

Middle East Dialogue Conference 2022 Proposal  
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Title: Green Space, the Green Line, and the Bible in East Jerusalem  
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This presentation explores the connections between biblical archaeology, privately-funded organizations, and the ongoing annexation of Palestinian territory. In East Jerusalem, recent development of historic sites which provide “green” recreational spaces for tourists and Israeli residents has been planned for some of the most vulnerable areas in the city—in Palestinian neighborhoods whose existence have been under increasing threat over the past several years. This project will focus on the City of David, an archaeological site and tourist venue in East Jerusalem that has undergone immense growth and development since its operations were taken over by The Ir David Foundation (Amutat EL-AD) in the early 2000s.<sup>1</sup> The Israeli NGO *Emek Shaveh*’s research regarding the Israeli tactic to develop green/archaeological spaces along the Green Line, which is mostly carried out by privately-funded organizations such as The Ir David Foundation, will be a critical resource in this project's analysis of the annexation that occurs under the guise of biblical archaeology. In the case of the City of David, as is true with many other biblical archaeology sites in Israel, biblical texts are used as a guide for the curation of archaeological findings in a geo-politically advantageous manner. In other words, the land is shaped to resemble a particular biblical depiction of it—most often that of “Promised Land”—which effectively elides the presence of a Palestinian people and history in the land. This phenomenon of developing sites of biblical tourism in politically-contested territory finds resonance with what biblical scholar Vincent Wimbush characterizes as scripturalization—the

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<sup>1</sup> The foundation claims it is “dedicated to the preservation and development of the Biblical City of David and its environs.” “The Ir David Foundation,” City of David, accessed January 25, 2022, <https://www.cityofdavid.org.il/en/The-Ir-David-Foundation>.

social-psycho-political practice of using the Bible to establish colonial realities. In exploring the intersections between Wimbush's theoretical framework and the current development of archaeological and tourist sites in East Jerusalem, this project argues that the ongoing biblicalization of the land serves to legitimate and normalize the continuous settler colonization of Palestine. Through an analysis of the histories of scripturalizing and greenwashing land, which are present in particular biblical archaeological sites throughout Israel/Palestine, I will theorize that as these sites "restore" scriptural realities, they are simultaneously shaping the land's geo-political contours.<sup>2</sup>

*Jennifer Maidrand is an Ambassador Warren Clark Fellow (AWCF) with Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP). Note: CMEP does not necessarily agree with all the positions of our writers, and they do not speak on CMEP's behalf.*

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<sup>2</sup> Nadia Abu El-Haj has coined this practice of biblical archaeology in Israel/Palestine as carving "facts on the ground;" Abu El-Haj, *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and the Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).