



tà della vicina Chiesa Greco-Ortodossa, attualmente occupato da un campo di fichi, meglio noto come 'Giardino del Re'.

L'area archeologica in questione si trova, dunque, in una posizione strategica perché situata prima dei percorsi di ritorno dell'intera visita alla Città di Davide. Da qui, infatti, parte il percorso interrato di risalita che corre sotto la vecchia strada principale della città, così come parte la navetta meccanizzata che percorrendo la strada carrabile esterna torna al punto di partenza della visita. Quindi un'area che rappresenta uno snodo fondamentale nei percorsi di visita e in diretto contatto con il quartiere arabo che si dispiega al suo esterno.

Da questo ricco orizzonte di tracce e di memorie storiche, nonché da necessità odierne, nasce un itinerario di progetto che formalizza la proposta di un nuovo padiglione di ingresso all'area archeologica della Città di Davide, contenente anche sistemi interpretativi della limitrofa traccia archeologica della Piscina di Siloe e che vuole lavorare sulla loro contemporanea ma sensibile interpretazione. In primis, il senso ctonio della relazione con la terra — in questo caso con la roccia — declinato ad una poetica dell'allusione che cerca di dire senza mostrare. Ovvero, una composizione che è più un atto del levare che uno dell'aggiungere, dove la massa primigenia della roccia, come lo è stato nelle varie epoche della storia del luogo, viene sottratta ad accogliere nuove relazioni per le esigenze del contemporaneo. A questo, si sommi il colloquio con le preesistenze che vorrebbe accendere di nuovi significati le tracce del passato, in una generale rifermentazione nella quale passato presente e futuro, sono gli elementi di un medesimo divenire e che il progetto vorrebbe riuscire a cogliere, a mostrare e a caricare di nuova vitalità.

Per questo il volume dell'ipotizzato padiglione è quasi del tutto interno alla parete di roccia che si affaccia sul lato corto della piscina, proiettando all'esterno, verso il frutteto e verso le poche tracce esistenti, una estrusione in acciaio cor-ten che scherma una retrostante vetrata a doppia altezza, ampia come tutto il volume scavato nella roccia. Roccia che per inciso, rappresenta l'unica possibi-

pavillion to the archaeological area of the City of David, which also contains interpretative systems for the archaeological site of the Pool of Siloam nearby, originates.

First of all the sense of the chthonic relationship to the earth — in this case the rock — carried out following a poetics of allusion which attempts to communicate without showing. In other words a composition which is more an action of subtraction than of addition, in which the primordial mass of the rock is subtracted so as to house new relationships necessary for present needs. To this is added a dialogue with the pre-existing structures that wants to enhance with new meanings the traces of the past, in a general 're-fermentation' in which past, present and future are a part of the same process of becoming and which the project attempts to grasp, show and charge with new vitality.

This is why the volume of the proposed pavillion is almost entirely within the rock wall that faces the short end of the pool, projecting outward, in the direction of the orchard and of the few existing traces, an extrusion in weathering steel that screens a double height glass pane that is as wide as the whole volume excavated in the rock. Rock which, by the way, currently represents the only possibility in terms of excavation and placement without interfering with the archaeological remains not yet revealed.

The width of the steps found in the Pool become the general outline on which the geometry of the project is based and which envisages a rectangular excavation on the surface of the rock; a volume of subtracted matter which would constitute a courtyard/well at the same height of the Pool's steps.

This courtyard/well, which would include a shallow pool, becomes the distributive and symbolic core of the entire composition: in fact the various vertical links are placed on the area adjacent to the built section, at the flat level above the rock wall: staircases, lifts and ramps which face the shallow pool excavated in the rock. Within the limits of the courtyard excavated in the rock a quadrangular volume is created which faces the shady space of the courtyard/well and the sunny

0 5m 10m 15m 20m



lità di scavo e di collocazione attuale, senza andare ad interferire con la presenza di resti archeologici non ancora venuti alla luce.

La larghezza delle gradinate ritrovate della Piscina divengono l'andamento su cui si imposta la geometria del progetto, che prevede di realizzare uno scavo rettangolare sulla sommità della roccia; un tassello sottratto di materia che andando a costituire una corte/pozzo, ritrova la medesima quota delle gradinate della piscina. Questa corte/pozzo, caratterizzata sul fondo da un basso specchio d'acqua, diviene il cuore distributivo e simbolico dell'intera composizione; infatti, dall'area al margine dell'edificato, al livello pianeggiante sopra la parete di roccia, scendono i diversi collegamenti verticali: scale, ascensori e rampe inclinate, che si affacciano sullo specchio d'acqua scavato nella roccia. Nei limiti stabiliti dalla corte scavata nella roccia, viene ricavato un volume quadrangolare che si affaccia verso lo spazio ombroso della corte/pozzo e verso lo spazio assolato dell'area archeologica. Tale volume a doppia altezza con ballatoio centrale, contiene tutti gli elementi architettonici e funzionali necessari al secondo ingresso del sito archeologico e all'interpretazione dei resti archeologici di Siloe, al quale risulta fisicamente collegato tramite due percorsi scavati nella roccia che vengono annunciati all'esterno da sottili tagli verticali, posti sotto l'aggetto in cor-ten.

All'esterno, la sistemazione prevede in attesa dello scavo completo della piscina, un'operazione di semplice allusione, ricreando la forma e la misura dell'originaria piscina ricorrendo al posizionamento di una pedana in doghe di legno lungo il suo ipotetico perimetro, in modo da sperimentarne la sua dimensione e la sua esperienza, solo camminandoci sopra attraverso il boschetto di fichi. Tale spazio verde attualmente più alto un paio di metri dai resti della piscina, viene messo in relazione con il sistema archeologico tramite scale che vanno ad incidere il terrapieno. Anche attraverso il bow-window in vetro e cor-ten estruso dalla roccia, è possibile cogliere visivamente l'intera estensione della piscina.

A livello urbano, le connessioni con l'esistente si

archaeological area. This double-height volume with a central balcony contains all the architectural and functional elements necessary for the second entrance to the archaeological site and for the interpretation of the archaeological remains of the Pool of Siloam, to which it is physically connected through two paths excavated in the rock and seen from the outside through thin vertical openings placed under the weathering steel eave.

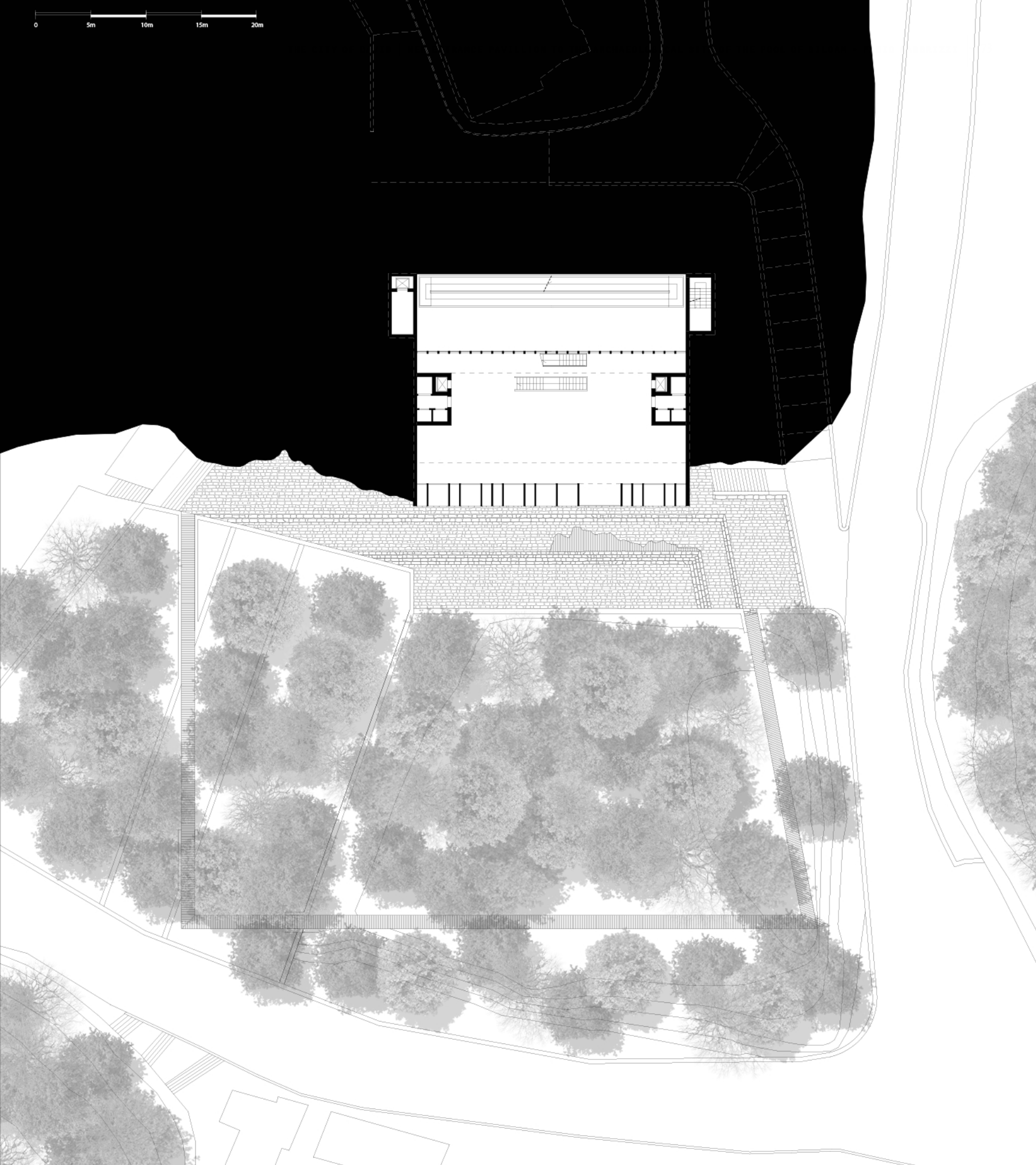
Pending the complete excavation of the pool, the intervention envisages a simple allusion operation, recreating the shape and size of the original pool with a wooden walkway placed along its supposed perimeter, thus providing the experience of walking over it through the fig orchard. This green area, currently a couple of metres higher than the remains of the pool, is linked to the archaeological system through a series of steps that cut into the embankment. The entire extension of the pool can also be seen through the bow-window in weathering steel which extrudes from the rock.

At the urban level, the links with the existing context are limited to a new separation system with an entrance gate that marks the boundary of both the pool and the entire archaeological site with the Arab quarter, whereas a slight redesigning of the upper part of the rock hails the presence of an 'under' which is rich in meanings and relationships.

The materials envisaged for this structure are weathering steel in the case of the few presences that surface from the rock wall and which permit the creation of the great abstract design of the bow-window which faces the remains of the pool and which also serves the purpose of providing a screen from the sun; weathering steel again for the exterior staircases and ramps; glass for the great window surfaces; and exposed concrete for the intradoses of the floors, in those places where it is not the rock that defines the perimeters of the interior volumes and of the walls of the courtyard/well.

The pool, with only a dozen centimetres of water, is finished with smooth slabs of black stone, so as to highlight its surface which reflects the colour of the sky, the clouds and the noon sunshine.

0 5m 10m 15m 20m



limitano ad un nuovo sistema di separazione con cancello di ingresso che va a definire dal limitrofo quartiere arabo l'accesso alla piscina, e quindi a tutta la zona archeologica, mentre un leggero ridisegno della parte sommitale della roccia, annuncia la presenza di un 'sotto' ricco di significati e di relazioni.

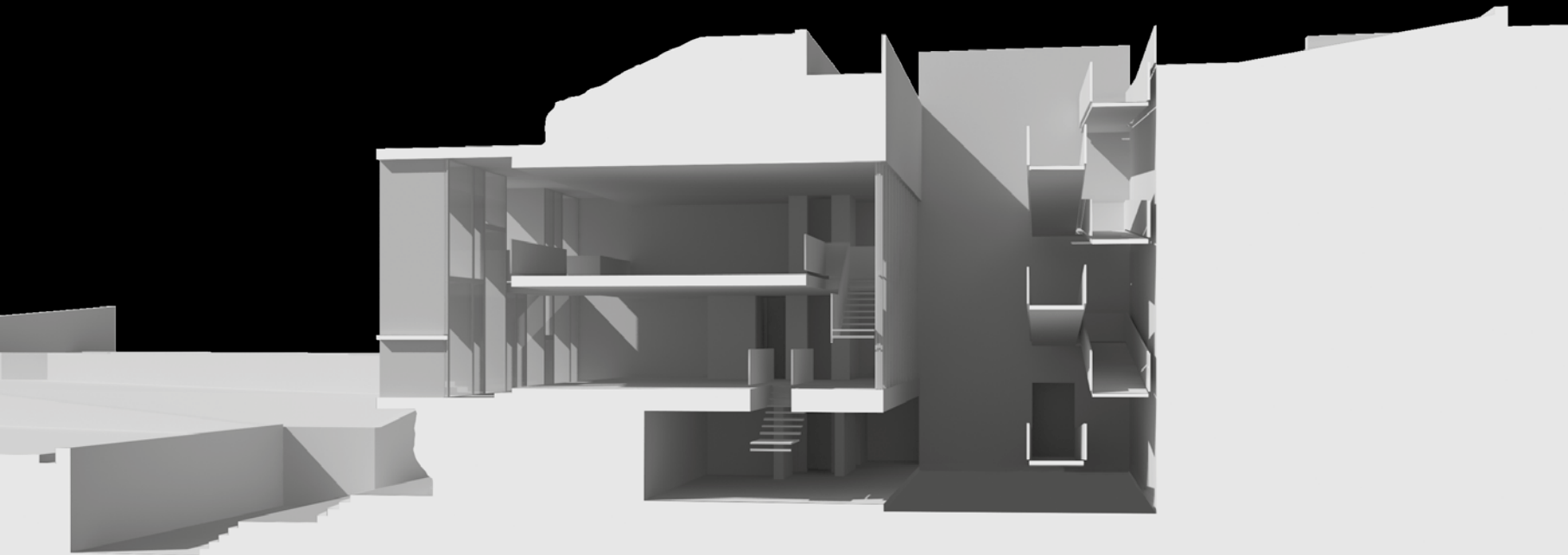
I materiali ipotizzati in questa realizzazione sono l'acciaio cor-ten per le poche presenze che affiorano dalla parete di roccia e che consentono di creare il grande disegno astratto del fronte del bow-window rivolto sulle tracce della piscina e che ha anche chiare funzioni di schermo solare, sempre acciaio cor-ten impiegato per scale e rampe esterne, vetro per le grandi superfici finestrate e cemento *brut* a faccia vista per gli intradossi dei solai e le pareti interne, là dove la roccia viva non entra direttamente a definire i perimetri dei volumi interni e delle pareti della corte-pozzo. La vasca con appena qualche decina di centimetri d'acqua immaginata sul suo fondo, viene rifinita con lastre lisce di pietra nera, in modo da esaltare la sua superficie riflettente che restituirà il colore del cielo con le sue nubi e i raggi del sole a mezzogiorno.



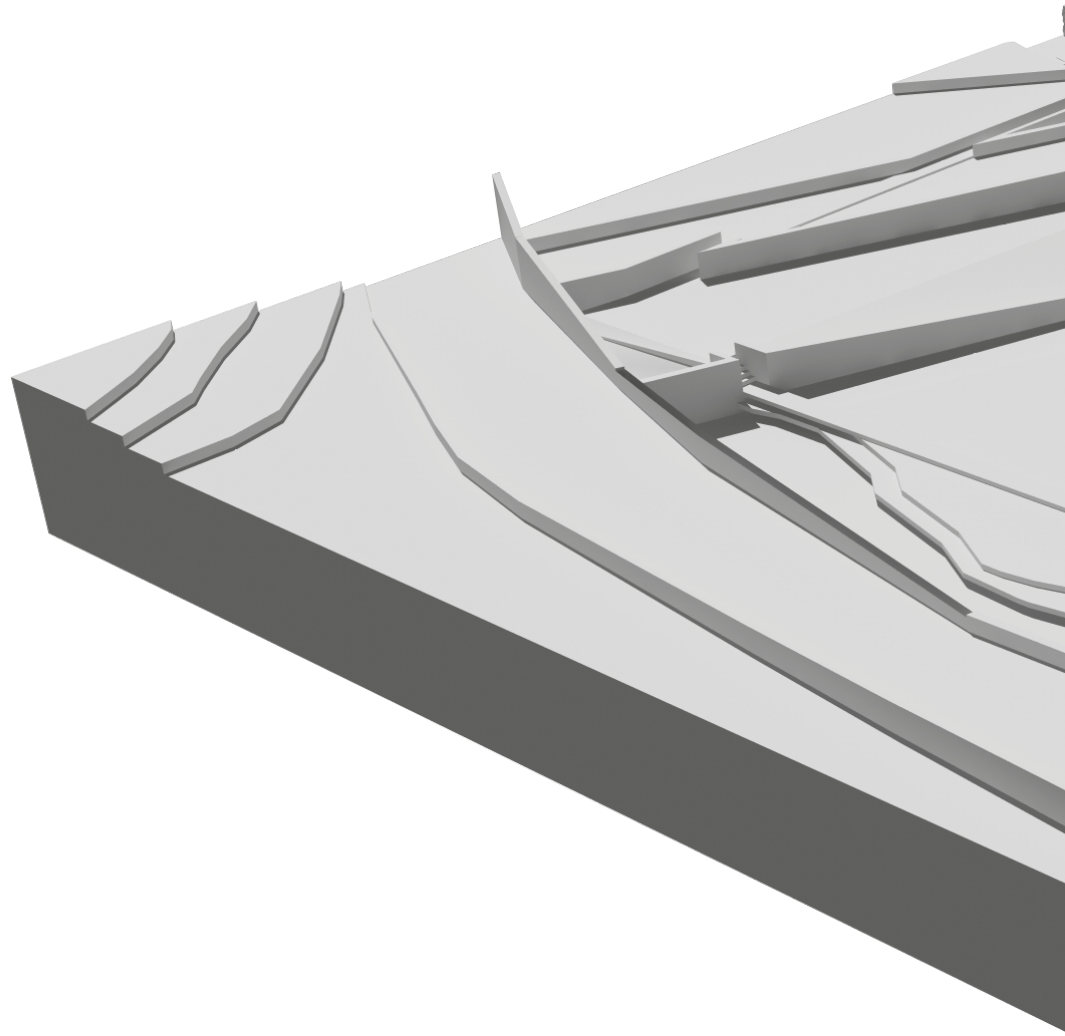


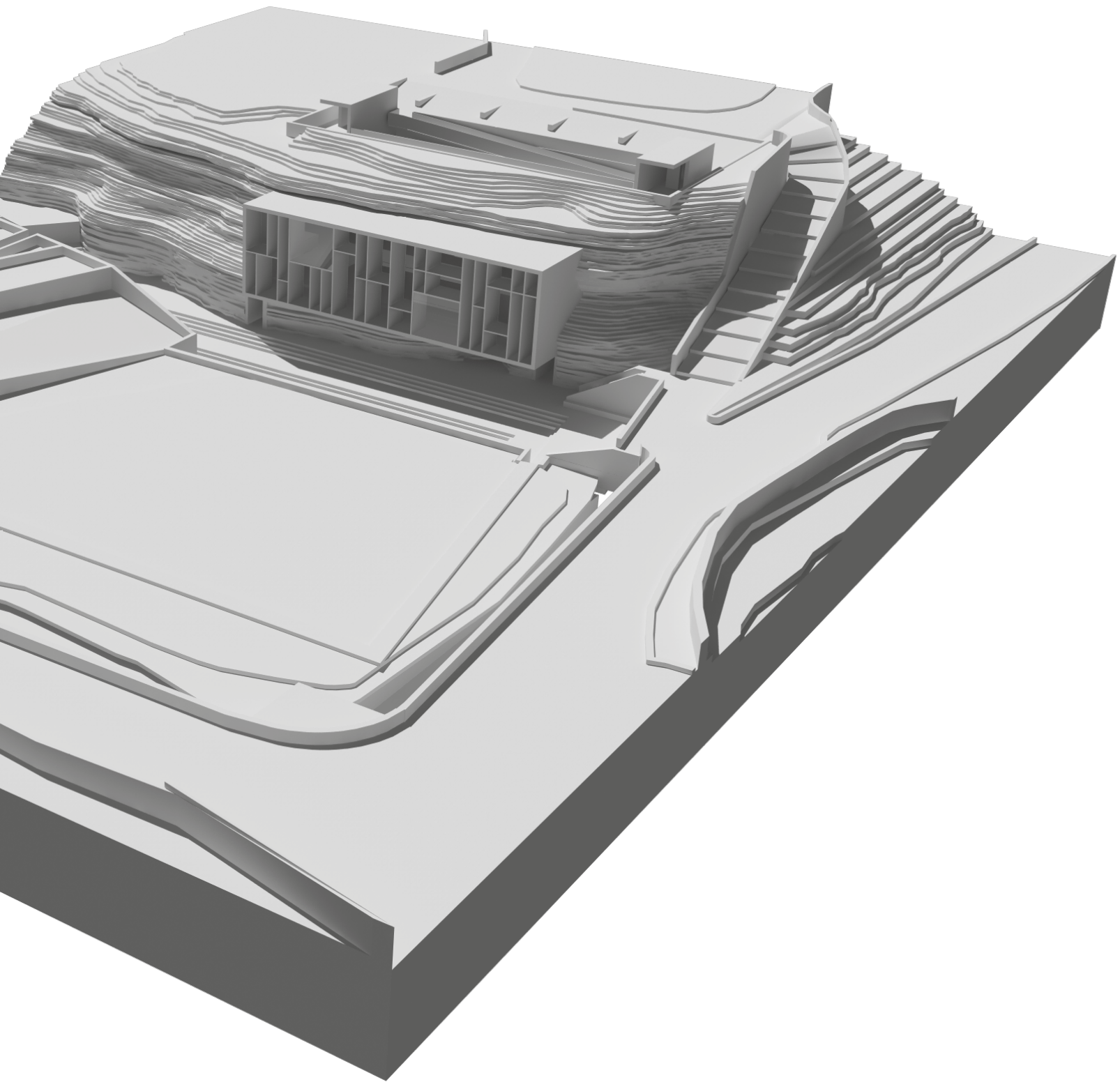














**THE WESTERN WALL PLAZA.
STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHITECTURAL PLANNING PROPOSALS**

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The Western Wall, which still exists... Its stones are large and thick. I have not seen stones of that size in any ancient building, not in Rome and not in any other land. (Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura, 1488)¹

You will go down through the narrow alleys of ancient Jerusalem and arrive at the Wall and stand there. Then you will not only see with your eyes but you will also feel with your entire being the single eternity in our past... And when your feet enter the courtyard of the Wall, here you feel and experience the re-weaving of your soul into the eternal fabric of 2,000 years... Into the space at this remnant of the Wall the sighs from all the ends of the earth and all eras penetrate... The Wall does not differentiate between lands and eras. The tears have all flowed from the hearts of one people, they have all come from one source and they will all pray to One. (Zalman Shazar, 1911)²

The Western Wall is not just remains. The Western Wall is a meaningful reference to the past, the present and the future. The Western Wall is a religious, national, spiritual and historical reference. And it should be treated as such. One must approach its design with this in mind. (Cassuto. 1976)³

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to present a background to the discussion on the proposal by architect Fabio Fabbrizzi for a new architectural project on the outskirts of the Western Wall Plaza, towards the Jewish Quarter. In his proposal, Fabbrizzi presents a structure that stands opposite the Western Wall and maintains a visual and conceptual dialogue with it. This dialogue begins with the lower archaeological level, continues on the level of the plaza and continues to climb up to the upper street where it serves as an upper terrace on the residential level of the Jewish Quarter. This project continues the design-architectural practice that has been going on for five decades and joins the broader discussion about the political and social implications embedded in the act of 'framing places' (Dovey, 1999) and the way we see ourselves within it — a location that is simultaneously a picture and a mirror.

In the process of designing the Plaza in the last five decades, there were three main milestones: the preparation of the site for mass visits and the establishment of new and binding ritual practic-

¹ Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura — Italian commentator on the Mishna, immigrated to the Land of Israel in 1488.

² Zalman Shazar — born in Russia, immigrated to the Land of Israel in 1924. He was the first Minister of Education of the State of Israel and its third President. In 1911 Shazar visited the Land of Israel for the first time.

³ David Cassuto — born in Italy, immigrated to the Land of Israel in 1945. Between 1972-1982 was the architectural advisor for the Minister of Religious Affairs.

es in the first months following the Six-Day War; the discussion about the design of the permanent Plaza that took place mainly in the 1970s, especially around architect Moshe Safdie's plan, and finally the temporary plaza becoming permanent; the struggle of the non-Orthodox movements for their status in the Plaza in the late 1990s and early 2000s, as part of the struggles about religion and state in Israel.

These were accompanied by archaeological discoveries from excavations in the southern and western areas of the Plaza, security and public safety considerations, medium-scale construction projects on the northern and southern sides of the Plaza, political-religious struggles and changes in the cultural perceptions of the place of holy sites in Israeli society.

The Wailing Wall, HaKotel HaMa'aravi, El-Buraq – Story of a Wall

The Western Wall in Jerusalem is a part of the retaining wall that supports the platform of the Temple Mount constructed by Herod the Great in around 19 BCE. In the Jewish tradition the Western Wall is customarily viewed as the remnant of the Second Temple, which was destroyed in 70 CE and for many generations was the object of longing and prayer in the consciousness of the Jewish people in the Diaspora. After the Six-Day War (1967) the Western Wall came, for the first time in its history, under Jewish control and Israeli sovereignty, accessible and available to every Jew who wishes to pray there.

For many generations, the Western Wall symbolized the destruction of the Temple, the Jewish exile and the yearning for Zion, a place unparalleled in Jewish culture, tradition, and history. In recent generations, the Western Wall has also become important to those Jews who have not been deeply connected to holy sites out of religious commitment, but also, and perhaps primarily, because of their sense of belonging to the Jewish people; as a result, the Wall has also become a site visited by many non-Jews. Nowadays the Western Wall is the main pilgrimage site for Jews from Israel and abroad, and as is the case with other major holy sites around the world, it is also a leading site for incoming tourism to Israel (according to official publications, about 90% of tourists visiting Jerusalem visit the Western Wall).

The new reality created at the Western Wall at the end of the Six-Day War raised many questions about the future character of the place: As the paramount symbol of the Jewish nation as a whole, of the Jewish citizens of Israel and of the Jews of the Diaspora, the question of religious control and religious character attributed to the Western Wall was one that needed to be considered in the most practical manner. Another question arose concerning the limits of the sanctity of the place — was it only a holy place or also a historical, national and cultural site?

The fact that the site has a rich history of thousands of years also caused rifts with the archaeological establishment, which demanded an archaeological dig in the area, primarily for the academic aim of excavating into the recesses of the past. The excavators at the foot of the Temple Mount walls saw their work to a great extent as a national mission, in that the findings could attest to the continued connection between the Jewish people and the Temple Mount and its immediate surroundings. As a result, the archeological excavations also had a political nature. Through them, the State of Israel was able to do what was previously denied to it and in fact the Jews were never allowed to do.

The transformation of the Western Wall into a national and international attraction began immediately after the Six-Day War, when a huge throng of worshipers and visitors began to fill the site. The huge number of visitors expected at the square was one of the main factors that hastened the decision, on the fourth day after the end of the war, to demolish the Mughrabi neighborhood, a residential neighborhood which spanned the west part of the square, and to create a large open space in front of the Western Wall. In fact, until the War of Independence (1948) the Jews were forced to settle for a limited prayer place of a few dozen square meters, which was under the protection of the Arabs of the Mughrabi neighborhood, who often prevented prayers from taking place at the site and even desecrated the area over the years. A few days after the war, the families living in the Mughrabi neighborhood were evacuated and resettled in Jerusalem and bulldozers demolished the neighborhood, preparing a large prayer area suitable for the expected mass visit (Nitzan-Shiffan, 2011).

The First Plan for the Western Wall Plaza

The Western Wall Plaza was first planned by Mimar Sinan, the royal architect of the Ottoman sultan Suleiman the Magnificent in the first half of the 16th century. The design of the area was simple and modest. A twenty-two-meter wide section of the Western Wall at the heart of the Mughrabi residential neighborhood was allocated for this purpose. It was paved with stones and a prayer plaza was constructed, measuring 22 meters long and slightly more than 3 meters wide. Stone walls were built to enclose the area in the south, west and north, while the eastern part of the border was a section of the original Western Wall from the time of the Second Temple. The walls of the plaza formed a barrier between it and the houses of the residential neighborhood and an opening led to it from its northern side, straight from a narrow alley that crossed the residential neighborhood. The visitor would be unaware of the Wall's existence until he came upon the cobblestone plaza (Aner, Ben-Dov, Naor, 1981).

As he entered the narrow, closed prayer area, the second wall of the Second Temple would be revealed to him, topped with the large stones from the Islamic era, and over these would be the smaller stones. In order to increase its impact and holiness, the Plaza was deepened, so that five tiers of Herod's construction were exposed to the eye of the worshiper. Being in a small, narrow courtyard adjacent to the Western Wall forced the worshiper to look up and stretch his neck if he wanted to see the upper tiers properly.

The Western Wall, whose height at the time of the Herodian building was five meters above the cobblestone Plaza, with the additional four meters of large stone construction from the time of the old Islamic era, making it nine meters tall, stood higher than the other walls of the prayer area, which were only three meters high, and created an illusion of being significantly taller than its surroundings. The larger dimensions of the stones as compared to the small stones used in the construction of the walls of the compound intended for prayer, created a great contrast for the onlooker, consequently invoking a sense of viewing a great structure, a sense of a high wall built of huge stones majestically towering over you.

The Western Wall Plaza After the Six-Day War, 1967

Immediately following the end of the fighting, the prime minister of the period Levi Eshkol ordered the fast construction of a road from Mount Zion to the Dung Gate. This road was paved outside the Old City walls, in order to allow the masses of the Israeli people to flock to the Western Wall. This was before the Old City, with its alleys and its treasures, opened its gates to the visitor. Already at this stage it was clear that a huge number of people would come to visit the Western Wall and that it was necessary to create an area which would absorb the masses. It was also clear that in the future traffic here would increase and that the Western Wall would become a national and religious focal point for huge numbers of people. The 400-year-old prayer area, designed and built by Sinan, could not withstand this burden. As a result, an order was issued to demolish and vacate the dilapidated houses in the Mughrabi neighborhood and evacuate the few remaining residents and place them in temporary housing in the Muslim Quarter and in the neighborhoods outside the wall (Bahat, 2017).

About a week after the end of the war, in the area adjacent to the Western Wall, in the area which stretches between the 'Machakma' building to the north and the rampart on which the path to the Mughrabi Gate lies in the south, from the Western Wall in the east to the edge of the Jewish Quarter in the west, a wide Plaza was built. The length of the Western Wall extended to 60 meters and the width of the Plaza was even slightly higher than the length of the Western Wall.

Once the area was opened, the dimensions and the nature of the Plaza (wide and open) caused the wall to look shorter and took away much of its splendor and uniqueness, since it was visible to the viewer from afar and lacked the small space in front and the shorter walls around it which gave it its amplified appearance. In order to deal with this problem, it was decided to excavate the space near the Western Wall, thus giving the wall more height. However, since they were reluctant to deal with the fragments of the past — the archeology buried in the depths of the earth, it was decided not to go too deep. Even though the two additional tiers add a little height to the wall, its height which seemed to shrink because of the huge Plaza in front of it and its visibility from a distance, remained unresolved visual problems. In the first stage, the Plaza adjacent to the Western Wall was paved and a 60-meter-long prayer site, which is still in use today, was built.

From the moment the Mughrabi neighborhood was demolished, there was a discussion about the nature of the cleared area and its design. The question of separation between the genders, the determination of prayer in the spirit of Jewish and Orthodox tradition, the squabbles with archaeologists about their place and their right to dig in the area, all sparked debate.

The designers of the Plaza, architect Joseph Scheinberger, in collaboration with engineers of the Public Works Department, decided it was necessary to slightly raise the area to the west of it, thus creating a barrier between the prayer area and the Plaza used by the numerous visitors and tourists coming to the Western Wall. Over time, the elevated area was also paved, a drainage system installed, entrance arrangements made and behavior patterns set in place. Nevertheless, it was clear to all that the existing order was temporary and that the Plaza needed designing and planning which would be the fruit of research based on all the aspects relevant to the area: the fact of its being a holy place and a place of prayer, consideration for the archaeological remains buried in the area, and arrangements for visitors who do not come to pray but to visit for celebrations, as pilgrims or tourists streaming into the Holy City.

Another important milestone in the new status of the Western Wall was the establishment of the Plaza as a venue for holding gatherings and swearing-in ceremonies for IDF soldiers and for the main opening ceremony of the annual memorial day for IDF soldiers who fell in Israel's wars. Thus the Wall was charged with an additional meaning for the people, donning an official, national and military character, in addition to its previous symbolism.

It can be said that about a year after the Six-Day War, the main arrangements for the Plaza were set in place which would accompany it in the following years: the entire Plaza to the west of the Wall, on which the Mughrabi neighborhood stood, was declared to be under the responsibility of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Consequently, the plaza adjacent to the wall (the prayer area) was a

holy place with arrangements just like an Orthodox synagogue. Archaeological excavations were conducted to the south, which did not have any religious activity and the plaza to the west of the prayer area was dedicated to tourist visits. The plaza, which was initially defined as temporary, became permanent with the passage of time.

Until this point, it can be said that the design of the Western Wall Plaza represents a model of interrelations between three main focal points:

- Sanctity | in the case of the Western Wall, since it is a holy place and a pilgrimage site for Jews.
- Heritage and nationalism | turning the location into a site which represents a shared history and memory — in the case of the Western Wall an archaeological site on the one hand, and a large national ceremony and celebration grounds on the other.
- Tourism | the evolution of the site as a touristic focal point for both Jews and non-Jews, groups and individuals of various religions and nationalities.

Design of the Western Wall Plaza – Planning Issues and Design Approaches

Architect Shlomo Aharonson, who participated in a debate on the issue of the planning of the Western Wall Plaza noted that

is not an architectural problem, but rather a conceptual one, and therefore the architectural solution must be an outcome and decision of the conceptual plan: historical, religious and political. As a result, architecture is in fact secondary to the decision about the principle. (Aharonson, 1976)

Following this, it is possible to indicate two main approaches that have emerged over the years around the conceptual discussion on the question of the Plaza's design: (a) planning and execution time, (b) the sense of transience in constructing the plaza.

Time | some believe that this is not the time to plan and implement a significant intervention in such a sensitive space (this argument has been heard over the years). They claim that historical spaces of value and meaning were not designed in one generation, but rather joined the work of many people with different ideas while maintaining self-discipline and adapting to the site's conditions and requirements. Maximum caution is combined with a vision which emerges from loyalty to the heritage embodied in the site and its significance to our generation. These are the lines that guide us in the planning and construction process on the site (Scheinberger, 1976).

Transience | this approach emphasizes the fact that the Western Wall is actually 'the beginning of something'. It should emit a feeling that there is something here that is not over yet; at least from a traditional Jewish point of view, it is not finished. The Wall is only an introduction to something greater and more important than it — the Temple Mount (Aharonson, 1976). Therefore, one

must take into account in every possible plan that the Western Wall is not the culmination of aspirations, however theoretical they may be; the ultimate yearning is for the construction of the Third Temple itself, even if the matter is theoretical or postponed, according to Jewish belief, for many years until the coming of the Messiah. As for the influence of the above on planning, it should be remembered that no plan should divert this thought from the Jewish soul and create at the Western Wall what could be considered a substitute for the Temple. The Wall should symbolize a state of destruction, of imperfection, of a reality that should not be seen as an end, but as a step to better days.

To these two approaches can be added another point that is frequently mentioned in the discussions, namely, 'the restoration of the sense of intimacy' that existed prior to 1967. The design of the prayer plaza of the Western Wall during the Ottoman period, which maintained its shape until 1948, was successful when a small prayer area was needed for a small community. The success of the planning was that the section of the Wall, which was built of huge stones from the Second Temple period, was trapped between small stone walls and stone floors at their feet. All this gave a huge and impressive appearance to the large stones that far surpassed the Wall's small neighbors. The small closed courtyard created a unique, intimate and isolated environment for the worshiper and the visitor. This directed the worshiper to the focal point, without any surrounding distraction. As stated, this all ended with the demolition of the Mughrabi neighborhood. A series of recently unearthed buildings to the north of the 'Machakma' building, standing on its support arches, continues to the west, forming a dividing line between the Old City and the Plaza. To the west was discovered a rocky hill, on which stand a number of houses, some ancient and some relatively new (30-50 years-old). These are the outermost houses of the Jewish Quarter where it met the Mughrabi Quarter, which disappeared from the area and until its destruction covered the aforementioned cliff. In the south, the wall of the Old City and the Dung Gate were discovered.

As for the Western Wall, if there is no human activity next to it, it is seen only as a high wall built of large stones.

At some distance from the Western Wall one can see the gold-plated Dome of the Rock and other buildings and trees on the Temple Mount. Two essential points are intertwined in this matter, which require a solution in any plan for the great plaza. Both are in the realm of emotions, a fact that causes numerous planning difficulties, since feelings cannot always be translated into the language of stones. It is difficult to find a common denominator for the feelings of a wide public with varied opinions through architectural planning.

Considering this, when the architectural planning of the space is discussed, many questions arise

regarding the question of how to approach the planning of the immediate vicinity of the Western Wall: should it be surrounded by prestigious public buildings? Or should it remain in its glorious loneliness? Should its intimacy be emphasized? Or does it belong to the entire people? Should the roads be directed toward it? Or parallel to it? Does it begin and end in the same historic hundred meters? Or should it be part of the wall of the entire Temple Mount, emphasizing the Temple Mount as one whole? Should the landscapes of the kings of Israel be restored? Or should it reflect the landscape that has been created around it in the last hundred years? Another problem in its planning is how to make it a place where individuals can reflect and pray by themselves or in small groups, while at the same time, crowds can gather and celebrate.

There are more questions to ponder. How can it be planned so that the focus of attention is not transferred from the Wall itself to its surroundings? Will the houses built on the formidable rock cliff on the western side of the Plaza become attractions in and of themselves, or not? This point should be taken into consideration when planning the environment; however pretty and aesthetically pleasant, it should be modest compared to the main focal point in this area.

Comparison with Other Plazas in the World

The comparison of the plaza in front of the Western Wall to various squares and plazas around the world serves two main purposes in the discussion: the first is examining the proportions, scale, focal points, access methods, etc. These are objective parameters which can be measured and analyzed in architectural planning tools. However, the second purpose of the comparison is to differentiate the Western Wall Plaza conceptually, morally and emotionally from other squares and plazas in the world. It is argued that the Western Wall Plaza is not like other squares because while other squares exist for themselves, the Western Wall Plaza is a place of expectation, and while most squares are gathering places for the masses, the Western Wall is a place for both individuals and masses⁴.

Two comparisons keep being made over the years: San Marco Square in Venice and San Pietro Square in Rome, both because of their centrality in the international arena and consciousness, and because of their physical proportions which are similar to that of the Western Wall Plaza. These examples are used in addition for marking two new and significant parameters: the identity of the planner(s) and the duration of construction of the square.

One of the claims that arise repeatedly in the debate surrounding the planning of the Western

⁴ See, for example, the words of Architect David Cassuto in 1976: "There is no square in the world which is similar or identical to this one. A wall of worn stones, a memory of the splendor that used to be there. Only a reminder of that architecture, of which the Western Wall was a small part... it does not replace the Temple. But it is certainly a symbol of the steadfastness of the Jewish people".

Wall Plaza is that it still lacks the time perspective in order for the current generation of planners to be able to cope with this unique (and new) space planning task. Whereas other important squares in the world were built over the centuries — for political, budgetary, technical and many other reasons, here the aim is to plan and build, within a short time, a comprehensive project that will meet all known planning requirements at a given moment. Against this claim, there are voices calling for shaking off ‘the paralyzing fear of the present generation’ and for proposing a plan in the spirit of Jerusalem’s history that includes buildings of different styles from various periods whose builders believed that their entry into Jerusalem was the most important in the city’s history.

The Safdie Design Plan for the Western Wall Plaza

The most famous plan for the Western Wall Plaza design to date is the plan by Israeli-Canadian architect Moshe Safdie, which was commissioned by Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek and the Company for the Reconstruction and Development of the Jewish Quarter and was first presented in 1973. The plan had some starting points at its core that influenced the planning principles: first, that the Western Wall is a sacred place of worship, but since the Six-Day War the Western Wall and the plaza at its foot have received additional meanings, which include its becoming a sought-after site for many visitors and a place of national gathering of the first degree. Thus, the central problem in the planning of the Western Wall is how to make it a place where individuals can commune with their Maker, while at the same time other, different groups find a space to express themselves. Another starting point of the plan was the accumulated archaeological knowledge that led some archaeologists who excavated in the Western Wall area to be an integral part of the planning process and give instructions related to archaeological findings there.

The design concept of the plans was based on the construction of a series of terraced plazas, rising from the Herodian level near the Western Wall to the level of the Jewish Quarter to the west⁵. This construction, like a theater, will be done in such a way that the large square will be at the Western Wall and the narrower squares near the Jewish Quarter. The advantages of this approach, as envisioned by architect Safdie, are that the graded plazas allow different types of visitors and small as well as large groups to be adapted to the atmosphere of the place. Small groups, mainly praying groups, will gather in the lowest square and enjoy an intimate atmosphere. Larger groups, especially those who come to the area not for religious reasons, will populate the higher levels without missing out on a good view of the Wall and the sense of closeness to it.

The planning challenge was to make the Western Wall Plaza an integral part of the urban fabric.

⁵ Further reading, drawings and illustrations: Safdie M. 1989, *Jerusalem: The Future of the Past*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

Indeed, Safdie's plan constitutes an attempt to create 'a place which will seem to have always been there' without giving up its newness, a place that will assimilate rather than stand out, which will create a strong presence without breaking the morphology of the Old City.

Safdie's plan sought to lower the prayer area adjacent to the wall to the Herodian level (i.e., to deepen the level of the Western Wall by nine meters). The lowering satisfies two requirements: firstly, it exposes the Western Wall to its full height, thus meeting the demand for monumentality without exceeding the height of Muslim and Christian monuments. Secondly, the exposure of the Herodian street creates a three-dimensional space in which both the pavement and the wall are ancient. According to Safdie, "Today, Israelis will be able to walk on the same flagstones used by Jewish pilgrims in antiquity" (Safdie, 1989).

From the plaza to the west, Safdie planned an urban theater of terraced structures that get smaller as they approach the higher level of the Jewish Quarter. In this theater, every roof is a plaza or a balcony for the floor above it. The whole space takes on the appearance of an 'Arab village' in its imitation of the common vernacular morphology in the surrounding space.

The bridging of the different scales was designed to be done by a set of proportions according to which it is possible to calculate increasing elements in a way that they will match each other and will meet the requirements of organization, uniformity and efficiency. The key to the unity of the complex was thus linked to an industrialized construction process using pre-prepared elements that will define the architectural language of the plaza.

In 1975, a public conference and exhibition was held to discuss the principles of Safdie's plan, which caused a stir. The conference and discussion was led by the architect David Cassuto, who served as a consultant architect for the Minister of Religious Affairs. The discussion revolved around two central axes: first — the value of the Western Wall as a monument; the second — the power of architecture: does it forge meaning, or does it instead serve external ideas and programs to which architecture gives form (Cassuto, 1975).

There were objections to the plan both from the religious point of view and from architects. The fear of the religious representatives was that the plan would completely change the nature of the Western Wall Plaza, make it an attraction for tourists and strip the Wall of its uniqueness as a place of prayer. It was further argued that the proposed level formation would create a commercial tourism center opposite the Western Wall and would turn the most sacred place for the people of Israel into an 'eastern bazaar'. The architects who took part in the discussions (including architects, landscape architects, conservation architects and archaeologists) expressed concern about "a project completed with a single wave of thought" (Shlomo Aharonson, in Cassuto, 1975). In their

view, the importance of the Western Wall lies in the repeated action of its sanctification. Therefore, according to landscape architect Aharonson, “the design and construction of the central square of the Jewish people should include more than one generation of people”.

In the final analysis, Safdie’s Western Wall Plaza design proposal was not implemented, and the temporary plaza that was installed at the foot of the Western Wall became, as is well known, the permanent space to this day. This is despite the fact that in 1977 the State approved the plan after it received Orthodox Jewish consent for the project.

Planning Proposals Over the Years

Immediately after the Six-Day War, the powers-that-be in the Ministry of Religious Affairs asked the Japanese architect-sculptor Isamu Noguchi, the designer of the Sculpture Garden at the Israel Museum, to present a plan for the Western Wall area. Noguchi did not know the past of the Western Wall and his encounters with Israel acquainted him mainly with the new history of the state. He was deeply impressed by the rebirth of the state in the shadow of the Holocaust in Europe. Therefore, he wanted to design a higher level where prayers could take place, which would preserve the height of the level at which the Western Wall Plaza was in 1948. In the center, according to his plan, a black basalt block would be erected, bearing an inscription and symbolizing the Holocaust, which, despite the horror and pain it caused, helped with the rebirth of the State of Israel. There were other elements which would serve as symbols for various events in Jewish history that are connected to the Western Wall. The Noguchi Plan takes into account the existence of archaeological excavations beneath the prayer level and their preservation as a covered archaeological garden open for visits to study the history of the region during various eras, especially the Second Temple period.

Another proposal presented immediately after the war was that of architect Louis Kahn, commissioned by Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek at the recommendation of the Israeli architect Ram Karmi to design a monumental building on the remains of the ‘Hurva’ synagogue in the Jewish quarter, which was destroyed by the Jordanian army in 1948. Kahn visited Jerusalem in December 1967 and presented his initial plans in July 1968, and further proposals — in 1969-1972. All of Kahn’s alternatives were based on the location of the new building alongside the ‘Hurva’, based on the idea of ‘ruins wrapped around buildings’, as well as on a symbolic connection of the new building with the Western Wall Plaza⁶. Kahn’s ‘Hurva’ was intended to be a ‘Jewish cathedral’ that

⁶ Further reading, drawings and illustrations: Larson K. 2000, *Louis I. Kahn: Unbuilt Masterworks*, Monacelli Press.

would stand in front of the Dome of the Rock and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Kahn felt the need to break the boundaries of the project and created a connection between the new building and the Western Wall Plaza. In so doing, he proposed a bridge between the religious ‘worship’ (prayer) and the sense of two thousand years of history in the space. His modernist design caused heated debates, mainly because of the enormous size and the dominance of the building in the urban context of the Jewish Quarter, and finally the plan was rejected by the District Planning Committee. Although Kahn’s plan was not implemented, his proposals are considered among his unrealized masterpieces.

In 1970, landscape architect Shlomo Aaronson was commissioned to draw fundamental conclusions for the design of the Western Wall Plaza. He presumed that as with other important squares in the world, such as the Piazza San Pietro in the Vatican or Piazza San Marco in Venice, which took generations and on average one hundred years to build, the Western Wall Plaza would also be constructed in a similar time period. Aaronson presented a project that was envisaged to be built in stages and enabled each generation to make its mark on the complex. This was in fact the first proposal to be linked to historical, religious and national contexts. In practice, he proposed deepening the eastern part of the plaza by excavating it to the level of the street during the Second Temple period. In this manner, an ancient site with national and historical connotations was combined with a religious site.

In 1982, architects Adolfo Natalini and David Palterer presented a plan for the development of the area.

We attempted a project that integrates times and places, different needs and desires, a project designed with allegories and metaphors, where the stones are building and sign, talking architecture and diagram to be deciphered⁷.

The project envisioned the expansion of the archeological garden along the existing Western Wall Plaza and its division into two levels: an upper public plaza for ceremonies, gatherings, etc., and beneath it, on the archeological level, a place to pray opposite the stones of the Western Wall. In their plan, the architects presented a network of ‘towers of shadows’ on the upper plaza: perforated stone cylinders which, in addition to give light and ventilation to the archaeological levels below, create shadows and aggregation, and evoke an urban situation: a city on many levels crossed by the sun, the wind and the steps of men.

In the 1990s, architect Tuvia Sagiv suggested, following archaeological research conducted on

⁷ Further reading, drawings and illustrations: *Adolfo Natalini Figure di pietra*, Quaderni di Lotus, Electa, Milano, 1984.

the Temple Mount, to divide the hill into two parts: the upper level would remain in the hands of the Arabs, while the lower level would be excavated and entrusted to the Jews. In Sagiv's simulations, one can see a massive opening dug in the Western Wall, at the edge of the existing Plaza, which leads to the underground level that would be open to the Jewish public.

The matter of the design of the Western Wall Plaza remains unresolved even after 50 years in which the area was under the responsibility of Israeli planning institutions. Today, a number of projects on the periphery of the Plaza are being promoted, which will of course have great influence on the general feeling of the worshiper or visitor at the Western Wall, but the question of planning the Plaza itself remains unanswered.

Summary

Over the years, a number of alternatives were proposed for the Plaza, however none of the plans, except for that of Safdie, which was extensively discussed here, came to fruition or sparked a public debate such as the one in 1975. It seems that the voices which were heard in that discussion continue to resonate with decision makers today, as expressed by the architect David Reznik:

We have only just returned to the Western Wall itself. The trauma of the return has not yet passed. We cannot, in my opinion, plan at a time of trauma, at a time of hesitation, when the program is not yet consolidated and it seems like we cannot consolidate a program at the moment. I think a program for the Wall will arise of its own accord. It will mature with time.

Subsequently the Planning Research Committee's conclusions were that

the Plaza of the Western Wall will not be designed with a final and finished design within the foreseeable future, but it will come about gradually, in stages, over a long period of time. What we need today is a fundamental framework according to which any change in the physical structure of the site will be decided in the coming years.

This principle, of course, is in sharp contrast to a comprehensive architectural plan which would be implemented uniformly and immediately, stemming from a clear architectonic understanding. We have seen that there are those who claim that our contemporaries are not allowed or able to determine for future generations the nature of the most sacred site of Judaism. According to them, in today's conditions, any agreed-upon plan will be the result of a compromise between political systems rather than a conceptual consensus which can be translated into an architectural design that suits the uniqueness of the site. Others argue that overall planning is possible only as a response to a detailed program that will garner broad agreement. They demand that before planning the Western Wall Plaza a special committee be convened to formulate a spiritual-ethical and operational-quantitative program that will be agreed upon by all, or at least most, of the bodies in charge

of the subject. The task of planning should be the subject of an open competition that will abide by the program that is formulated, and the task will not be entrusted to one architect or another because of the national and international importance and sensitivity of this space.

In this context, it is interesting to examine the proposal of architect Fabio Fabbrizzi for a new architectural project on the western side of the Plaza. This is a structure that appears as an enclosed mass, hovering above the current Western Wall Plaza that extends below it, allowing the visitor to cross continuously from one end to the other.

In the same way, the building connects to the upper street — the outermost residential street of the Jewish Quarter — and offers an additional public tier that overlooks the Temple Mount and the Western Wall Plaza. This upper level reveals to the viewer the building which is built around an open central space that contains an auditorium that hovers above the archeological level which is exposed below the lower level of the Plaza.

It seems like Fabbrizzi is conducting a dialogue with the history of design and the conceptual principles that guide it, thus joining it as a link that seeks to shape, with time, the complex that stands next to and overlooks the Western Wall. In his design, he manages to capture the outstanding characteristics of the Old City of Jerusalem, which are expressed not only in architecture but also in their function and symbolism. Thus, the building serves as a shelter for the visitor from the sun and the rain, without forcing him to enter a closed space, without taking away from him the experience of being in the Plaza. The large stone mass at the front of the building conducts a dialogue with the Western Wall but does not threaten it, because it is detached from the ground as opposed to the Western Wall which is firmly planted deep inside the hill and deep in consciousness; the moderate openings in the foreground resemble the narrow spaces that open between the great stones of the Western Wall, allowing a glimpse into the depths of the wall, a place to bury prayers and wishes. In his design, Fabbrizzi manages to create a place that is simultaneously a picture and a mirror.

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