



**AERIAL VIEW OF THE EXCAVATION OF TAMAR PARK**

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**Jujube Tree – One of the oldest trees in Israel**

**Biblical Tamar Park  
Seven Periods - Site Sponsors**

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*Note: Some dates are  
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**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Biblical Tamar Park is directed by Blossoming Rose Israel (BRI), an Israeli amuta #58-040-9951 (A.R.). BRI has a 24 year lease agreement, issued by the Central Arava Regional Council, to “maintain, beautify, and develop this public Park.” Blossoming Rose (USA), a sister non-profit organization, and its Board of Trustees, manage the Park by providing the human and financial resources. Financial support is generated solely from donations and gifts by people interested in preserving the heritage and the seven historic sites at Biblical Tamar Park.

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# Welcome to Biblical Tamar Park



Welcome to Biblical Tamar Park! On behalf of the Israeli Antiquities Authority, the Central Arava Regional Council and many hardworking friends, we invite you to take a short walk through time into a desert oasis called “the Jewel of the Arava.” Without a doubt, it is the oldest and most unique place in southern Israel, a towering fortress of such importance to world trade that it still remains as a showpiece of Hebraic heritage.

The Tamar pathway stretches across 4,000 years from Abraham, to Moses, to Kings David and Solomon, on down through many centuries of foreign conquests, into more recent times with Israel’s rebirth as a sovereign nation. It is one of the few ancient cities that have had a Jewish presence for such an extended period of history.

Excavations began in 1986 by Blossoming Rose, a non-profit philanthropic group from Michigan (USA), functioning as the Park’s lease holder and curator. These dedicated men and women not only coordinate archeological restorations and related educational programs, but they also provide the staff who help beautify and maintain this important site.

Digs sponsored by Blossoming Rose and others, supervised by the IAA, have been taking place for over twenty-five years, the most recent occurring in May 2013. Rare and priceless treasures were unearthed from several layers of occupation, and are now being stored for future display.

People, from all walks of life, and from all parts of the world, volunteer their time and talents at Tamar. Within the Park’s 55 acres, there are rustic accommodations, including air-conditioned caravans with 50 beds, a dining hall, the tel itself, a sukkah, and a welcome kiosk. These facilities are available for tour groups, conferences, and any number of other activities.

Please feel free to join us in this worthwhile enterprise. Shalom!

## SEVEN HISTORIC PERIODS

“If only these rocks could speak” is a phrase often heard in Israel. But the rocks do speak at Tamar, and they tell us about the place and the people who lived there, only faintly remembered and recorded in biblical writings. They are a visible reminder of what happened when nomads first wandered across the region, followed by Canaanites, Phoenicians, Hebrews, Arabs and other Semitic tribes who settled the land, and who left behind distinct layers of sediment and stone to form the Seven Periods of archeological history we see today.

What we find in this desert oasis are ancient roadways converging near the tip of the Dead Sea at En Hatzeva (or “strong spring”), located at the base of a giant Jujube tree where its cool waters quenched the thirst of weary travelers as the demands of commerce gave employment to local residents and taxes to kings, princes and emperors. Whether by design or accident, it was a convenient stopover for camel caravans carting trade goods along the now famous “incense and spice route,” a commercial enterprise reaching from the Far East to the port city of Gaza and beyond. But it was much more important than that. Major figures of the Hebrew Bible were also part of the picture.

Now, of course, new highways run beside the old ones, but Biblical Tamar Park stands as a monument to the past and a resting place for modern travelers. It is an active tel designed as an educational center for Israeli students and tourists.

Our goal has always been to use interactive displays to show who was there, what actually happened and when. You will see the oldest Israelite four-room house ever found, dating to the days of the Israelites, huge openings where Solomonite gates once stood, Roman baths, aqueducts and fortress walls, as well as evidence of earthquakes and the all-too-frequent foreign military conquests. Reconstructions reveal information about people living at Tamar during the critical Seven Periods. As the site is analyzed and slowly rebuilt, the truth slowly emerges. We begin to see what life was like back then, from the times when early Hebrews first arrived, to present-day Israelis now living in the Land of Israel.

**As you walk from site to site,  
think of yourself as one who belongs  
in this ancient place, and then decide which  
period of history you feel most connected to.**

### The Abrahamic Period



About four thousand years ago Biblical Tamar Park could have been an Amorite village. It is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as one of the places conquered by invading armies just as Abram had ended his sojourn in Egypt and returned to the Land of Canaan. After reentering the land and making a sacred covenant with the Lord of Creation, he received a new name, Abraham, after which he fathered two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, both of whom begat children of their own.

Stories about Abraham and his offspring include descriptions of desert places in the wilderness of Beersheva and Paran, located just slightly to the north and to the south of Tamar. For a period of

time their descendents lived together as friends and neighbors, planting palm groves for shade, sharing food and family ties, or sipping water from the nearby spring at En Hatzeva.

These and other Genesis stories provide the basis for the core monotheistic beliefs of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

### The Moses Period



Four books of the Bible are dedicated to the story of the Jewish exodus from Egypt, their journey through the Sinai wilderness, and then the entrance into their Promised Land. According to the Book of Numbers, they camped on the outskirts of “Oboth,” which means Tamar or “Palm Tree” in English, before entering Canaan. The spring at Hatzeva provided the abundant waters for the palm trees to grow and the oasis was one of the many stops for the caravans where the camels and drivers could replenish their water supply.

The Torah has it that Moses received “words from heaven,” saying, “I will give you the Land as a heritage” (Ex. 6:8). This proclamation and similar commandments became priestly teachings for the new inhabitants, instructions informing them how to build God’s Tabernacle and how to live.

Moses was always in the front, leading his people and setting up the newly created Tabernacle at every stop. Finally, the weary wanderers entered the country of Edom, went east of the Dead Sea and camped near to present day Amman. There Moses died, and Joshua took the leadership of the Israelites before they crossed the Jordan River and entered their Promised Land.

Over the next ten generations, they did not have kings, but were governed by a collection of tribal chieftains called Judges.

### The Israelite Period



As always, Tamar remained a perennial source of water to be enjoyed by everyone, including Edomites and Moabites, as well as the “Children of Abraham,” known to their neighbors as Israelites, after Jacob’s name had been changed to Israel centuries beforehand.

But in the south it was the tribe of Judah who became “Jews” to the rest of the world and heirs to the most memorable of all Jewish kingdoms, at first ruled by Saul, and then by none other than David and Solomon. Under their leadership, within the boundaries of a newly unified nation, Tamar became much more than a desert oasis. It was now an outpost, fortified for defensive purposes, and strategically positioned, not only to monitor caravans traveling to and from distant cities, but to protect copper mines at Faynan, near Eilat.

Archeological remains confirm that “Solomon... built Tamar (Tadmor) in the wilderness, within the land...of his dominion” (I Kings 9:19) and that three hundred years later King Josiah destroyed the pagan altar being used there at the time. “Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out” (I Kings 13:3).

### The Babylonian to Roman Period



When Solomon died the United Kingdom was divided into two separate halves, neither of which had the strength to continue as an independent conquering nation. Both were consumed by animus toward one another and, therefore, became victims of external conquest.

The Egyptians were first to arrive, followed by Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and Greeks, each of which made an indelible mark on the landscape and the people.

In Tamar, the fortress of Solomon may have been destroyed, at least partially, when Pharaoh Sheshonq I (Shishak in the Bible) plundered several southern cities, stripping the First Temple of its sacred vessels and its gold. Otherwise, the Arava was hardly affected by these foreign occupations until Pompey and his legions marched in. Palestine then became part of the Greco-Roman world, subject to the enforced Hellenization already taking root in the Jewish homeland because of the arrival of Alexander.

Unlike Greece, Rome was always concerned with the procurement of taxes and trade to support an expanding empire. With that in mind, Roman soldiers secured the spice routes through southern Israel and reestablished Tamar as a fortified city complex of longstanding duration. They protected the caravans and kept a tight hold on merchandise and money. Yet they could not control religion or the zealous nature of true believers.

Over time, as the empire weakened, and as its warriors were no longer Romans by blood, pagan polytheism was traded in for the monotheism of a new faith that grew out of the older Abrahamic roots of Judaism. It happened slowly, of course, even as Roman converts guarded Tamar and the nearby copper mines where Christians labored for the emperor.

### The Arab/Crusader/Ottoman Period



Rome’s control of *Syria Palaestina* was interrupted in 221 CE during what has been called “The Imperial Crisis,” a fifty-year period when everyone suffered from the impact of foreign invasions, civil strife, plagues and economic depression. Not only did the empire survive, but so did Tamar. The site was chosen as one of the main military establishments to be rebuilt by the Romans, bigger and better than ever, alongside the much traveled highway leading into and out of “occupied territory.”

But in 363 CE the Roman presence ended abruptly as the town and its impressive structures were destroyed in a massive earthquake. Tamar, or En Hatzeva, however, was still an oasis where people could refresh themselves beside the cool waters, and sometimes discuss or even convert to new religions. After primeval polytheism, came monotheism, then Judaism and Christianity, followed by Islam.

Muhammad arrived on the scene in the sixth century and seems to have considered himself a “restorer” of the monotheistic faith started by Adam, handed down to Noah, through Abraham, to Moses, and the other prophets. He embraced Jesus as one of the earlier prophets, but Muhammad’s Muslim recruits believed him to be “the Last Prophet of God,” much like Christians thought of Jesus as “the only Son of God.” He got his inspiration from the angel Gabriel and taught that “the people of the Book” (Christians and Jews) were to be respected, but not necessarily treated as equals. Pagans, on the other hand, would be forced to convert or die.

Subsequent years of Islamic control did not prove to be good ones for most Jews, Christians, pagans, or the newly conquered territories. There was little interest on the part of Jihadist invaders to protect the land or the historic places, except for the Temple Mount and the burial place of the Patriarchs in Hebron.

Tamar thus became a lonely outpost serving Arab soldiers, Ottoman Turks, and Bedouin tribesmen as they traversed ancient pathways between Mecca and Jerusalem.

### The British Period



The game changer in Palestine was “the war to end all wars,” but the foundation for world conflict had been well established beforehand by the British and Ottoman empires. In part this was due to the discovery of oil throughout the Middle East.

Britain was a Christian nation, Turkey a Muslim one, and the Jews had no country, as of yet, to call their own. But the British people at first sympathized with Jewish longings for a homeland, so they supported the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and its Zionist goals.

The Turks entered World War I when they signed a secret pact called The Ottoman-German Alliance. The British High Command feared that the Ottomans might attack and capture Middle East oil fields, they launched their Sinai-Palestine Campaigns which ultimately proved successful when the Armistice was signed four years later. That left Britain (and France) in charge of carving up the boundaries of new nation-states like Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia.

British occupation of Palestine may have been the shortest in history, but in many ways it was the most significant. There were no oil fields to be had, just growing numbers of Jewish refugees and displaced Arabs competing for control of cities, towns and large tracts of acreage. Then, too, the Brits had an all important Mandate with defined borders from the League of Nations for what would become the State of Israel.

When all was said and done, despite good and less benevolent intentions, neither Britain nor Turkey contributed much to the immediate restoration of the Promised Land. It was always Jewish immigrants who made the greatest strides toward independence during this last period of foreign dominance, except perhaps for the fact that English expeditionary forces built a jail and an office building at the peak of Biblical Tamar. From that vantage point they could see in all directions and take advantage of the oasis as a respite for British soldiers marching to and from Eilat. It is said Lawrence of Arabia led the way by mapping the area years earlier when it was a forgotten Arab outpost.

### The Israeli Period



The events of the late 1940s were quick, decisive, and historic. Britain withdrew from Palestine as Arabs declared war on the Jews, the end result being victory for the people and the State of Israel.

Tamar became the first military garrison on the southern border of Jordan using Israeli soldiers to protect desert settlers. The newly formed national guard built housing for themselves and others who were willing to defend the boundaries of their new nation. Later, they would be reassigned to a larger base in the south as Simha Pearlmuter and his family were encouraged to take up residence in the vacated buildings. During the conflict, because of its strategic location, a kitchen and a bomb shelter were hastily constructed and the place was given a new name, Kibbutz Ir Ovot, meaning “the Community of Oboto.”

Simha was a deeply religious man with an extraordinary vision. He soon started a farming commune dedicated to rediscovering Biblical Tamar as it once was. Through his efforts and the timely help of another visionary, Dr. DeWayne Coxon, along with countless volunteers, the dream is now coming into view. As the Bible says, and as archeology persistently proves, “The wilderness and this solitary place shall make them glad; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose” (Isaiah 35:1).

**Thanks for visiting this special place.  
Remember us to your family and friends.  
And please do come again!**