

3,200-Year-Old Wall Surrounding Joshua's Altar Destroyed in Palestinian Construction

The ground shakes as steel strikes rock. Men wipe sweat and dust from their brow as they pave a new road. Construction like this, perhaps in your neighborhood or outside office buildings, while aggravating at times, will probably not strike ancient, biblical remnants of the Holy Land.

Such is not the case in the Palestinian city of Nablus.

Strategic affairs Minister Michael Biton promised new Palestinian road construction in Nablus would not cause harm to the ancient 3,200-year-old wall that belonged to the biblical site of Joshua's altar on Mount Ebal. Unfortunately for historic Jewish archeologists and history buffs, Biton's promise fell short.

Now, the Shomrim al Hanetzach organization, which focuses on the protection of Jewish archaeology, is calling for retribution for the construction, on the basis that further damage could crumble Joshua's altar.

Not only has the construction caused damage to the wall's exterior, but the Palestinian workers also used portions of the wall's remnants to form gravel for the road—which Religious Zionist Party head M.K. Bezalel Smotrich called an “insane failure.” He further states the “results are irreversible,” *The Jerusalem Post* reports.

Former Justice Minister M.K. Ayelet Shaked (Yamina), said, “There are relentless attempts to weaken our hold on our homeland and to obscure the Jewish people's glorious past in

the Land of Israel, both through terrorist acts and destruction of archaeology.”

Shaked continued, “The government knew that work was being done in this area and yet part of the archaeological site was destroyed.”

Conservative nongovernmental organizations like Shomrim al Hanetzach say not only does the construction cause leaders to be concerned for further damage to the altar, but they also say it speaks to the government’s lack of respect for heritage and is even a violation of the Oslo Accords. The Accords were created in 1993 between the government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization to negate violence in the Israeli-Palestine conflict.

“We call on the prime minister and government ministers to stop burying their heads in the sand, to start working before no more heritage remains,” Guy Derech, a member of Shomrim al Hanetzach, said.

Smotrich, an Israeli politician and deputy speaker of the Knesset, wants to do away with the civil administration once he has the power to do so. Currently, the area under construction falls in a province under the civil administration, which governs civilian life in Area C of the West Bank. Smotrich says civilian life should instead be governed by various ministries. {eo}