

December 2017



Revival of Pilgrim Routes via Ein Karem to Jerusalem In the 1st and 2nd Temple Periods



Photo: Courtesy of Ron Havilio

The Concept of Green Pilgrimage

Every year more than a quarter of a billion people choose to undertake a journey that has deep spiritual significance for them. These pilgrims do not merely seek a restful vacation or spectacular views, but a transformative experience that feeds their souls – a journey that taps into their cultural, spiritual and religious beliefs.

No matter what their religion, human beings share a sense of connection with the natural world – based on the belief that they have a responsibility to protect the divine work of creation.

Throughout the world, more and more tourists are looking for alternative experiences and new meaning in their travels: tourism that caters for the individual, nature and ecotourism, incorporating a cultural, ethnic and spiritual dimension.

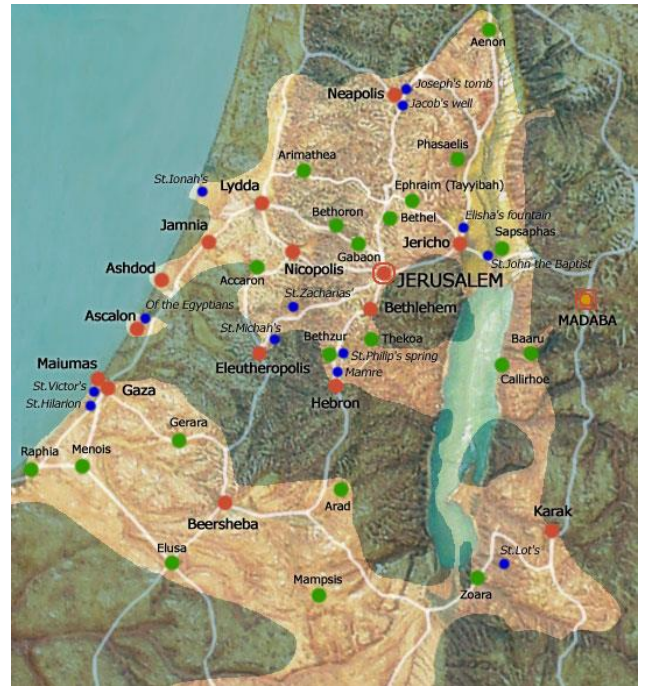
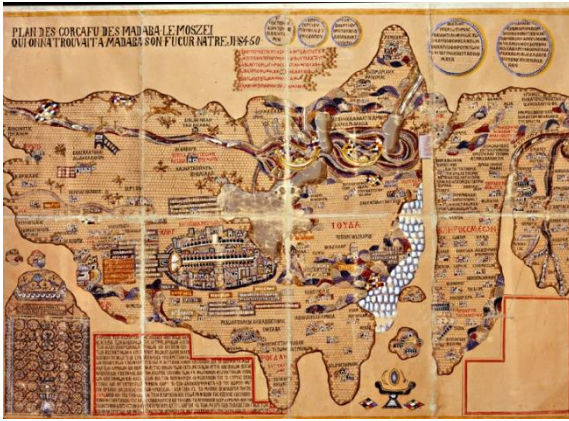
Pilgrimage to the Holy Land is quite different from pilgrimage in other parts of the world, in diverse ways. Because Jerusalem is a spiritual destination for the three monotheistic faiths, members of all three communities strive to visit the Holy Land at least once during their lifetime.

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land began 3,000 years ago, during the time of the First Temple. The Bible lays out very clearly the duty of all the Israelites to visit the Temple three times a year. The journey was usually on foot and thus the three holidays were called “Foot Festivals”. In Second Temple times there was already a Jewish Diaspora and the many routes up to Jerusalem came from all the different countries of origin.

*"Safeguard the month of standing grain so that you will be able to keep the Feast of the Passover to God your Lord, since it was in the month of standing grain that God your Lord brought you out of Egypt at night.... Then count seven weeks for yourself. From the time that you first put the sickle to the standing grain, you must count seven weeks. You shall then celebrate the Feast of Weeks to God your Lord, presenting a hand-delivered offering according to the extent of the blessing that God your Lord has granted you.... When you bring in the products of your threshing floor and wine vat, you shall celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days.... **Three times each year**, all your males shall thus be seen in the presence of God your Lord in the place that He will choose: on the Feast of Passover, on the Feast of Weeks and on the Feast of Tabernacles. You shall not appear before God empty-handed." (Deuteronomy Chap.16, xvi)*

Christian traditions gave rise to many additional routes, marking important stations in Jesus' life. Later the Muslims added their own.

Throughout history the common denominator for all the routes and all the faith communities was the shared goal of reaching Jerusalem. The many routes to Jerusalem are rich in heritage sites of both natural and historic value.



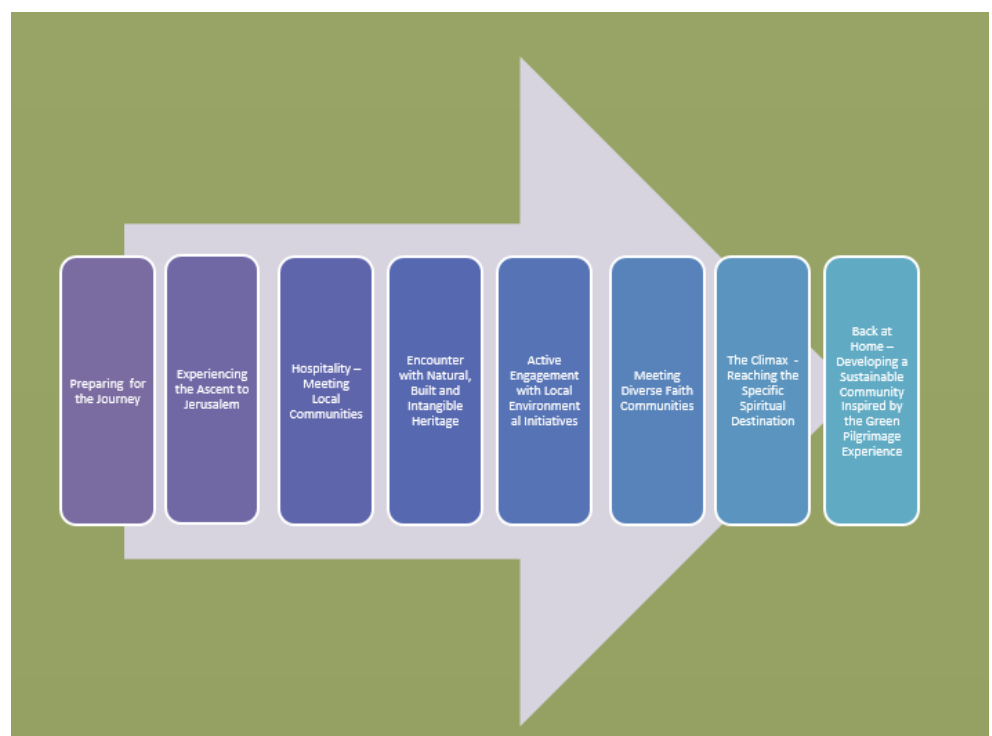
Madaba Map from the 6th century – the pilgrimage routes to Jerusalem from that period are shown clearly. On the left is the original map and on the right a map that places the original in the context of a modern map

Green Pilgrimage brings together faiths, cities and sites, which offer visitors a profound experience that is at once spiritual, ethical and “green”.

According to the philosophy of Green Pilgrimage, we are obligated not only to preserve the quality of the built and natural fabric and heritage of historic sites in the Holy Land, but also to make them easily accessible to visitors, and to create a warm and welcoming interface between the residents and the visiting pilgrims and tourists.

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The concept of green pilgrimage is described here as “The Pilgrim Ladder”: Sets out the stages of the journey—preparation, the journey itself, ending with the impact on the community after the pilgrimage is over



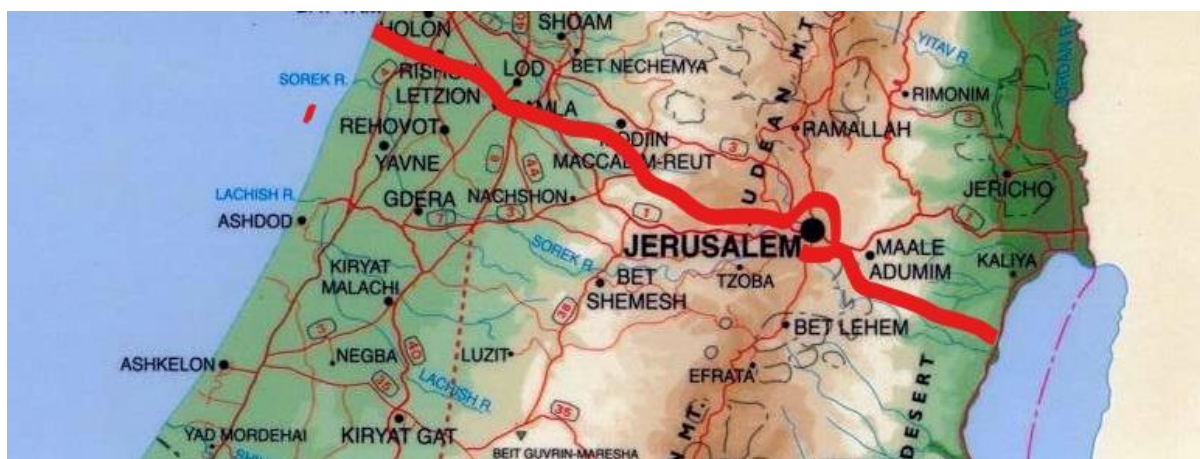
The Jerusalem Green Fund

The JGF is an Israeli non-profit organization. It aims to foster public accountability and to promote environmental, social and economic sustainability in and around Jerusalem. The JGF supports grassroots initiatives, working with communities and faiths in the Jerusalem region, and reaches out to faith communities around the world. Green Pilgrimage has become an important area of activity for the JGF.

Ein Karem within the context of Green Pilgrimage to Jerusalem

Against the backdrop of the global green pilgrimage movement, we realized that Ein Karem provides an excellent opportunity to develop a green pilgrimage experience.

Ein Karem is one of the most important pilgrim destinations in the Christian world. It is one of the few places where one can sense footsteps from the distant past, and experience the way people lived in Bible times. The village itself is situated in a scenic basin which helps take pilgrims back to the periods of the First and Second Temples, surrounded by ancient agricultural terraces, olive and wine presses as well as ancient fruit orchards and natural springs. This historic landscape is characterized by the churches and monasteries that have worked in the area for hundreds of years. In the heart of the village is Mary's Holy Spring, and more than a million pilgrims visit Ein Karem every year.

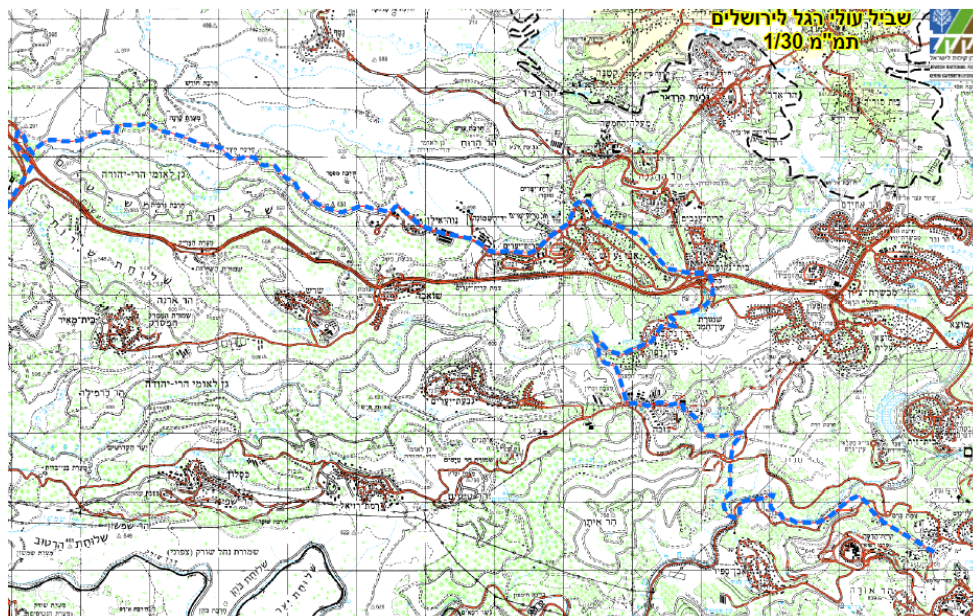


A sketch of the route from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River and the Dead Sea through Jerusalem

The Pilgrimage Route from Emmaus to Ein Karem

The route from the Mediterranean coast to Jerusalem, and on down to the Dead Sea, about 90 km long, is both complex and challenging. That is why we decided to divide it into several segments. The first part to be developed in the spirit of the Green Pilgrimage philosophy, will be from the ancient city of Emmaus to Ein Karem. This part is approximately 30 kilometers.

This route passes through places with high natural and heritage values and is mostly congruent with an existing path already marked on the map. This route was identified originally by the Jewish National Fund (J.N.F), and we will be working in partnership with their professional team, and with the Nature and Parks Authority. We will incorporate important sites along the way, emphasizing the experience of pilgrims in ancient times.



On this map the pilgrimage route is represented by a blue dotted line.

Description of the Route According to its Sections

Section 1: From the Ancient Town of Emmaus to Abu Ghosh

The starting point is Canada Park, near the remains of Emmaus. The remains of this town, like many other places along the pilgrimage routes, can tell stories from the past of the many upheavals that took place in the Holy Land. Emmaus functioned as a town from the Second Temple period, through the Roman and Crusader periods to the long period of Ottoman rule.

According to Christian tradition, it was near Emmaus that Jesus met two of his disciples, after his resurrection. In the Gospel According to Luke we read:

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles^[a] from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” (Luke Chap. 24, xiii – xxv)

The most dominant evidence of all the historical upheavals, is the agricultural heritage. Traditional agriculture can still be seen along all the entire route, which is characterized by the remains of many and diverse layers of settlement from Biblical to modern times. The shared heritage of all these periods is the tradition of agriculture in the mountainous terrain, which made the terraces an essential ingredient to retain water on the hillsides.

The route to Abu Ghosh goes up through the landscape of the Jerusalem hills, alongside the terraces and ancient remains, passing through the forests of the JNF that were planted in modern times.



Caravaggio painting of the meeting of Jesus
And the two Disciples near Emmaus.



Water System from Ancient Emmaus

Section 2: From Abu Ghosh to Tel Tzuba (Belmont Castle)

Abu Ghosh is a small ancient village near Kiriath Jearim the place where the Ark of the Covenant was housed for 20 years according to the Bible. Like Emmaus, the history of Abu Ghosh contains layer upon layer of history from the Stone Age until today. Abu Ghosh is located on the ancient road to Jerusalem and always was a hosting place for Pilgrims on their way to or from the Temple.

From Abu Ghosh the route continues to Ein Lamon, an ancient spring set in a beautiful natural landscape, near the village of Ein Rafah, which also offers local hospitality.

The route continues up to Belmont Castle, the remains of a Crusader Fortress, commanding a spectacular view of the surroundings. In this area there is an ancient spring and an ancient olive tree more than 500 years old.



The view from Belmont Castle (photo from the JNF archives)

Section 3: From Belmont Castle to Sataf and the Monastery in Even Sapir

The route continues to Sataf, where the JNF restored ancient agriculture from Biblical times. Two springs that emerge from the site water the agricultural terraces, which date back thousands of years. Like in olden times, irrigated vegetable gardens grow alongside vineyards, olive groves and almond orchards that require no artificial irrigation. From here pilgrims can descend into the Sorek Valley before climbing up to the Monastery in Even Sapir.



The Slopes of Sataf (from the JNF archives)

The Monastery of John in the Desert in Even Sapir

This monastery is also known as the Monastery of Saint John in the Wilderness. The first phase of the monastery was built in the 6th century. According to tradition, Saint John used to hide in a cave nearby. At this beautiful site there is a small church, a spring and a beautiful garden.



The Chapel in the Monastery
(photos courtesy of Osnat Post)



The Approach to the Monastery

Section 4: From the St. John in the Wilderness to Ein Karem.

The last part of the route winds through the beautiful hills surrounding Ein Karem. Here, although we are already coming into the municipal boundary of Jerusalem, the landscape is especially rich and verdant, with an abundance of ancient olive and wine presses, almond and olive trees, evidence of ancient Biblical orchards, agricultural terraces and water sources. We learn how pilgrims on their way to the Temple found food, drink and hospitality, as well as drawing inspiration from the wonders of God's creation.



Evidence of Ancient Agriculture around Ein Karem (photos courtesy of Ron Havilio).

Section 5: Ein Karem

Ein Karem has always been an important stop on the way to or from Jerusalem. Local hospitality plays as important a role now as it did for pilgrims in ancient times.

The residents of Ein Karem offer visitors hospitality in their homes, or in the Christian institutions in the village. Food is provided by home hospitality or at the many eateries in the village. Local artists and craftsmen run workshops in the village.

Recently, working with the Jerusalem Green Fund, work has begun to restore the traditional Biblical terraces and residents, pilgrims and visitors are learning together about the guiding principles of agriculture in mountainous terrain.



Chinese volunteers help in restoration of terraces

Summary

There are many different ways to experience Biblical pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The first section of the route we selected to focus on, although only one part of the entire route, can give the pilgrims a meaningful experience as reflected in the philosophy of green pilgrimage. This part offers many remains from the First and Second Temple Periods, with magnificent views. The route enables meetings with local people and enables visitors to enjoy local hospitality. Our examination of the route showed us that it is safe and walkable, and although the entire route is 30 kilometers from Emmaus to Jerusalem we propose to focus on significant small sections of it. Thus, visiting pilgrims can walk as much or as little as they like, but will still benefit from a green and meaningful experience.

The Next Step – Branding and Implementation of the Green Pilgrimage Philosophy.

The next stage of our work will be to give expression to the values of Green Pilgrimage along the route that was selected.

We have begun to think about the main areas of focus for the next stage, but since this will be a second phase of work, we would like to discuss the different things that can be done with the Shi An Culture team.

Menu of Projects and Initiatives

- ✓ Create a website
- ✓ Establish a “Pilgrimage Route Administration”, together with other major stakeholders. Apart from the Jerusalem Green Fund, the main bodies involved are: The Ministry of Tourism, the Nature and Parks Authority, the Antiquities Authority, the Jewish National Fund and the local authorities along the route. This administration will play an important role in coordination, branding and fundraising.
- ✓ Encounters with local people along the route. Meetings with dozens of people and institutions related to the route and together with them to develop content, events and hospitality. (Ein Karem, Even Sapir, Kibbutz Tzuba, Abu Ghosh, Yad Ha-Shmona, Ein Rafa and Ein Naquba)
- ✓ Planning and production of events, such as food festivals, cultural and artistic events (with an emphasis on local arts and crafts)
- ✓ Joint activities of the pilgrims and the residents, such as voluntary work in rehabilitating paths, terraces, planting, meditations, joint study of local values, heritage and more.
- ✓ Planning possible hospitality along the route (food and accommodation)
- ✓ Planning a “pilot walk” along the route with a group of pilgrims (or groups)
- ✓ Planning a “green passport” for the pilgrims that walk along the route.
- ✓ Completing the route from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea.

Thanks

The JGF Green Pilgrimage team would like to express its thanks and appreciation of the support given by Shi An Culture to the first phase of this initiative.

We have set ourselves the goal of recreating the experience of pilgrims on their way to the Temple in biblical times. At the same time, we realize that they will encounter sites and experiences from the Christian pilgrim tradition as well.

In this first phase we have focused on the first 30 kilometers of the chosen route, and we hope that with your continued support we will be able to map the remaining sections of the route, and to implement the ideas that we identified that would inspire a green pilgrimage experience.

Submitted by the Green Pilgrimage Team, working through the Jerusalem Green Fund

