* (Amman 2011), in addition to other reports and articles

published in the *Annual of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities* and other specialized journals.

After all these important discoveries, hundreds of thousands of visitors now come to the site every year. Among these, the visits of Pope John Paul II in the year 2000 and that of Pope Benedict XVI, (who in the company of King Abdullah II and Queen Rania Al-Abdullah unveiled the corner stone of the Catholic Church next to the Baptism Site in 2009) add particular significance to the site, with its official recognition as the true site of the Baptism of Jesus by the Roman Catholic Church, besides those of many other denominations (see annex 2: letters of authentication).



Fig. 57: A small flask (ampulla). Probably from the 6th or 7th century, it shows a scene of the baptism. Jesus is in the center, in the waters of the Jordan, flanked by an angel on the left and John the Baptist on the right. The Greek inscription reads “blessing of the Lord from the Holy Places”. **Source:** (Reuben and Taylor, *Beyond the Jordan* (2010) P.88.)



Fig. 58: A Late 6th or Early 7th Century Pilgrim Token, with the Baptism Scene Stamped on It. Such tokens with stamps that depicted a scene relating to a particular pilgrimage site could be easily and cheaply made using local clay and were the most common type of pilgrim „souvenir’. **Source:** (Reuben and Taylor, *Beyond the Jordan* (2010), P.89.)

Supportive Intangible Sources: The Community’s Belief System and Religious Texts

The community’s belief system and religious texts are supportive non-physical and intangible sources of authenticity for the site. Many of the archaeological discoveries at the site, together with the natural features of the site today (e.g., the existence of the reeds (Luke 7:24-25), tamarisk and *yanbout* plants that are the natural habitat for bees (Matthew 3:4)) correspond with the details of the religious texts of the Old and New Testaments.

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)



Fig. 59: The visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Jordan in 2009.



Fig. 60: Pope Benedict XVI visiting the Baptism Site in May 2009, accompanied by King Abdullah, Queen Rania and Prince Ghazi



Fig. 61: The visit of Pope John Paul II on March 21, 2000

The Natural and Environmental Setting of the Site

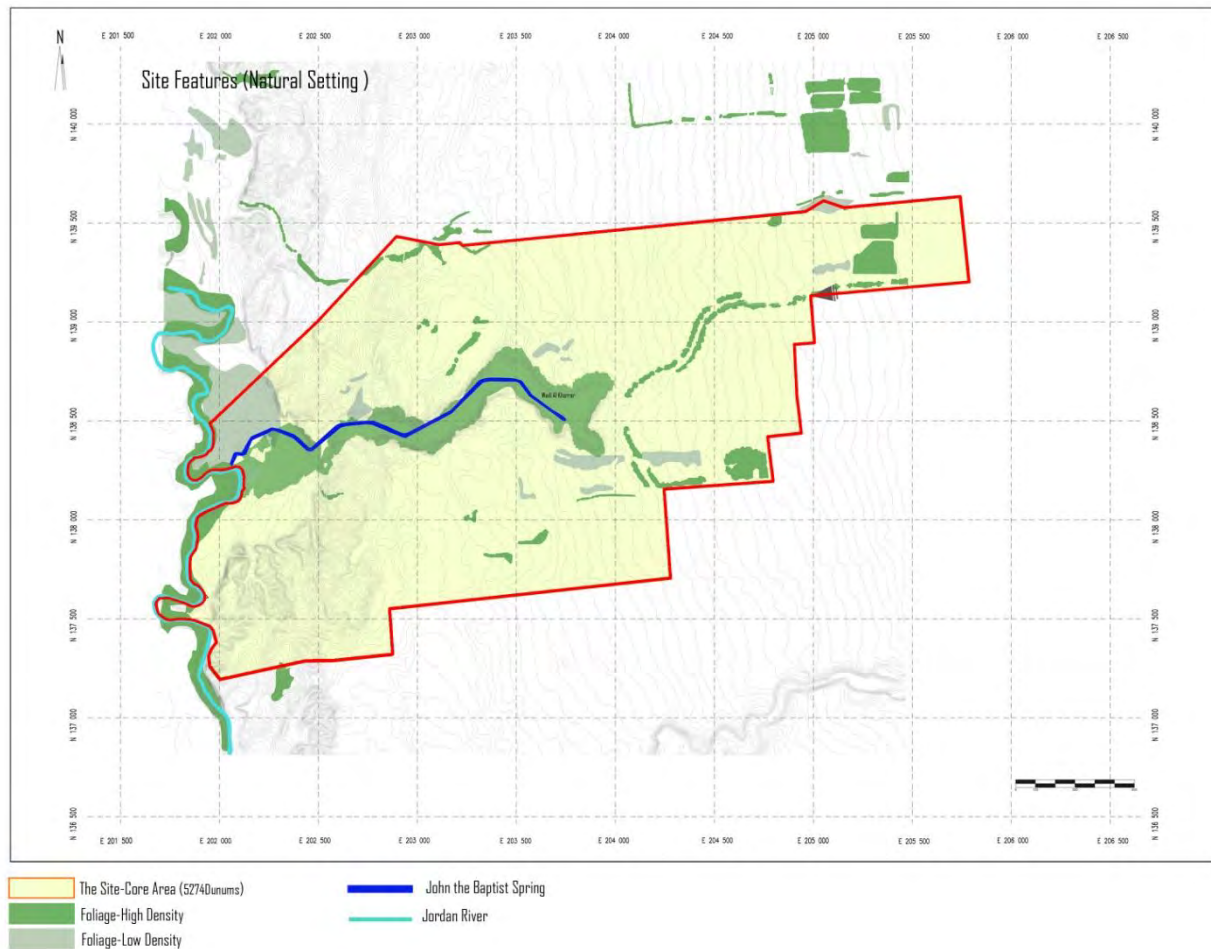


Fig. 62: Site features (natural setting component)

Environmental Information

Climate

The site is in a very hot area, reaching 45° C in summer. In winter the temperature averages 10° C. The long-term mean annual temperature is about 25 C°.

Hydrology

The site is part of the Rift Valley formation. The area, part of the Middle Ghor, forms a depression enclosed by mountainous ridges and is composed of a network of small wadis flowing west towards the Jordan River.



Fig. 63: Visitors to the site under the hot summer sun

Fresh and brackish water flow from beneath the ground and from the adjacent mountains into the major wadi at the site, moving from east to west towards the Jordan River and the Dead Sea.

The site is around 370m below sea level. Annual rainfall does not exceed 100mm and the water table at the site is very shallow due to its low altitude. That, in addition to the presence of adjacent mountain ridges, helps to direct the rainwater

runoff into the wadi system in the form of streams of medium velocity. The area is sub-tropical due to its low elevation.

Ground Water Features of the Site

The aquifer underlying the site is the Jordan Valley Floor Aquifer, consisting of alluvial fans and other recent sediment inter-fingering with the salty, clayed deposits of the predecessors of the Dead Sea. The ground water flow is directed from the mountain foothills to the course of the Jordan River.

Surface Water Systems

The surface water system is found in two perpendicular movement systems. The first is the North-South movement of the Jordan River and the second is the East-West movement of Wadi Al-Kharrar, which ends at the Jordan River.

Wadi Al-Kharrar is a stream that almost 2 km east of the Jordan River. The amount of water in this wadi fluctuates based on the seasonal amount of rainfall. The water is rather fresh at the starting point, but becomes more saline as it moves along since it leaches some salt deposits until it ends in the Jordan River. Wadi Al-Kharrar does not actually pour into the Jordan River as a water stream but rather forms a delta saturated with water supporting a very thick vegetation.

Geology and Soil Type

Most of the soil in the Rift Valley is alluvial, transported from the high mountains and down into the valley. Since the texture and composition of the soil depends on the place of origin and manner of transport, some areas have red clay, while other places have brownish and yellowish soil, depending on the soil mixture.

The soil cover is porous and allows the ground water to percolate as well as to ooze from the ground water to the surface. The soil color depends on the origin of the mountain rocks surrounding the site as well as the transported mature soil.

The soil types in the site can be classified into the following groups:

Alluvial Soil: this soil is arable due to the low concentration or absence of salt. It usually supports the natural vegetation of tropical trees and shrub land vegetation.

Saline Soil: this type supports a special type of vegetation often characterized by the formation of silt dunes dominated by *Nitraria retusa*.

Lisan Marls (qattara): this type of soil is highly saline since it was formed under the ancient sea that once linked the Sea of Galilee with the Red Sea along the Rift Valley. This soil has a high clay content.

The Biological Features of the Site

Habitat Diversity

The site can be classified into the following habitats:

- Major wadi with permanent flow of water
- Reed beds
- Brackish marshes
- Jordan River

Plant Diversity

According to Al-Eisawi et al. (1999), four subdivisions can be identified at the site: Sub-tropical and Sudanian vegetation, fresh water vegetation (which occurs at two places: the Jordan River and Wadi Al-Kharrar), saline vegetation and qattara vegetation. Some of the site most noticeable plants are the reeds (*qussaib* in Arabic) (Luke 7:24-25), which were mentioned in the New Testament and were associated with John the Baptist, and also another plant called *yanbout* in Arabic (Matthew 3:4), which is the natural habitat for bees. Another local plant is the tamarisk (with its ancient name *saphsaphas*), today called *tarfah* in Arabic. This plant in particular was mentioned and associated with the site labeled Saphsaphas on the Byzantine Mosaic Map of Madaba from the 6th century AD.

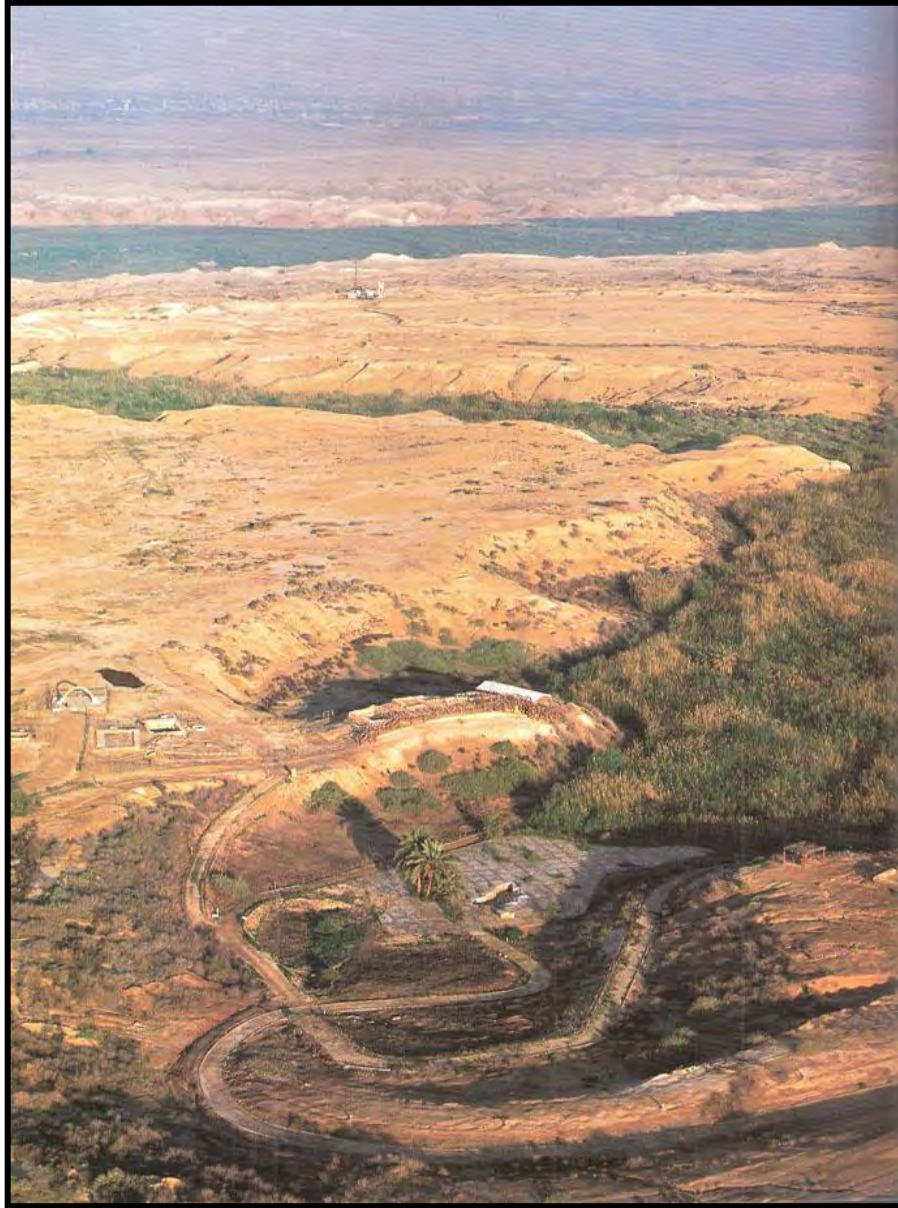


Fig. 64: Aerial view of Wadi Al-Kharrar. Beginning just below the Rhetorios Monastery Complex on Elijah’s Hill, the wadi winds down to the *Zor*, the Jordan River bed.

Faunal Diversity

The site is highly diversified in terms of vertebrates, birds, reptiles and mammals.

Around 380 species of birds have been recorded in Jordan, of which more than 80 were recorded in the site, representing 21 percent of Jordan’s diversity in avifauna. Based on that, the site is an important bird area for Jordan.

A total of 18 species of mammals were recorded in the site during the period June-July 1999 and it is anticipated that 15 species more can be found. Examples of the species found are *Canis lupus*, *Canis aureus* and *Lupus capensis*.

Environmental Evaluation of the Site

The site is an attraction to many naturalists. The catchment basin of the Dead Sea embraces the southern part of the Levantine landscape over a length of 360 km. It forms an important area where species from different zoo-geographical realms coexist. The vegetation is well preserved in comparison to the surrounding areas due to the fact that the site was off-limits for a long time as a military zone. The site has different characteristics explained below.

Naturalness

The fact that the Jordan Valley has been irrigated for fruit and vegetable production (c.f. Andrews 1995) means that little of the natural subtropical vegetation remains, although the southern course of the Jordan River, including Wadi Al-Kharrar has been less affected by direct human impact, due to the limited access and reduced quality of the saline soils for agriculture. The area along the east bank of the Jordan River is very important since it has not changed much over the years.

The presence of the fresh water aquatic system, with thick vegetation in addition to the climatic conditions, makes the area suitable for many aquatic and terrestrial animals. It is also suitable as an important global migratory route.

Rarity

The Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) is a marsh wetland with several unique features.

Two wetland types are present at the site: the major wadi system starting from Wadi Al-Kharrar and running towards the Jordan River, and the Jordan River itself. Many wetland flora and fauna are present, such as the tree frog and marsh frog, as well as several species of hydrophilic dragonflies, water beetles and crustaceans. A considerable number of migratory and wetland birds are recorded in the site (e.g., the Dead Sea Sparrow), some of which are endangered.

The dense aquatic vegetation has created special conditions for the survival of many endangered amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. Bird Life International and Wetland International have both declared the whole Jordan River basin to be an important bird and wetland area in Jordan.

Fragility

The Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) is one of the last natural refuge sites in Jordan.

It is essential to control tourist activities in a sustainable fashion within the carrying capacity of the Baptism Site in order to conserve its cultural and natural assets.



Fig. 65: Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah’s Hill) today



Fig. 66: A laughing dove on her nest in a Tamarisk tree



Fig. 67: Vegetation cover in the *Zor* surrounding the Baptism Site



Fig. 68: The Jordan River flowing among thick vegetation, below the *qattara* hills

2.b History and Development

Remains from the Chalcolithic period to the Islamic periods are found at the site, as revealed by years of excavations. The major phase of occupation were the Roman period and especially the following Byzantine period, when the site flourished as a Christian pilgrimage site and most of the extant churches, monasteries, water installations and other features were first constructed.

The Main Phases of Occupation at the Baptism Site

- Late Chalcolithic (ca. 3500 BC): represented by a small farming community.
- Late Hellenistic and Roman periods (100 BC-second century AD): represented mainly in Tell Al-Kharrar.

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

- Byzantine period (early 4th century-640 AD): represented throughout the site (churches on the east bank of the Jordan River and at Tell Al-Kharrar).



Fig. 69: Palestine and Transjordan in the Roman period

- Early Islamic (Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid and Seljuk Periods 640-1099 AD): represented at Tell Al-Kharrar and the Church of St John the Baptist.
- Middle Islamic (Crusader, Ayyubid and Mamluk periods 1099-15th century AD): represented at Tell Al-Kharrar and the Church of John the Baptist.
- Late Ottoman period (late 19th-early 20th centuries AD): represented by mudbrick buildings and a cemetery.

The major buildings at the site were destroyed as a result of earthquakes and floods and rebuilt multiple times until the site was abandoned by the late fifteenth century. Later occupation was confined to a few Late Ottoman mudbrick buildings at the edge of the *Ghor*. The area became a wilderness and after 1967 a closed military zone, until the archaeological excavations started in the mid-1990s.

Early Occupation

Within the core area of the Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas), the earliest traces of occupation date from the Chalcolithic Period (around 3500 BC). Otherwise the site appears to have been next occupied starting only in the Hellenistic period (2nd century BC), as attested by pottery and coins. From the Early Roman period (1st century BC-2nd century AD) there is enough evidence to confirm that the site was used at the time of John the Baptist and Jesus. On Tell Al-Kharrar one well had pottery from the 1st century onwards, and another building, along with two pools, may date to the late 3rd or early 4th century.

The Byzantine Period

The main phase of occupation at the Site, begins in the Byzantine period in the 4th century AD with the Christian interest in the site. The Byzantine occupation at the site clustered around two areas: along the east bank of the Jordan River and around the hill of Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah’s Hill) two km to the east.

Along the east bank of the river was a cluster of churches. The main building was the Church of St. John the Baptist, which went through multiple phases of construction and rebuilding. The first church was built by the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius (491-518 AD). The first phase church was destroyed in an earthquake

and rebuilt. This second-phase church was destroyed in turn by flooding, only to be rebuilt as the third church, a large basilica that had a flight of steps from its east end down to a chapel supported on four large piers along the river. The third church and the chapel on the piers collapsed due to flooding in the 6th or 7th centuries. To the north of the Church of St. John the Baptist there were the remains of another monastery.

On Elijah’s Hill, the main buildings date to the 5th-6th centuries AD. The principal building on the hill was a monastery built by Rhetorios, presbyter and abbot, as a dedicatory inscription attests. Within this monastery there was a church (Northern Church) and rooms that served as the monks’ living quarters. To the southwest of the Northern Church was a hermit’s cave that was later turned into the apse of a small chapel, known as the Western or Cave Chapel. To the south is another small chapel, now given the name of the Church of Pope John Paul II.

Along the Wadi Al-Kharrar leading from Tell Al-Kharrar to the Jordan River was a Pilgrims’ Station rest stop, also dating from the 5th and 6th centuries, and a large pool. To the north of the wadi were hermits’ cells.

The Early Islamic Period

These various buildings seem to have continued in use into the early Islamic period, but this later history is not well documented archaeologically, so for how long the major use of the site continued is only poorly understood.

Along the east bank of the river, after the building on the four piers collapsed, a tiny chapel was built on one of the piers. That chapel is mentioned by the Russian Abbot Daniel in 1107, at the start of the Crusader Period, as the Chapel of the Mantle, commemorating where Jesus took off his cloak before being baptized. This testimony proves that the site was still in use at that time.

The Middle Islamic (Crusader, Ayyubid and Mamluk) Period (1099-1516 AD)

On Tell Al-Kharrar a Greek Orthodox monastery was established in the 13th century on the remains of the Byzantine period, but how long it continued in use is uncertain. Few pilgrims coming from Jerusalem now crossed over to the east side of the Jordan River and whatever buildings were still standing fell into disuse, so that by the time a pilgrim named Felix Fabri came in 1484, the site was in ruins.

The Ottoman Period (16th to early 20th centuries AD)

Although Christian pilgrims continued to come to the Jordan River throughout the Ottoman period, they no longer normally crossed the river to the east side or made a point of coming to this specific spot along the river, although the memory of this area being the place of the baptism of Jesus must have survived since travelers accounts throughout the 19th century describe baptism pilgrimage and rites taking place a few miles north of the mouth of the Jordan river into the Dead Sea. The area of the Baptism Site appears to have been abandoned for centuries before the first modern-day explorers noted the ruins at the end of the 19th century. A small chapel dedicated to St. Mary of Egypt, a hermit from the Byzantine period, was built at the end of the 19th century and destroyed in the 1927 earthquake.

20th Century

There was some limited farming on the fringes of the site in the early 20th century and a small cemetery on top of Tell Al-Kharrar was in use for a time. But the site continued to be a wilderness, and after the war in 1967 a closed military zone, up to the signing of the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel in 1994, after which point the contemporary history of the site begins.

21st Century

Excavations began in 1997 and conservation and basic restoration work has been carried out since then with the aim of rehabilitating the site and reopening it for pilgrims and visitors. Paths and shelters with a water supply and rest areas were developed at the site and new facilities outside the core of the property were established. These included the main entrance, a car park, a ticket area, a VIP building and management offices, in addition to a conference center, a store and maintenance area, souvenir shops, a waste water treatment plant and a desalination plant. See chapter 5 for a detailed description of the visitor facilities and of the conservation and management plan.

Section 3: Justification for Inscription

3.1.a Brief Synthesis

The Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) is the location that since early Christianity is associated with John the Baptist’s ministry and his baptism of Jesus in the early 1st century AD, as recorded in the Gospels (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:29-34). The site has an extraordinary significance for all Abrahamic religions: besides the events associated with the ministry of John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus, the crossing of prophets Elias/Elijah and Elisha, the ascension to heaven of Elias/Elijah, and the last years of the life of St. Mary the Egyptian.

The site is located in an area along the lower Jordan River (around 385 meters below sea level) with a long occupational history since the Chalcolithic period (5th millennium BC) up to the present. The baptism of Jesus gives special significance to this location, as witnessed by the continuous use of the site by priests, monks, hermits and pilgrims, from at least the early Byzantine (4th c. AD) to the Mamluk period (15th c. AD), and continuing until modern times as a place of pilgrimage after the abandonment of the structures that were originally built for the cultic practices related to the baptism and its commemoration. Five churches and other structures were built during the Byzantine period along the bank of the Jordan River to accommodate the pilgrims who came to commemorate the baptism of Jesus. Some of the churches had unique features, such as two churches that were built high on piers to protect them from flooding by the river.

At another location along the river bank subject to flooding, three other churches were built one after the other after flood damage, demonstrating the great significance that the location had in spite of it not being suitable for permanent construction. A unique cruciform baptismal pool that used the water of the Jordan River for baptism rites was also built. In addition to those structures along the bank of the Jordan River, other structures offer other direct links to the Christian use of the site, including a pilgrim’s station, a large baptismal pool, hermit cells and other monastic installations around a hill 2km to the east, associated with Prophet Elijah (Elias) and his ascension to Heaven (1 Kings 17:1-7; 2 Kings 2:6-14). A cave that Christian tradition has identified as the one in which John the Baptist lived also

became an integral part of this monastic complex. Christian tradition also maintains that St. Mary of Egypt lived here the last years of her life.

After 1967 the area was a closed military zone, but Christian interest in the Baptism Site quickly revived in the mid-1990s, as soon as access to the site once again became possible. Excavations at the site were quickly undertaken, confirming travelers’ accounts, textual and archaeological evidence that early Christian tradition had located here the baptism of Jesus. The heads of many Christian denominations confirmed the site as the true location of the baptism of Jesus, making it one of the three most important sites for Christianity together with Bethlehem where Jesus was born and Jerusalem where his earthly life ended.

The natural setting of the Baptism Site, which serves today as a significant nature preserve, is similar to how it was in ancient times, marked by such prominent natural features as the reeds described in the Bible. This enables pilgrims and visitors to the site to experience it as it had been in the past.

The physical remains discovered since 1997 preserve their authenticity under several criteria, such as location and setting, spirit and feeling, and materials and substance, while their integrity, although threatened by natural decay, is substantial, as modern interventions were limited to conservation and avoided any conjectural reconstruction. The conservation and management of the area allowed it to be opened for visitation and pilgrimage again. Today the site is managed by the Baptism Commission, an independent organization mandated by the Government of Jordan to conserve the values of the site while allowing controlled access to the site and its use by various Christian denominations, reviving the practice of pilgrimage, thus marking an ideal continuity with the origin of Christianity in the very location that saw its emergence.

3.1.b Criteria Under Which Inscription is Proposed

(iii) The Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) bears unique testimony to the cultural and religious tradition of baptism and the importance it holds in the Christian belief system.

The archaeological components of the Baptism Site constitute a unique assemblage that clearly indicates the function of the place for Christian religious rites associated with the tradition of baptism, over more than a millennium of continuous use from the Late Roman/Early Byzantine to the Mamluk periods (4th to 15th c. AD). The cultural significance of the site results from a rich archaeological heritage and unique architectural features within a special cultural and natural setting. Recent discoveries demonstrate the sacred, cultural and archaeological uniqueness of the Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) as the traditional site of Christ’s baptism by John, and its association with the life of John the Baptist, with the ascension to Heaven of Prophet Elias/Elijah, and the life of St. Mary of Egypt, venerated in Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches as the patron saint of penitents. The structures found at the site, such as churches, chapels, baptismal basins and pools, monasteries, hermit caves, and pilgrim hostels, all point to the high religious significance this location had for Christianity since its earliest times. Together, they bear unique testimony to the tradition of baptism and to its fundamental importance for Christians of all denominations.

(iv) The Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) exhibits outstanding examples of buildings and architectural ensembles which illustrate a fundamental event in the history of one of the world’s great religions.

The performance of the rites of baptism and the physical constraints of the location required new forms of buildings and installations, not found anywhere else. These buildings are characterized by unique features, such as construction on piers as a way to protect two of the churches from flooding, or the marble staircase leading to the water of the river Jordan, where huge pillars served as base for a cruciform baptistery and the Chapel of the Mantle, commemorating the location where Jesus

deposed his garments before being baptized by John. This Chapel was probably destroyed by floods and rebuilt in the 12th century in smaller form using only one of the four pillars it originally stood upon. The churches, marble steps, baptistery, and the smaller chapel are preserved in situ, providing physical evidence to the narratives of pilgrims such as Theodosius (530 AD), the Piacenza Pilgrim (570 AD), Arculfus (670 AD), Willibald (721-727 AD) and others.

The nearby church was built under emperor Anastasius (491-518 AD). This church, the remains of which are still visible in situ, was considered as the most notable memorial church of St. John the Baptist on the bank of the Jordan River. Theodosius wrote *“5 miles north of the Dead Sea in the place where the Lord was baptized..... there too is the church of S. John the Baptist, which the Emperor Anastasius built: this church is very lofty, being built above large chambers, on account of the Jordan River when it overflows”* (Macpherson 1895). The archaeological and architectural remains match this description. Forty years later (570 AD) the Piacenza Pilgrim wrote: *“There is an obelisk there surrounded by a screen and in the water where the river turned back in its bed, stands a wooden cross. On both banks there are marble steps leading down to the water”* (Stewart 1890).

These steps were discovered and are still preserved in situ, descending eastward from the church of St. John the Baptist towards the water of the cruciform baptismal pool. Descriptions of the area matching the archaeological remains are also found in Arculfus (670 AD), who also saw a wooden cross in the middle of the river, a little church built on four piers, and a large monastery on a nearby hill (*“Right at the river’s edge stands a small rectangular church which was built, so it is said, at the place where the Lord’s clothes were placed while he was baptized. The fact that it is supported on four stone vaults makes it usable, since the water, which comes in from all sides, is underneath it. It has a tiled roof. This remarkable church is supported, as we have said, by arches and vaults, and stands in the lower part of the valley through which the Jordan flows. But in the upper part there is a great monastery for monks, which has been built on the brow of a small hill nearby, overlooking the church. There is also a church built there in honour of Saint John Baptist which, together with the monastery, is enclosed in a single masonry wall”*) (Wilkinson 2002:190-191). Willibald in the first half of the eighth century saw a church raised on stone piers, as well as the same wooden cross in the

middle of the river. All these accounts coincide between them in their descriptions and are confirmed by the remains found at the site, in particular the church on piers, the steps leading to the cruciform baptistery in the river, and the Chapel of the Mantle (Wright 1848:17; Mkhjian 2005:403).

(vi) The Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) is directly associated with the Christian tradition of the baptism of Jesus, an event of universal significance. It is also associated with characters and events of high significance for all Abrahamic religions.

The built and natural environments of the Baptism Site are associated with spiritual and religious values and traditions, historical events, and characters of universal significance, in particular for the Abrahamic religions. It is here that Prophets Elias/Elijah and Elisha crossed the river parting its waters, and where Elias was first fed by ravens and finally ascended to Heaven (2. Kings 2:5-11), where John the Baptist lived as a hermit, practicing baptism and announcing the coming of the Christ, and finally baptizing him (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:28-34), and it is also here that St. Mary the Egyptian lived a life of repentance.

The strongest of these associations, for which the site is universally known especially to Christians of all denominations, is the one with baptism. Baptism is considered a sacrament by most denominations while the Catholic Church considers it the first of seven sacraments, both in time (as it is normally received in infancy) and in priority, since other sacraments cannot be received without it being performed first. This gives to the location of Bethany Beyond the Jordan (Al-Maghtas) an extraordinary associative value, as it can be considered the place where Christianity originated. Physically, this is confirmed by the millenarian use of the place by monks, hermits, saints (St. Mary of Egypt, for example) and pilgrims since the Late Roman period until the 15th century, when the structures that have now been excavated were abandoned. The tradition of baptism, however, was not lost and it continued throughout the centuries, until the early 20th century.

Religious practices were resumed in the mid-1990s, as soon as the site ceased to be a closed military zone. The heads of several Christian denominations declared the site the true site of the baptism of Jesus, and new churches are being built outside

the core of the property to allow their congregations to perform their pilgrimage without impinging on the site, and each year Epiphany is celebrated at the site. The site was also visited by Pope John Paul II during the 2000 Jubilee year, by Pope Benedict XVI in 2009, and it will be visited by Pope Francis II in May 2014, making it one of the most visited locations in the world by Roman Catholic Popes, adding to the significance of the site the official recognition of this Church.

3.1.c Statement of Integrity

The Baptism Site, Bethany Beyond the Jordan (Al-Maghtas) fell into ruins by the 15th century and remained an abandoned site until modern times. After the war in 1967, the area became a closed military zone until the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel in 1994, so the site did not experience any encroachment by development. Once the site became accessible again, Christian interest in the site quickly revived, and a number of Christian denominations have built new churches and facilities for pilgrims. Those modern buildings are mostly located outside the core area of the Baptism Site and so do not impinge on the site. Archaeological investigations prior to construction have confirmed the absence of any archaeological remains in the locations chosen for the construction of new facilities.

The boundaries of the Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) protect its significance; the area encompasses all archaeological features located at the site. The archaeological site stretches around 2 km from east to west between Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah’s Hill) and Wadi Al-Kharrar on the east, and the Jordan River to the west. The fenced area is 533.7 ha, which includes the core and the rest of the site that is owned and designated, including possible undiscovered archaeological remains. The suggested buffer zone that has an area of 773.2ha is under protection of Jordan Valley Authority’s law (Annex 4). Land use regulations around the site protect the site from future adverse developments that might have a negative impact on it and its surroundings.

The Baptism Site Commission in cooperation with the Department of Antiquities (DoA) and the Madaba Mosaic Institute jointly carry out the monitoring, conservation & consolidation of mosaics floors and the archaeological remains.

Multiple seasons of archaeological excavations have been carried out since the mid-1990s, with an eye towards developing the site for renewed pilgrimage and tourism. All of the churches and other archaeological remains uncovered during the excavations were preserved after necessary consolidation and conservation with minimal restoration and interventions; those remains are intact and represent the wholeness of the site in terms of site interpretation and values. No reconstruction work was carried out even when enough evidence would allow such work. Solid wooden reversible shelters were placed on each major ancient structure. These shelters can be removed easily if necessary or if further archaeological evidence appears. All floors, walls and layers were preserved. In spite of the simplicity of the archaeological remains they reveal the function and the exceptional meaning of the structures for the practice of baptism.

Environmental risks to the site include flooding by the Jordan River, wild fires in the surrounding vegetation, earthquakes in the Jordan Valley, salinity of the ground water and wide temperature fluctuations. The strategies and policies which were implemented at the site in the last years acted as a response to risks such as flooding of the Jordan River, modern dikes already in place to protect the ancient churches built on the bank of the Jordan River. Modern shelters over the archaeological remains are built to be flood- and earthquake- resistant due to their flexible construction of wood, while the experienced staff of the Baptism site commission control and monitor possible threats at the site through preventive conservation process and consolidation in compliance with international conventions and charters.

3.1.d Statement of Authenticity

The Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) is the traditional location where John the Baptist lived and baptized Jesus in the early 1st century AD. The archaeological remains show that the site was a Christian pilgrimage site since the earliest phases of Christianity, and continued to be used, according to archaeological evidence, up to the 15th century AD when the churches, monasteries, and associated structures were abandoned, although the tradition of baptism in this location was not forgotten and continued until the early 20th century. The Gospel account of the baptism of Jesus locates the event at Bethany Beyond the Jordan. Archaeological excavations conducted at the site since 1997

have confirmed this as the location of the baptism of Jesus as the remains found not only point to a use associated with the cultic practice of baptism, but also coincide in great detail with the narratives of early pilgrims from the 6th to the 8th century AD.

The main source of authenticity is the archaeological remains at the site excavated since 1997, represented by churches, monasteries, hermitages, pilgrim hostels, baptismal basins, in addition to epigraphic and other archaeological findings such as pottery and coins, as well as the Madaba mosaic map of the Holy Land (dated to the 6th century), where the location is clearly marked as “Aenon which is now Saphsaphas”. Other non-physical intangible sources (such as accounts of pilgrims, travelers and historians over the centuries, along with the religious texts and belief system of the Christian community) add another, non-physical layer to the site’s authenticity.

The physical remains, uncovered over years of excavations, provide a demonstration of the importance with which Christian pilgrims have held the site. The archaeological remains form the foundation for the exceptional value of this property: churches and monasteries were built here starting in the 5th century AD for the use of monks and pilgrims at this holy site. The **form and design** of these remains is clearly related to a cultic use commemorating the baptism of Jesus and perpetuating the tradition allowing pilgrims to be baptized in the same location where the baptism of Jesus took place: from the pilgrim hostels to the churches and from the baptismal pools to the hermits’ caves, the entire archaeological complex revolves around the commemoration and tradition of baptism. Form and design also reflect the environmental conditions of the site, since some structures had to be built on piers to avoid being damaged by flooding brought by the river Jordan. This construction **technique** is so far a unique feature not found at other contemporary sites. **Materials and substance** of the remains are intact: although the original structures are reduced to their lower courses and pavements, no reconstruction was attempted, and the site has been consolidated after excavation only using compatible mortars and building materials, and protecting the most delicate features with wooden shelters that are easily reversible. The **location and setting** of the site is particularly evocative and authentic to its original aspect, close to the Jordan River and among a thick grow of natural reeds (Luke 7:24-25), a landscape that is described in the Bible and that has remained substantially intact,

also thanks to the rigid management of the natural and cultural resources implemented in the site and its buffer zones.

The association of the site to a fundamental event in the Christian belief system, that of the baptism of Jesus, hence to the very origin of Christianity in this location, means that **the use and the function** of the site and the structures found there maintain their authenticity, since they all relate to ritual practices conducted to commemorate that event since at least the Late Roman / Early Byzantine period. This also indicates a long standing **tradition** of pilgrimage that has survived through the centuries as witnessed by the archaeological remains, early pilgrims’ accounts as well as 19th and 20th century travelers’ reports, and that it is being revived today with the recognition of this site as being the authentic location of the Baptism by the heads of Christian denominations throughout the world³, making the site one of the holiest for Christianity. Outside of the core zone and where archaeological investigations have confirmed the absence of remains, new churches, monasteries and pilgrims’ houses belonging to various Christian denominations are being built, contributing to bring back the **spirit** of the site and a millenarian tradition of pilgrimage for believers who want to follow in the footsteps of the prophets and be in physical contact with the holy sites. This location serves again as a destination for baptism where the local Christian community and Christians from all over the world have the opportunity to visit and baptize their children or renew the rite of baptism on their own persons. For all these reasons **spirit and feeling** at “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (al-Maghtas) are particularly powerful, as each single archaeological remain and the entire physical landscape are imbued with the beliefs of the pilgrims who come to the site to witness in person the root of their faith.

The Vatican has listed the Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) among five official Jubilee sites in Jordan, including the Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo (visited by Pope John Paul II in March 2000 and by Pope Benedict XVI in May 2009), Mukawer, where John the Baptist was beheaded, Mar Elias, the birthplace of the Prophet Elijah, and the shrine of the Virgin Mary at Anjara, Ajloun.

³ See the letters of authentication sent by the leaders of several Christian denominations, in the Annexes.

3.1.e Protection and Management Requirements

The Management Plan of “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) offers a collective vision and provides a decision-making tool to guide future excavations, conservation and intervention at the Baptism Site. It is value-driven and through a participatory and interdisciplinary process balances the needs of conservation and the demands of tourism development. Being a collective vision for the management of cultural and natural sites, the management plan provides an anchor to accommodate how different stakeholders relate to the site and its management.

The general framework for the management plan of the Site consists of a three-tiered process: **1. Identification:** including full documentation of the Site, identification of its various stakeholders, and setting the aims of the management plan; **2. Assessment:** including the assessment of the cultural significance of the site and understanding of its diverse values; assessment of the management contexts (identifying the on-going constraints and opportunities that will affect the conservation and management of the Site); and assessment of the physical condition (assessment of potential environmental and physical threats and challenges and of previous conservation works conducted on the site); **3. Response:** the establishment of policies and development of strategies for the management of the site. The Management Plan is thus designed to face future challenges while protecting and conserving the site.

In response to the many assessments conducted in preparation of the management plan, detailed policies and objectives for general site protection, conservation and management were devised. They included policies for the conservation of the archaeological layers (such as policies for continuing research, for documentation, site conservation, and sustainable use), for the conservation of the natural environment (such as surveys for the identification of the flora and fauna present at the site, and for planting and managing the natural environment), for site interpretation and presentation (upgrading the present narratives and facilities), for sustainable tourism and visitation (addressing issues of congestion, visitor circulation, site promotion as a place of co-existence and tolerance), and for site management and staff capacity building. Detailed strategies and actions were also formulated in order to translate into practice the recommendations of the policy statements.

3.2 Comparative Analysis

The Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) is a prominent Christian pilgrimage site connected with the life of Jesus. It commemorates where he was baptized by John the Baptist and as such is a significant site in the development of the Christian religion. This comparative analysis will take into consideration pilgrimage sites found in the region and associated with specific biblical narratives in the Old and New Testaments, as well as with World Heritage Sites associated with a major religious belief, and which are the subject of pilgrimage.

In Jordan there are Christian pilgrimage sites from the first Christian centuries localizing events from the Old and New Testaments. However none of them were nearly as prominent as the Baptism Site. One such site is Mount Nebo, on a high hill to the southeast within sight of the Baptism Site, where tradition locates the place where Moses looked over to the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 34: 1-5). Starting in the 4th century, it developed into a large monastery and pilgrimage site that continued into the early Islamic period, but was abandoned by the ninth century (Piccirillo and Alliata 1998), and although its memory remained, it did not survive as a place of pilgrimage until it has been excavated and restored by the Custodia Terrae Sanctae in the early 20th century.

Another pilgrimage site in Jordan is Lot’s Cave / Deir „Ain „Abata, on a hill at the south end of the Dead Sea, where early Christians located the cave where Lot and his two daughters stayed after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:30-38). The monastery continued as a pilgrimage site up to the late 8th century, but was abandoned soon thereafter (Politis 2012). As for Mount Nebo, pilgrimage to this location stopped after its abandonment.

Unlike those two, among others in Jordan, the Baptism Site, Bethany Beyond the Jordan (Al-Maghtas) is the one pilgrimage site that continued to be visited by Christian pilgrims long after all others fell into ruins and ceased to be visited. Throughout the centuries, most Christian pilgrims who came to Jerusalem made the additional effort to go to the Baptism Site on the Jordan River, demonstrating that this site was far more important than any of the others. According to Stoddard (1923:192) “...to most of the pilgrims to the Holy Land baptism, or even a bath, in

the Jordan is one of the most sacred and important events of their lives, and they religiously cherish the robes in which they have been immersed, to serve ultimately as their winding sheets”.

In addition to those Christian pilgrimage sites, there were many other early Christian monasteries in the desert area east of Jerusalem down to the Jordan River. In the early Byzantine centuries thousands of monks were resident in dozens of monasteries there. These monasteries continued to thrive in the early Islamic period, but only a few continued after the early ninth century and beyond up to the present day (Hirschfeld 1991).

Among those monasteries, a number were located close to the west bank of the Jordan River. The Monastery of St. John the Baptist at Qasr al-Yahud, a small site some 800 meters west of the Jordan River and a couple of kilometers south of the baptism site was a Byzantine monastery whose archaeological remains were not studied in detail (Guérin 1874: 111-116; Ovadiah and de Silva 1981: 249), before a modern Greek Orthodox monastery was built there in the late 19th century. Before the full extent of the remains at the Baptist Site were known, some scholars (e.g. Hirschfeld 1991:16) thought that this site was the Monastery of St. John the Baptist to which the innumerable pilgrims and travelers referred as the site of the baptism of Jesus. But with the discovery and full investigation of the remains of the Baptism Site such a view is no longer tenable.

Churches and monasteries similar to the ones at the Baptism Site are common, but this site has its own unique function for the important ritual of baptism and had unique features, such as the churches built on piers as protection against flooding of the Jordan River, and a unique cruciform baptistery that used the waters of the Jordan for pilgrims to be baptized in.

The Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage route in Bethlehem (connecting it with Esbus through the Baptism Site) [inscribed in 2012 using Criteria (iv) and (vi)] can be taken into consideration for the comparative analysis since similarities in some respects are conspicuous: a major Christian pilgrimage destination where Jesus was born, it holds the Church of the Nativity, whose oldest sections go back to the early Byzantine period and it is still used today for daily worship, and a cluster of other ecclesiastical buildings including convents, churches, towers and

others. In Bethlehem the Christmas rites attract thousands of pilgrims from all over the world.

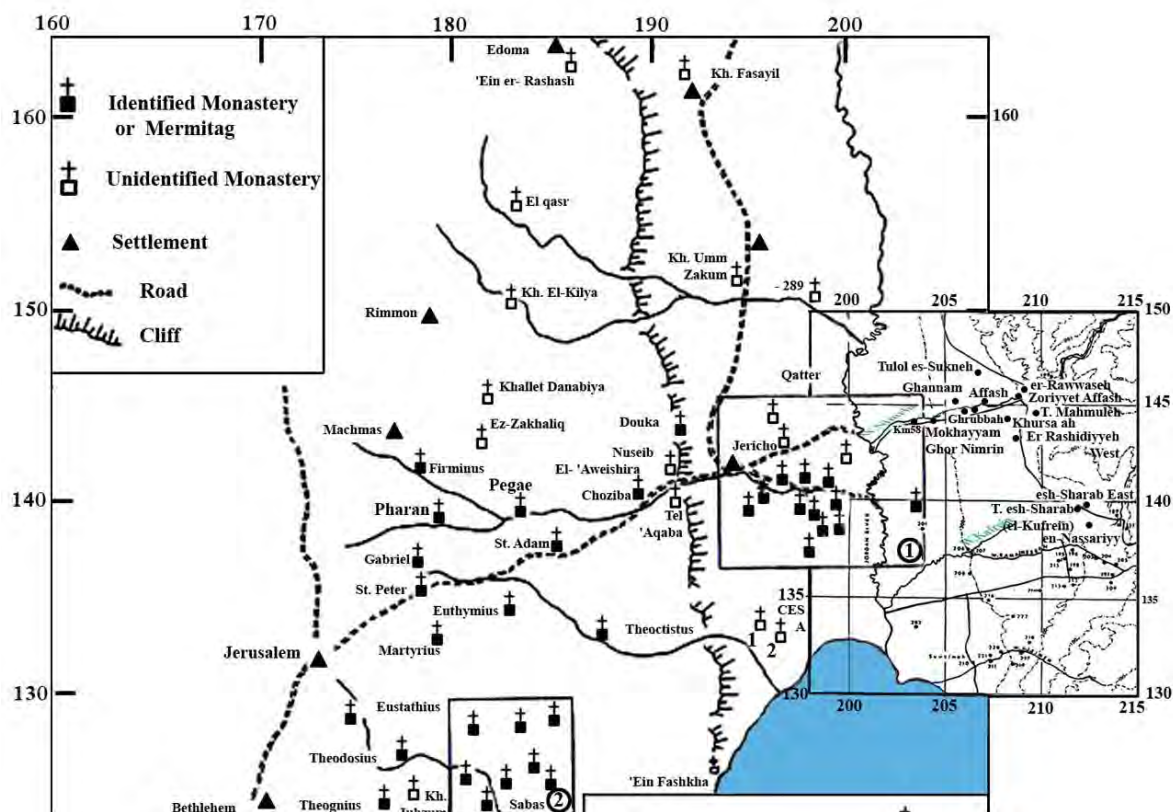


Fig. 70: Monasteries and Monastic Sites West and East of the Jordan River

In a similar way, the Baptism site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) is a prominent and unique Christian pilgrimage site where Epiphany is celebrated annually (in the eastern Christian rites the Epiphany also commemorates the baptism of Jesus). The Baptism site is the location where Christian religion originated, and this belief is confirmed by the fact that pilgrims have frequented this site uninterruptedly since the Late Roman period, as confirmed by the recordings of many pilgrims and travelers.

Many other religious sites of outstanding universal value exist worldwide, such as Saint Catherine’s Area at the foot of Mount Sinai, Egypt (inscribed in 2002 using Criteria (i), (iii), (iv), and (vi), which is the location where Moses received the Ten Commandments, an event of importance for all three Abrahamic religions. This makes Saint Catherine area a unique cultural testimony of peaceful co-existence

and religious harmony. The area of Saint Catherine comprises a “core” area with the Orthodox Monastery in the middle, and a cluster of other monuments.

The oldest part of Saint Catherine area, the Monastery, which is still in use, was founded in the 6th century. The longevity of Saint Catherine area as a religious area and its unique cultural testimony is very rarely found elsewhere and it is comparable to that of Bethany Beyond the Jordan (Al-Maghtas) since both sites are important for the three Abrahamic religions. But it is worth mentioning that “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” has an earlier history which goes back to the early 1st century AD and is associated with other, earlier events recorded in the Old Testament in connection with the life and ascent to Heaven of Prophet Elijah (Elias).

The small island of Pátmos, in Greece is another holy place and a World Heritage site [inscribed in 1999 using Criteria (iii), (iv), and (vi)]. The island of Pátmos represents a traditional Greek Orthodox pilgrimage center that consists of three parts; the Historic Centre (Chorá), the Monastery of Saint John the Theologian and the Cave of the Apocalypse. Similar to “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas), the island of Pátmos is one of the very few places in the world that continued practicing its religious ceremonies from early Christianity until these days to commemorate the life of St. John and his writing of the Gospel and of the Apocalypse. The difference between the two sites is that the locations on the island of Pátmos commemorating the life of St. John and his writing of the Gospel and of the Apocalypse, do not contain structures specifically built for rites associated with this pilgrimage, contrary to the Baptism site, where the commemoration of the event is also associated with its performance by the pilgrims.

The World Heritage site of Lumbini, the Birthplace of the Lord Buddha [inscribed in 1997 using Criteria (iii) and (vi)], is also another comparable site to “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” as it is one of the holiest and significant places for Buddhism, one of the world’s great religions, from a very early period. Lumbini developed as a Buddhist pilgrimage centre, since it is believed that the Lord Buddha was born here in 623 BC. It must be pointed out that Lumbini is one of the four holy places of Buddhism; the sites of his birth, Enlightenment, First Discourse, and death. The site is characterized by a complex of monasteries, stupas, temples and other structures dated from the 3^d century BC to the 15th century AD.

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

The main difference with these major World Heritage sites, giving to Bethany Beyond the Jordan an exceptional value, is that this site is physically and directly associated with the use of the site for the performance of baptism, a rite of fundamental importance in the life of every Christian. It is this association between historic event and unique structures specifically built to allow its commemoration and performance that gives to the Baptism site its exceptional character.

Comparative Study of Bethany Beyond the Jordan, Bethlehem, Saint Catherine, Patmos, and Lumbini

Case/ Aspect	Baptism site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)	Case 1: Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem	Case 2: Saint Catherine	Case 3: Island of Patmos	Case 4: Lumbini
Date of Inscription	Tentative list	2012	2002	1999	1997
Type of Site	Cultural	Cultural	Cultural	Cultural	Cultural
Location	Jordan	Palestine	Egypt	Greece	Nepal
Property	533.7 ha	2.98 ha	60,100 ha	8,800 ha	1.95 ha
Criteria	(iii) (iv) (vi)	(iv) (vi)	(i)(iii)(iv)(vi)	(iii) (iv) (vi)	(iii) (vi)
OUV	The location of the baptism of Jesus by John, where the archaeological remains witness the use of the site for this function	Birthplace of Jesus.	The location where Moses received the Ten Commandments	The location where St John the Theologian wrote both his Gospel and the Apocalypse	The location where the Lord Buddha was born
Intangible elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Related to a religious event – Accounts of pilgrims, travelers and historians over the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Related to a religious event – A unique cultural testimony of the peaceful co-existence and religious harmony. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Related to a religious events – Symbol of peace for all mankind – Continuity of use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Related to a religious event – Exceptional example of a traditional Greek Orthodox 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Related to a religious event – One of the four pilgrimage sites as indicated by the Lord Buddha

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

	centuries – Religious texts and belief system of the Christian community – Continuous use for two millennia	– Demonstrates an intimate relationship between natural grandeur and spiritual commitment. – Continuity of use		pilgrimage center – Continuity of use since the 12 th century	– Continuity of use
Tangible elements	Churches with unique features, monasteries, baptismal pool, hermit cells and archeological findings in addition to significant natural landscape similar to the one of the time of John the Baptist.	The Church of the Nativity; clusters of other ecclesiastical buildings including convents, churches, towers and gardens; in addition to a Pilgrimage Route from Jerusalem.	Orthodox Monastery going back to the 6 c. AD and a cluster of satellites that include natural and cultural heritage monuments.	Historic Centre includes churches and residential houses going back to the 17th century. The Monastery of Saint John the Theologian was constructed in 1088 AD and Cave of the Apocalypse where St John wrote both his Gospel and the Apocalypse.	Complex of temples, monasteries, stupas and other features commemorating the birth of Lord Buddha.

3.3 Proposed Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

a) Brief synthesis

The Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) Protected Area is located in the Southern Jordan Valley on the east side of the Jordan River around 9 km north of the Dead Sea and is part of the District of South Shunah in the Governorate of Al-Balqaa in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The site is located a few kilometers to the east of the oasis and ancient site of Jericho and ca. 50 km

west of Amman, the capital of Jordan. The site covers an area of 533.7 hectares that includes an archaeological complex dating back to the Roman and Byzantine periods. The archaeological features are found in two distinct zones, al-Kharrar, also known as “Elijah hill” (Jebel Mar Elias in Arabic), and Al-Maghtas. They consist of churches, monasteries, hermit caves, water systems, pilgrim hostels and baptismal pools dated between the 6th and the 15th centuries AD, from the Byzantine to the Mamluk periods. All these features are associated with the Christian rite of baptism, as it is here that tradition locates the baptism of Jesus by John, and they witness the uninterrupted use of the site for a millennium as a place of pilgrimage. After the abandonment of the cultic structures, the site continued to receive the visit of pilgrims that wanted to bathe in the waters of the Jordan in order to renovate baptism on their persons. In 1967 the site was closed and became a military area. After the peace accords of 1994 archaeological excavations were conducted at the site, together with the preservation of the remains found and their presentation to the public. Religious interest in the site was renovated, especially after the heads of many Christian denominations declared this to be the true location of the baptism of Jesus. New churches are being built outside of the core zone of the site and where archaeological remains are not present, in agreement with management guidelines and under the supervision of the Baptism Site Commission, an independent organization in charge of the management of the site.

b) Justification for Criteria

The site is being nominated under criteria (iii), (iv) and (vi).

(iii): *The Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) bears unique testimony to the cultural and religious tradition of baptism and the importance it holds in the Christian belief system.*

The extant structures of the Baptism Site demonstrate the exceptional interest that Christian monks, hermits and pilgrims had in the site. Five churches and other structures were built along the bank of the Jordan River to accommodate the pilgrims who came to commemorate the baptism of Jesus. In addition to those structures along the bank of the Jordan River, other structures offer other direct links to the Christian use of the site, including a pilgrim’s station, a large baptismal pool, hermit cells and other monastic installations including a cave that Christian

tradition identified as the one in which John the Baptist lived. Together, all these features represent a unique assemblage that is directly and tangibly associated with the tradition of baptism and to its fundamental importance for Christians of all denominations.

*(iv) The Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) **exhibits** outstanding examples of buildings and architectural ensembles which illustrate a fundamental event in the history of one of the world’s great religions.*

The performance of the rites of baptism and the physical constraints of the location required new forms of buildings and installations, not found anywhere else. These buildings are characterized by unique features, such as construction on piers as a way to protect two of the churches from flooding, or the marble staircase leading to the water of the river Jordan, where huge pillars served as base for a cruciform baptistery and the Chapel of the Mantle, commemorating the location where Jesus deposited his garments before being baptized by John. The churches, marble steps, baptistery, and the smaller chapel are preserved in situ, providing physical evidence to the narratives of pilgrims who visited the site between the 6th and the 8th century AD.

(vi): The Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) is directly associated with the Christian tradition of the baptism of Jesus, an event of universal significance. It is also associated with characters and events of high significance for all Abrahamic religions.

The built and natural environments of the Baptism Site are associated with spiritual and religious values and traditions, historical events, and characters of universal significance, in particular for the Abrahamic religions. It is here that prophets Elias/Elijah and Elisha crossed the river parting its waters, and where Elias was first fed by ravens and finally ascended to Heaven, where John the Baptist lived as a hermit, practicing baptism and announcing the coming of the Christ, and finally baptizing him. The place is also associated with the life of St. Mary the Egyptian, especially venerated in Eastern Christian Churches.

The strongest of these associations, for which the site is universally known especially to Christians of all denominations is the one with baptism. This gives to the location of Bethany Beyond the Jordan (Al-Maghtas) an extraordinary

associative value, as it can be considered the place where Christianity originated. Physically, this is confirmed by the millenarian use of the place by monks, hermits, saints and pilgrims since the Late Roman period until the 15th century, when the structures that have now been excavated were abandoned. The tradition of baptism, however, was not lost and it continued throughout the centuries, until the early 20th century. This tradition is now renovated, and each year Epiphany is celebrated at the site.

(c) Statement of Integrity

The boundaries of the Baptism Site, Bethany Beyond the Jordan (Al-Maghtas) include all known archaeological remains at the site, both the churches and installations along the bank of the Jordan River and the monastery and other installations at Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah’s Hill) to the east. No modern encroachments exist at the site since it was a military area until 1994. Modern constructions such as new churches and pilgrim stations are being built outside of the core area of the site. The archaeological remains have been conserved using only compatible materials, thus they preserve their original form, as no conjectural reconstruction was made. Some shelters were built to protect delicate features such as floor mosaics using natural materials such as wood, and they are totally reversible.

(d) Statement of Authenticity

The authenticity of the Baptism Site, identified in the Bible as Bethany beyond the Jordan, derives from the archaeological remains of the various churches, monasteries and other installations, along with accounts of pilgrims, travelers and historians, and with the religious texts and belief system of the Christian community. The site meets the test of authenticity under several criteria, especially **form and design**, as the structures were specifically designed to perform baptism and perpetuate the **tradition** allowing pilgrims to be baptized in the same location where the baptism of Jesus took place. The **location and setting** of the site is particularly evocative and authentic to its original aspect, close to the Jordan River and among a thick grow of natural reeds. The association of the site to a fundamental event in the Christian belief system, that of the baptism of Jesus, hence to the very origin of Christianity in this location, means that **the use and the**

function of the site and the structures found there are authentic since they all relate to ritual practices conducted to commemorate that event since at least the Late Roman / Early Byzantine period. For all these reasons the **spirit and feeling** at “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) are particularly powerful, as each single archaeological remain and the entire physical landscape are imbued with the beliefs of the pilgrims who come to the site to witness in person the root of their faith.

(e) Requirements for Protection and Management

The site is managed by the Baptism Site Commission, an independent organization mandated by the Jordanian government to ensure the protection of the site and to open it to visitation. The site is protected by the Antiquities Law of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, No. 21 of 1988, amended in 2002 (amendment No. 23), 2004 (amendment No. 23) and 2008 (amendment No. 55), while its buffer zone use is regulated by the above-mentioned laws and by the Jordan Valley Development Law of 1988 and amended in 2001 (amendment No. 30). A Management Plan has been developed for the site with the establishment of policies and objectives for the management of the site; for the conservation and consolidation of both its archeological and natural layers; for the future interpretation and presentation on site; and for future facilities for visitors. The Management Plan attempts to account for the future challenges the site will face, while trying to protect and conserve its attributes and values.

Section 4. State of Conservation and Factors Affecting the Property

4.a Present State of Conservation

The Archaeological Layer and Continuous Conservation, Consolidation, and Interpretation Efforts

The major buildings at the site were destroyed as a result of earthquakes. There are indications that the churches and other facilities were restored in antiquity and other buildings were added to the restored ones. The site seemed to have been abandoned after the fifteenth century and the area became a wilderness until the archaeological excavations of the mid-1990s started. Conservation and modest restoration work took place on a large scale aiming at rehabilitating the site and reopening it for pilgrims and visitors. No reconstruction work was undertaken at any archaeological building. Paths and shelters with water supply and rest areas were also created. These paths and shelters are totally reversible and do not interfere with the aspect of the site.

General Conservation Approach and Philosophy

The approach of the main site’s conservation architect is minimal intervention that is based not on reconstruction, but rather on consolidation and stabilization of the archaeological remains while maintaining a clear visual distinction between the original archaeological material and new intervention. Stabilization is defined as treatment procedures intended to maintain the integrity of cultural property and to minimize deterioration. It is also a process of intervention which may be used as an interim measure on a severely deteriorated building or it may involve the long-term consolidation of a structure. Stabilization is designed to be reversible and is distinguished from the original material of the archaeological remains. Stabilization can also be defined as the act or process of applying measures designed to re-establish a weather- resistant enclosure and the structural stability of an unsafe or deteriorated property while maintaining the essential form as it exists at present (USA Secretary of the Interior’s Standards For Historic Preservation 1979). This includes the introduction, for example, of protective shelters to protect the fragile remains of mosaic floors. The Getty Conservation Institute defines stabilization as the act of maintaining the fabric of a place in its existing state and retarding or slowing deterioration (Getty Conservation Institute 2009).

Consolidation could be defined as a treatment used to strengthen deteriorated materials to ensure their structural integrity. Repointing is an example of such a reversible consolidation treatment. In general, the expert carrying out consolidation at the site maintained a visual differentiation between the original fabric and the new added material. Furthermore, no attempts for reconstruction were practiced, not only to avoid conservation in conjecture, but also to maintain a policy of minimal intervention within the site. Such practices are in accordance with Articles 9, 12 and 15 of the Venice Charter.

Sometimes, construction needed to be added to certain existing archaeological walls for such reasons as change in level between the outside and inside the church that might cause mosaic floors or any other archaeological material to collapse in the future. In such cases, the added courses (approximately 40-50 cm) of stone were done in the framework of consolidation of the wall and stabilization of the original mosaic flooring. All care and attention was made to create a visual difference between the original wall and the new added portion. In certain cases, consolidation work was conducted in fragile areas and foundations. The conservators used compatible material (local river stone) together with a vernacular cement mixture that is salt-resistant (a mixture of 50 percent hydrated lime, sand and white cement), experimenting nine mixtures before deciding on the most compatible one.

Protective shelters were added in three cases over fragile mosaic floorings and other archaeological remains over the North Church in Wadi Al-Kharrar and over the Basilica and Small Chapel near the Jordan River. When protective shelters were added, attention was given to use organic materials and placing wood bases for the protective shelter over stone archaeological floorings or walls without causing any adverse effect on them.

The shelters follow the Venice Charter in terms of:

- Reversibility
- Functioning well in terms of protecting the archaeological material (mosaic floor, other) from severe sun and rain.
- Compatibility with the environment around it.

These shelters were by no means considered attempts at reconstruction, but rather a level of intervention that falls within the approach of stabilization and minimal intervention. Furthermore, these protective shelters are affordable and sustainable, contrary to other examples of protective shelters in other Jordanian archaeological sites that are extremely expensive and need continuous maintenance.. The local community was involved in the building of these protective shelters, and thereby gained a sense of ownership and stewardship of the site.

In terms of the philosophy of intervention on the natural layer of the site, all attention had been paid not to alter the character of the area (e.g., naturalness feeling of Wadi Al-Kharrar) and to maintain the original landscape coverage (e.g. native plants of reeds, tamarisk and yanbout). Drip irrigation was used in certain areas, but also maintaining minimal intervention. The original natural habitat was not touched in the core archaeological area with the exception of the unobtrusive interpretative pedestrian paths.



Fig. 71: Wadi Al-Kharrar – Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah’s Hill)

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

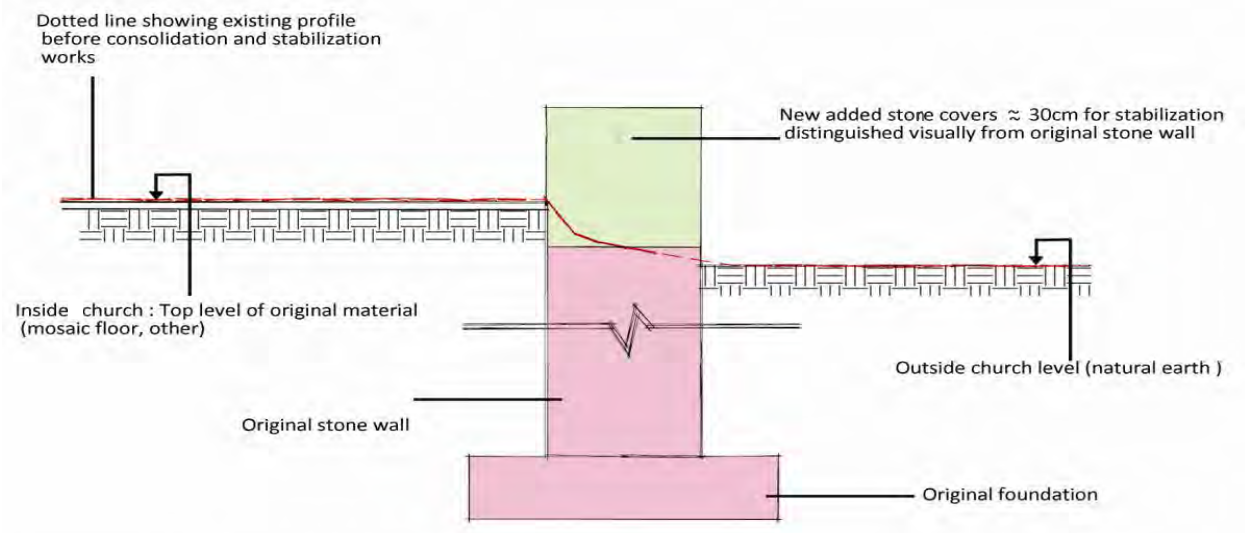


Fig. 72: Approach for consolidation and stabilization works

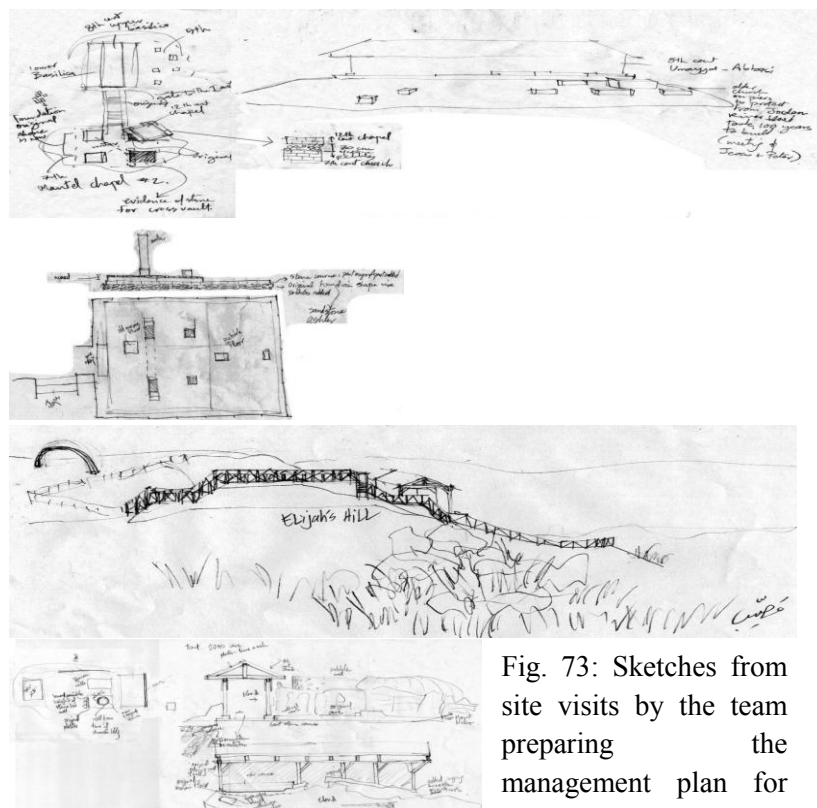


Fig. 73: Sketches from site visits by the team preparing the management plan for the Baptism Site, summer 2012.



Fig. 74: Eastern part of monastery walls at the beginning of intervention (consolidation works)



Fig. 75: The northern wall of the marble steps



Fig. 76: Consolidation works at the churches by the river (the four piers and the small chapel) showing the approach for consolidation based on the visual distinction between existing and new interventions



Fig. 77: Two views of the 5th century mosaics in the North Church within the Rhetorios monastery



Fig. 78: Details of the 5th century mosaics in the North Church within the Rhetorios monastery



Fig. 79: Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah's Hill) from the south before excavation and consolidation



Fig. 80: Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah's Hill) after conservation and presentation



Fig. 81: North Church: View from the east before the addition of the protective shelter



Fig. 82: Local workers participating in the construction of the wooden protective shelter of the North Church



Fig. 83: The North Church after the addition of the protective shelter



Fig. 84: Reversible wooden columns in the lower part of the protective shelter



Fig. 85: The Basilica after the addition of a protective shelter

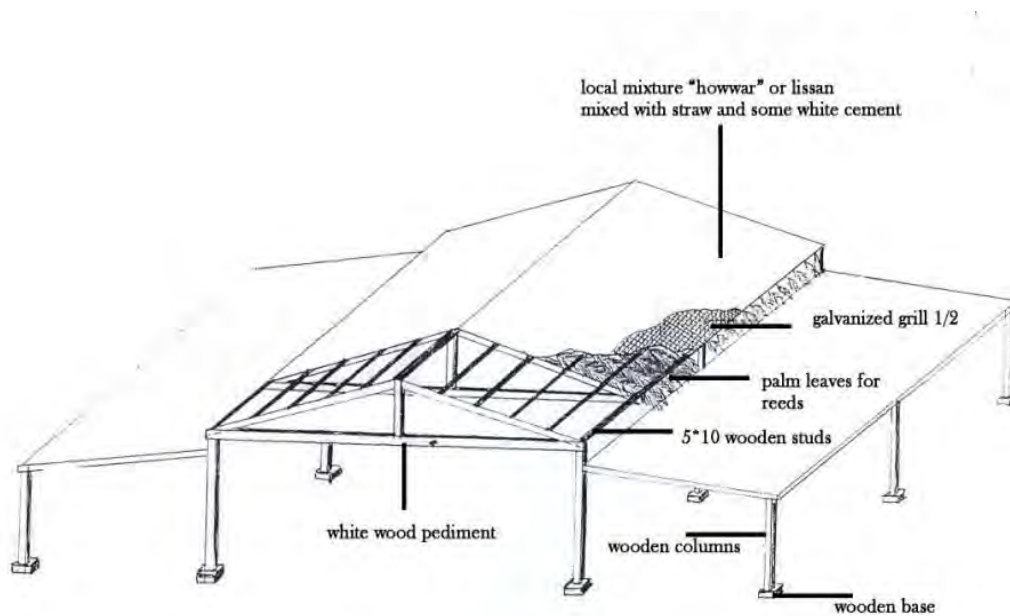


Fig. 86: Details of the protective shelter over the upper Basilica within the complex of St John the Baptist

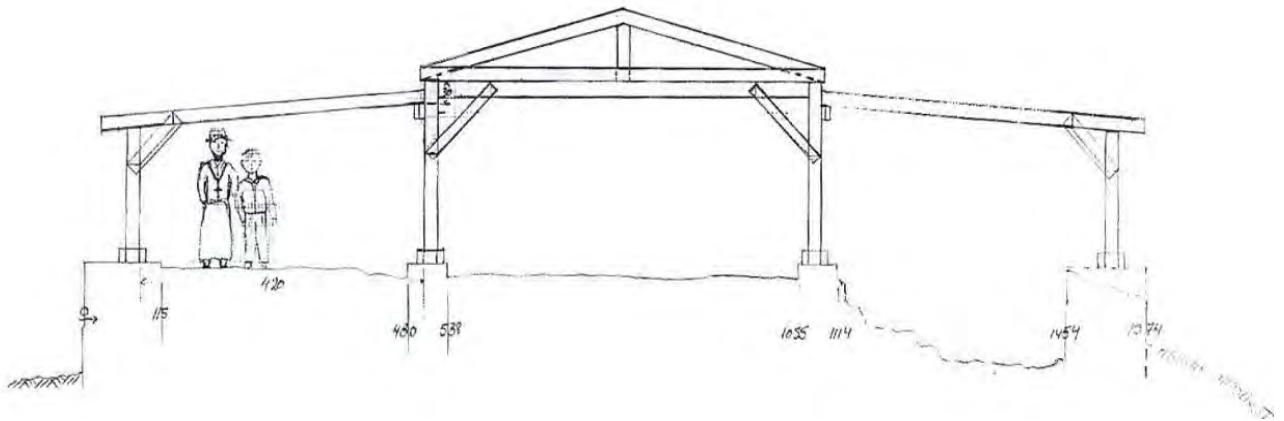


Fig. 87: Section through the shelter looking east

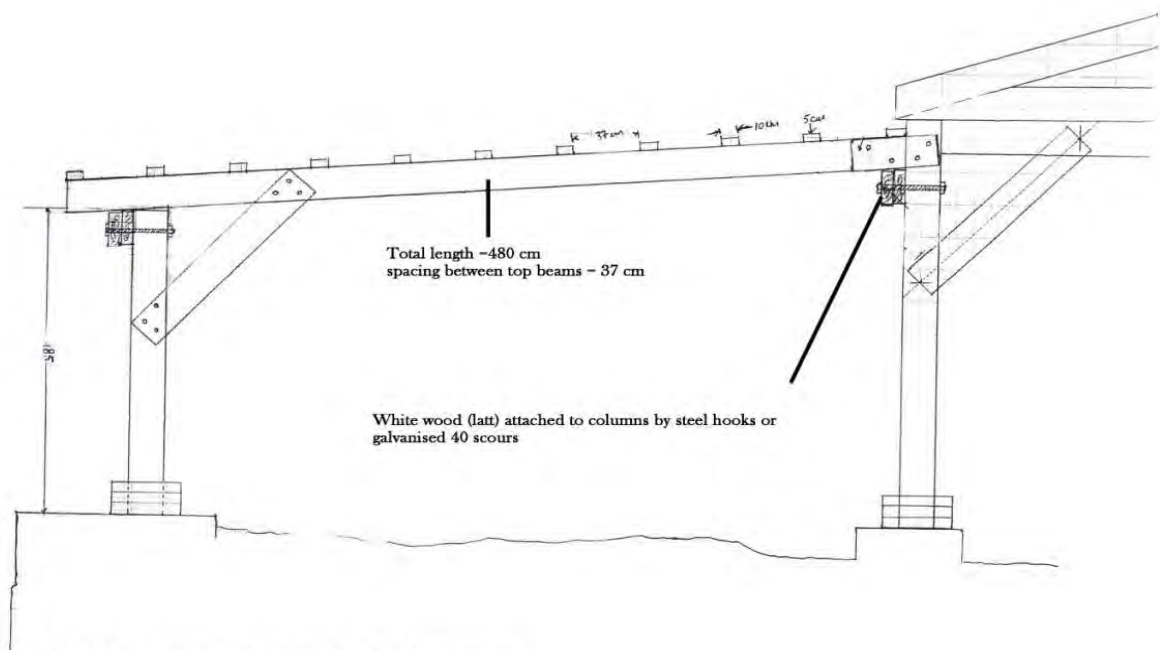


Fig. 88: Detailed section of part of the shelter

Conservation of the Archeological Layer

In general, the state of conservation of the site is good and acceptable; however, the site lacks specialized expertise in conservation of archaeological heritage and in specific areas such as material conservation of mosaic floorings. The objective is to arrive to a high-quality conservation of the site that is based on the most

updated theories, practices, and according to the requirements of international conventions and charters. Maintaining the specific character for the site is also very crucial.

In order to achieve this, the following policies should be addressed:

- Policies regarding the nature and scope of future investigations, excavations and research. These should include policies regarding site treatment and conservation after excavations.
- Policies regarding the continuous documentation of the Site. The documentation should address in details the current archeological layer, the associated interpretation and interpretative paths, and also the natural layer of the Site. The documentation should also address future excavations and conservation works.
- Policies regarding the future conservation approach and philosophy to be adopted in the Site while conserving its archaeological layers.
- Policies regarding material conservation and mainly mosaics and mosaic flooring in situ.
- Policies regarding appropriate use of the Site and the appropriate use of its different parts and zones.

Since the discovery of the site, the conservation of the archaeological layer takes place annually by a Department of Antiquities team ever since the site was recently discovered. Periodical reports are kept at the Department.

There are also ongoing monitoring and maintenance works to ensure the good state of the entire site, to include all archaeological remains. Not only are the archaeological remains taken care of, but also their surroundings and the natural setting.

Partnerships are also being pursued between the Baptism Site Commission, the Department of Antiquities of Jordan and the Mosaic institute of Madaba.

4.b Factors Affecting the Property

4.b.i Development Pressures

Pressure for demolition, rebuilding or new construction and other uses

Such development pressures do not exist within the Site, as the whole site and its archaeological remains are protected by law, and governed by the Baptism Site Commission, which enforces site conservation approaches and strategies.

The only future construction of new buildings in the area will be the construction of new churches for the various Christian denominations, which are allowed only on certain areas away from the core archaeological area. The purpose in allowing such new construction is to enable the continued use of the site for pilgrimage, worship and the practice of Baptism. Furthermore, these contemporary religious structures, with their diverse architectural styles, not only represent the diversity of Christians around the world, but also relieve the pressure on the fragile archaeological layer of the site, which is thereby protected from massive visitations and religious celebrations. Such celebrations (e.g. Baptism and Epiphany among others) are held in the premises of the contemporary churches.

Another possibility for new construction that is under study is the establishment of a tourist village at the far eastern end of the Site near the entrance and away from the core archaeological area. This tourist village may include low-rise housing that is compatible with the international conventions and charters, the Jordan Valley Authority law, and the law of antiquities in addition to other facilities to accommodate pilgrims and other visitors who may wish to stay overnight while participating in events at the modern churches or visiting other nearby sites, such as Mount Nebo, Mukawar and Madaba. This proposed village will be one of the main components of the future visitation strategy.

Inappropriate use

All the cultural and natural sites are protected by the Commission and the practice of continuous site conservation and protection. The visitation of these sites is also well-regulated. There is no threat, whatsoever, of any of these sites being subject to adaptive reuse or any other development pressure that might harm their authenticity.

Habitat modification or destruction following encroaching agriculture, forestry or grazing, inappropriate or unsustainable natural resource exploitation and the introduction of exotic species likely to disrupt natural ecological processes

It is important to mention that no habitat modification or destruction is taking place or is anticipated to take place in the future due to the protection of the site and the practice of nature conservation by the Commission. The buffer zone also provides another layer of protection. Attention had been made not to alter the character of the Area (e.g., a feeling of naturalness for Wadi Al-Kharrar) and to maintain the original landscape coverage (e.g. native plants of reeds, tamarisk and yanbout). Drip irrigation was used in certain areas to maintain minimal intervention. The original natural habitat was not touched in the core archaeological area with the exception of unobtrusive interpretative pedestrian paths.

Tourism

Tourism and visitation is properly managed by the Commission. Tourism facilities are located away from the core archeological area. Furthermore, the site is equipped with roads that end at a distance from the main archaeological zone, and from there, tourists and visitors use marked paths and trails of compacted earth that are unobtrusive and in harmony with the Site. The management of site visitation is well-addressed and the Commission continues to think of ways to improve it, such as increasing the number of shuttle buses, providing more site tour guides, and developing techniques for site interpretation and presentation. No other uses are allowed on-site, and the Site is also protected by the Buffer Zone which entails restricted land use of farm land.

Damage caused by mining and creating new population centers on or near properties so as to harm them or their setting

Mining is not allowed on the Site or in the Buffer Zone, and the area around the Buffer Zone is mostly composed of agricultural land. The Site is protected by the Buffer Zone, which entails restricted land use of farm land. It is also worth mentioning that the Jordan Valley Authority Law (Annex 4) that is strongly enforced, ensures that all the pieces of land surrounding the Baptism Site are kept as farm units.

In general, it is unlikely that the site will suffer in the future from any threats due to future development as the Site enjoys two layers of protection: its ownership line and the buffer zone.

4.b.ii Environmental Pressures

Introduction

The site is classified into the following habitats: Major Valley (Wadi) with permanent flow of water, Reed Beds, Brackish Marshes, and the Jordan River. The site is highly diversified in terms of vertebrates, birds, reptiles and mammals.

The fact that the Jordan Valley has been irrigated for fruit and vegetable production means that little of the natural subtropical vegetation remains, although the southern course of the Jordan River including Wadi Al-Kharrar (the core archeological area within the Site) has been minimally affected by direct human impact, due to the limited access and reduced quality of the saline soils for agriculture. The area along the east bank of Jordan River is very important since it has not changed much over the years. The whole site has a character of “naturalness” to it. The Baptism Site is a salt marsh wetland with several unique features. There are two wetland types in the Baptism Site: the major wadi system starting from Wadi Al-Kharrar and running towards the Jordan River, and the Jordan River itself.

In terms of the philosophy in the intervention within the natural layer of the Site, attention had been made not to alter the character of the area and to maintain the original landscape coverage. The planting of trees (e.g., olive groves) and other trees is conducted away from the core archaeological area which mostly is kept with the indigenous foliage cover including reeds, palms, tamarisk and yanbout. The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature coordinates with the Baptism Site Commission to conduct base line surveys to collect data on the natural habitat of the Site and its flora and fauna. The Site has its own desalination plant to provide fresh water for the new baptistries that serve pilgrims who wish to be baptised at the site where Jesus was baptised but not in the Jordan River itself for fear of drowning. In addition, proper measures are made for good practices of solid waste management.

Listing and summarizing major sources of environmental deterioration affecting building fabric, flora, and fauna

In terms of potential and existing risks, one could mention the following:

- Temperature changes: extreme temperatures between day and night and especially in the summer seasons,
- High salinity present in the site which mostly affects iron structures (e.g., light posts).

Beyond the above listed, no risks or threats are anticipated to affect the building fabric, flora, and fauna of the Site.

4.b.iii Natural Disasters and Risk Preparedness

Future Risks and Threats

It is important to distinguish between risks and threats to the site. Risks are inherent characteristics of a site, such as flooding, while threats represent potential future challenges such as encroachments by development that are best dealt with at a more administrative level (e.g., coordination between various institutions regarding a particular issue).

It is unlikely that the site will suffer from any threats due to future development because the Site enjoys two layers of protection: its ownership line and the buffer zone. One of the major future pressures on the Site is tourism pressure. The Site is gaining in popularity, so the increase in the number of visitors will lead to more pressure on the Site. This is dealt with in the management Plan, in coordination with the Churches that are establishing a presence in the vicinity of the site. The following is a listing of some of the risks that should be accounted for in the management plan:

Environmental risks to the site include flooding by the Jordan River, wild fires in the surrounding vegetation, earthquakes in the Jordan Valley, salinity of the ground water and large temperature fluctuations.

The Site’s fragile archaeological remains suffer from salt deposits and atmospheric pollution.

Flooding of the Jordan River, as happened in February 2003 and January 2013, is mitigated by modern dikes already in place that protect the ancient churches built around the east bank of the river. The modern shelters over the archaeological remains are built to be flood- and earthquake-resistant due to their flexible construction of wood. The staff has received first-aid training, and it is an on-going process. Coordination and cooperation with various stakeholders also ensures teamwork to minimize and solve any outstanding issue.

4.b.iv Responsible Visitation at World Heritage Sites

Interpretation on Site: paths, interpretive signage and gallery

The Site enjoys several pedestrian pathways with different types of interpretation. One type is the interpretative stone panels explaining the history of the Site and its archaeological layer. Another is the audio tour with audio stops along the trails.

The site also has a gallery, inside the Baptism Site conference center, which houses a valuable collection of pottery, stone pieces and coins from different periods of the Site’s occupation as well as interpretive panels explaining the history of the Site.



Fig. 89: Part of the pedestrian trails with audio point No. 4



Fig. 90: Part of the pedestrian trails with audio point No. 2



Fig. 91: Part of the site interpretation panels made of local stone. This one explains the Byzantine and later churches by the Jordan River



Fig. 92: Part of the newly added pedestrian pathway (bridge) made of wood at Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah's Hill)



Fig. 93: Pedestrian trails leading from the prayer hall to Rhetorios' monastery. The railing of the pedestrian pathways is unobtrusive



Fig. 94: One of the panoramic lookouts with an unobtrusive shaded surface overlooking the Jordan River

Assessment of Tourism Context

The mandate of Baptism Site Commission is to protect and preserve the entire site and its surroundings and to facilitate everything related to modern pilgrimage and tourism without affecting its spiritual character and cultural and natural landscape. To ensure this goal the number and flow of visitors is kept under control and periodical assessment for each season is undertaken. It is clear from basic observation on tourism management activities on Site that the practices of the Baptism Site Commission are very positive and encouraging in terms of organizing the flow of tourist on site and also in terms of providing facilities for them along the Site as will be explained in the following two sections.

Tourism Profiles and Statistics

Visitors and pilgrims from all over the world visit the Site during all months of the year. The Site is frequented mainly by Christian communities in Jordan (although Muslim visitors are not rare), from neighboring countries, and from all over the world. They come to the Site as visitors, tourists and pilgrims, as well as to

celebrate certain religious holidays (e.g., Epiphany) and most of all to practice the ritual of baptism.

The following chart illustrates the number of visitors to site by month for the past five years. It is clear from the Chart that April and October are the busiest months of the year in general. This could be due to the fact that during these two months the climate in Jordan is very moderate and pleasant. In general, the maximum capacity today is 2000 pilgrims/visitors daily. Larger numbers have been recorded at Epiphany Celebrations.

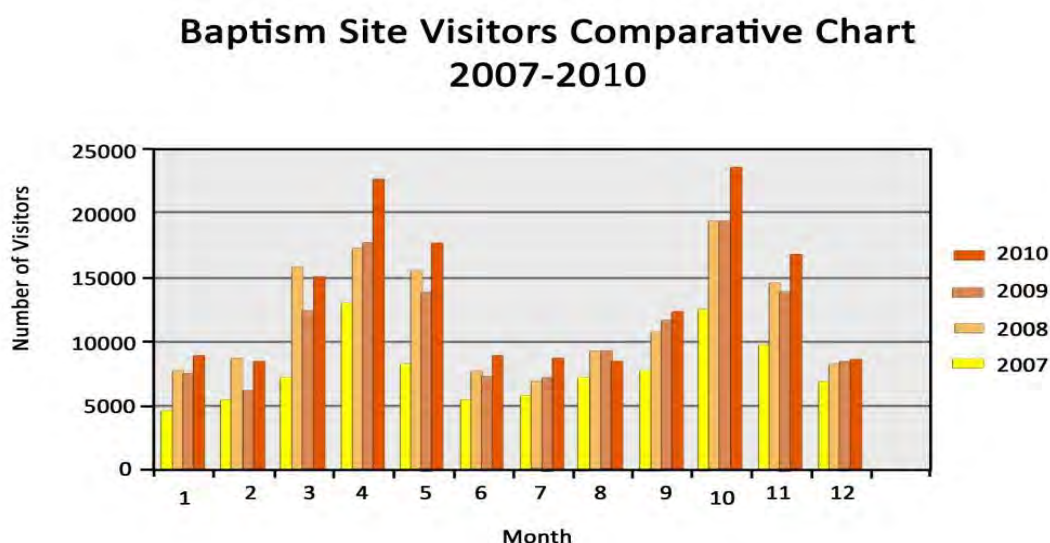


Fig. 95: Baptism Site visitors comparative chart

Tourism Facilities Assessment

The practices of The Baptism Site Commission are positive and encouraging in terms of organizing the flow of tourists on site and also in terms of providing facilities for them along the Site. These practices include:

- Easy access. The site is handicapped accessible in most of its trails and panoramic lookouts
- Signage on the main roads leading to the Site
- Ticketing, shops, WC facilities

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

- Provision of various tourists trails with a certain level of interpretation about the site and its historical and archeological layers. These pedestrian trails facilitate the movement of the visitors and have minimal impact on the Site.
- Provision of first aid facilities on Site.
- Provision of shaded areas which are unobtrusive in their design using local material (e.g., wood for construction and palm and reeds as cover). In addition, the Commission had provided 3 panoramic lookouts in various strategic locations for the visitors and tourists to enjoy the view of the river.
- Provision of a shuttle bus that takes the tourists to different parts of the Site. Groups visiting the site can start their Site exploration journey immediately. Individuals can make advantage of the Bus Shuttle every half an hour. The shuttle bus runs every quarter of an hour in case of increased visitations.
- Provision of off-site services including various pamphlets and brochures that are produced by the Commission in addition to various book publications on the Site that have been supported by the Commission as well.



Fig. 96: Samples of brochures produced by the Baptism Site commission

4.b.v Number of Inhabitants within the Property and the Buffer Zone

Estimated Population Located within:

Area of Nominated Property: 70-80 staff

Buffer Zone: 385 bedouin

Total: 480 staff and Bedouin

Year: 2012

There are several villages south of Wadi Nimrin and north of the Dead Sea that can be seen in connection with the Baptism Site and its property. These villages belong administratively to the town of South Shunah, the main trade and tourist center, especially for residents of the Jordan Valley and visitors from the highland towns of Jordan. Major settlements include Al-Kufrein, Al-Ramah, Al-Jofah, Al-Rawdah, Sweimeh, New Shunah, Al-Karamah, Al-Nahdah, Al-Jawasreh, Nimrein Al-Gharbi and Nimrein Al-Sharqi. According to the Jordanian Department of Statistics, 46,840 citizens were living in this area at the end of 2011. Most of the villages are located along two main highways, one between the Yarmouk River and the Dead Sea and the other coming from Amman to the Dead Sea. None of these settlements is located in the immediate vicinity of the Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas), although some villagers own agricultural land surrounding its buffer zone.

A detailed study by Mefleh Al-Edwan entitled "Al-Maghtas and its Neighborhood, a Study of the Place and its Society" (in Arabic) was made available to the team working on the Nomination Dossier. According to George Tarif, two plots of Al-Kufrein village were waqf endowments for the Christian communities: one is 45 ha (450 dunums) and the other 44.8 ha (448 dunums). Raouf Abu Jaber, in an interview with Mefleh Al-Edwan, stated that these endowments belonged to the Roman Catholic Monastery that bought them from the locals at the turn of the 20th century and were registered in Salt, a major town on the highland east of the Baptism Site.

The majority of the inhabitants of the area surrounding the Baptism Site are Muslims. Mefleh Al-Edwan mentions in his above mentioned study that in the

nineteenth century, six out of forty families were Christian, forming around 13 percent of the total population of the area and they lived side by side in harmony.

Some of the inhabitants of this area and other areas of the Jordan Valley immigrated in different periods from other areas of Jordan, Palestine and even North Africa as agricultural workers. Other residents of this area come from Amman and other highland towns and own winter houses in North Shunah, Al-Jofeh, Sweimeh and other locations.

NO	Zone	Population	Percentage
1	South Shuneh District	43,850	11.20
2	South Shuneh	3,936	8.97
3	New Shunah	4,354	9.93
4	Al-Karamah	9,180	20.94
5	Al-Rawdah	8,992	20.51
6	Al-Ramah	4,773	10.88
7	Al-Kufrein	2,055	4.69
8	Al-Jofah	6,364	14.51
9	Sweimeh	4,196	9.57

Fig. 97: Population statistics of the villages surrounding the Baptism Site in 2010.

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

No	Settlements	Number of Housing Units
1	South Shuneh	1,300
2	New Shunah	1,500
3	Al-Karamah	2,000
4	Al-Rawdah	1,880
5	Al-Ramah	500
6	Al-Kufrein	385
7	Al-Jofah	1,500
8	Sweimeh	1,700
	Total	10,780

Fig. 98: Housing unites in each of the villages



Fig. 99: Bedouin tribesmen living by the Jordan River

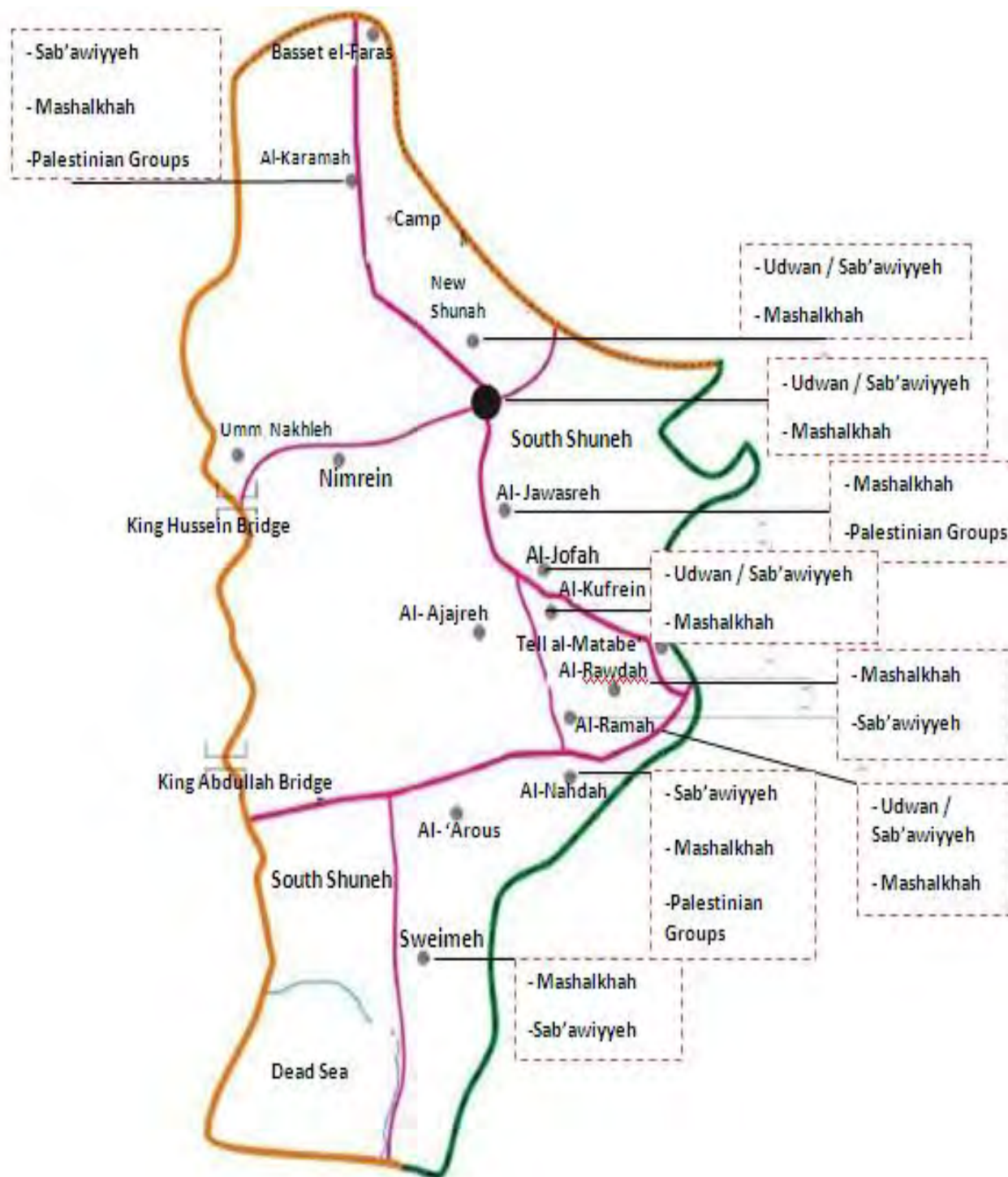


Fig. 100: District of South Shuneh distribution of tribes and other groups

Section 5. Protection and Management of the Property

Introduction:

Authorities, Responsible Bodies and Procedures

The authority responsible for the Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” is the Baptism Site Commission. The Commission has an independent board of trustees appointed by H.M King Abdullah II bin al-Hussein and is chaired by H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad. This has been identified through the By-Law of the *Baptism Site Commission* (Number 48 of the year 2001). The Commission Director is Engineer Dia’ Al Madani, and assistant director is Engineer Rustom Mkhjian who is also the Baptism Site Director for Conservation Works.

It is extremely important to mention that the Commission enjoys a very high level of independence in terms of Site management approaches and financial independence. This is very different from other archaeological sites of Jordan where revenues (in most cases) do not necessarily filter back to the Site or community. Furthermore, the Site has the full support of H.M. King Abdullah II bin al-Hussein and of H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Mohammad who is considered the champion for its recognition and protection.

The Baptism Site and its Commission has a web site that presents the Site with its cultural and natural assets in addition to information regarding facilities, visitation and management. This web site can be accessed at www.baptismsite.com

Furthermore, The Commission is keen on spreading awareness and knowledge about the Site and its significance to the local community and general public. They presented in the past years several public lectures to different audiences and held several training sessions on Site addressing tourist guides training and other issues. Furthermore, several public workshops were held where invited local community members and general public discussed the topic of religious tolerance and co-existence between different religions in Jordan. The Commission strives to promote the Site as a beacon for tolerance and co-existence in this region.

5.a Ownership and Protective Designation

Ownership Structure

The ownership structure of the Site is twofold. The main core area of the Site is a Christian Waqf (endowment) belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church. The Baptism Site Commission owns the remainder part of the Site identified in the Ownership Map (below). The by-law of the Baptism Site Commission (number 48 for the year 2001) and its amendments identified portions of land belonging to the Treasury which were added to the site. Article 4 of the By-law identifies in details the number of plots constituting the Site.

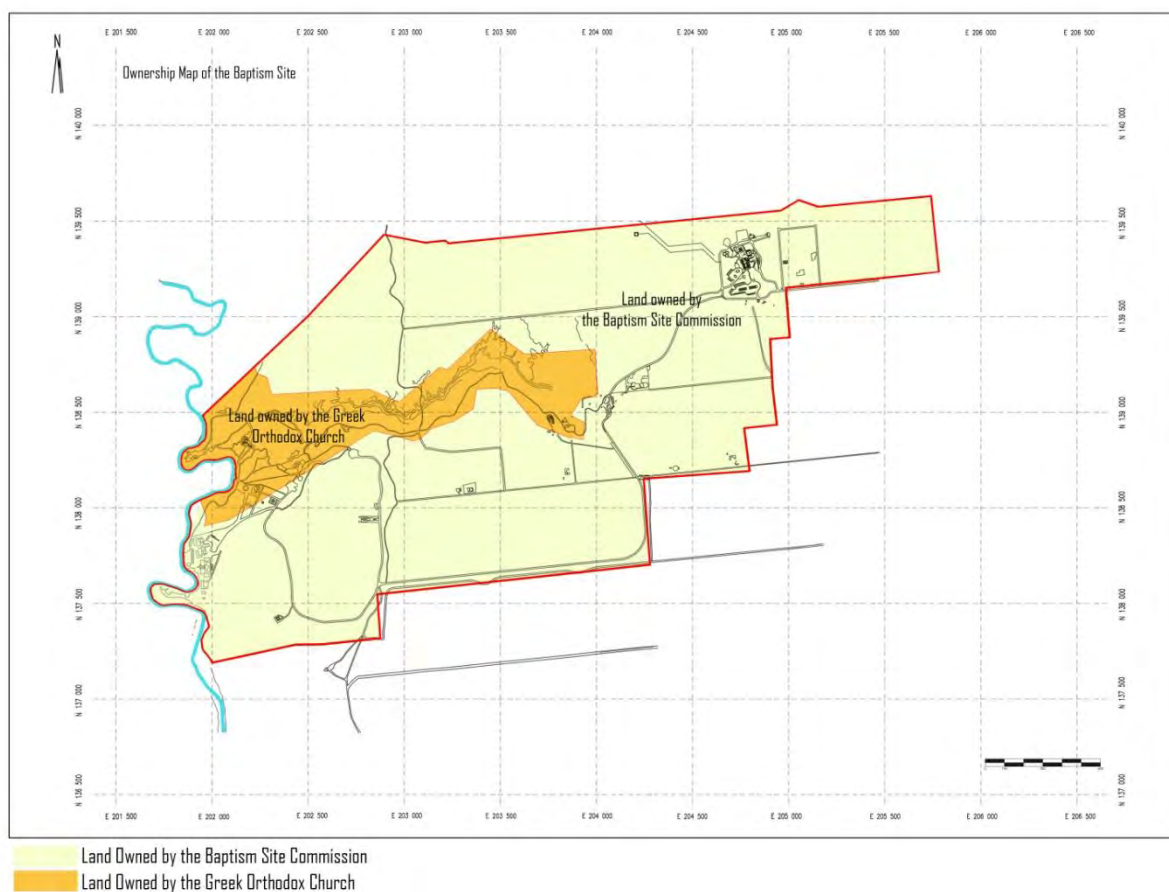


Fig. 101: Ownership map of the Baptism Site

5.b Protective Designation

The site is protected by several laws and by-laws. Antiquities Law 21/1988 classifies immovable heritage as follows:

- “Antique sites” (Antiquities Law 21/1988, art. 3, par. 8), consisting in sites whose importance and value is officially recognized by the State and namely:
 - a. Any area in the Kingdom that was considered historic site under former laws;
 - b. Any other area that the Minister decides that it contains any antiquities or that is related to important historical events, provided that this decision shall be announced in the Official Gazette.
- “Immovable antiquities” (Antiquities Law 21/1988, art. 3, par. 9), consisting in the larger group of immovable heritage bearing some kind of significance and value, namely “fixed antiquities that are connected to the ground, whether built on it or existing underground, including antiquities underwater and those in territorial waters” (Antiquities Law 21/1988, art. 3, par. 8).
- “Antiquities protectorate” (Antiquities Law 21/1988, art. 3, par. 14), defined by the Law as “an area of land that contains archaeological remains or human or natural remains that have been designated and announced by a decision of the Cabinet. This decision is based on the recommendation of the Minister supported by a recommendation of the Director General. These include the terms and provisions for the preservation of things present therein” (Antiquities Law 21/1988, art. 3, par. 9).

The **protection** of antiquities in Jordan is enacted through three main channels:

- Prohibition of destruction, damage or alteration of the antiquity itself, as per article 9 of Antiquities Law 21/1988⁴;
- Regulation of development works around the antiquity, so as to avoid major impact on the antiquity itself and on its contextual perception, as ruled in article 13 of Antiquities Law 21/1988⁵.

⁴ “It is prohibited to destroy, ruin, disfigure or cause damage to antiquities including the change of their features, the separation of any part thereof, transformation thereof, affixing of notices thereon or displaying of signs on them” (Antiquities Law 21/1988, art. 9).

⁵ According to the Antiquities Law: “a) It is prohibited to license the establishment of any structure including buildings and walls unless it is about 5-25 m from any antiquities, against a fair compensation. b) It is permissible, by a decision of the minister on the recommendation for the Director, to increase the distance mentioned in Paragraph a) of this Article if necessity requires in any of the following cases: 1-The protection or maintenance of the antique site. 2-The expansion of the antique site. 3-To secure that the antique site is not obscured by any

- Regulation of antiquities’ investigation, particularly regarding institutions/authorities entitled to survey and excavate antiquities and the ownership of artefacts found thereon, as stated in articles 14-22 of Antiquities Law 21/1988. The Department of Antiquities is the only authority entitled to carry out antiquities’ investigation in Jordan or to license other institutions to undertake such work. All antiquities found during any work carried out by any entity or person in the Kingdom belongs to the State (Antiquities Law 21/1988, art. 21, par. a).

The By-Law of the *Baptism Site Commission* (Number 48 of the year 2001) (Annex 3), in addition to other laws such as Jordan Valley Authority Law (Annex 4) and the Cities, Villages, and Buildings Planning Law provides another strong regulatory mechanism of protection for the Site. The objectives are to protect the Site from future threats (mainly development and tourism development projects that might jeopardize the nature and character of the Site and its immediate surroundings).

One of the most effective planning mitigation measures concerning the protection of a cultural and heritage site is the provision of a buffer zone with certain land use regulations around the site. Such a buffer zone, together with its land-use regulations can protect a site from future adverse developments that might have a negative impact on it and its surroundings.

The boundary of the Site protects its significance. The Buffer Zone with its land-use regulations provides a strong level of added protection. The activities within the Buffer Zone should enhance the experience of the visitors and also provide benefits to the local community. Therefore, the Buffer Zone can be a regulatory tool that enhances the universal value of the Site and benefits the local community.

Details of the Buffer Zone are provided in Fig. 1 and Fig. 193. The area of the Buffer Zone is 773.2 hectares, while the area of the Site is 533.7 hectares. The Buffer Zone around the Site is mainly composed of an extended boundary of approximately 600m on each of the north, east and south sides. The Jordan River

construction. c) It is prohibited to set up any heavy or dangerous industries, lime furnaces or stone quarries at a distance less than one km from the location of the antique sites. In all cases, prior approval of the Department shall be given before inviting offers or awarding tenders for engineering services, design and sketched and preparing the documents of public and private project tenders” (Antiquities Law 21/1988, art. 13).

bordering the Site on the west side forms a natural barrier of protection. The land within the Buffer Zone, according to the Jordan Valley Authority, is zoned as agricultural units of 4.0 hectares each (200 x 200) m. The type of activity within these Farm Units is restricted to agricultural cultivation. Building activities are restricted to a minimum and should only be to service the farm land. The other part of the Buffer Zone bordering the Jordan River is zoned as a nesting area for migrating birds.

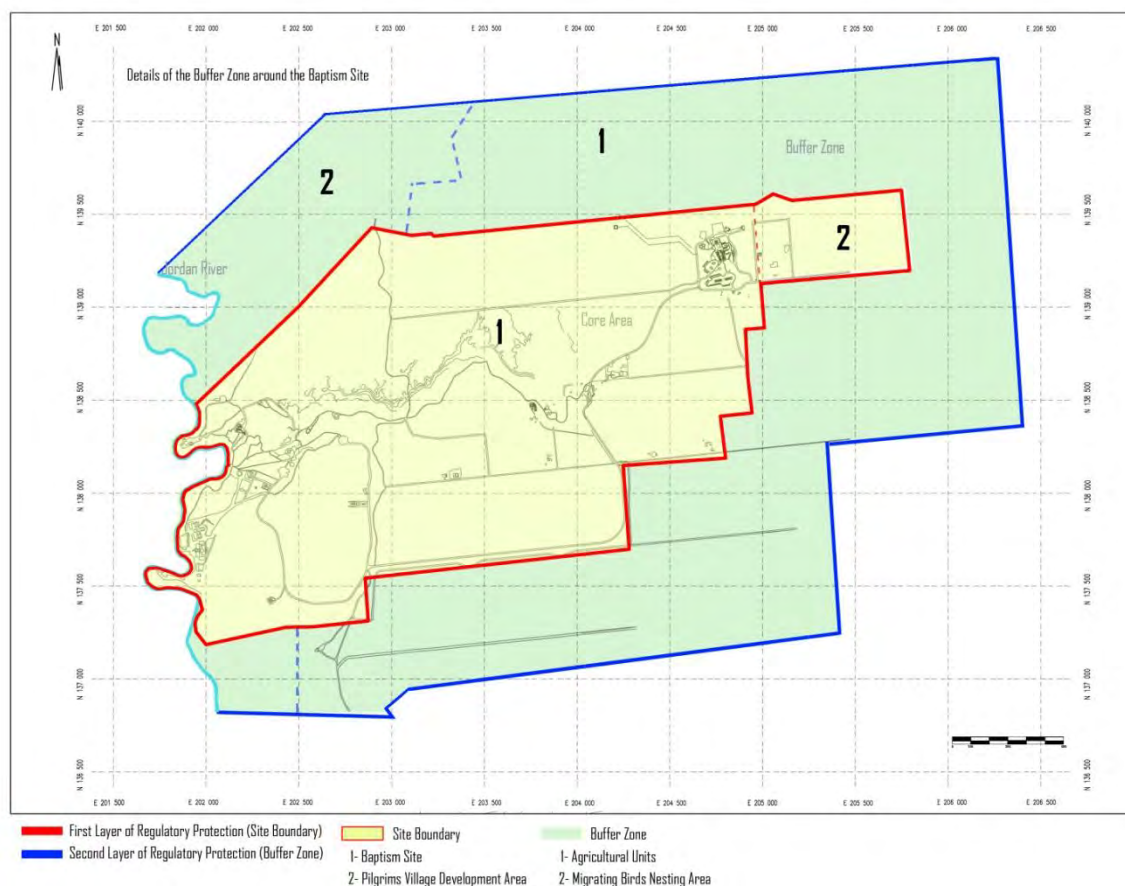


Fig. 102: Details of the buffer zone around the Baptism Site

5.c Means of Implementing Protective Measures

Legal and Legislative Context , Structure of the Organization, and Staff Resources

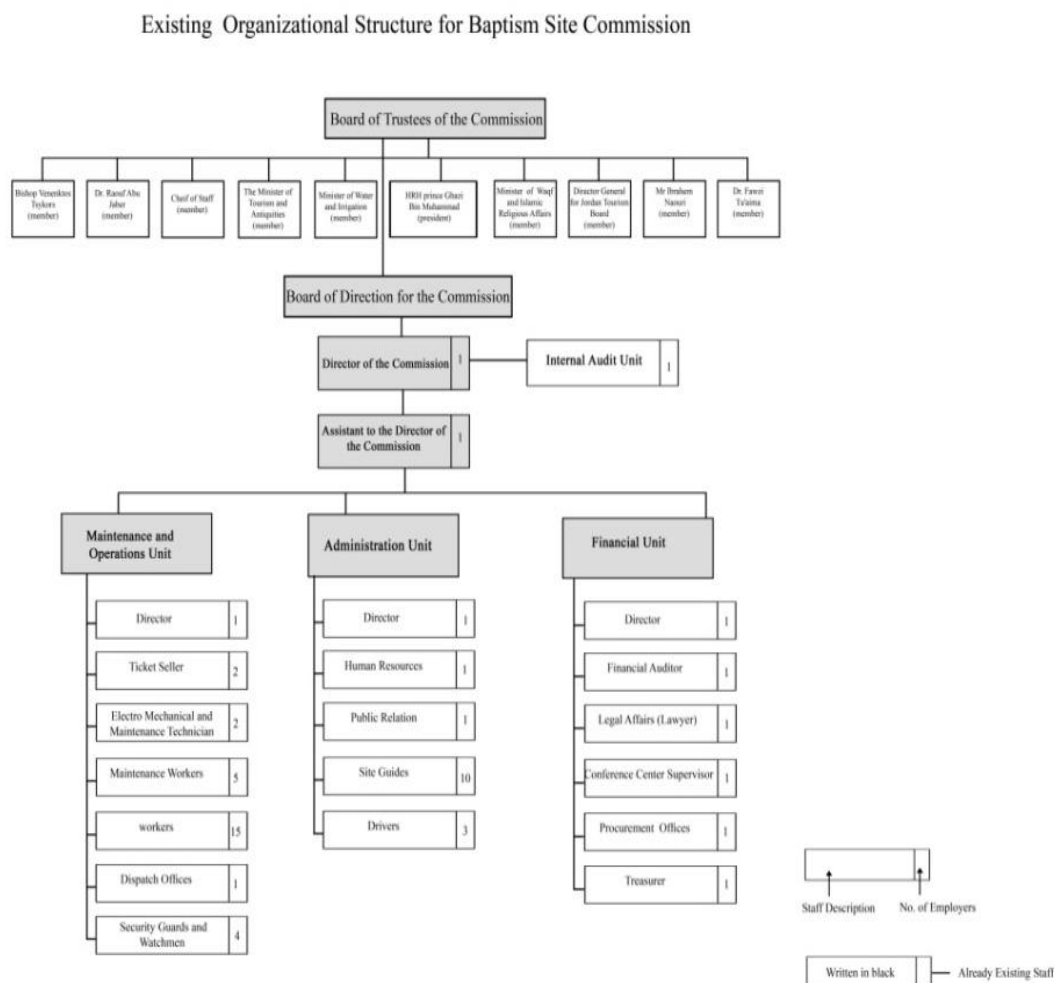


Fig. 103: Existing organizational structure for the Baptism Site Commission

The site is managed by the Baptism Site Commission in coordination with other entities, such as the local Municipalities and the Department of Antiquities of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The current administrative and organizational structure for the Baptism Site Commission consists of a board of trustees and a board of directors. In addition, the following units exist:

- An Administrative Unit: including a director, human resources officer, public relations officer, ten site guides, and three drivers.
- A Financial Unit: including a director, financial auditor, lawyer, Conference Centre supervisor, procurement officer, a treasurer, and two ticket sellers.
- A Maintenance and Operations Unit: including a director, two electro-mechanical and maintenance technicians, five maintenance workers, 15 workers, a dispatch officer, and four security guards and watchmen.

The By-Law of the Commission (identified earlier) provides the legal and legislative protection framework through which the Commission is responsible for the protection and management of the Site. Yet, other laws such as the Jordan Valley Authority law (Law number 3 for the year 2001) which identifies the nature of development (agricultural, tourism, other) that takes place with the Jordan Rift Valley of which the Site is part of. As far as the Baptism Site is concerned, the Jordan Valley Authority and the Department of Antiquities both share jurisdiction in term of licensing any construction or development. As far as the Site is concerned, the basic principle being followed to date is that any development in the area for tourism and pilgrimage should entail minimum construction or alteration of the landscape and visitor services should be placed well away from the core archaeological area of the site. Beside it is worth mentioning that an agreement was conducted with the Jordan Valley Authority to maintain and keep all the pieces of land surrounding the Baptism Site as farm units.

5.d Existing Plans Related to the Municipality and Region in which the Proposed Property is Located

The Jordan Valley Development Law as Amended by the Amended Law No. (30) for Year 2001.

This is the basic law of 1988 establishing the Jordan Valley Authority as the government agency responsible for the development of the Jordan Valley. See Annex 4.

Cities, Villages and Buildings Planning Law no. 79 of 1966:

This law is the fundamental legislation that controls planning and building activities in all the municipalities of Jordan, including Greater Amman Municipality (GAM). The enforcement of this law lies under the Municipality of Municipal Affairs, MOMA represented by its Minister. Although this law does not address the development of heritage buildings or sites any differently from other developments, it comprises references to the conservation of sites and construction of historical and architectural values in articles 15-19. These articles cover what regional and structural plans should contain. However, in article 23, it does not necessitate that inclusion, and makes it optional by stating that detailed plans may include what is specified in article 19. Considering the existing detailed plans of Jordanian cities and villages in general, these do not comprise sites that are designated as heritage. Therefore, in almost all cases, any new heritage designation will be subject to development rights changes and thus to compensation.

Article 48 from chapter six, specifies that refusal of building licenses due to the damage that construction may cause to antiquates, and natural beauty or their conservation does not qualify for compensation.

Agriculture Law, Temporary Law no. 44 of 2002

This legislation is concerned with the organization of agriculture and animals production resources. It comprises articles that regulate the various aspects of the agricultural sector, such as safety of products and compliance with standards and specifications, health of animals and plants, agricultural and animal products trading and production activates. It is also concerned with protection of trees, forests, grazing lands from damage. The enforcement of this law lies under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture. This law is useful and is relevant to the notion of protection of natural habitat within the Baptism Site. Although heritage protection is not a target of this Law, it has some relevance to the protection of natural heritage, specifically forests (*Haraj* Lands) and indigenous trees. The Law comprises a number of articles, articles 27-36 that include several protection measures.

Antiquities Law no. 21 of 1988

This law is concerned with the protection of artifacts and antiquities of older civilizations. The Law covers aspects related to regulating the responsibility of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, specifically the Department of Antiquities of protecting antiquities. The responsibility ranges between excavations, identifying, designating, protecting and managing antiquities, and antiquates sites, in addition to promoting antiquities and heritage culture.

5.e Property Management Plan

Aims and Objectives of the Management Plan

The Baptism Site Management Plan offers a collective vision and provides a decision-making tool to guide future excavations, conservation and intervention on the site. It is value-driven and through a participatory and interdisciplinary process balances the needs of conservation and the demands of tourism development. Being a collective vision for the management of cultural and natural sites, the management plan provides an anchor to accommodate how different stakeholders relate to the site and to its management.

The objectives of the Management Plan of the Baptism Site are multiple and include:

- Create a shared vision among the staff responsible for the site and external parties who have an interest in the site.
- Protect the fragile layers of the site (natural and archaeological) for future generations.
- Properly research, interpret and present the site in the most suitable approach possible and also in accordance with the updated findings of the scientific community about the Site.
- Orchestrate and facilitate the experience on Site whether for pilgrims or visitors and tourists alike.
- Involve stakeholders (and thereby strengthen relationships, negotiate conflicts, and form alliances that will benefit the site.

- Engage in transparent decision making; that is to make the decision making process open and clear to all.
- End up with a flexible management plan that is also affected by the changing contextual reality of the Site and country and also by available resources for future implementation.

Stakeholder analysis

In accordance with contemporary management planning practice, the process of developing the plan was preceded by a stakeholder analysis which allowed identifying and involving a number of actors, especially from the local community. The following is a review of the various stakeholders that are associated with the Site in one way or another including not only the local communities, but also the staff and workers, visitors, pilgrims, and researchers and scholars who had worked on the Site, to mention a few.

Local Community

The local inhabitants knew about the existence of this important archaeological site before the archaeologists who undertook surveys and excavations in this part of the Jordan Valley. In the 1990s they were able to guide concerned archaeologists to the center of the ancient site east of the Jordan River. The local citizens around the site east of the Jordan River belong to a large tribe known as the „Udwan who have inhabited the area for a long period of time.

The involvement of the local community continued during and after the archaeological excavations. They felt responsible for the protection of the site and considered themselves part of its cultural history. The local citizens have also their own stories related to the site, which contribute to a better understanding of the place. They also participated in the excavations and later in managing and guarding the property. They are also involved in the visitor services and in decision making. Around eighty percent of the staff members of the Baptism Site were employed from the local community. Researchers belonging to this tribe were invited to be part of the team involved in the preparation of the nomination dossier of the property. The local community surrounding the Baptism Site increasingly plays an

important role in the development of the site. They consider themselves to be part of the history of the site and they share in its growth and responsibility.



Fig. 104: Involving the local community in the excavations and conservation of the site

Permanent Staff and Employees

An important group of stakeholders include the permanent staff and employees. While preparing the Management Plan, the team worked in close relation with many of the Staff including the Director of the Commission of the Baptism Site (Eng. Dia’ Madani) and also Assistant Director (Mr. Rustom Mkhjian), originally a civil engineer but trained as an archaeologist at the Department of Antiquates of Jordan and as a conservationist at ICCROM in Rome and also at the Site working hand in hand with many of the researchers and archaeologists who had studied and worked on the Site.

It is extremely important to mention that the strong sense of belonging and dedication to the Site; coupled with enthusiasm and eagerness to learn more about its historic, natural and archaeological layers in addition to unobtrusive measures for its continuous conservation and stabilization; are some of the main characteristics of Mr. Mkhjian. The presence of such individuals in culturally and archaeological significant site is crucial and would be a central reason for the success of any management plan that is put forward.

The Various Christian Denominations

The various Christian denominations together with their priests are considered an important group of stakeholders associated with the site at different levels. Several of these priests are permanent residents within the Site, and also the various Christian communities from Jordan and outside frequently visit the Site as pilgrims or visitors.

Pilgrims

The site had been visited by travelers and pilgrims since even before the Byzantine period. The site is considered an important point on the Christian pilgrimage route that includes Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Madaba and the Baptism Site itself. These pilgrims are important stakeholders and have been as such since antiquity.

Visitors and Tourists

The site is frequented by many visitors and tourists from all over the world, these tourists are also important stakeholders and the nature of their experience on the Site is an important aspect of the Management Plan.

Archaeologists, Historians, and Other Experts

Several archaeologists, historians, and other researchers through the years have worked on the site including Ibrahim, Yaseen, Waheeb, Abu Shmais, Hadidi, Mkhjian, Kanellopoulos to mention a few. Several of these individuals developed special ties to the Site and many of them are considered significant stakeholders as well.

Other stakeholders include tour operators, donor agencies, and hotel operators within the Dead Sea area and beyond.

Framework for Protection and Management / Management Plan Summary and Future Challenges for Site Protection and Management

The general framework for the management plan of the Site consists of a three-tiered process: **1. Identification:** including full documentation of the Site, identification of its various stakeholders, and setting the aims of the management plan; **2. Assessment:** including the assessment of the cultural significance of the site and understanding of its diverse values; assessment of the management contexts (identifying the on-going constraints and opportunities that will affect the conservation and management of the Site); and assessment of the physical condition (assessment of potential environmental and physical threats and challenges and of previous conservation works conducted on the site); **3. Response:** the establishment of policies and development of strategies for the management of the site. The Management Plan attempts to account for the future challenges the Site will face while trying to protect and conserve it.

The following points are important milestones and significant issues that are related to the Management Plan of the Site:

1. A detailed study, documentation, and evaluation of the Site were conducted for the natural layer including its habitat (plant and faunal diversity), for the historical

and archaeological layer; and for the contemporary facilities and interpretation and visitor infrastructure.

2. A study was conducted to identify and understand the diversity of the stakeholders associated with the Site including: the local community; the permanent staff and employees; the various Christian denominations; the pilgrims, visitors, and tourists; and the archaeologists, historians, and other experts who had been affiliated with the Site.

3. A detailed study was conducted to evaluate and understand the various values present and associated with the Site. It is important to understand that the ritual of baptism together with the act of “building” churches are continuous practices at the Site since early Christianity and Byzantine periods, through the Islamic periods, and into the present. So, this is a complex site that is continuously evolving with multiple values including spiritual, historical, archaeological, cultural and informational values.

4. A detailed assessment of the existing and previous conservation of the Site’s historic and archaeological layer addressed the continuous conservation and consolidation works and detailed the state of conservation for the archeological layer. The general conservation approach centered on minimal intervention that is based mainly not on reconstruction, but rather on consolidation and stabilization of the archaeological remains while maintaining a clear visual distinction between the original archaeological material and the new. This serves to protect and conserve the attributes that carry outstanding universal values within the Site, while addressing its vulnerability. This assessment included the evaluation of the three shelters that were added over the fragile mosaic floorings and other archaeological remains (over the North Church in Wadi Al-Kharrar, and over the Basilica and Small Chapel near the Jordan River). When protective shelters were added, the Venice Charter was followed in terms of: 1. Using organic materials; 2. Not causing any adverse effect on the Site; and 3. Reversibility.

5. An assessment of the conservation efforts addressed the natural layer of the Site while addressing as well future risks and threats.

6. An assessment of the interpretation infrastructure available on the Site included paths, interpretative signage, the audio tour, and other Site interpretation mechanisms and services.

7. An assessment of the tourism context included the available tourism facilities and services made available by the Baptism Commission.

8. A detailed assessment of the management context addressed the authorities responsible for the Site (the Baptism Site Commission) and also the existing legal and legislative context through the existence of several laws that support the existence of the Commission and also the protection and conservation of the Site. A study was also conducted to understand the structure of the organization and the details of its staffing levels.

9. In response to the assessment, detailed policies and objectives for general site protection, conservation and management were researched and devised. They included:

- Conservation of the Archaeological Layer:
 - Policies regarding the nature and scope of future investigations, excavations and research. These should include policies regarding site treatment and conservation after excavations.
 - Policies regarding the continuous documentation of the Site. The documentation should address in details the current archeological layer, the associated interpretation and interpretative paths, and also the natural layer of the Site. The documentation should also address future excavations and conservation works.
 - Policies regarding the future conservation approach and philosophy to be adopted at the Site while conserving its archaeological layers.
 - Policies regarding material conservation and especially of the mosaic flooring in situ.
 - Policies regarding appropriate use of the Site and its different parts and zones.
- Conservation of the Natural Layer: One of the main objectives regarding the conservation of the natural layer within the Site is basically not to alter the character of the Area (e.g., naturalness feeling for Wadi Al-

Kharrar) and to maintain the original landscape coverage (e.g. native plants of the reeds, tamarisk and yanbout). To achieve such objectives, several policies would be devised:

- Policies regarding conducting surveys of the natural habitat of the Baptism Site.
 - Policies regarding natural conservation of the habitat and flora and fauna diversity within the Site.
 - Policies regarding future planting and irrigation within the Site.
- Site Interpretation and Presentation:
 - See section 5.i
 - Sustainable Tourism and Site Visitation:



Fig. 105: Yanboot tree



Fig. 106: Trees in Wadi Al-Kharrar

- According to the INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL TOURISM CHARTER (Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance) of 1991, Principle 1 states that since domestic and international tourism is among the foremost vehicles for cultural exchange, conservation should provide responsible and well managed opportunities for members of the host community and visitors to experience and understand that community's heritage and culture at first hand. In order to achieve such objectives, the following policies are applied regarding the Baptism Site:
- Policies regarding the visitor experience within the Site, addressing issues of congestion, routing and feeling.
- Policies regarding promoting the Site as a place of significance to all religions and also as a place of co-existence and tolerance.
- Policies regarding the production of print and other material about the Site.
- Policies regarding the upgrading of tourist facilities within the Site.
- Policies regarding the involvement of the local community within the planning for tourism within the Site and beyond.



Fig. 107: Visitors and pilgrims attending a religious service



Fig. 108: Visitors to the site

- Site Management and Staff Capacity Building:
- The protection of archaeological heritage is a process of continuous dynamic development. Time should therefore be made available to professionals working in this field to enable them to update their knowledge. Postgraduate training programs should be developed with special emphasis on the protection and management of the archaeological heritage.
- In order to achieve such objectives, the following policies would be entertained:
 - Policies regarding the upgrading of the current organizational structure for the Baptism Site.
 - Policies regarding future capacity building and training in areas related to heritage management and conservation.
 - Policies regarding the creation of a platform for dialogue between different individuals working within the Site.

10. Strategies were developed for management, site protection, and conservation and interpretation of the Site addressing:

- Strategies for Site Protection:
 - Regulatory and Contractual Instruments of Site Protection:

- Conducting periodical meetings with the various institutions and governmental bodies to insure that future development of the around the Baptism Site would have no adverse effect on the Site or on its surroundings. These periodical meetings can take place with the Jordan Valley Authority, Jordan Development Zones, Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Department of Antiquities, Ministry of Tourism, Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, Ministry of Agriculture, and several other entities as well.
 - Activate previous contracts and agreements with the Jordan Valley Authority, especially regarding the nature and scope of activities planned for the “Agricultural Units” that are designated around the Site within its Buffer Zone. This activation should address in details Article 22 of the Jordan Valley Authority Law.
 - Create memorandum of agreements between the Baptism Site Commission and the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature to address the conducting of future base line surveys for the natural layer within the Site.
- Strategies for the Conservation of the Archaeological Layer:
- To achieve policies regarding the nature and scope of future investigations, excavations and research, the following strategies should be devised:
 - Insure the hiring of a qualified researcher or an archaeological team to oversee future excavations at the site.
 - Establish a resource library at the Site with books, journal articles, reports and other material addressing the Baptism Site in general and other related topics such as conservation of archeological sites.
 - Encourage collaboration with well-reputed research institutions interested in archeological and historic research, such as the Council for British Research on the Levant (CBRL) and their British Institute in Amman, the French Institute of the Near East (IFPO), the German

Protestant Institute for History and Archaeology, and the American Center for Oriental Research (ACOR), to mention a few.

- To achieve policies regarding the continuous documentation of the Site, the following strategies should be devised:
 - Embark on a project that would strive to document in detail the archeological layer of the Site (through the production of measured drawings and other means).
 - Embark on a project that would periodically document the excavations and conservation activities within the Site.
- To achieve policies regarding the future conservation approach and philosophy to be adopted in the Site while conserving its archaeological layers, the following strategies should be devised:
 - Insure the hiring of qualified architectural and object conservators to work and supervise the conservation works on Site.
 - Organize on-site training (even if special experts need to be brought in to conduct such trainings) in the area of archaeological site conservation in general but also addressing issues related to conservation of the Site’s fragile archaeological remains such as pulverization, exfoliation, salt deposits, atmospheric pollution, and plant deposits to mention only the most recurring problems.
 - Embark on a periodical site consolidation and stabilization project to address the various problems and challenges that the Baptism Site faces in terms of conservation of its archeological layers including its mosaics and small finds.
 - Create links with specialized and well-reputed conservation laboratories and institutions in order to solicit technical help and support in the conservation of the Site such as the Paul Getty Conservation Institute in Los Angeles and the ICCROM in Rome.



Fig. 109: The scanty remains of the mosaic in a room to the south of the basilica



Fig. 110: A wooden retaining wall being built



Fig. 111: Part of the floor seen in the test trench



Fig. 112: The floor of the lower basilica after it had been preserved and protected

- Strategies for the Conservation of the Natural Layer:
 - One of the main objectives regarding the conservation of the natural layer within the Site is basically not to alter the character of the Area (e.g. naturalness feeling for Wadi Al-Kharrar) and to maintain the original

- landscape coverage (e.g. native plants of the reeds, tamarisk and yanbout). The following are the various strategies to be put in place:
- To achieve policies regarding conducting surveys of the natural habitat of the Baptism Site, the following strategies should be devised:
 - Initiate immediately with the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature of Jordan a joint project to conduct a base-line survey of the natural habitat at the Site.
 - Produce special brochures and pamphlets about the indigenous plant and animal habitat within the Site and distribute them among the local community and visitors of the Site.
 - To achieve policies regarding natural conservation of the habitat and flora and fauna diversity within the Site; the following strategies should be devised:
 - Work seriously on declaring the Baptism Site as a nature reserve and as a natural habitat for two distinctive plants: the tamarisk (which, in addition to its environmental value, also has historic meanings and values) and the yanbout (natural bee habitat).
 - Coordinate with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to elicit technical support in terms of nature conservation.
 - - To achieve policies regarding future planting and irrigation within the Site, the following strategies are recommended:
 - Stop and eliminate completely the planting of the Salam tree (*Prosopis*) which prospers at the expenses of the important tamarisk trees on site. The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) published a special report indicating that the *Prosopis* tree is an invasive tree that takes over the habitat of other trees.

- Continue experimenting with water harvesting. Also implement irrigation techniques that are more environmentally conscious.
- Strategies for Site Interpretation and Presentation:
 - See section 5.i
- Strategies for Sustainable Tourism and Site Visitation:
 - Design and experiment with different routing options. Revise bus shuttle and other schedules to avoid congestion during busy seasons.
 - Write a code of ethical conduct and practices for visitors that is related to issues of the relationship between the visitor and this fragile site.
 - Organize events at the Baptism Site on the topic of mutual understanding between Christians and Muslims that dwell on the commonalities between the two faiths.
 - Produce printed material in the form of brochures about peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Christians.
 - Upgrade the brochures and other print material associated with the Site and the Commission.
 - Conduct periodical evaluation of the performance of such facilities (e.g., public toilets).
 - Upgrade and enhance maintenance procedures of various facilities on Site such as shaded areas and panoramic lookouts.
 - Engage the local community more in various daily activities within the Site that are more related to management procedures and interaction with the Site’s history, archaeology and visitors.
 - Embark on a project to document the intangible heritage within the area and incorporate local narratives within the overall interpretation scheme.
- Strategies for Site Management and Staff Capacity Building:
 - One very important objective is still to upgrade and develop the capacity building programs that would strive to improve the management of the Site. The following are the various strategies to be put in place preceded by their related policies:

- To achieve policies regarding the upgrading of the current Organizational Structure for the Baptism Site, the following strategies should be devised:
 - Add a Site Conservation, Interpretation, and Management Unit: this unit should strive to hire the following professionals who will be responsible for achieving the strategies related to site conservation, material conservation, and interpretation and presentation of the Site to the general public:
 - a. A conservation specialist (archaeologist or architect) with ample experience in conservation within archaeological sites.
 - b. An archaeological team that would work on the upgrading of future research within the areas of archaeology and history.
 - c. A material conservationist with ample experience in the conservation of mosaics and mosaic flooring.
 - d. A site interpretation and presentation expert, who would work on developing the strategies for the future interpretation of the Site.
 - Add a Heritage and Education Tourism Unit: this unit should strive to hire the following professionals who will be responsible for achieving the strategies that are related to site the promotion of heritage and education tourism within the Site and beyond within the Dead Sea Area and the *Ghor*:
 - a. A Museum Curator, this person would work closely with the interpretation expert and would work to develop the nature of interpretation, within the Museum in addition to address issues of artifact acquisition, renovation, interpretation, and display.
 - b. A heritage tourism specialist, this individual would work to promote heritage and education tourism within the Site and within the region; thus linking the Site to other archaeological sites within the Jordan Valley.

c. A data graphics and Info-graphics specialist, this person will work closely with several individuals working on museum duration, interpretation on Site, and publication of material about the Site.

Existing and Proposed Organizational Structure for Baptism Site Commission

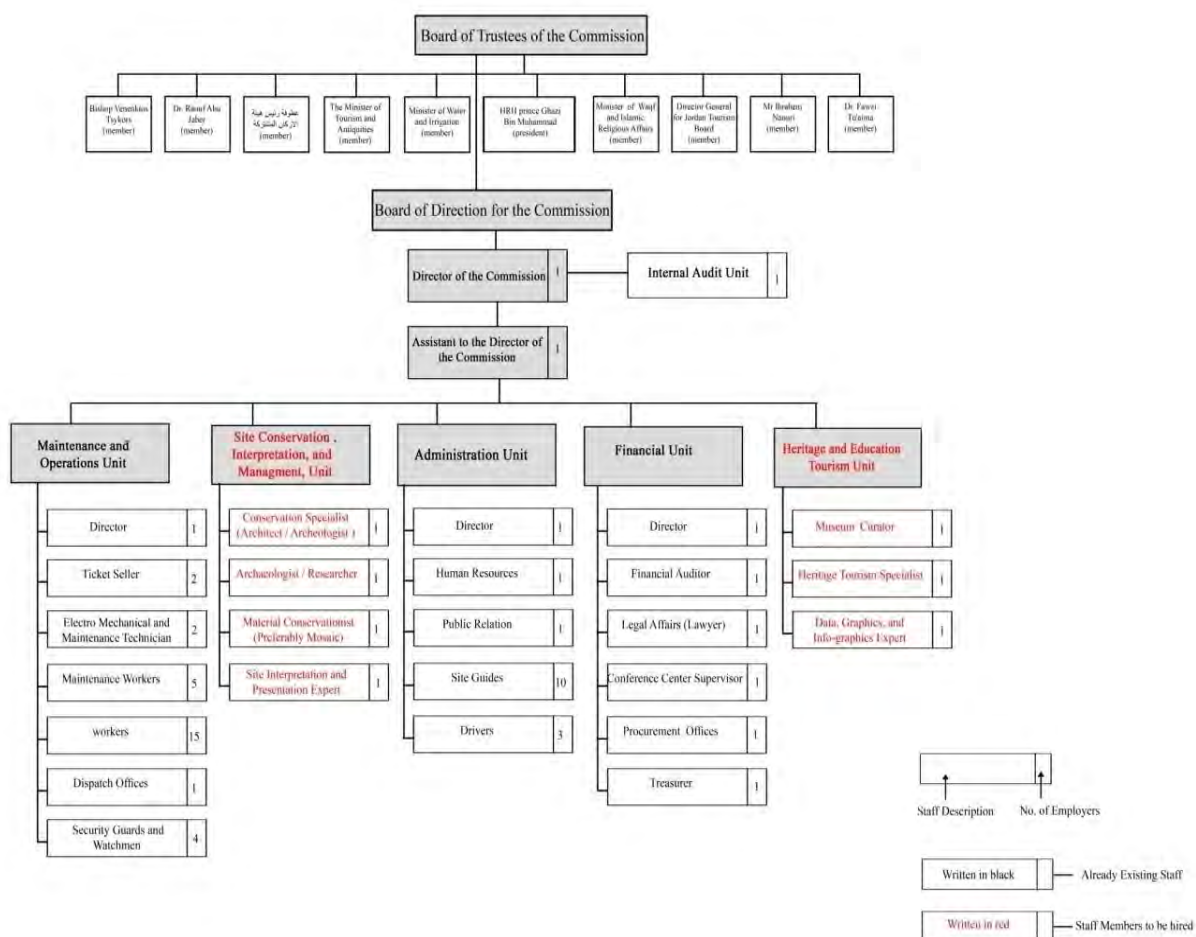


Fig. 113: Existing and proposed organizational structure for the Baptism Site Commission

- To achieve policies regarding future capacity building and training in several areas related to heritage management and conservation; the following strategies should be devised:

- Develop within the Commission an allocated fund that would enable staff members at the Baptism Site to attend special courses in related fields of tourism, heritage conservation and documentation.
- Hold periodic meetings between different staff members involved in, for example, the conservation of the Site (including conservation architect, maintenance technicians and workers) and engage in a discussion about a particular issue pertaining to the conservation of the Site.



Fig. 114: Assistant to the director Engineer Rustom Mkhjian explaining the Western Church



Fig. 115: The cave chapel on Elijah's Hill, with the reconstructed pool above it, and the water canalization system leading away from it, believed by some early pilgrims to be the cave where John the Baptist lived



Fig. 116: Marble floor remains of the lower basilica

5.f Sources and Levels of Finance

Revenues come from different sources:

- Service Charges: a service charge to visit the site is required to compensate for the services provided by the Commission such as local guides, shuttle buses, and other, such as expenses for the desalination plant that provides fresh water for baptism.
- Bank Interest: For example, the interest in Banks amounted to about 138500 JDs in the year 2010.
- Investments: such as revenues from rents and other investments.

The funds are spent on maintenance and operations, salaries, social security, administrative expenses, constructions, equipments, furniture, and other items. The figure below illustrates these sources of revenues and expenses for the years 2009, 2010, and 2011 in Jordan Dinars.

No.	Type of Revenue	2009	2010	2011
1	Service charges	827000	1021000	910000
2	Bank Interest	112000	140000	66000
3	Investments	73000	81000	54000
	Total	1012000	1242000	1030000

Fig. 117: Annual budget for Baptism Site 2009, 2010 and 2011 (Revenue)

5.g Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

Staff at the Baptism site will receive appropriate training in conservation and management techniques, through their participation in courses provided by ICCROM, as described in the site’s management plan. Their present level of expertise derives from on-the-job training received during the preparation of the site’s management plan, and with the implementation of conservation projects described in chapters 2 and 4, taking advantage of the presence of national and foreign experts assisting with these projects. Experts from the Department of Antiquities of Jordan and from the Madaba Mosaic School are also at hand in case of emergency work to be conducted on site. As already mentioned, capacity building is a priority action in implementing the site management plan, and this will be carried both on site and by sending selected staff to attend courses in Jordan and in the region to acquire the necessary skills.

5.h Visitor Facilities and Infrastructure

After excavation and conservation, the site was developed in order to allow visitors and pilgrims to access it without negative impacts. Particular attention was given to locating the main visitor facilities away from the archaeological area, and to minimizing the aspect and size of paths, shaded areas, and information points, in order to leave the site in its pristine environment. Following is a short description of these facilities.

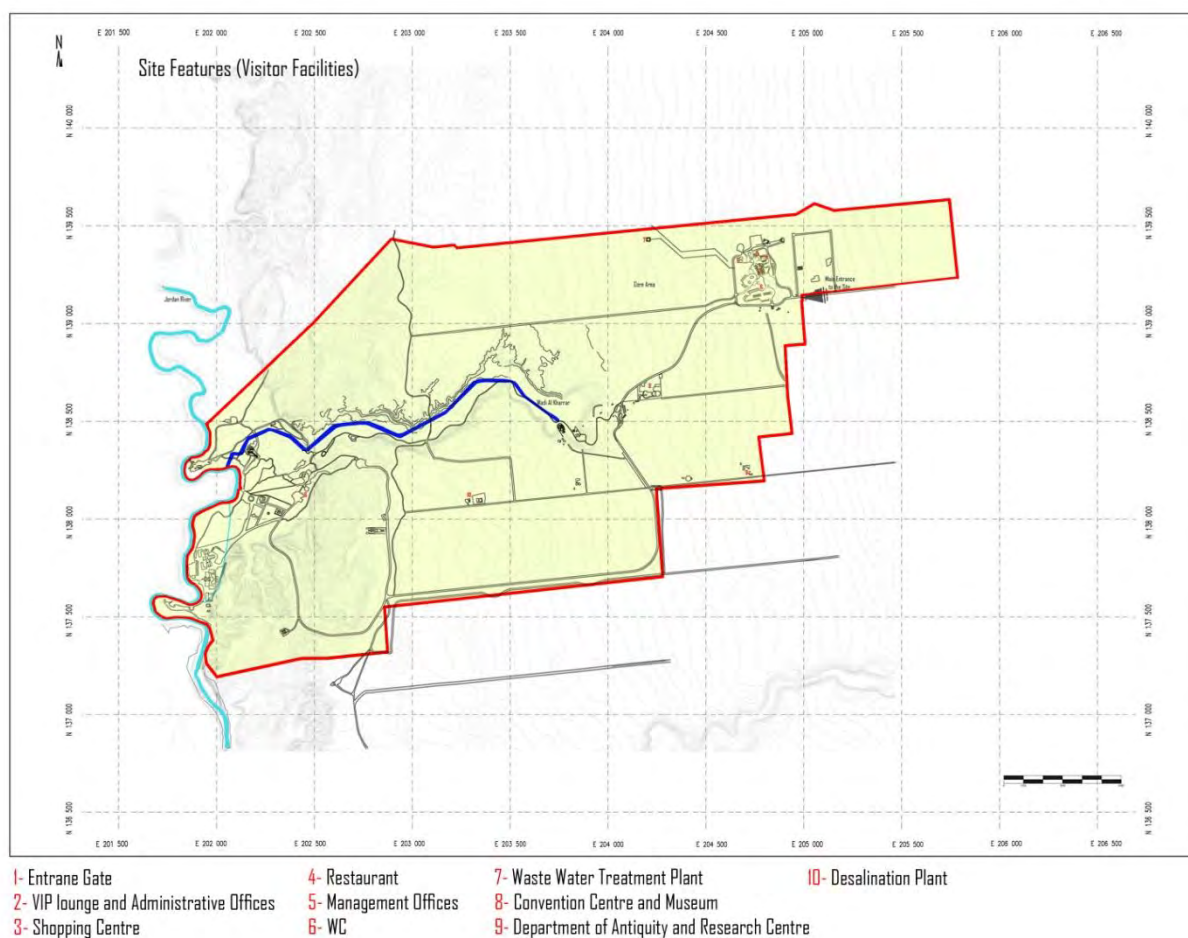


Fig. 118: Site features (contemporary facilities layer)

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

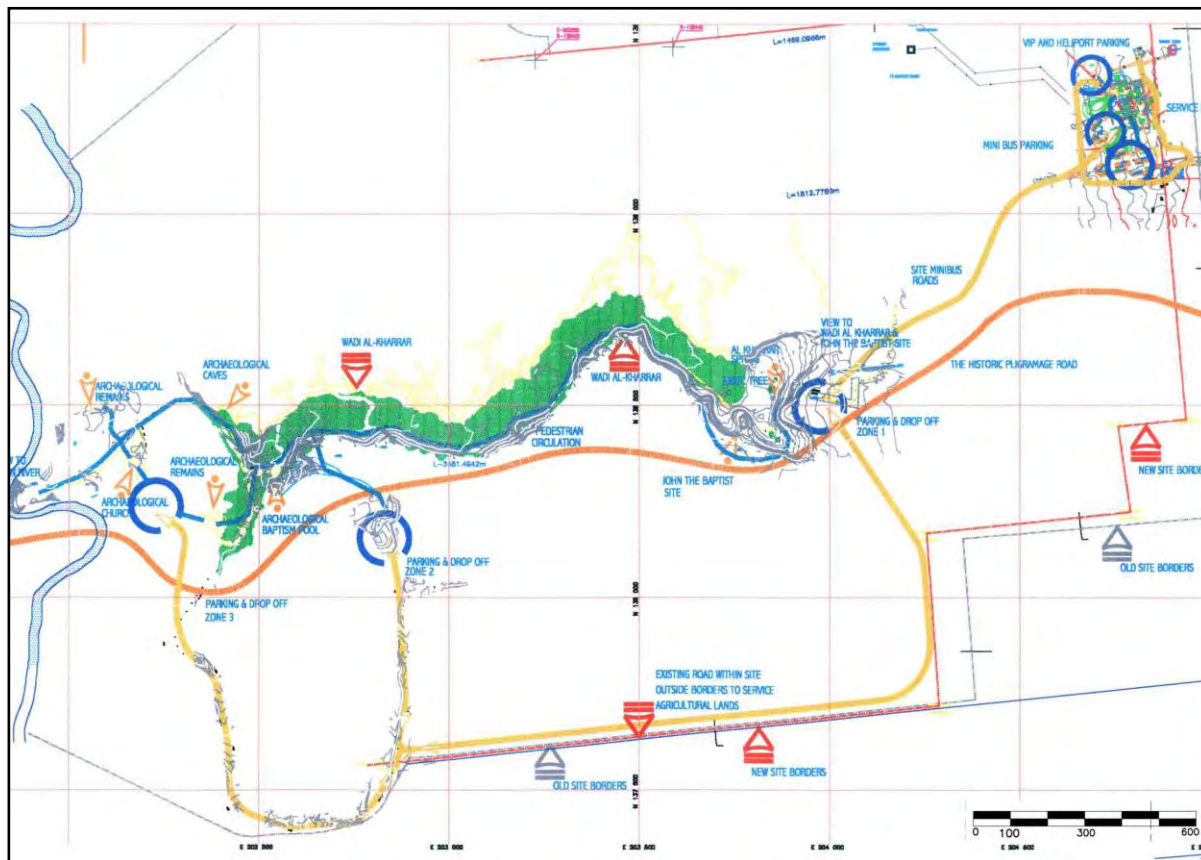


Fig. 119: The master plan



Fig. 120: The Baptism Site

Paths and Panoramic Lookouts, Outdoor Signage and Shaded Areas

In order to facilitate a smooth experience for the visitors and pilgrims, several unobtrusive pedestrian trails have been incorporated into the Site. They were designed with minimal intervention in mind and are composed of compressed earth and simple wooden railings when needed.

Belvederes (Panoramic Lookouts) 1, 2, 3

Several panoramic lookouts were also incorporated overlooking the Jordan River. Their design is simple and unobtrusive and at the same time, they provide shade for visitors and pilgrims in addition to other users of the Site.

Other Shaded Areas and Outdoor Signage

Along the pedestrian paths every 200 meters or so one can find simple wooden structures with roofs made of palms and reeds. They provide rest stops for the visitors and a relief from the hot sun. Several interpretative outdoor signs have also been provided to explain the various significant historic and archaeological layers of the Site. In addition, along the routes of the visitor, an audio tour is possible with certain stop points marked on site with audio explanations.



Fig. 121: Trails for visitors

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

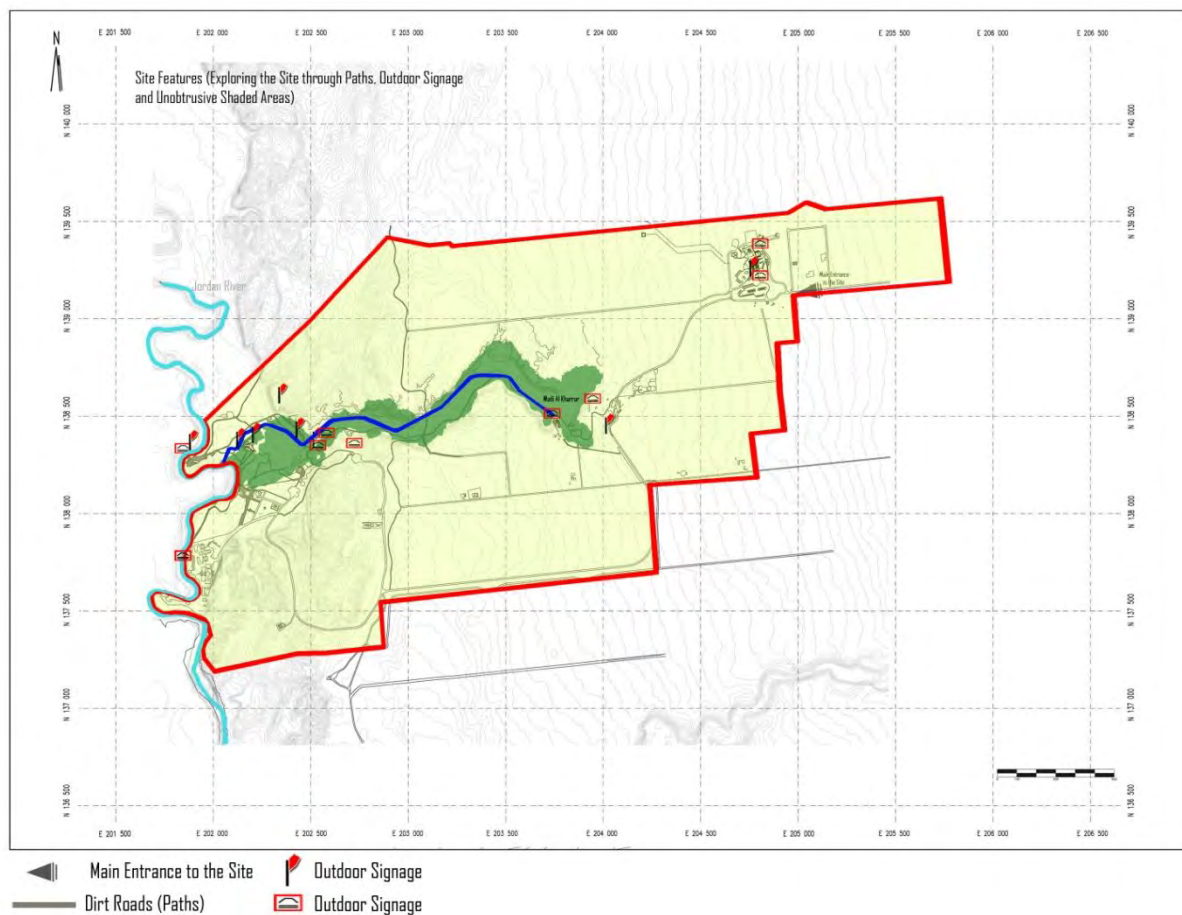


Fig. 122: Site features (paths, outdoor signage and unobtrusive shaded areas)



Fig. 123: Pedestrian trails for visitors



Fig. 124: A rest area along the interpretive path down Wadi Al-Kharrar in the direction of the Jordan River



Fig.125: Panoramic lookouts and shaded areas



Fig. 126: The special trail for the handicapped



Fig. 127: The trail for visitors



Fig. 128: The trail around the basilica



Fig. 129: A shelter

Roads

In certain selected areas of the Site, and away from the core archaeological area, certain asphalted roads have been constructed to facilitate the movement of visitors and pilgrims. The roads are very simple in their design and only provide access to certain areas away from the archaeological structures. Two golf carts that are battery charged provide access to areas where the roads do not reach. In order to protect the character and ambiance of the Site, only the golf carts can be used on parts of the pedestrian trails in cases of elderly or physically challenged visitors who are not able to walk the whole distance.

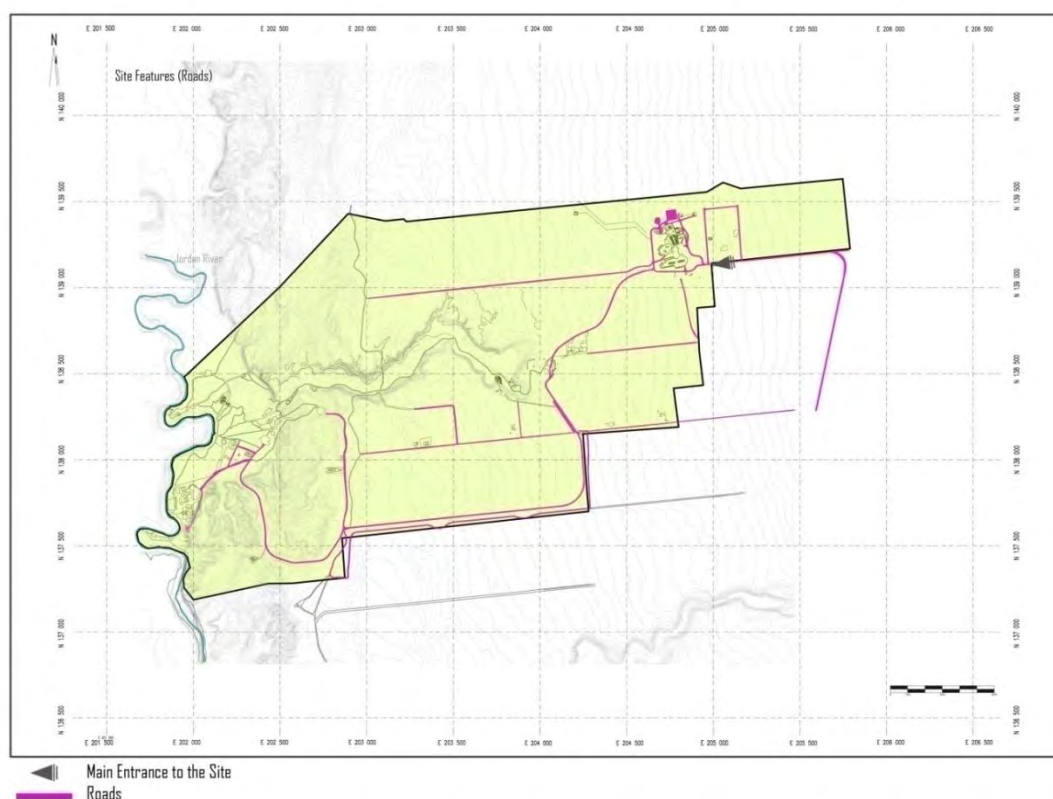


Fig. 130: Roads layer



Fig. 131: Road within the site

Contemporary Visitor Facilities

The following images and maps illustrate the various visitor and infrastructure facilities that exist on site. They include:

- The Main Entrance Gates
- The Store and maintenance area
- The VIP Lounge and Administrative Offices
- The Convention Center
- The Shops for souvenirs and other site-related items
- The Management Offices
- The Department of Antiquities and Research Center
- Several WC Facilities present in various locations within the site.
- The Visitor Center and Museum
- Various Infrastructure Facilities including the Service Centre, Desalination Plant, and Waste and Water Treatment Plant.
- Parking for cars and coach buses.

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

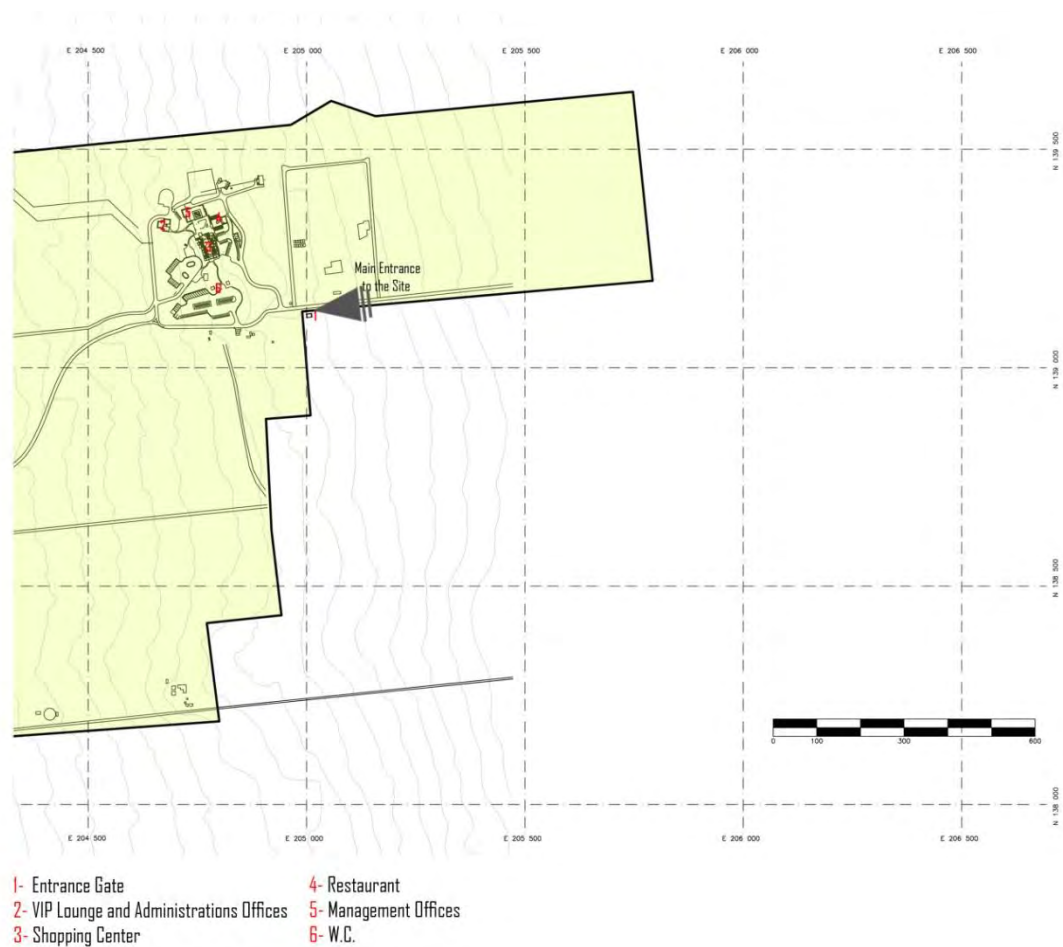


Fig. 132: Site features (visitor center)



Fig. 133: The road to the entrance gate



Fig. 134: Fencing at the boundary of the site



Fig. 135: Entrance gates



Fig. 136: The main entrance



Fig. 137: Shaded parking



Fig. 138: The ticket area



Fig. 139: A rest shelter



Fig. 140: The VIP building and management offices



Fig. 141: The plaza administration and management offices



Fig. 142: Al Souk (souvenir shops)



Fig. 143: The store and maintenance area



Fig. 144: The desalination plant



Fig. 145: Filtered cold water

Contemporary Religious and Cultural Facilities (Contemporary Churches)

The Baptism Site had been significant for various religions for ages. The ritual of baptism has been practiced on the site since the early Christian and Byzantine periods and continued to be practiced all through Muslim periods and has been revived in recent years. The site represents a location associated with religious tolerance where different religions and religious denominations of the Christian faith have come together to celebrate their diversity and provide new churches to serve their different constituencies. Furthermore, these contemporary religious structures, with their diverse architectural styles, not only represent the diversity of Christians around the world, but also relieve the pressure on the fragile archaeological layer of the Site, which is thereby protected from massive visitations and religious celebrations. Such celebrations (e.g., Baptism, Epiphany and others) are held in the premises of the contemporary churches. All of these factors rationalize the existence of this contemporary religious layer.

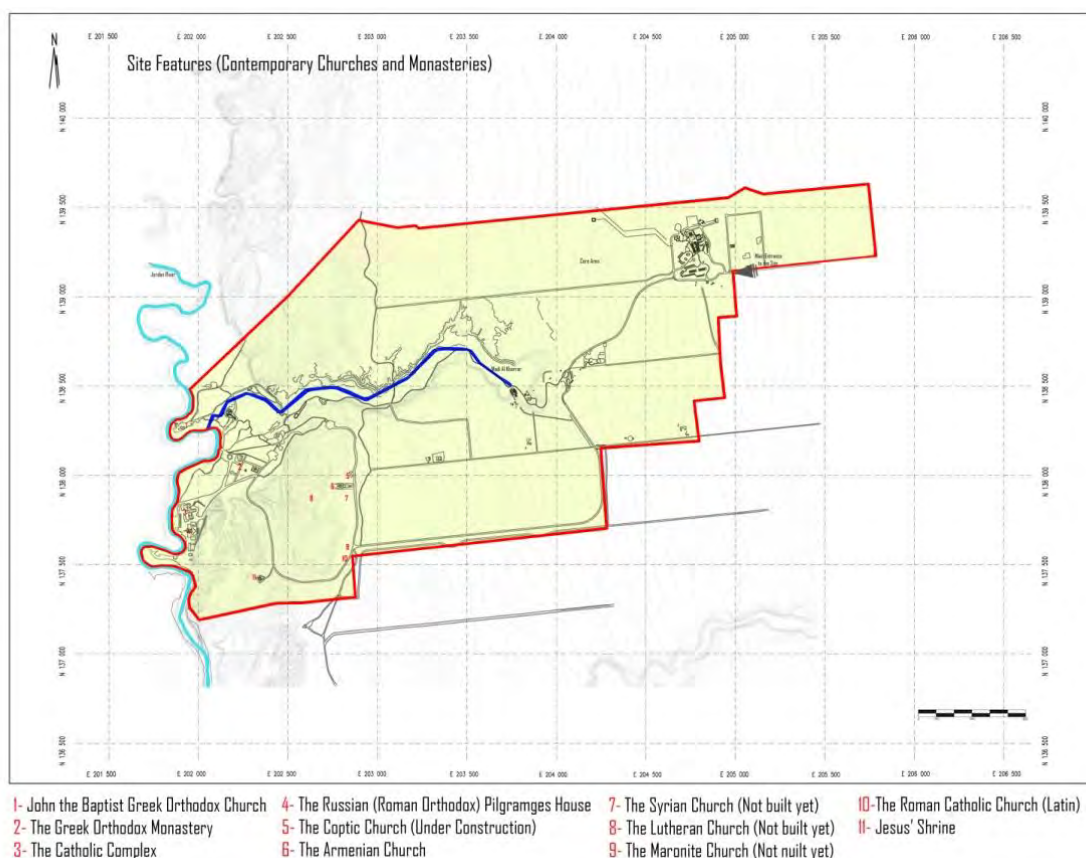


Fig. 146: Site Features (contemporary churches and monasteries layer)

The existing and planned contemporary churches include:

- The Greek Orthodox Complex and Greek Orthodox Church
- The Catholic Complex
- The Russian (Roman Orthodox) Pilgrimage House
- The Coptic Church (Under Construction)
- The Lutheran Church (Not Built Yet)
- The Armenian Church
- The Syrian Church
- The Maronite Church (Not Built Yet)
- Jesus’ Shrine
- The Roman Catholic Church (Latin)

One of the aims of the Baptism Site Commission is to revive the property as a pilgrimage site alongside other sites in Jordan: Mount Nebo, Madaba, Umm Al-Rasas and Mukawer. For that purpose, the Board of Trustees of the site donated specific pieces of land outside the property for building new churches, twelve in total for all denominations and faiths, including guest houses and residences for monks and priests. The Catholic Church will have the largest piece of land (3 ha). This will be considered as waqf (endowment) land for charitable purposes, which cannot be sold or used for other purposes. The cost of construction and other facilities will be met by each concerned denomination. This is with the hope of making the site easily accessible and convenient for pilgrims from all over the world. The Commission has also allocated 35 ha of land just outside the entrance of the site for a Baptism Site Village to accommodate as many other visitors as possible, although construction has not yet begun.

Since the Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) has reopened for visitors, numerous religious events have been held there. One major annual event is the celebration of Epiphany, which was held for the first time at the start of the third millennium, on 6 January 2000, when over 25,000 believers from Jordan and the neighboring Arab countries came for the occasion. Each year hundreds of

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

thousands of visitors come to the Baptism Site (see the table below), and thousands of Christians are baptized at the site. Among other activities, three Christian-Muslim interfaith conferences have been held at the site since the opening of the Baptism Site Conference Center in 2011.

Visitors to the Baptism site for the last seven years (note: these numbers do not include religious celebrations or official visitors, around 30,000 participants annually)

Year	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2007	4500	5300	7200	13000	8300	5300	5700	7200	7700	12300	9600	6800	92900
2008	7573	8642	15771	17253	15466	7405	6790	9303	10824	19550	14424	8178	141179
2009	7485	6191	12540	17682	13791	7357	7121	9129	11681	19169	13864	8264	134274
2010	8899	8487	15205	22654	17656	9040	8857	8712	12161	23591	16892	8519	160673
2011	9254	8060	10871	13179	8260	5248	5471	4482	6908	10566	9894	5337	92193
2012	5470	5270	8886	12362	9066	6047	4919	5787	6089	11738	8174	4815	88623
2013	5043	5504	9296	11654	8563	5209	4380	6663	5842	11084	8452	4649	86339



Fig. 147: Baptism Site Plan: Archaeological Sites and Sites Allocated for New Churches

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

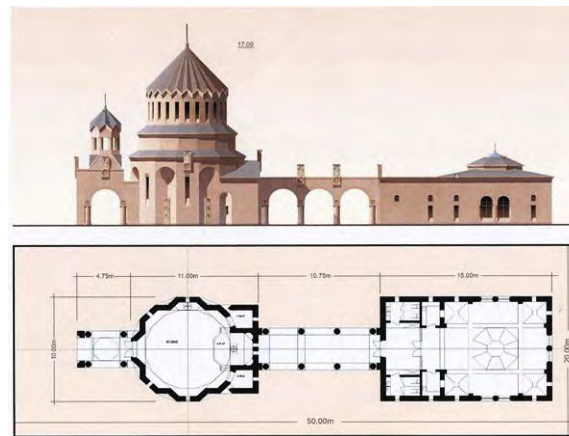


Fig. 148: The Armenian church

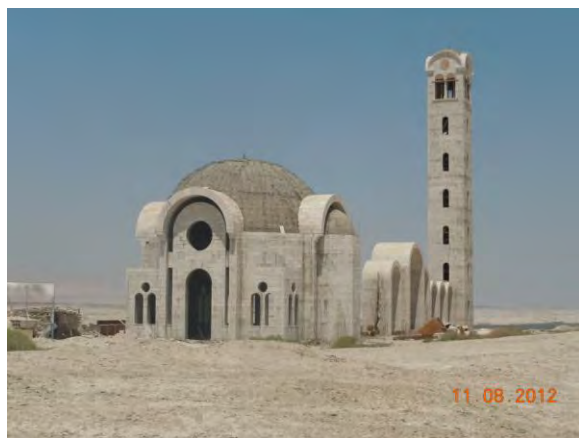


Fig. 149: The Coptic church



Fig. 150: The Catholic church



Fig. 151: Russian pilgrimage house



Fig. 152: View from the west side of the Jordan River

5.i Policies and Programmes Related to the Presentation and Promotion of the Property

Site Interpretation and Presentation-Related Policies and Objectives

Interpretation within the Site should address different realities associated with the Site (e.g., the archaeological and natural layers and the local narratives and anecdotes to show the different perspectives of the Site). The content developed for the interpretation should be reached and presented according to the agreed scholarly view and should make accessible to the general public the multi layers of significance of the Site. The objectives, according to the *ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites* should be to:

1. Facilitate understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage sites and foster public awareness and engagement in the need for their protection and conservation.
2. Communicate the meaning of cultural heritage sites to a range of audiences through careful, documented recognition of significance, through accepted scientific and scholarly methods as well as from living cultural traditions.
3. Safeguard the tangible and intangible values of cultural heritage sites in their natural and cultural settings and social contexts.
4. Respect the authenticity of cultural heritage sites, by communicating the significance of their historic fabric and cultural values and protecting them from the adverse impact of intrusive interpretive infrastructure, visitor pressure, inaccurate or inappropriate interpretation.
5. Contribute to the sustainable conservation of cultural heritage sites, through promoting public understanding of, and participation in ongoing conservation efforts, ensuring long-term maintenance of the interpretive infrastructure and regular review of its interpretive contents.
6. Encourage inclusiveness in the interpretation of cultural heritage sites, by facilitating the involvement of stakeholders and associated communities in the development and implementation of interpretive programs.

7. Develop technical and professional guidelines for heritage interpretation and presentation, including technologies, research, and training. Such guidelines must be appropriate and sustainable in their social contexts.

In order to achieve such objectives, several policies should be devised:

- Policies regarding the development of scholarly content for the interpretation taking into consideration the regional context and the associations between the Baptism Site and other sites within the area.
- Policies regarding the documentation of the interpretative paths, and their relationship to the archaeological layer.
- Policies regarding the upgrading of the interpretative tools.



Fig. 153: Part of the site interpretation panels made of local stone. This one in particular explains the Byzantine and later churches by the Jordan River



Fig. 154: Audio tour (point no. 8)

Strategies

Site Interpretation and Presentation-Related Strategies

Due to the size of the site and to its integrative and integrated whole, the following interpretation strategies would be adopted and implemented within a 5-year plan to achieve a better future management of the site. The main objective is to gain a deeper understanding of the Site and make its significance accessible to the public. The following are the various strategies to be put in place preceded by their related objectives:

- To achieve policies regarding the development of scholarly content for the interpretation taking into consideration the regional context and the associations between the Baptism Site and other sites within the area, the following strategies should be devised:

1. Insure the hiring of a qualified heritage interpretation and presentation expert.
2. Embark on a project to review and upgrade the content and then interpretation material for the Site.

- To achieve policies regarding the documentation of the interpretative paths, and their relationship to the archaeological layer, the following strategies should be devised:

1. Embark on a project that would work to documenting the interpretive paths of various types within the Site and their relationship to the archaeological layer.
- To achieve policies regarding the upgrading of the various interpretative tools once the content had already been developed and upgraded, the following strategies should be devised:
1. Improve and research options for routing and trails all through the Site.
 2. Upgrade the Audio tour based on the development of the new content for the interpretation. This might entail the introduction of more audio points
 3. Upgrade the interpretative signage on site in the light of the development of the upgraded interpretation content.
 4. Upgrade the current Museum and integrate it with a Visitor Center. The experience within the visitor center has to complement the experience within the Site. More work and attention should be made in the Museum to illustrate (within the content through maps, illustrations, and other types of illustrative material) the link between the Baptism Site and region in terms of history, association, archaeology, and pilgrimage trails.
 5. The publication of a comprehensive monograph on the Site; in addition to the publication of a more comprehensive brochure for tourists and visitors that attempts to illustrate the multi layers of significance for the Site.

5.j Staffing levels and expertise

As it has been mentioned in section 5.g, staff needs to grow expertise in the fields of conservation and management. The present staff includes two engineers, administration supporting team, conservation specialists, technical workers, electricians, auditors, accountants, local guides, guards, and labourers.

Section 6. Monitoring

6.a Key Indicators for Measuring State of Conservation

Monitoring, Periodical Review and Revision

Presently, there are no specific policies for site monitoring. The site management implementation plan has incorporated provisions for monitoring and periodic review.

The following mechanisms are suggested to conduct monitoring and periodic review on the Site:

- Mechanisms for Monitoring and Periodic Review related to Site Conservation and the Physical Condition of the Archaeological Layer in addition to the state of the natural layer within the Site. Monitoring address each of the elements identified in the assessment part of the Management Plan. For example, monitoring of the state of conservation of the archaeological layer within the Site should address issues related to:

- Salt deposits
- Pulverization
- Exfoliation
- Detachment
- Atmospheric Pollution; and other issues that were assessed during the assessment phase of the Management Plan.

The data inferred from the monitoring of the state of conservation for the Site can be inputted into periodic reports and tables that identify key indicators during the monitoring process.

Such mechanisms could be based on:

1. Periodic assessment (visual, other) for the state of conservation of the archaeological layer on site.

2. Periodic testing of samples from the Site to evaluate their physical condition and state of conservation.
3. Periodic inventories for conservation measures on Site.
4. State of the Environment Reporting: conduct thematic surveys concentrating on the number, expansion, extinction, and characterization of different species (fauna and flora) with emphasis on the unique plant and animal habitats of the Site.
5. Other

- Mechanisms for Monitoring and Periodical Reporting related to the Quality of the Visitor Experience on the Site: such mechanisms could be based on:

1. The Participant Observation Method: This approach will monitor and investigate in a non-biased methodology the nature and quality of the tourist experience on Site. This is done by a staff member (or other person) pretending to be a tourist and that follows the visitors around and documenting details of their experience such as routing, problems with congestions, bottle necks, lack of shaded areas, other. This person, and through this participant observation approach will identify the challenges and problems that are faced by the tourists on site.
2. Periodic Visitor Satisfaction Surveys: eliciting tourists and visitors opinion on the level of services and quality of the experience within the Site.

Data management for such period reporting and monitoring is very important. Such periodical tables, review reports, and surveys should be electronically filed in order to be able to make comparisons and evaluations in the future.

The records will be kept in the Site Conservation, Interpretation, and Management Unit at the Baptism Site.

6.b Administrative Arrangements for Monitoring Property

The Baptism Site Commission through its staff will provide monitoring of the property in cooperation with the Department of Antiquities of Jordan. The By-Law of the Commission (identified earlier) provides the legal and legislative protection

framework through which the Commission is responsible for the protection and management of the Site.

The Baptism Site Commission

The Management Office of the Baptism Site:

E-mail: baptismsite@orange.jo

Telephone: +962 5 35 90360

Commission Director

Engineer Dia Al Madani

Information: Cellphone: +962 77 753 1011

Assistant Director and Director of Archaeological Works:

Engineer Rustum Mkhjian

E-mail: rustom_baptismsite@hotmail.com

Telephone: +962 77 784 2300

6.c Results of Previous Reporting Exercises

Although the Commission in cooperation with the Department of Antiquities conducts periodic assessment and conservation works on the archaeological remains of the site, the first full scale report prepared on the state of conservation of the property was completed by Mr. Franco Sciorilli (State of Conservation of the Archaeological Layer / summer of 2012). This report has been included in the management plan for the site. Other smaller-scaled individual excavations and conservation reports prepared each season by the archaeologists and engineers for the years 1998 to 2011 are published in the *Annual Report of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* or found on file at the Department of Antiquities of Jordan.

Once the management plan is implemented, the Commission will conduct periodic reporting annually on the state of conservation of the site’s natural and cultural components, in collaboration with the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, Jordanian universities and the Madaba Mosaics institute. These reports will be based on the monitoring mechanisms and periodic reviews conducted on Site that will address various conservation issues.

Section 7: Documentation

7.a Photographs and Audiovisual Image Inventory and Authorization Form

Figure number	Page	Date	Photographer	Copyright owner	Contact	Rights Cession
7	17	NA	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities	Baptism Site Commission	ok
8	18	NA	Royal Geographic Center	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
10	20	1932	Father Abel	Review Biblique	Baptism Site Commission	ok
11	21	NA	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities	ok
13	22	2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Baptism Site Commission	ok
14	23	2008	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities	Baptism Site Commission	ok
15	23	2008	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities	Baptism Site Commission	ok
16	25	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
17	26	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
18	27	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
19	28	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
20	29	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
21	30	2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Baptism Site Commission	ok
22	31	2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Baptism Site Commission	ok
23	31	2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Baptism Site Commission	ok
24	32	2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Baptism Site Commission	ok
25	33	2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Baptism Site Commission	ok
26	34	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
30	38	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
31	38	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
32	40	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
33	41	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
34	42	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
35	44	2003	after Mkhjian and Kanellopoulos 2003	after Mkhjian and Kanellopoulos 2003	after Mkhjian and Kanellopoulos 2003	ok
36	44	2003	after Mkhjian and Kanellopoulos 2003	after Mkhjian and Kanellopoulos 2003	after Mkhjian and Kanellopoulos 2003	ok

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

37	44	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
38	46	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
39	46	2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Baptism Site Commission	ok
40	47	2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Baptism Site Commission	ok
41	48	2010	after Waheeb, M. 2008	after Waheeb, M. 2008	after Waheeb, M. 2008	ok
42	50	2002	After Abu Shmeis and Waheeb 2002	After Abu Shmeis and Waheeb 2002	After Abu Shmeis and Waheeb 2002	ok
43	51	2002	After Abu Shmeis and Waheeb 2002	After Abu Shmeis and Waheeb 2002	After Abu Shmeis and Waheeb 2002	ok
44	52	2002	After Abu Shmeis and Waheeb 2002	After Abu Shmeis and Waheeb 2002	After Abu Shmeis and Waheeb 2002	ok
45	52	2002	After Abu Shmeis and Waheeb 2002	After Abu Shmeis and Waheeb 2002	After Abu Shmeis and Waheeb 2002	ok
47	54	2009	after Nabulsi 2009	after Nabulsi 2009	after Nabulsi 2009	ok
48	55	2009	after Nabulsi 2009	after Nabulsi 2009	after Nabulsi 2009	ok
49	55	2009	after Nabulsi 2009	after Nabulsi 2009	after Nabulsi 2009	ok
50	56	2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Baptism Site Commission	ok
51	57	2009	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
52	58	2009	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
53	59	2009	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
54	61	2009	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
55	62	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
56	63	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
57	65	2010	after Waheeb, M. 2011	after Waheeb, M. 2011	after Waheeb, M. 2011	ok
58	66	2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Baptism Site Commission	ok
59	67	2009	Allan, Yousef	Allan, Yousef	Allan, Yousef	ok
60	68	2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Baptism Site Commission	ok
61	68	2000	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
63	70	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
64	73	2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Baptism Site Commission	ok
65	75	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
66	76	2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Reuben and Taylor 2010	Baptism Site Commission	ok
67	76	2008	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

68	77	2008	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
71	104	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
72	105	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
73	105	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
74	106	2000	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
75	106	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
76	107	2012	Sciorilli, Franco	Sciorilli, Franco	Sciorilli, Franco	ok
77	108	2012	Sciorilli, Franco	Sciorilli, Franco	Sciorilli, Franco	ok
78	109	2012	Sciorilli, Franco	Sciorilli, Franco	Sciorilli, Franco	ok
79	110	2011	after Waheeb, M. 2011	after Waheeb, M. 2011	after Waheeb, M. 2011	ok
80	110	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
81	111	1999	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
82	111	1999	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
83	112	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
84	112	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
85	113	2002	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
86	113	2002	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
87	114	2002	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
88	114	2002	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
89	120	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
90	121	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
91	121	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
92	122	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
93	122	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
94	123	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
95	124	2010	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
96	125	2008	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
97	127	2010	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
98	128	2010	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
99	129	2010	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
103	136	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
104	141	2008	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
105	146	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
106	146	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
107	147	2002	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
108	148	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
109	151	2008	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

110	151	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
111	152	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
112	152	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
113	156	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
114	157	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
115	157	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
116	158	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
117	159	2012	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
121	162	2012	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
123	163	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
124	164	2011	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
125	164	2011	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
126	165	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
127	165	1991	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
128	166	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
129	166	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
131	168	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
133	169	2006	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
134	170	2010	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
135	170	2000	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
136	170	2012	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
137	171	2012	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
138	171	2008	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
139	171	2010	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
140	172	2012	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
141	172	2012	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
142	173	2012	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
143	173	2012	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
144	174	2012	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	Baptism Site Commission	ok
145	174	2012	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
148	179	2012	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
149	179	2012	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
150	179	2012	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
151	180	2012	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
152	180	2012	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	Mkhjian, Rustom	ok
153	182	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok
154	183	2012	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	Daher, Rami	ok

7.b Texts Relating to Protective Designation, Copies of Property Management Plans or Documented Management Systems and Extracts of Other Plans Relevant to the Property

Please consult the following annexes:

2: Letters of Authentication

3: The Statute of the Baptism Site Commission and Amendments Number 48 for 2001.

4: Jordan Valley Development Law

6: Bethany Beyond the Jordan (Al-Maghtas) Site Management Plan

7.c Form and Date of the Most Recent Records or Inventory of Property

The most recent documentation of the state of the Baptism Site, “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas) was conducted in the summer of 2012 by Mr. Franco Sciorilli (State of Conservation of the Archaeological Layer) during the course of the preparation of this nomination file.

This report has been included in the management plan for the site.

7.d Address Where Inventories, Records and Archives are Held

I- The Baptism Site Commission

P.O. Box (56)

South Shunah / 18110

Jordan

Telephone: + 962 5 3590360

Fax: + 962 5 3590361

E-mail: baptismsite@orange.jo

II- The Department of Antiquities

P.O. Box (88)

Amman 1118

Jordan

Telephone: + 962 6 4644336

Fax: + 962 6 4615848

[E-mail: info@doa.gov.jo](mailto:info@doa.gov.jo)

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Section 8: Contact Information of Responsible Authorities

8.a Preparer

The Baptism Site Commission

P.O. Box (56)

South Shunah / 18110

Jordan

Telephone: + 962 5 3590360

Fax: + 962 5 3590361

E-mail: baptismsite@orange.jo

Rustom_baptismsite@hotmail.com

COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE NOMINATION:

Name	Phone Number	Address
Dr.Monther Jamhawi	Mobile +962 795662533	P.O. Box 88 Al Atrash St. / Jabal Amman Amman, Jordan Tel.: +962 6 4644320 Fax.: +962 6 4644714 Email: mjamhawi@doa.jo
Dr.Wasfi Al Kailani	Mobile +962 779181822	Email: wkailani@rhc.jo
Prof. Moawiyah M. Ibrahim	Mobile +962 795677215	P.O.Box 815584 11180 Jabal Amman Amman Jordan Home Tel +962 6 5821855 Mobile +962 79 5677215 Fax +962-6-58634468. Email: Moawiyah@rocketmail.com
Dr. Rami Dhaher	Mobile: +962 796813999	Email: r.daher@turath.jo

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

Dr. Ghazi Bisheh	Mobile: +962 795673933	Email: gbisheh@hotmail.com
Dr. Robert Schick	Mobile: +962 798909618	American Center of Oriental Research, Amman Email: schickrobert@hotmail.com
Mr. Dia Al-Madani	Mobile: +962 777531011	Email: baptismsite@orange.jo
Eng. Rustom Mkhjian	Mobile: +962 777842300	Email: rustom_baptismsite@hotmail.com
Abdullah Abbadi	Mobile: +962 799075530 +962 777422785	Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Email: Abbadi1960@yahoo.com
Sahar Barari	Mobile: +962 777512921	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities Email: Saharbarari@yahoo.com
Jihad Haroun	Mobile: +962 775682600	Department of Antiquities Email: Jnia4@yahoo.com
Franco Sciorilli	Mobile: +962 796680120	Email: francoscorilli@yahoo.com
Omar al-Ghoul	Mobile: +962 795670196	Email: Ghul40@hotmail.com
Abdelsami Abu Diyyeh	Mobile: +962 785537886	Email: Absami50@hotmail.com
Mohammad al-Shreifat	Mobile: +962 795435199	Email: Alshrifat_004@yahoo.com
Mefleh Al-Edwan	Mobile: +962 776501117	Email: mfadwan@rhc.jo
Eng. Zain Ahmad Hajahjah	Mobile: +962 799141847	Department of Antiquities Email: Zhajahjah@gmail.com
Dr. Gaetano Palumbo	Mobile: +974 70180608	Email: gaetanopalumbo@hotmail.com

8.b Official Local Institution/Agency

The Baptism Site Commission

P.O. Box (56)

South Shunah / 18110

Jordan

Telephone: + 962 5 3590360

Fax: + 962 5 3590361

E-mail: baptismsite@orange.jo

The Management Office of the Baptism Site:

Commission Director:

E-mail: baptismsite@orange.jo

Information: Cellphone: +962 77 753 1011

Telephone: +962 5 35 90360

Assistant Director:

E-mail: rustom_baptismsite@hotmail.com

Telephone: +962 77 784 2300

8.c Other Local Institutions

Department of Antiquities

P.O. Box 88

Amman 1118

Jordan

Jordan National Commission for Education, Culture and Science

Ministry of Education

P.O. Box 1646

Amman 11118

Jordan

8.d Official Web address

<http://www.baptismsite.com>

Section 9: Signature on Behalf of the State Party

Dr. Monther Dahash Jamhawi

Director General

Department of Antiquities DOA

Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities

Signature

Date: / /2014