Justification for UNESCO World Heritage Nomination:

The Lower Jordan River Valley

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Introduction

Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME), is a unique organization that brings together Jordanian, Palestinian, and Israeli environmentalists. Our primary objective is the promotion of cooperative efforts to protect our shared environmental heritage. In so doing, we seek to advance both sustainable regional development and the creation of necessary conditions for lasting peace in our region.

In response to the demise of the Jordan River, FoEME has launched a campaign to assess the viability of placing the Lower Jordan River Valley on a “Tentative Listing” for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage program. The following feasibility study is a working document aimed at identifying the sites and artifacts of cultural and natural heritage warranting World Heritage Justification. The paper is meant to serve as an informative document for the purpose of facilitating discussion between experts. Therefore, each World Heritage criteria has been evaluated and all possible information pertaining to the justification of the criteria has been presented. Further needs and questions are included at the end of each explanation to serve as a basis for discussion and further in depth research.

The Selection criteria include:

i. To represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;

ii. To exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;

iii. To bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;

iv. To be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;

v. To be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;

vi. To be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.

vii. To contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;

viii. To be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;

ix. To be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;
x. To contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

The Lower Jordan River Valley as a whole is of great cultural, religious and geographical value to billions worldwide. As part of the 7,200 kilometer long Great Rift Valley, the Jordan River Valley is uniquely situated in the lowest area on Earth at the ecological junction of the Asian, African and European continents.

Mankind's narrative is rooted here with the Jordan Valley serving as the pathway for the movement out of Africa during the hominid period. It is believed that around 10,000 BCE hunter-gatherers began the shift towards settlement with the first cultivation of grains and later the domestication of animals in the Jordan River Valley. This shift towards sedentary life lead to a need for the creation of social organization including: governance, property and early forms of organized religion. It can be argued that these factors laid the groundwork for the development of civilization.

Later, the Valley became of central significance in the Old and New Testaments. The River itself is claimed to be the site of many biblical events and miracles. During the Greco-Roman period, the Romans claimed contiguous territorial authority on both sides of the River making four of the cities “Decapolis” cities. During the Byzantine period, sites of the baptism and those associated with the revelations of the Testament became places of pilgrimage around which churches and monasteries were built. The Early Moslem period saw the first buildings of the Umayyad dynasty and the identification of sites associated with the prophet Mohammed.

During the whole period the geo-climatic conditions were a generator for innovative changes in technologies, including buildings, mosaics, pottery and frescos, and new farming techniques, including the domestication of new crops and their ancillary installations.

FoEME encourages the use of this document to further the discussion about the World Heritage Justification of the Lower Jordan River Valley. As this is a working document, please feel free to comment on and respond to any or all of the criteria listed in the following document.
World Heritage Criteria: Jordan River Valley Justification

(i) Represent a masterpiece of human creative genius

Option 1:
According to the Palestinian National Authority Inventory of Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites of Potential Outstanding Universal Value in Palestine (2005), "The Neolithic town of Tell es-Sultan, and its fortification system, including the tower, represent a unique example of farming and urban development some 10,000 years ago, the earliest such structure known in the world and, as such, is a work of human creative genius. These features also indicated the early development of a strong communal and political system."

Option 2:
The Madaba Mosaic represents a masterpiece of creative human genius in that it is the earliest original map of the Holy Land in any form to have survived from antiquity. The 6th century mosaic, found in the remains of a Byzantine church, contains the earliest exact representation of the holy city "Jerusalem." It is of additional exceptional universal value, because unlike other mosaics of the time, it is a geographical map rather than a landscape mosaic (Jordan Tourism Board [JTB], n.d.).

Comparisons:

1. Ensemble of the Ferrapontov Monastery (Russian Federation, 2000): The wall paintings of Dionisy in the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin at Ferrapontov Monastery are the highest expression of Russian mural art in the 15th-16th centuries.

2. Saint Catherine Area (Egypt, 2002): The architecture of St Catherine's Monastery, the artistic treasures that it houses, and its domestic integration into a rugged landscape combine to make it an outstanding example of human creative genius.

Further Needs: Other mosaics of the period should be examined and the ICOMOS mosaic expert should be consulted.

(ii) Exhibit an important interchange of human values over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design.

Option 1:
The Lower Jordan River Valley (LJRV) demonstrates an important interchange of human values over a span of time in developments of early architecture and defense technologies. Architecture in the LJRV began during the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A (PPNA) period as the Natufians settled at Tell es-Sultan and built round huts from sun-dried brick. Jericho’s Tell is the first fortification ever discovered in the world. The
fortification was comprised of a great earthen rampart (surrounding the village) with a four to five meter high stone tower at its base. On top of that was a mud brick wall two meters thick and about six to eight meters high. At the crest of the embankment was a similar mud brick wall whose base was roughly 13 meters above ground level outside the retaining wall (Kenyon, 1970).

According to the Palestinian National Authority Inventory of Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites of Potential Outstanding Universal Value in Palestine (2005), "Tell es-Sultan shows an important interchange of human values during the Neolithic period on the development of architecture, particularly urban architecture and planning, and of construction technology."

The Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period (PPNB) was a time of great progress for the area's inhabitants. Peoples of this era began building rectangular shaped houses with rooms that were 6.5 meters by 5 meters or 3 meters by 7 meters, and were one to two stories. Homes were usually built with an open yard used for cooking. They used stones to build the foundation, while the remainder of the building was constructed of sun-dried bricks that were rectangular in shape with sharpened edges. The floor was formed of a mud layer topped by a layer of lime followed by soft lime, dyed red or light blue. The PPNB community also built a defensive wall around their village. According to Kathleen Kenyon (1970), “Their wall was freestanding only on the outer side. It was constructed by cutting it back into the house levels on the inner side, removing the corresponding levels on the outer side and piling the soil so derived on the inner side to form a terrace. On this terrace, houses were built right up the inner side of the wall.” However, towards the end of the PPNB period, the site at Jericho was abandoned. During the next period, the Chalcolithic, settlements were concentrated in Teleilat Ghassul.

On the Jordanian side of the LIJR, excavations at the Chalcolithic site of Teleilat Ghassul have uncovered brick houses built around 5000 BCE. Throughout the next 1,500 years there was an increase in the number of rooms and sanctuaries of the area residences. Each house consisted of one rectangular room with painted walls and a walled courtyard that contained a number of features, including hearths and pits. Larger buildings that most likely served communal functions were also uncovered. Teleilat Ghassul is the largest and most important Chalcolithic period site in the southern Levant, and is the type-site for the Ghassulian culture. According to J. Basil Hennessy’s (as cited in Lovell, 2004) excavations at Ghassul, the Ghassulian culture was indigenous to the southern Levant, which developed out of the Neolithic culture of Jericho. The major technological advance of this period was the first ever introduction of copper in the Southern Levant. Copper was used for the production of tools and ritual items.

During the Middle Bronze Age (1950-1550 BCE) innovative forms of fortification were constructed in Jericho and Pella. Both towns built ramparts made of earthen mounds surrounding their communities. The mound slopes were then covered in hard plaster, which made it slippery and difficult for an enemy to climb. Additionally, Pella’s residents built massive walls and watchtowers to enclose their city (Gibson & Negev, 2001; Kenyon, 1970).
Later in history, during the Crusader and Mamluk Periods, other innovations in defense architecture were pioneered in the LJRV. For example, Qala'at al-Rabadh Castle, located in Ajloun, was built between 1184-85 CE by the nephew of Saladin in the campaign against the Crusaders. The Castle is an excellent example of 12th century CE Arab-Islamic military architecture. It also exhibits an important interchange of human values during the Mamluk times, in which it was one station in a network of beacons and pigeon posts transmitting messages from Baghdad to Cairo. The Castle was built in response to the Crusader Castle of Belvior (Kochav HaYarden), which was built in the 12th century CE. It consists of an inner and outer fortress, and is the most complete Crusader Castle in the LJRV (Gibson & Negev, 2001; JTB, n.d.).

Option 2:

Jericho, the world's oldest city, exhibits an important interchange of human values on developments in town planning. Jericho is believed to be the world's oldest continuously inhabited city. The ability to expand the food supply allowed for the development of permanent settlements of greater size and complexity. Jericho grew into a fortified town complete with ditches, stone walls, and towers and contained approximately 2,000 residents (Kenyon, 1970).

Comparisons:

1. Samarkand-Crossroads of Cultures (Uzbekistan, 2001): The Historic town of Samarkand is a crossroad and melting pot of the world's cultures. Ensembles in Samarkand such as the Bibi Khanum Mosque and Registan Square played a seminal role in the development of Islamic architecture over the entire region, from the Mediterranean to the Indian subcontinent.

2. Bam and its Cultural Landscape (Iran, 2004): Bam developed at the crossroads of important trade routes at the southern side of the Iranian high plateau, and it became an outstanding example of the interaction of the various influences.

3. Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley (Afghanistan, 2003): The artistic and architectural remains of Bamiyan Valley, and an import Buddhist centre on the Silk Road, are an exceptional testimony to the interchange of Indian, Hellenistic, Roman, Sasanian influences as the basis for the development of a particular artistic expression in the Gandharan School, to this can be added the Islamic influence in a later period.

4. Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape (Mongolia, 2004): Demonstrates how a strong and persistent nomadic culture led to the development of extensive trade networks and the creation of large administrative, commercial, military and religious centers. The empires that these urban centers supported undoubtedly influenced societies across Asia and into Europe and in turn absorbed influence from both east and west in a true interchange of human values.
5. Kalwaria Zebrzydowska: The Mannerist Architectural and Park Landscape Complex and Pilgrimage Park (Poland, 1999): Kalwaria Zebrzydowska is an exceptional cultural monument in which the natural landscape was used as the setting for a symbolic representation in the form of chapels and avenues of the events of the Passion of Christ. The result is a cultural landscape of great beauty and spiritual quality in which natural and man-made elements combine in a harmonious manner.

6. Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape (South Africa, 2003): Contains evidence for an important interchange of human values that led to far-reaching cultural and social changes in Southern Africa between AD 900 and 1300.

**Further Needs:** Should this trace changes in pottery and architecture and technologies based on interactions with influences from invading peoples? Such as in Tell es-Sa’idiyyeh which shows the influence of the Sea Peoples in the change from bronze to iron use? Or the influence of Syrians on the development of Qanats? There are numerous examples. Should we trace the interchange between Byzantine and Islamic cultures? Should we look at the early architecture of synagogues and monasteries and trace how it changed through the ages with influences from other cultures? Should utensils be included?

(iii) Bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared.

**Option 1:**

The LJRV bears an exceptional testimony to the rise and fall of the Roman/Byzantine Decapolis cities. During the Greco-Roman period the reality of being part of a frontier zone created alliances that were encouraged by the central government in Rome. The Decapolis, while contested as to its real significance, is mentioned by Pliny as well as in the New Testament, as a contiguous territorial authority on both sides of the Jordan River, focused on a disputed number of "Decapolis" cities. The four city-states of Beit She'an and Scythopolis to the west of the Jordan River, and Gadara and Pella to the east of the River were central to the LJRV civilization (Khateeb, Nassar, & Turner, 2005).

The city-states were deeply impacted by Roman culture. Each of the cities was eventually rebuilt with a Roman-style grid of streets based around a central cardo and decumanus. The Romans also sponsored and built numerous temples and other public buildings.

During the 4th century, Christianity gradually became the region’s accepted religion and numerous churches and chapels were constructed. Sites of the baptism and those associated with the revelations of New Testament became places of pilgrimage around which churches and monasteries were built. Astonishing advancements in basilica type church building were made during Emperor Justinian’s reign (527-65 CE). One of the most characteristic features of Byzantine architecture is the mosaics. Mosaic floors
decorated many of the excavated churches throughout the Valley. The most famous of these mosaics is the 6th century Madaba Mosaic, discussed earlier (JTB, n.d.).

The Decapolis city of Pella, the place of refuge for 1st century CE Jerusalem Christians, is the site of one of Christianity’s earliest churches. Many of the site’s remains date back to the time of the *Pax Romana* including, the 1st Century CE Odeon, a 400-seat covered theatre located just below the Civic Center Complex; the public baths; a number of tombs and family mausoleums; and a Byzantine basilica from the 6th century CE known as the Byzantine Cathedral Church. The site is strategically situated on numerous important trade routes linking Europe and the Near East with Central Asia, China, and Mongolia (Bourke, 1997; JTB, n.d.; Khouri, 1981).

The Decapolis city of Umm Qais, considered the third most popular archaeological site in Jordan, contains ruins from the ancient city of Gadara. Currently under excavation, the Umm Qais houses numerous antiquities that are a testament to the Roman/Byzantine Decapolis. These antiquities include: a theater, a row of toman shops, one of the city's main gates and a rare 4th century five-aisle basilica. The basilica was built directly over a Roman-Byzantine tomb, which undoubtedly commemorates the location where the Byzantines believed Jesus performed the miracle of the Gadarene swine (JTB, n.d.; Gibson & Negev, 2001).

Beit She’an (Scythopolis), taken by the Romans in 64 BCE, was made the capital of the Decapolis. The city contains the best-preserved Roman theater of ancient Samaria as well as a hippodrome, cardo and other trademarks of the Roman Influence. A large Byzantine construction was excavated that is built in a semicircle consisting of an open market with separate rooms, most likely for shops, each of which contains a mosaic. One of the rooms holds the spectacular mosaic of Tyche, the Roman Goddess of good fortune. In back of the theatre archaeologists unearthed the remains of the biggest Byzantine bath in Israel. During the 6th century Byzantine period, a Christian monastery named the Monastery of Lady Mary was built including a Zodiac mosaic that is still preserved (Gibson & Negev, 2001; Gracier, 1999; Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MFA], 2001).

**Option 2:**

The LJRV provides an exceptional testimony to the foundations of the agrarian cultural tradition and the first agricultural revolution, arguably leading to the most significant developments in human history. Based on excavations and research by Kathleen Kenyon (1970), it is widely held that the spring at Tell-es-Sultan was one of the first sites of the Agricultural/Neolithic Revolution. Here, hunter-gathers made the transition from a nomadic to a settled existence as they began cultivating crops and domesticating animals for their subsistence. In addition to the beginning of settled agricultural communities, the Agricultural Revolution was of paramount importance to the foundations of civilization. Sedentary life led to the creation of new systems of social organization based on property, which led to the establishment of new regulations. Property also created an incentive to develop improvements, such as wells or irrigation in order to maximize the productivity of one’s property. Therefore, the people of the agricultural revolution
unknowingly laid the foundations for cultural advancements, and provided the framework for institutions and practices that would lead the rise of civilization (Kenyon, 1970).

Tell-es-Sultan documents the history of agriculture at Jericho in the LJRV. Agriculture dates back to the PPNA society (8350-7370 BCE). Evidence of domesticated emmer wheat, barely and pulses have been found at the site, which attest to plant domestication. A large quantity of animal bones and a smaller amount of arrowheads (in proportion to animal bones), were found at the site, which demonstrate that hunting was still an element of the PPNA societies economy. According to Professor Zeuner (as cited in Kenyon, 1970) there is evidence of the domestication of the goat at Tel es-Sultan. He also holds that the abundance of cow, pig and sheep bones is evidence to the beginning of domesticated herding (Kenyon, 1970). The next period, PPNB (7220-5850 BCE), provides evidence to an expanded range of domesticated plants. Also linked to this period are cult objects such as preserved human skulls whose facial features are reconstructed from plaster and eyes set with shell, which demonstrate communal social evolution (Jericho Municipality; Kenyon, 1970).

According to Kathleen Kenyon (1970), “Palestine, as represented by Jericho, can therefore put forward good claim to be one of the places in which there took place the transition from a nomadic way of life to the settled existence that is the prerequisite of all development towards civilization.”

More recently, excavations at Gilgal uncovered an 11,400-year-old fig, which leads archaeologists to believe that hunter-gatherers were cultivating fruit prior to the domestication of wheat and legumes around Tell-es-Sultan. This finding is of outstanding importance in understanding the agricultural revolution. Based on this evidence, archaeologists now believe that the transition to sedentary agricultural villages was a much longer process (Norris, 2006).

Comparisons:
1. Quadi Qadisha (the Holy Valley) and the Forest of the Cedars of God (Horsh Arz el-Rab) (Lebanon, 1998): The Qadisha Valley has been the site of monastic communities continuously since the earliest years of Christianity. Likewise, the LJRV has been the site of countless religious miracles and important interactions between man and God in three major religions.

2. Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape (Mongolia, 2004): Underpinning all the development within the Orkhon Valley for the past two millennia has been a strong culture of nomadic pastoralism. This culture is still a revered and indeed central part of a Mongolian society and is highly respected as a 'noble way to live in harmony with the landscape.'

3. Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape (South Africa, 2003): The remains in the Mapungubwe cultural landscape are a remarkably complete testimony to the growth and subsequent decline of the Mapungubwe state, which at its height was the largest kingdom in the African sub-continent.
4. Saint Catherine Area (Egypt, 2002): St Catherine's Monastery is one of the very early outstanding examples in Eastern tradition of a Christian monastic settlement located in a remote area. It demonstrates an intimate relationship between natural grandeur and spiritual commitment.

5. Frontiers of the Roman Empire (Germany, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 1987): The site consists of sections of the border line of the Roman Empire at its greatest extent in the 2nd century A.D., part of what is known as the “Roman Limes.” All together, the Limes stretched over 5,000 km from the Atlantic coast of northern Britain, through Europe to the Black Sea, and from there to the Red Sea and across North Africa to the Atlantic coast. Vestiges in this site include remains of the ramparts, walls and ditches, watchtowers, forts, and civilian settlements, which accommodated tradesmen, craftsmen and others who serviced the military.

(iv) An outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.

The castles, monasteries, mosaics, pottery and tells of the LJRV, make the area an outstanding example of a Valley that illustrates several significant stages in human history.

Prehistoric

Ubeidiya, located 3.5 km south of the Sea of Galilee on the west bank of the Jordan River, is a prehistoric site believed to date back approximately 1.4 million years. Numerous hominid instruments were found throughout the layers of Ubeidiya. These tools include chopping tools, polyhedrons, spheroids, discoidals, hand axes, borers, flakes, side scrapers, notches and denticulates. According to the Temper Heritage Management Plan of Ubeidiya and Sha’ar Hagolan (2003), "the site of Ubeidiya yielded over 15,000 stone artifacts and thus, from the perspective of lithic assemblages, it is the richest site out of Africa known to date."

Pre-Pottery Neolithic and Pottery Neolithic Periods (8500-4500 BCE)

Human history, as traced through types of building, architecture, technology and landscape ensembles in the LJRV, dates back to Neolithic times at Tell-es-Sultan. As discussed earlier, Tell-es-Sultan represents 10,000 years of uninterrupted inhabitancy. From here grew the town of Jericho, which is believed to be the world’s oldest city. Stone Age settlers of the area engineered the first form of irrigation, enabling them to continuously inhabit the same land. One of the most important features of the site is the remains of a large stone tower and fortifications dating back to 7000 BCE, which is the earliest urban fortification known in the world. Innovations in architecture of the time include the beginning use of sun-dried mud brick for building and the use of lime plaster on walls. Additional remains have been found in other areas of the Jordan River Valley such as Tell esh-Shuneh, Tel Abu Habil, Ghrubba in the East Bank of Jordan, and
villages such as Ain Ghazal, Beidha and Basta Wadi Yarmuk also boasts a Neolithic pottery culture (Khouri, 1981).

Pottery making was developed in the area during the late Neolithic period. According to Rami Khouri (1981), pottery first appeared east of Bab Al Dthraa, around 4500 BCE. Excavations have uncovered earlier efforts to fashion pottery from plaster, however it was not until the late Neolithic period that populations began to systematically create vessels from clay. It is likely that pottery making was introduced to the area from craftsmen arriving from the civilizations developing in Mesopotamia.

During this period, the Yarmukian people of Sha'ar Hagolan forged technological innovations in pottery production. Earliest forms of pottery within the Eastern Mediterranean region were produced here in the Yarmuk River Valley. The pottery vessels that were excavated were decorated with paint and/or incision. This style of decoration has been coined "Sha'ar Hagolan Decoration" (Garfinkel & Miller, 2002).

According to excavations conducted by Yosef Garfinkel (2002), Sha'ar Hagolan dates back 8,000 years. It is believed that between 2,000 and 3,000 people lived in the town that covered 200 dunams. Sha'ar Hagolan is of particular importance in the history of large-scale architecture dating back to the Neolithic period. Excavations have uncovered massive complexes composed of one large courtyard surrounded by a number of smaller rooms. Also uncovered was a network of streets paved with pebbles and mud plaster. These architectural techniques are still used in many traditional Mediterranean societies (Garfinkel & Miller, 2002).

**Chalcolithic Period (4500-3300 BCE)**

During the Chalcolithic period, the settlement at Jericho was abandoned and occupation began to appear at Teleilat Ghassul in Jordan. Information concerning the Chalcolithic period was first derived from excavations at Teleilat Ghassul, which makes it a site of exceptional universal importance. It is the type-site for the local version of the Chalcolithic period, termed Ghassulian, which is found throughout the Levant. Findings from Teleilat Ghassul indicate major advancements in pottery production and the introduction of copper technology. During this era, communities began using the potter’s wheel to make small jars, which was a profound advancement. Another pottery innovation was the production of a V-shaped goblet. The site contains remains of mud brick houses built around 5000 BCE that grew over the next 1,500 years to include multi-room complexes and sanctuaries. The site consists of at least 9 occupation phases (Lovell, 2004).

In the foothills just above Teleilat Ghassul are the remains of hundreds of simple structures called “dolmens.” These structures are composed of two vertical stone blocks, covered with a larger third block and sometimes closed off by a fourth block on one side. The dolmens are of great significance because they represent humanity’s first attempts at extensive building and are found nowhere in the Middle East other than Jordan (Khouri, 1981).
Additional examples include, the first remains from Tell Deir Alla are of a village of the Chalcolithic period (Khouri, 1988). Jericho, Tell al-Far’a and Sha’ar Hagolan all contain cultural materials from the Chalcolithic period (Gonen, 1992).

Tel-Tsaf, which is located near Beit She'an, is a town that dates back to the 5th century BCE. The site is of particular importance because little is known about the Chalcolithic period. Excavations at the town, which was inhabited only during this one period, found mud brick walls, installations, pottery and flint remains indicating the presence of architecture and technology in the town. An exceptional type of pottery group was also reported, characterized by red and black paint on white slip (Tel-Tsaf Ware). Such pottery is known only from three other sites in Jordan (Gonen, 1992).

The Bronze Age/Canaanite Period (3300-1200 BCE)

The Early Bronze Age (3300-2100 BCE) pottery period was characterized by the use of the handle and burial pottery. A great deal of the evidence about the Early Bronze Age comes from the pottery of the time. It was very abundant at all the sites. Perhaps one of the most impressive improvements in the technical quality of the pottery was resultant from the Kiln's use for firing and of an increased use of the potter’s wheel. Pottery of the Middle Bronze Age (2100-1500 BCE) was completely different from the previous era. During this period the Hyksos entered the area, introducing new cultural influences. Consequently, a completely new style of pottery and bronze weapons began to develop. Additionally, fortified towns flourished during this time (Khouri, 1981).

During the Bronze Age, the Canaanite cities of Jericho, Tell al-Far’a, Tell an-Nasbe and Tell at-Tell were established in the LJR. These cities grew from agricultural settlements that were surrounded by defensive walls. The defensive walls, as well their agricultural economies, enabled these cities to attain substantial political strength in their commercial relationships with surrounding inhabitants (Khouri, 1981).

Tell el-Hayyat was a farming community found approximately 7 km from Pella. Hayyat was inhabited throughout the Middle Bronze Age (2100-1500 BCE). Hayyat typifies agrarian village life in early civilizations and suggests an enhanced economic autonomy in Middle Bronze Age societies (Falconer, 1995; Khouri, 1988).

The Migdol Temple, found at Pella, was constructed around 1650 BCE and inhabited continuously until 850 BCE. According to University of Sydney archaeologist, Stephen Bourke (as cited in Saldana, 2002), it is the largest known Bronze and Iron Age Temple and stands as a testament to the transition to monotheism. The building itself illustrates significant stages in local religious history. Resulting from the 250 artifacts and remains from the different stages of building, occupation and destruction, Bourke’s team has been able to trace the evolution of man’s belief in a monotheistic God. Additionally, the time and location of Migdol Temple’s erection coincide with the Old Testament’s account of the beginning time and location of monotheism (Bourke, 1997; Saldana, 2002).
Excavations at Tell Deir Alla, assert that the main mound was first settled at the end of the Middle Bronze Age, around 1600 BCE. Several architectural sites such as a sanctuary complex, treasury, late Bronze houses, and the remains of an Iron Village were uncovered. One of the most important discoveries from Deir Alla are clay tablets inscribed with, what are believed to be, the first written records in Jordan (Khouri, 1981). Additionally, cultural artifacts such as pottery from different periods, vessels, beads and bronze armor were found. A temple dating back to 1500 BCE was built at Tell Deir Alla, which is most likely the ancient cultic and market center of the biblical Succoth, visited by Gideon as he chased the Midianites back to the east (Judges 8:5-16) (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan [HKJ], n.d.).

Beit She'an became a settled town during the late Bronze Age. Town inhabitants lived in multi-roomed houses. Excavations of the area have uncovered what is believed to have been a public storehouse or granary made of fine bricks and a roof covering of reeds and plaster. Additionally, numerous pottery vessels were discovered. At the end of the 12th century BCE, two temples were built on the ruins of an earlier Egyptian temple. Many ceramic cultic stands were uncovered in these temples’ ruins. According to excavations, Beit She'an was typified by Egyptian culture during the late Bronze Age. Remains of four temples were uncovered, which are extremely similar to those of Egyptian design. Based on these findings, archeologists believe that Beit She'an was an Egyptian central administrative city during the period (Gibson & Negev, 2001; Gracier, 1999; MFA, 2001).

The architecture of the LJR markedly changed during the Bronze Age. At Jericho, the construction of houses was much more substantial than earlier periods. Communities began using timber in the construction of homes. Moreover, they started building silos for the storage of grain for extended time periods, as shown in Beit She'an (Kenyon, 1970).

**Iron Age (1200-586 BCE)**

During the Iron Age, the inhabitants of Tell Deir Alla began smelting metal, and simultaneously developing domestic mud brick architecture. Iron and bronze were used to forge weapons (Khouri, 1981).

Tell Mazar, which is located 3 km east of the Jordan River, houses an open-air sanctuary dating to the Iron Age. It is considered to be one of the most important Iron Age sites in Jordan. An 11th century sanctuary was excavated at the site. The site was almost continuously occupied from the Late Bronze Age to the Persian Age (Khouri, 1981).

A large temple was uncovered in Pella that dates back to 1300-900 BCE. Excavations have uncovered a number of imports and luxury goods and a ceramic cult stand. Additionally, a large mud brick building was uncovered which is believed to have been a civic building (Bourke, 1997).
**Roman Period (63 BCE – 323 CE)**

Findings from this period are of paramount importance to dating the time and location of Jesus Christ’s life. Additionally, excavations have enabled us to understand the true influence Rome had on the buildings and architectural ensembles of the period in the cities of the LJRV.

Bethany beyond the Jordan is an excellent example of the building and technological ensemble that commemorates the Baptism of Jesus and subsequent development that occurred in conjunction with the rise of Christianity. Excavations have revealed a walled monastery that includes at least four churches and chapels, a “prayer hall,” a sophisticated water conveyance and storage system, three pools, and a surrounding protective wall. Ceramic water pipes that brought water to Bethany beyond the Jordan have been identified some 300 meters southeast from the main settlement and traced to the nearby wadis Kefrein, Ramah, and Gharabah. The pipes transported water into a settling tank near the “prayer hall,” the water was then transported through pipes to a stone aqueduct followed by two smaller settling tanks, and ultimately into a reservoir/pool and cistern. The main aqueduct continued over stone arches to supply the monastery and its three baptism pools. The main reservoir was dug out of natural lisan marl. A vault system supported the roof, and a mosaic floor was placed over the roof. The pottery from this structure suggests a late Byzantine date. Domestic pottery was found at the site that confirms it was used during the time of Christ (Gibson & Negev, 2001; Jordan Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities; JTB, n.d.).

In 64 BCE Beit She’an (Scythopolis) was taken by the Romans, rebuilt, and made into the Capital of the Decapolis. Scythopolis was a testament to the Roman Empire’s impressive urban planning. The city was surrounded by enormous freestanding gateways that provided a visual boundary. The city still contains remains of the best-preserved Roman theater of ancient Samaria as well as a hippodrome and cardo (Gibson & Negev, 2001; MFA, 2001).

Pella’s archeological remains include numerous examples of Roman architecture, which illustrate Roman influence in the LJRV during this period. The site contains remains of one of Christianity’s earliest churches. Many of the remains date back to the time of the *Pax Romana* including: The 1st Century CE Odeon, a 400-seat covered theatre located just below the Civic Center Complex; the public baths; a number of tombs and family mausoleums: a Byzantine basilica from the 6th century CE known as the Byzantine Cathedral Church (Bourke, 1997; Gibson & Negev, 2001; JTB, n.d.).

Umm Qais (Gadara) was one of the Roman Decapolis cities, which, during its glory days, was a strong fortress near the Yarmuk River. Remains include those of two theaters, a basilica, and a temple (Gibson & Negev, 2001; JTB, n.d.).
Byzantine Period (324-640 CE)

The Churches, monasteries and mosaics of this period are a tangible testimony to the increase in pilgrimages during this time due to Emperor Constantine and his mother Helen. Moreover, they are evidence of the monastic life that spread during this period from Egypt to Syria, Palestine and Anatolia. They demonstrate the stage of human history wherein Christianity became the official religion of Byzantine states, beginning under Constantine the Great’s rule.

Moreover, rich finds in architecture and tombs indicated that Pella was a prosperous town during this era. Byzantine civic buildings, a theater and three churches have been uncovered. Deir Hijle, a Byzantine monastery located 10 km south east of Jericho was founded in the 5th century CE.

As noted earlier, the Byzantine Madaba Mosaic Map created in the 6th century CE, is of great importance as it is the earliest map of the region and contains the most exact representation of Jerusalem. This map is one key in developing scholarly knowledge about the physical layout of Jerusalem. During this period the Church of the Map of the Hippolutus Mansion, the Church of the Virgin Mary, the Church of Prophet Elijah, the Church of the Martyrs (Al-khadir), the Burnt Palace and the Church of the Sunna’ family were all built. Other Churches in the area include The Memorial Church of Moses at Mount Nebo (Gibson & Negev, 2001; JTB, n.d.).

During the 6th century Byzantine period, the Christian Monastery of Lady Mary was built in Beit She'an. This monastery contains a zodiac mosaic that is still preserved today (Gibson & Negev, 2001; MFA, 2001).

During the 6th-7th centuries CE four churches were built on the hill at Bethany beyond the Jordan. The largest of these Byzantine churches contained a partly preserved mosaic floor with the following Greek inscription: “By the help of the grace of Christ our God the whole monastery was constructed in the time of Rhortorios, the most God-Beloved presbyter and abbot. May God the Savior give him mercy.” The second church also contains remains of a mosaic with small cross motifs, although much more fragmentary than the first. Finally, the third church seems to have been built around a natural cave on the west side of the hill that was used in the days of John the Baptist. Very little remains from the fourth church other than some floor patches with cross-decorated colored mosaics. Byzantine period remains at Bethany beyond the Jordan demonstrate great efforts during the period to enhance the productivity of water by building cisterns, pools, aqueducts, and pipes. The most significant finding from this area is a Byzantine monastery that is comprised of churches, baptism and water storage pools, water systems and chapels. Another Byzantine Church was built around the cave where John the Baptist is believed to have lived and baptized. Closer to the Jordan River are four other Byzantine churches and large pools with an extensive water system, dating to the 5th and 6th centuries CE (Jordan Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities [JMTA], 2003; JTB, n.d.).
Another little-known legacy of the LJRV are the Qanats, short, rock-cut spring tunnels or slab-covered surface canals. The Romans and Byzantines built numerous aqueducts and wells, improved irrigation techniques in the region and expanded arable land. Every qanat in Jordan is adjacent to Roman and Byzantine settlements or outposts. Scholars believe that Jordan's qanats were built by the Romans and used by the Byzantines from the 1st century CE to the 7th century CE. Some of these qanats continued to be used during the early Islamic period, when the Umayyad caliphate (661-750 CE) controlled agriculture and trade in this region. Irrigation systems in the Jordan Valley were maintained under the Umayyad caliphate. However, by 750 CE, the Islamic Abbasids had conquered the Umayyads and established the caliphate in Baghdad. Under their rule, many settlements and agricultural sites were abandoned and overrun by Bedouin tribesmen, and with the exception of one, none of Jordan's qanats were used after this time (Lightfoot, 1997).

**Umayyad and Abbasid Period (636-1099 CE)**

Hisham Palace (Khirbat al Mafjar), built in 724 CE, was the impressive desert palace of the 10th Umayyad Caliph Hisham (the last significant representative of the dynasty). The palace includes multiple baths, mosques and colonnaded courts. Many mosaics and stucco ornaments were uncovered, and are outstanding examples of early Islamic art and architecture. The palace contains the “tree of life” mosaic (Gibson & Negev, 2001; Jericho Municipality, n.d.).

**Crusader Period (1099-1250 CE)**

The Crusader Castle of Belvoir (Kochav HaYarden) was built in the 12th century CE. It consists of an inner and outer fortress, and remains the most complete Crusader Castle in the LJRV.

Aljoun Castle (Qal’at Al-Rabed) was built in 1184 by the nephew of Salaheddin (Saladin) in reaction to the Crusader attacks from northern Jordan and the castle of Belvoir. The Castle served as a strategic military watch post that protected the trade routes during the 12th-15th Centuries. Aljoun Castle is one of the best-preserved and most complete examples of medieval Arab-Islamic military architecture. Among its main features are a surrounding dry moat, a drawbridge into the main entrance, the fortified entrance gate (with decorative pigeon stone carvings), a massive south tower, and several other towers on all sides. Inside, the castle is a labyrinth of vaulted passages, winding staircases, long ramps, enormous rooms that served as dining halls, dormitories, and stables, a total of 11 water cisterns, and the private quarters of the Lord of the Castle (complete with a small stone bathtub and rectangular windows that convert into arrow-slits for defensive purposes) (JTB, n.d.; Jordan Media Group, 1995; HKJ, n.d.).

**Ayyubid-Mamluk Period (1187-1516 CE)**

During this period, the Jordan Valley reached its highest level of agricultural productivity. The Mamluks pioneered irrigation innovations that led to a comprehensive sugar cane industry. They used the water to power the sugar mills to process sugar cane.
During this period, the Valley contained at least 20 mills, some of which were being used up until the 1960s. Aqueducts and simple stone canals enabled the Mamluks to utilize water from the wadis to power the mills. It is possible that the water was then recycled to irrigate the fields. Many of these sugar mills were located between Tell es-Sultan and the Mount of Temptation (Khouri, 1981).

**Additional Technological Ensemble: Bridges and Khans—Crossing the River Jordan**

The crossing of rivers has always had special meaning. The routes and civilizations that have crossed and walked the Valley have termed the phrase to ‘Cross the Jordan’ predating that of the Rubicon. Located by Naharayim are three historical bridges: the Roman Bridge, the Ottoman Bridge and the British Mandate Bridge. These bridges serve as a visual example of the Valley's historical crossing points and are of equal importance to both Israel and Jordan. The Roman Bridge, built over 2000 years ago, was erected by Roman rulers, connecting the Roman cities of that period: Beit She'an, Pella and Um Qais. During the Ottoman Empire, a railway bridge was built, connecting the Mediterranean port of Akko with Damascus. In the 1920s, the British Mandate added a third bridge, for motor vehicles, linking the area with Tiberias and Damascus. The many khans and custom houses, that criss-cross the Valley, stand as symbols of interaction and coexistence in relation to the free movement and exchange of peoples, customs and ideas (Khateeb et al, 2005).

More recently, the Old Naharayim Power Plant, stands as a symbol of one of the first extensive attempts to increase the viability of the land before Israel became a state. Pinchas Rutenberg, founder of the Palestine Electric Company, utilized the confluence of the Jordan and Yarmuk Rivers to provide power for populations on both sides of the River. This included the building of the first dams in the area.

**Comparisons:**

1. **Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape (Mongolia, 2004):** The Orkhon Valley is an outstanding example of a Valley that illustrates several significant states in human history. First and foremost it was the centre of the Mongolian Empire; secondly it reflects a particular Mongolian variation of Turkish power; thirdly, the Tuvkhun hermitage monastery was the setting for the development of a Mongolian form of Buddhism; and fourthly, Khar Balgas, reflects the Uighur urgan culture in the capital of the Uighur Empire. Collectively, the remains in the site reflect the symbiotic links between nomadic, pastoral societies and their administrative and religious centers, and the importance of the Orkhon Valley in the history of central Asia.

2. **Old Bridge Area of the Old City of Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2005):** With the reconstruction of the Old Bridge and its surroundings, the symbolic power and meaning of the City of Mostar, as an exceptional and universal symbol of coexistence of communities from diverse cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, has been reinforced and strengthened, underlining the unlimited efforts of human solidarity for peace and powerful cooperation in the face of overwhelming catastrophes.
3. Samarkand - Crossroads of Cultures (Uzbekistan, 2001): The historic town of Samarkand illustrates in its art, architecture, and urban structure the most important states of Central Asian cultural and political history from the 13th century to the present day.

4. Three Castles, Defensive Wall and Ramparts of the Market-Town of Bellinzona (Switzerland, 2000): The Bellinzona site consists of a group of fortifications grouped around the castle of Castelgrande, which stands on a rocky peak looking out over the entire Ticino Valley. Running from the castle, a series of fortified walls protect the ancient town and block the passage through the Valley. A second castle (Montebello) forms an integral part of the fortifications, while a third but separate castle (Sasso Corbaro) was built on an isolated rocky promontory south-east of the other fortifications. The fortified ensemble of Bellinzona is an outstanding example of a late medieval defensive structure guarding a key strategic Alpine pass.

5. Historic Fortified City of Carcassonne (France, 1997): The historic town of Carcassonne is an excellent example of a medieval fortified town whose massive defenses were constructed on walls dating from Late Antiquity. It is of exceptional importance by virtue of the restoration work carried out in the second half of the 19th century by Viollet-le-Duc, which had a profound influence on subsequent developments in conservation principles and practice.

6. Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley (Afghanistan, 2003): The cultural landscape and archaeological remains of the Bamiyan Valley represent the artistic and religious developments which from the 1st to the 13th centuries characterized ancient Bakhtria, integrating various cultural influences into the Gandhara school of Buddhist art. The Bamiyan Valley is an outstanding example of a cultural landscape which illustrates a significant period in Buddhism.

Further Needs: Need to fill in the gaps for information concerning the Umayyad period. More information should be gathered concerning the khans throughout the Valley.

(v) Be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.

The Lower Jordan River Valley is an outstanding example of traditional human settlement and land use as represented by the agrarian revolution, which arguably led to some of the most significant developments in human history.

Based on excavations and research by Kathleen Kenyon (1970), it is widely held that the spring at Tell es-Sultan, Ain es Sultan, is one of the first sites of the Agricultural/Neolithic Revolution. The fertile alluvial soil that surrounded the spring attracted Natufian hunter-gatherers to begin the process of plant and animal domestication, thereby enabling them to settle permanently and build hut-like dwellings. It is believed that the
Stone Age settlers of the area engineered the first form of irrigation, which enabled them to continuously inhabit the same land.

Kenyon’s (1970) inferences were partly based on the size of Tell es-Sultan. The wild grain, animals and spring within reach of the settlement could not have supported the approximate 2,000 inhabitants of Jericho during this time. Therefore, Kenyon (1970) deduced that the early settlers utilized agricultural and irrigation systems to increase the food production necessary to sustain their peoples. The ability to expand the food supply allowed for the development of permanent settlements of greater size and complexity. Jericho, therefore, grew into a fortified town complete with ditches, stone walls, and towers.

Kenyon (1970) also maintained that severe deforestation occurred in Jericho during the end of the early Bronze Age, which resulted in erosion and permanently altered the area’s ecosystem. The site contains evidence of large quantities of burnt wood from roofs and from horizontal beams used in the town walls. Deforestation may also have been a byproduct of the beginning of agriculture. As societies became sedentary, they cleared more and more land for the harvesting of crops. Therefore, populations in the area began to decline and move to new settlements.

Although Jericho has widely been held as the archetypical site of the agrarian revolution, more recent excavations throughout the Valley have uncovered new information that adds to the story of the revolution and traditional land use. For example, archeologists believe that ancient fig remains at Gilgal are evidence that ancient peoples grew fig trees some 11,400 years ago, making the fruit the earliest domesticated crop (Norris, 2006).

Sha’ar Hagolan is another excellent example of traditional human settlement as hunter-gathers made the transition to sedentary agricultural villages and pioneered monumental architecture. Excavations at this site have uncovered a Neolithic village dating back to 5500-5000 BCE. At the center of the village were large courtyards with an enormous public building in the center, which were also surrounded by a number of smaller rooms made with sun-dried mud bricks. The village also contained an advanced street network paved with pebbles and mud plaster (Garfinkel & Miller, 2002).

Like the settlers of Jericho who depended on the springs of the area, the people of Sha'ar Hagolan settled close to the Yarmuk River. The River provided humans and domesticated animals with a water source that was utilized for agriculture, drinking water and a source of mud and clay from which bricks and pottery were fashioned. Additionally, the River provided an abundance of pebbles that were utilized as follows: flint pebbles for the lithic industry, basalt pebbles for building and construction, and limestone pebbles for anthropomorphic figurines (Garfinkel, 2003).

The Drying of Jordan’s desert in the Late Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic Periods caused inhabitants to settle in the Jordan Valley along the Jordan River and nearby side wadis. According Rami Khouri (1981), evidence of villages in the Jordanian deserts ceases to exist around 6000 BCE. This leads to an interesting conclusion about the interaction
between early societies and their environment. Populations seem to have moved out of the desert and towards the water sources of the LJRV. These settlers built small primitive farming societies, whose homes were made mostly of clay or were stone-lined circular pits with reed roofs. However, later on in the Chalcolithic Period communities began moving to the foothills and setting up fully developed villages like Teleilat Ghassul (Khouri, 1981).

During the Early Bronze Age, populations returned to the lower side wadis of the Valley. Again, unfortified farming communities began to spring up throughout the Lower Valley. Based on the many basalt rock saddle querns that were used to prepare grains that have been uncovered, it can be inferred that the farming was extremely active during this time. However, during the Middle Bronze Age the region became increasingly dry. Individuals therefore moved to hilltops and set up fortified cities, such as Tell es Sa‘idiyeh and Pella. Tell el-Hayyat was a farming community found approximately 7 km from Pella (Falconer, 1995). Tell el Hayyat was inhabited throughout the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 BCE) and typifies agrarian village life in early civilizations (Khouri, 1981).

Comparisons:
1. Madriu-Perafita-Claror Valley (Andorra, 2004): The Valley is a microcosm of the way its inhabitants have harvested the scarce resources of the high Pyrenees over the past millennia to create a sustainable living environment in harmony with the mountain landscape. The Valley is a reflection of an ancient communal system of land management that has survived for over 700 years.

2. Agricultural Landscape of Southern Öland (Sweden, 2000): Södra Öland is an outstanding example of human settlement, making the optimum use of diverse landscape types on a single island.

3. Bam and its Cultural Landscape (Iran, 2004): The cultural landscape of Bam is an outstanding representation of the interaction of man and nature in a desert environment.

Further needs: Research the development of agriculture and irrigation in the Jordan River Valley, including a comparison to current day practices. The concept of deforestation must be examined more closely.

(vi) Be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.

Prior to the creation of organized religion, hunter-gatherers began to create religious customs, myths, gods and cultic figurines. Archeologists believe that the transition to settled agricultural communities, which occurred in the Lower Jordan River Valley, created a need for societies to establish gods responsible for cosmic and social order.

Throughout the LJRV there are key examples of cultic figurines and artwork that were discovered. The most outstanding characteristic of the Sha‘ar Hagolan Yarmukian culture was their art. The artistic and cultic objects that were uncovered include engraved and
incised pebbles and small stone and clay figurines. Anthropomorphic statuettes of clay were assembled from separately made body parts. The facial features, particularly the protruding eyes, are somewhat grotesque. The large number of fertility figurines, probably representing the "goddess mother," reflects a cult based on the life cycle (Garfinkel, 2003). Scholars believe the female figurine in Neolithic art is actually a prototype of the “mother goddess,” who symbolizes all aspects of the fertility concept: human fertility, as well as that of flora and fauna (Garfinkel, 2003). Ghassulian communities used the walls of their homes for artistic and ceremonial purposes, painting bright images of masked men, stars and geometric motifs that were most likely connected with religious beliefs (Khoury, 1981). Findings at Jericho contain early forms of religious ritual. These include greenstone amulets, special treatment of the heads of some of the dead and burial practices (Kenyon, 1970).

The LJRV is directly and tangibly related with many of the religious traditions, beliefs, and artistic works of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Moreover, it is closely associated with many of the events that were the basis of these religions. The Bible, the most famous literary work of genius, mentions the Jordan River 175 times in the Old Testament and 15 times in the New Testament (Khateeb et al, 2005; Turner, 2004).

The Garden of Eden is believed to have been located along the banks of the Jordan River, in the northern Jordan River Valley near Wadi Rayyan and Beit She'an. This is not surprising, given the area’s lush vegetation and rich animal life. In the book of Genesis, God Calls the Jordan Valley plain around the Dead Sea “the Garden of the Lord” (Genesis 13:10) (HKJ, n.d.). Some early biblical traditions interpret the Genesis 2:10 account of a river that “flowed out of Eden to water the garden” as a description of the upper Jordan River and Valley. After being expelled from the Garden of Eden, these traditions say Adam stood in the waters of the Jordan River for 40 days, praying and begging forgiveness from God.

The Jordan Valley is clearly mentioned in the book of Genesis 13:10-11 when Lot chose the area as his territory as he parted from Abraham, "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar. So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley" (Genesis 13:10-11). Later, the Valley became home to the Israelites and the River became the natural border of the twelve tribes of Israel (HKJ, n.d.).

Mount Nebo is the Mountain from which, according to the bible, Moses ascended and saw the “Promised Land” that he would never enter. It is also the site of a 4th century sanctuary that commemorates Moses’ death place. The bible says that God stopped the waters of the Jordan from flowing and allowed Joshua to lead the remaining tribesmen across the River (Joshua 3: 14-17) (JMTA, 2003). This reportedly took place right by Mount Nebo at a ford directly opposite Jericho called Beit ʿAbara. Beit ʿAbara is also believed to be the place where the Prophets Elijah and Elisha parted the River and crossed to the east side. From the East side of the River, Elijah ascended into heaven “on a chariot of fire and horses of fire” (2 Kings 2:5-14) (JTB, n.d.).
Bethany beyond the Jordan was located at or around Tell el-Kharrar. This was the location where John was Baptizing and Jesus was Baptized (John 1:28; Matthew 3:13-17) (Khouri, 1999). Following his baptism, Jesus’ spent forty days in the wilderness east of the River Jordan, where he fasted and resisted the temptations of Satan (Mark 1:13, Matthew 4:1-11). Additionally, Tell el-Kharrar is also called Elijah's Hill, because it is believed to be the place from which the Prophet Elijah ascended to heaven. During the Byzantine Period, the entire length of the Wadi Kharrar formed part of the early Christian pilgrimage route between Jerusalem, the Jordan River, Bethany beyond the Jordan and Mount Nebo. Excavations have uncovered remains of a Byzantine monastery, a large Byzantine church complex, several small churches, chapels, monks’ hermitages, caves, cells, a ceramic pipeline bringing water to Bethany beyond the Jordan and a pilgrims’ station (khan) on route to Mount Nebo. These findings demonstrate the role the Jordan River played in Christian faith and the developments that were brought about by pilgrims coming to visit this most holy site (HKJ, n.d.; JTB, n.d.).

The Bible mentions Beit She'an as one of the Canaanite cities, which was not conquered by the Israelites under Joshua (Joshua 17:11-12; Judges 1:27). The city is again mentioned after the Philistines’ defeat of King Saul’s Israelite army on Mt. Gilboa, when they impaled the bodies of King Saul and his sons on the walls of Beit She'an (1 Samuel 31:10-12). Beit She'an is also mentioned as an important city in the fifth administrative district of King Solomon (1 Kings 4:12) (Gracier, 1999).

Migdol Temple, in Pella, is the largest Bronze and Iron Age Temple known to man. According to excavations by Stephen Bourke it was in use continuously from 1650 to 850 BCE. The Migdol Temple holds within it hundreds of religious artifacts that point to five very distinct phases of occupation and rebuilding. Constructed and reconstructed numerous times, the Migdol Temple records changing cult practices during the Canaanite Hyksos ascendancy, then again during the Egyptian New Kingdom Empire, the Philistine Era and the Age of the Local Kingdoms (Saldana, 2002).

Tell Deir Alla has been identified with the biblical Succoth (Gen. 33:17; Josh. 13:27; Judg. 8:5; Kgs. 7:46). A sanctuary complex was built at Deir Alla during the Late Bronze Age. Here, a holy of holies built on a small mound and surrounded by pillars was found. It is believed to have been an open-air sanctuary, but was destroyed in the early 12th century BCE. The most spectacular finding of the site is the longest early Aramaic inscription ever found that mentions the biblical prophet Balaam. Mahanaim, three miles east of Deir Alla, is where Jacob camped on his way to meet his brother Esau (Genesis 32:1) (HKJ, n.d.).

Umm Qais (Gadara) is mentioned in the gospels as the scene of the healing of the men possessed with devils (Matt. 8:28; Mark 5:1-2; Luke 8:26-7) (HKJ, n.d.). Gilgal was the last station on the route of the Exodus, west of the Jordan, where Joshua set up 12 stones to commemorate the crossing of the River (Josh. 4:19-20). Here, in the plain of Jericho, the Children of Israel were circumcised (Josh 5:3).
During the Byzantine period, sites of the baptism and those associated with the revelations of Testament became places of pilgrimage around which churches and monasteries were built (JMTA, 2003). At least for churches and a “prayer hall” have been uncovered at Bethany beyond the Jordan (JTB, n.d.).

Hammath-Gader was a Jewish town dating from the Roman and Byzantine Periods, located on the right bank of the Yarmuk. Remains of a Roman temple and a synagogue have been found on the site. The synagogue contains mosaic floors and the location where the Torah Shrine stood is decorated with a medallion flanked by two lions. There are several Aramaic inscriptions, which describe that the synagogue was built with money donated by the local congregation and Jews from neighboring towns.

Today, Christian pilgrims come to the Holy Land to be baptized in the Jordan River. According to Christianity, the River is considered one of the most holy sites in the region, as it was the location of Jesus’ baptism. The baptism location, on the west bank of the river near the ancient city of Jericho, has been under Israeli military jurisdiction since 1967 and is largely inaccessible to the public. Therefore, pilgrims baptize at an alternate location further north near Lake Tiberias. In Jordan, Al-Maghtas, also known as “Bethany beyond the Jordan,” has been developed as the baptism site that is revered by citizens and tourists (JTB, n.d.).

The Jordan River Valley also plays a significant role in Islamic tradition. A large number of shrines of the Prophet Mohammad’s venerable companions exist in and around the Valley. These Islamic figures either died in the battles of early Islam or were victims of the plague that took place in the 18th year of the Prophet’s move to Madina (hijra). The following are the Mohammad's Prophets that are buried in the LJRV:

- Abu Ubeida Amer Bin Al-Jarrah, one of Islam's first converts, is buried in the Central Jordan Valley. His tomb is now a major Islamic center, as he was one of the "Blessed Ten," to whom the Prophet promised paradise.
- Mo'ath Bin Jabal, one of the six responsible for compiling the Holy Quran, is buried in the Valley.
- Derar Bin Al-Azwar, a revered companion of Mohammad, is buried in a mosque in the town of Deir 'Alla (HKJ, n.d.).

**Comparisons:**

1. Saint Catherine Area (Egypt, 2002): The St. Catherine’s area, centered on the holy mountain of Mount Sinai (Jebel Musa, Mount Horeb), like the Old City of Jerusalem, is sacred to the three world religions of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

2. Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley (Afghanistan, 2003): The Valley is the most monumental expression of the western Buddhism. It was an important centre of pilgrimage over many centuries. Due to their symbolic values, the monuments have suffered at different times of their existence, including the deliberate destruction in 2001, which shook the whole world.
Further criteria: Need more information of the role of the Jordan River Valley in Islam and when it is mentioned in the Quran. Look more in depth at traditions, other than the baptism pilgrimages, associated with the Jordan Valley and Jordan River. Should Sha’ar Hagolan be included due to the numerous amounts of figurines, even though it is not directly related to Christianity, Islam or Judaism? This would include the use of figurines. Or focus on the Ghassul Frescoes?

(vii) Contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance.

The Jordan Valley is home to an amazing diversity of flora and fauna because of its location between three continents (Asia, Europe and Africa). It is situated along a major bird migration corridor, and supports a wide variety of habitat types such as riparian, marsh grassland, scrub and arid desert. Many of the bird species that pass through the area twice a year such as the Spotted Eagle and the White Stork, depend on open spaces, using both natural and agricultural, to rest and forage (Harza JRV, 1997).

Comparisons:
1. Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan Protected Areas (China, 2003): The deep, parallel gorges of the Jinsha, Lancang and Nu Jiang are the outstanding natural feature of the site; while large sections of the three rivers lie just outside the site boundaries, the river gorges are nevertheless the dominant scenic element in the area. The Mingyongqia Glacier is a notable natural phenomenon, descending to 2700 m altitude from Mt Kawagebo (6740m), and is claimed to the glacier descending to the lowest altitude for such a low latitude (28 degrees N) in the northern hemisphere. Other outstanding scenic landforms are the alpine karst (especially the 'stone moon' in the Moon Mountain Scenic Area above the Nu Jiang Gorge) and the 'tortoise shell' weathering of the alpine Danxia.

(viii) Be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features.

The Jordan River Valley is an excellent example of major changes in the earth's history. The Jordan River Valley Lies at the intersection of two tectonic plates. During the Pliocene period the trench of the Jordan Valley was a gulf of the Mediterranean Sea. Around 20 to 30 million years ago, tectonic forces pulled the earth's crust in different directions separating the Arabian and African plates. These separations lead to the Arabian Peninsula's formation and the sculpting of the Dead Sea Valley, which became the main land route out of Africa for both flora and fauna. Today, investigators believe that these large-scale geologic processes have helped shape the course of human history. The area therefore allows geologists the unparalleled opportunity to see and investigate continental breakup in action.
Comparison:
1. Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan Protected Areas (China, 2003): The property is of outstanding value for displaying the geological history of the last 50 million years associated with the collision of the Indian Plate with the Eurasian Plate, the closure of the ancient Tethys Sea, and the uplifting of the Himalaya Range and the Tibetan Plateau.

Further needs: Need to conduct more research into how these processes have helped shape the course of human history and to determine what the other ongoing effects of the collision are.

(ix) Be outstanding examples representing significant ongoing ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals.

The Jordan River Valley lies at the intersection of two tectonics plates. During the Pliocene period the trench of the Jordan Valley was a gulf of the Mediterranean Sea. In the late Pleistocene the Valley was covered by a narrow saline lake, very much like the African Rift Valley lakes today. In the Pleistocene the northern basin was isolated from the southern one, and when the lake disappeared the Jordan River crept its way through the marl of the Valley. Today, the Jordan Valley is nearly flat except for the silt dunes and steep edges on either side of the Jordan River (Por & Ortal, 1985).

The Jordan River's main source of water is Mount Hermon's precipitation. The melting snow of Mount Hermon seeps into the rocks and forms huge underground reservoirs. It runs in the river from three main springs Hasbani in Lebanon, Banias in Syria and Dan in Israel. The three main sources combine near the northern edge of the Hula Valley and run into the Upper Jordan River which flows south about 14 km and enters the Kinneret.

The average flow of the river at its exit from the Hula Valley, and before entering Lake Kinneret, is estimated at 560-640 mcm. After leaving the Kinneret most of the water is extracted at the Degania Dam. The Dam releases water into the River only when there is runoff from the floods. About 10 km south of the lake, the river is joined by its main tributary, the Yarmuk River (Harza JRV, 1997).

The Yarmuk River drains at the basaltic plateaus of the Hauran in Syria, an area of fair rainfall and strong runoff, and accordingly with fewer springs. The catchment area of the Yarmuk amounts to 7250 sq. km. as compared with 2750 sq. km. of the Lower River Jordan at its exit from Lake Kinneret. The quality of the Lower Jordan River is influenced by both rainfall patterns and the amount of base flow extracted upstream. The flow into the river from the wadies of the Jordan Valley amounts to 147.7 mcm/ year, of which 83.9 is base flow and 63.8 is flood runoff during winter. The main tributaries of the lower Jordan River sub-basin are the Zerqa River and the wadies of Al-Arab, Ziglab, Jurum, Ybis, Kufranja, Rajib and Shuieb which amount to 10 mcm. Moreover, the water salinity in the Jordan River reaches 2000mg of total solids dissolved per liter due to the diversion of saline springs south of Lake Kinneret into the Jordan River, which amounts to 20 mcm.
The Nahal Harod's contribution to the River, which is highly polluted by domestic agricultural sewage, irrigation returns and fish pond refuse, amounts to 20mcm. As a result of sewage water contribution and saline springs to the Jordan River, the waters of the River is becoming ever less adequate for agriculture use and for sustaining the Valley's unique ecosystem (Shkonik, 1999).

The Jordan River basin is one of the world's rare ecological junctions. This geographical location has created a remarkable and unique mixture of diverse habitats that belong in origin to different bio-geographic climates, which are: the Mediterranean (European), the Irano-turanian (EuroAsian) and the Afro-tropical (Ethiopian). This significant mixture of bio-geographic regions was created due to diverse physical characteristics that made the Jordan River Basin an area of unique natural heritage. The basin's variation in elevation ranges from 300 m above sea level to 400 m below sea level; whereas the River itself is 200 m above sea level at its northern parts and at its mouth located at the Dead Sea it is -400m below sea level, which makes it the lowest river on earth.

The vegetation of the Jordan River Basin belongs to three bio-geographic regions. The unique character of the diverse zones has created a significant number of vegetation types that are located in a small geographic area, which include: Saline vegetation in the middle and southern parts of the River banks and their flooding plains; Tropical vegetation, which occupy the lowers parts of the middle and southern River Jordan Basin; Steppe vegetation in the northern parts where the species of this vegetation appears starting from the river banks and down to the middle elevation layers where the Irano-turanian zone exists; Deciduous Oak Forest vegetation, which is located at the lowest point of the African Rift Valley; Water Vegetation found in the wadi systems, which are the natural tributaries that flow west and west toward the Jordan (Khateeb et al, 2005).

Moreover, the Jordan River and its tributaries are considered to be the biological heart of the region. Similar to the Dead Sea, the ecosystem has evolved and developed over millennium to create many special and unique habitats. The River Basin is one of the major water catchment areas in the Middle East, where permanent and seasonal water resources are concentrated. Water availability has created some unique wetland habitats and systems that support and maintain important fresh water flora and fauna. More than 14 wetlands have been declared at the national level where most of them have been recognized internationally at 1995 by the IUCN – World Conservation Union, WWF-World Wide Fund for Nature, IWRB-International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau, Birdlife International and Ramsar Convention Bureau.

The wetlands play a major role in the sustenance of the River's ecosystems and for the survival of its species, especially since the Valley is surrounded by dry and arid areas that cannot support its diversity of species and habitats. The Jordan River Valley is an important wetland area in the Middle East because it maintains many endangered and valuable species such as the Brown Fish Owl, the Common Otter, the Arabian Leopard Rock Hyrax, the Fresh Water turtle, several endemic fresh water fish, fresh water snakes and many others (Scott, 1995).
Additionally, the Valley is part of the great African rift Valley and is considered to be an important corridor for migratory birds. It is estimated that about one million birds migrate annually through this narrow corridor which functions as the crossroads of several global migration passages. The basin contains over 300 species of birds, and is an important migratory route for global Avifauna such as black and white stock, Dalmation and Common Pelicans, King Fishers, Herons, Shovelers, Sandpipers, Shranks, Fracolin and other globally threatened water fowl. It is a prime spot for birdwatchers, and there is an international bird-watching center at Kfar Rupin which tourists can visit (Khateeb et al, 2005).

Life in the Jordan River Valley is unique because it is the combination of elements from Africa and the Fertile Crescent. The Valley serves as a gateway for the penetration of tropical African species towards the north and freshwater fauna towards the south, the Valley is considered to be the meeting place for three major animal regions: Palaearctic, Oriental and Ethiopian. A total of more than 200 species are found in Jordan River Valley including large trees of *Ziziphus lotus* antiziphus spinachristi, *Ziziphus numularia* and *Phoenix dactylifera*. *Acacia albida* and *Ziziphus spina–christi* are the principal tree and shrub species, while herbaceous species include *Hordeua Tritcum* and *Avena*. The grass *Stipa capnsis* is particularly associated with *Ziziphus*. The fauna of the area has declined significantly over the last fifty years due to farming activities and overgrazing of the Valley sides. Some such fauna still exists, seeking refuge in the river floodplain around dams and in uninhabited saline areas. The military areas of the river, because they are off limits to people, are the areas with the greatest diversity and health of flora and fauna.

The fish in the region are from Africa, Central Asia, Levant, the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. The fish population, which is particularly vulnerable to changes in water systems, includes at least a hundred types of terrestrial invertebrates.
**Works Cited**


