

## CHAPTER 5

# A New Approach to Community Archaeology in the Israel Antiquities Authority

## A View from the Northern Region

Einat Ambar-Armon

*Israel Antiquities Authority*

### Abstract

The Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) is in charge of the country's antiquities and antiquity sites and their excavation, preservation, study and publication, as well as bringing the community closer to the long and rich legacy of the Land of Israel. This chapter focuses on some of the new projects in the northern region of Israel that have taken place over the past few years, since the IAA developed and enhanced its educational and community commitments. The activities are targeted at the entire population and are intended to initiate widespread exposure to archaeology. Activities take place all over Israel, designed for all ages as well as for all sectors and religions. The entire community is invited to take part in archaeo-

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logical excavations and in a variety of educational initiatives. At the same time, the public is invited to see the backstage of the excavations, to see discoveries revealed to them as soon as they are found, and to access the findings through displays located near local sites and communities. The main purpose of these projects is to set the scene for community exposure to archaeology and create a meaningful, valuable and exciting experience that will eventually allow the public to become acquainted with the legacy and involved in preserving archaeological finds and ancient sites.

**Keywords:** community archaeology, public outreach, educational programmes, community participation

## Introduction

Israel is renowned worldwide for its archaeological sites. The number and wide distribution of the sites, as well as the multiple periods represented in them, have led to the understanding that many major and minor historical events took place here. The history and the universal cultural heritage of the country are among its most important resources, and it is essential to conserve them and to present them in a worthy manner.

It appears that the word ‘archaeology’ was first used in the fifth century BCE by the Greek philosopher Plato to express the study of ancient times. In a dialogue with Hippias of Elis, Socrates inquires what issues interest human beings. Hippias replies, ‘to learn about nations, Socrates, about heroes and humans, about settlements and how cities were founded in antiquity, in brief, they are interested in archaeology’ (Plato, *Hippias Major* 285d; see Lamb 1925). This quotation expresses the significance of cultural heritage in human history.

The opening phrase of the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel (14 May 1948) reads:

The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance.

This quote expresses the strong bond of the Jewish people to its land, a connection that led to the establishment of the state authority responsible for its antiquities and archaeological sites. The Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA; formerly the Department of Antiquities) is responsible for the excavation of archaeological sites for their protection and conservation, for research into them and publication about them, as well as for managing the 'National Treasures'. The IAA is required to determine the right balance between the needs of the developing state and the protection of its many archaeological sites. Its vision declares, 'the Israel Antiquities Authority will aim to increase public awareness and interest in the country's archaeological heritage'. In this chapter we will focus on this vision, describing the IAA activities undertaken to realise this aim.

### **The IAA and the Community**

The connection between archaeology and the community is not new. Shortly after the State of Israel was established in 1948, the newly appointed Israel Department of Antiquities began working to make archaeological finds accessible to the public, with the aim of educating the general public, and particularly younger generations, to bring about a love of the country through learning its past. Thousands of youngsters and adults took part in archaeological excavations and conferences organised by the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society, subsequently the Israel Exploration Society (Katz 2016, 106). Academic institutions and individuals initiated educational activities, people volunteered at excavations and participated in archaeological conferences and events, and young people took part in informal archaeological circles, an example of which can be found at Rogem Gannim in Kiryat Menahem in Jerusalem (Greenberg and Cinamon 2000, and examples therein). Over the years, the IAA educational centres have carried out many activities, mostly in educational institutions, and many thousands of pupils countrywide have learned about archaeology.

Nonetheless, archaeology has been considered by the general public to be rather boring and old-fashioned, mostly of interest to the older population. This has been even more the case when dealing with complex issues such as stratigraphy, pottery sherds, flints and other technological details that appear in archaeological reports. By contrast, outstanding discoveries, such as finds from Jerusalem, excavations that have brought to life biblical cities, King Herod's building projects, and the discovery of special hoards and artefacts adorned with festival symbols, continue to excite the general public even today. Consequently, the question arises as to whether this is not sufficient. Is it necessary to try to provoke interest among the non-motivated? While it is patently true that the IAA's principal responsibility is to implement the Antiquities Law and to protect the country's antiquities, it is also required to function as an educational body, initiating educational activities to provoke public interest and involvement in the protection of these antiquities.

### **The Department of Education and Communities**

In 2015, following the appointment of Yisrael Hasson as director general, the IAA changed its policy regarding these issues. Hasson considered the IAA 'the present generation's watchperson over the cultural heritage of the past' (personal communication), responsible for educating the public to appreciate archaeology and to protect antiquities. For this purpose, a new Department of Education and Communities (DEC) with broader responsibilities was set up in the IAA, parallel to the existing Department of Archaeology and Department of Conservation.<sup>1</sup>

The new department is responsible for involving the general public in IAA-led archaeological excavations, and for initiating educational archaeological activities focused on spreading the values of conserving the cultural heritage. The vision of the DEC, as stated in a letter sent to clients, is defined as 'connecting the youth, community and general public with the tangible cul-

ture of Israel throughout the history and peoples of the country, and actively involving them in the archaeological experience and practice'. Consequently, it is evident that individual and local initiatives were insufficient, and a long-term, deep-rooted process was required to connect the general public with its archaeological heritage and to provide opportunities for active archaeological involvement, above and beyond the imparting of theoretical knowledge.

### *What Led to the Establishment of the DEC?*

Four main issues led to the establishment of the DEC:

1. The need to protect the country's threatened archaeological heritage. It was considered that a motivated and involved public would play an active role as 'watchpeople', protecting the many imminently endangered archaeological sites around the country.
2. The need to strengthen the bond between people and cultural heritage. It was evident that much of the population is not familiar with, and consequently not emotionally attached to, its cultural heritage. It was considered that connecting communities with their local archaeological sites would foster a bond between them and their local identity and history.
3. The need to improve the IAA's public image. It was understood that focusing on the IAA's role of protecting sites for the good of the community would improve the IAA's often negative public image as a factor impeding and delaying development, albeit as a result of its essential role in conserving and protecting antiquities.
4. The practical need to foster a new generation of archaeologists. The assumption was that the present generation of archaeologists is small, and that participants in archaeological conferences belong mainly to the older generation. It was considered that the exposure of young people to archaeological activities would acquaint them with the field, thus increasing the potential of future archaeologists.

### *How Are the DEC's Aims Fulfilled?*

In the context of cultural heritage activity, the DEC provides opportunities for different population groups throughout the country to take part in archaeological excavations, conservation projects and the exposure of archaeological finds. Some finds and discoveries are on show in archaeological exhibitions and are shared with the public through the media directly after their discovery. The idea behind the educational activity is that experiencing an archaeological dig and discovering finds creates an emotional bond between the excavator and the cultural heritage and history of the country, as the participation enables active involvement and not just theoretical discussion. The youth and community involvement in archaeological projects arouses an emotional connection to the land, the countryside, and the historical and cultural heritage.

### *Who Leads the Educational Process?*

The DEC runs programmes from four educational centres located in the north, the centre and the south of the country and in Jerusalem. The leaders and guides employed in the centres have professional or academic qualifications in archaeology or related fields, and leadership qualifications or experience. IAA archaeologists, with various specialisations such as underwater archaeology or the prevention of archaeological plundering, also take part in the educational activity. Today it is standard that all IAA archaeologists are involved in the educational process, taking an active role in their region.

### *Who Participates in the Educational Process?*

The educational activity is geared to groups of all ages throughout Israel. Only a small proportion of the educational activities are carried out with tourists and cultural heritage supporters from abroad. Nursery school children and pupils from dayu schools,

boarding schools and youth villages participate in enriching programmes, including field days. 'Youth at risk'<sup>2</sup> and adult groups also participate in excavations, and there are open days for the general public. We value the archaeological dig as an educational tool and an opportunity for a multi-generational activity whereby groups of different ages work together. Different population groups in Israel meet and work together with the aim of connecting with their cultural and local heritage, as it is expressed in the wide variety of archaeological sites.

The IAA runs these activities in conjunction with other government offices, including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Jerusalem and Heritage, as well as with local and regional councils and other supporting organisations, such as the Jewish National Fund, the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, and the Society for the Protection of Nature. We consider that the combined effort of all of these interested parties leads to greater success in imparting the values of conserving the cultural heritage.

### *What Is the Connection between Protected Wildflowers and Archaeological Sites?*

In the past, it was standard practice in Israel to pick wildflowers, such as anemones, cyclamens and irises, until a dramatic change of awareness took place in the 1960s (Alon 1988). Until 1963 there was no law against picking wildflowers, and wildflower bulbs were picked and sold in large quantities, threatening their extinction. New laws passed in 1963 to protect nature reserves and wildflowers were accompanied by extensive educational work, creating a dramatic change in public awareness, which led in turn to renewed flowering in the country. The change was effected through educational activities with children and young people, and the result was that the term 'protected flowers' became part of the consciousness of all Israelis. This example of changing public awareness highlights the approach required, educating the young generation in order to protect the country's archaeological her-

itage. Statutory measures alone are clearly insufficient to protect our sites, and meaningful educational activities are required.

### *What Activities Are Included in the Programmes?*

By the end of 2022, the IAA had carried out a great variety of activities in which more than 700,000 children, young people, soldiers, and working-age and older adults had participated.

1. **Adoption of archaeological sites.** Pupils and communities adopt a local site and study the site and its historical significance and culture. IAA leaders and participants maintain and conserve the site, thus deepening their connection with and taking responsibility for it.
2. **Educational programmes in schools and during school holidays.** These programmes include experiential learning about ancient periods and cultures, including activities with ancient artefacts, and sometimes participation in archaeological excavations.
3. **Special events at archaeological sites.** Special activities, for example, before festivals or to celebrate birthdays, may focus on reconstructing various aspects of life in the ancient world (e.g., 'Light and Lamps' before Hanukkah, 'A Journey along the Nile' before Pesach, and 'From Wheat to Bread' before Shavuot). These experiential activities focus on the specific occasion.
4. **Lectures.** Archaeologists give lectures, sharing with the public new discoveries based on research projects. These lectures may be given as part of conferences in museums or at other public events, or sometimes less formal, for example 'Coffee-Time Archaeology'.
5. **'Nature Defense Forces.'** This project encourages Israel Defense Forces (IDF) officers to take responsibility for the environment as well as defending the country. The project involves cooperation between the IDF and the IAA in protecting archaeological sites within military areas and fosters the army's awareness of the need to act according to the Antiquities Law.

6. **Archaeological excavations.** Participation in archaeological excavations is the activity that has been the most influential in the change in public awareness and mindset that has been achieved in recent years.

## **Archaeological Excavations**

Participation in archaeological excavations is the highlight of the DEC's educational and community activities. The IAA carries out two main types of excavation: salvage excavations and educational excavations. This section focuses on the steps that the IAA, and specifically the DEC, have taken to enable young people and the general public to participate in excavations.

### *Salvage Excavations*

Salvage excavations are carried out in areas registered as archaeological sites, in the context of planned infrastructure development and construction projects, such as roads, neighbourhoods, and the laying of electricity, gas, and water pipes. The IAA, functioning according to the Antiquities Law to preserve and protect the country's antiquities, carries out preliminary trial excavations to determine the presence and extent of archaeological remains in areas designated for development. Subsequently, more-extensive salvage excavations are carried out, if deemed necessary. The excavations are restricted in time and extent, as they are directly linked with the development plans. Since there are very many archaeological sites in the country, there is a high probability that excavations will be required prior to development.<sup>3</sup> Following the excavations and the meticulous recording of finds, some sites are released for development, others are covered over, and in some cases changes are made in the development plans.

Whenever possible, young people and local communities are given the opportunity to take part in these excavations, exposing and 'salvaging' archaeological remains and contributing to

the understanding of ancient sites. Two types of participation in salvage excavations are presented here: youth participation and community participation.

### *Youth Participation and Pre-Army Programmes in Salvage Excavations*

Since 2015, the IAA has systematically incorporated young people in salvage excavations. Teenagers participate in the excavation for a five-day week, usually from 6am to 2pm. For most of the young people this is their first encounter with an archaeological dig, and the IAA staff invest effort in providing them with a positive experience in this new field (Figures 5.1–5.5). The youngsters, aged 16 plus, come from high schools and sometimes schools for ‘youth at risk’. Many of the schools and institutions return every year, appreciating that the archaeological experience, involving physical work and a positive attitude to work, strengthens and consolidates the young people and the institution. We have observed that the ‘youth at risk’ specifically both contribute significantly and benefit from the digging week. In some cases, the school groups receive payment for work that is channelled towards specific aims, such as educational journeys.

Young people from other educational frameworks also take part in the digs, including those from pre-army programmes (year-long frameworks that prepare young people after high school for meaningful army service and social and communal involvement and leadership). These groups are quantitatively the most significant part of the excavations (of the groups that come through the education department), and their professional contribution to the excavation is large and significant relative to that of groups of younger youth. Such programmes include this week in their annual activities because of a belief in the valuable contribution it makes to the young people’s development.

Prior to the dig week, DEC educational staff meet with the group, introduce them to the IAA and the world of archaeology, and prepare them for the dig. On the first day of the dig, the group



**Figure 5.1:** Young people excavating at Horbat Koshet, near Tive'on.  
(Photo: Einat Ambar-Armon, courtesy of IAA.)



**Figure 5.2:** Outdoor training activity (ODT) at an excavation at Migdal Ha-Emeq.  
(Photo: Einat Ambar-Armon, courtesy of IAA.)



**Figure 5.3:** Excavating and discovering an ancient lamp in an excavation near Hannaton.

(Photo: Einat Ambar-Armon, courtesy of IAA.)



**Figure 5.4:** Tour near the Horns of Hattin excavation.

(Photo: Einat Ambar-Armon, courtesy of IAA.)



**Figure 5.5:** Summarising a week of digging and receiving T-shirts and certificates at Menahamiya in the Jordan Valley.

(Photo: Einat Ambar-Armon, courtesy of IAA.)

arrives at the site early in the morning, receives an explanation about the site and about safety regulations, and starts work. Some wash pottery and register the pottery and the finds. During the week, the group has workshops on various related subjects, for example on pottery, flints, stratigraphy, etc. On the last day, there is a meeting to summarise the week and to present the results and the finds. Participants receive a certificate of participation and a souvenir T-shirt, and they fill in a feedback questionnaire. The youth groups differ from each other, and experience the week differently, depending on their age, cultural and religious backgrounds, values, preparation, and motivation.

Often the dig is a multicultural experience, for example when Jewish young people dig at a Christian archaeological site, under the guidance of Muslim archaeological staff. In such cases, the excavation plays the role of fostering multicultural interaction, providing an opportunity to work in cooperation, to meet different people and to make new acquaintances. An interesting example may be found at the excavation of a Byzantine church in Bet Shemesh (IAA Official Channel 2017; Storchan 2020, 6–7).

The feedback written by the young people enables us to learn from their experiences and their criticism. Responses have shown that participation in the dig arouses an emotional response to the country, its landscapes, and its historical and cultural heritage, and that, for the most part, the young people appreciate the enriched knowledge of the country, the sites and the history. Values such as mutual responsibility and physical work are enhanced by the dig experience, as are personal identity and roots, commitment, and social abilities. Difficulties of the dig experience are also expressed, such as the monotonous hard physical work, sometimes seemingly without results, and the frustration when finds are minimal, although educational staff alleviate such frustration by explaining the significance of even limited finds. Some young participants feel that the dig experience provides an opportunity to develop on a personal level and to express their values; others are less appreciative but, nonetheless, feel satisfaction from

overcoming difficulties. Over 80 per cent say that they would like to take part in another excavation.

The IAA archaeologists know that education is an integral part of their job. The main difficulty that arises is that the young people are usually less productive than experienced workers. Often, time limits are very restrictive, and the contribution of the young people to the work effort is less than the cost. The work with young people involves discipline and behaviour issues, and participants have to learn to work with patience and self-discipline. However, they do not always understand or comply with instructions, for example, about not sitting on the baulks or inside the squares, and archaeologists do not always have time to answer questions. Experienced guides or youth leaders work with the groups, as the archaeologists are not usually teacher-trained and as they are busy with their archaeological work. The guides have knowledge in archaeology and education, and they coordinate between the group and the archaeologist.

Summarising seven years of experience, it may be said that most of the archaeologists understand that the work with the young people is effective and rewarding, and also adds a breath of youthful air and young energies. This is especially true when the young people are well prepared in advance for the dig.

### *Community Participation in Salvage Excavations*

The IAA policy supports advertising its activities to the public, flying the IAA flag alongside the Israeli flag, and setting up signs reading, 'IAA is digging the past for you'. Passers-by show an interest, and we are happy to answer questions from volunteers, residents, neighbours, people interested in Israel and archaeologists from research institutes.

The IAA holds open days at salvage excavations, both at small excavations which are attended by about 20 local people, and at large excavations, to which many people come on several tours, sometimes up to 1,000 visitors. The archaeologist leads the tour, explaining the site and its remains, and finds are often exhibited,



**Figure 5.6:** A visit to an excavation at Moshav Nov in the Golan, and the first presentation of the finds.

(Photo: Einat Ambar-Armon, courtesy of IAA.)

sometimes still dirty from the field or before restoration. Visitors can sometimes take part in the excavation and in various archaeological activities. The open days enable the local population to connect with the excavation. This open approach differs from the traditional approach, whereby the excavation is completed and researched and the finds published and even stored in the museum before they are revealed to the public (Figure 5.6).

In the IAA Northern Region, many salvage excavations and other archaeological activities are carried out with local community participation. The Northern Region extends from the Golan and the Upper Galilee in the north to the Bet Shean Valley and the Menashe Hills in the south, and from the Mediterranean Sea on the west to the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan Valley on the east. The region is characterised by hilly landscapes, extensive open areas, many streams and water sources, and hundreds of archaeo-



**Figure 5.7:** Clergy tour at the excavation of the church at Kfar Kama.  
(Photo: Einat Ambar-Armon, courtesy of IAA.)

logical and historical sites. It is probable that the rural nature of this region and the connection of the population to nature and the environment are factors in the success of community archaeology in the north. Four examples of community participation in recent Northern Region salvage excavations are presented here.

**The church at Kfar Kama, near Mount Tabor.** A Byzantine church with decorated mosaic floors was uncovered in an excavation carried out in July 2020 in the context of development work for a park in the Circassian village of Kfar Kama (see, e.g., Israel 2020). Many volunteers took part in the excavation, doubling the number of paid workers. Towards the end of the excavation, ten tours were carried out at the site, one specifically for the clergy, including the head of the Greek Catholic Church in Israel (Figure 5.7). Many visitors came from the adjacent Circassian village of Kfar Kama, interested to hear about the remains discovered next

to their village. The tours took place in English, Hebrew and Circassian. Here the community was involved in the actual excavation, whereas in the past, the discovery of the church would only have become known to the public after the IAA spokesperson released it to the media.

**A Roman-period Jewish farmstead near Hannaton in Lower Galilee.** A salvage excavation was carried out near Kibbutz Hannaton, in the course of the construction of the Yiftah-el Interchange (2019–2020). An Early Roman farmstead was uncovered, including a complete Jewish ritual bath (*miqveh*). Young people from a local pre-army programme and many volunteers from the neighbouring community took part in the excavation. Muslim, Christian and Jewish, both religious and secular, workers and volunteers, all worked together, creating a cultural melting pot. Since the site was adjacent to the main road, the excavation attracted a great deal of attention when it was opened to the public. More than a thousand visitors participated in dozens of tours carried out over three days (Figure 5.8). When members of Kibbutz Hannaton, including several volunteers, understood that the site would be permanently covered over to construct the interchange, they asked permission to ‘adopt the ancient *miqveh*’ (see Science News 2020). In October 2020, the *miqveh* was transferred to the kibbutz in a joint operation of the IAA, the kibbutz, the Jezreel Regional Council and the Netivei Israel National Road Company. An educational archaeological park was to be set up in the kibbutz for the region and for visitors from abroad. This example emphasises the potential of the involvement of the community in salvage excavations.

**Old Safed in Upper Galilee.** An excavation was carried out in August 2020 to upgrade Ashtam Square at the entrance to the old town of Safed. The excavation was carried out by workers and volunteers, exposing buildings from the Ottoman period (sixteenth to nineteenth centuries). Since the excavation was carried out in the centre of Safed, curious passers-by stopped to ask questions, and the site was opened to visitors for a few days (Figure 5.9). One elderly visitor recalled that a tunnel had been dug here in the



**Figure 5.8:** Tour at the excavation near Hannaton.

(Photo: Einat Ambar-Armon, courtesy of IAA.)



**Figure 5.9:** Community tour in the old City of Safed.

(Photo: Einat Ambar-Armon, courtesy of IAA)

course of the Jewish–Arab conflict when the State of Israel was founded. The discovery of the tunnel a few days later caused great excitement. The public interest and pressure, and the media coverage (see Savir 2020), led the municipality to halt the works, with the aim of making the tunnel accessible to visitors and tourists.

**A pottery kiln in Moshav Zippori, near Nazareth.** Some small sites that do not receive media coverage are nonetheless of local interest. In September 2018, an ancient pottery kiln was exposed in a small excavation carried out in a plot designated for a nursery in Moshav Zippori. A few dozen people from the moshav visited on the open day and took a great interest in the kiln, which is significant for archaeological research. The nursery children also visited the dig and hung pictures of their visit in the new building, thus connecting the local community with their cultural heritage.

There are dozens of examples of community participation in salvage excavations, in ways adapted to the nature of the dig and the local community. It has become clear that involving the community in excavations and archaeological events, as well as providing online media coverage of new discoveries, contributes significantly to the IAA's efforts to protect Israel's antiquities and cultural heritage.

## Educational Excavations

Apart from the salvage excavations, the IAA initiates educational excavation projects of various types in different regions. Nursery children, school pupils, students, pre-army programmes, soldiers, older people and the general public can all take part in the digs, finding a suitable local project. Participants come from various backgrounds and religions, including Jews, Christians, Muslims, Bedouins, Druze, and Circassians, and the activities are adapted to the different populations. The educational initiatives provide an acquaintance with the world of archaeology and history, and add new knowledge related specifically to the finds retrieved in the excavations. Participation in the educational projects leads to the absorption of values, the strengthening of local identity

and community affiliation, and increased responsibility for the environment. Moreover, these projects enable communities to expose important sites that will be opened to the general public in the future, enabling them to continue to adopt the sites. Consequently, public involvement is an effective way to create a deep affinity with the local cultural heritage. Three examples of educational excavation projects in the Northern Region are presented here.

**The Sanhedrin Trail.** The Sanhedrin Trail is a rich cultural heritage trail that crosses the Lower Galilee in the footsteps of the main stations of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish High Council that led the Jewish people into the Galilee after the Bar Kochba revolt in 135 BCE. The trail can be traversed on foot, divided into five or more days, or by bike or jeep (IAA Official Channel). The trail has been created and developed mostly by schoolchildren, young people, volunteers and educational institutions, with the participation of volunteers from the Galilean communities. The project includes the marking and upkeep of the trail, adopting archaeological sites, lectures and workshops for adults and communities, and various other activities (Figures 5.10–5.12). Over the last four years, a large-scale educational excavation at Horbat Usha, the site identified as the first seat of the Sanhedrin, has been carried out almost entirely with educational institutions and volunteers from the community. The excavation has uncovered impressive finds of the ancient village that complement the Jewish written sources about life in Roman Jewish Galilee.

**Huqoq Secrets.** Horbat Huqoq, the ancient site of the village of Huqoq, is situated on a low hill facing south-eastwards towards the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan Valley. Since 2011, a Byzantine-period synagogue with unique fascinating mosaics has been excavated on the summit by an expedition from the University of North Carolina, headed by Jody Magness (Magness et al. 2014).

Additional remains observed on the hill, including stone walls, industrial installations, stone quarries and burial caves, led to the opening of an educational excavation at the site in 2017, with the aim of connecting local communities with the site and its finds.



**Figure 5.10:** The volunteer group at Horbat Usha along the Sanhedrin Trail.  
(Photo: Einat Ambar-Armon, courtesy of IAA.)



**Figure 5.11:** Young people washing and sorting pottery.  
(Photo: Einat Ambar-Armon, courtesy of IAA.)



**Figure 5.12:** Prisoners participating in the excavation at Huqoq.

(Photo: Einat Ambar-Armon, courtesy of IAA.)

The excavation is carried out in several areas, including on the hill where the stratigraphy can be examined; on the lower slopes where unique rock-hewn agricultural-processing installations were exposed, possibly for processing mustard plant oil; near the spring; and in a fascinating underground hiding complex, where visitors are able to enter the underground spaces by crawling along a circular route.<sup>4</sup> Open dig days, attracting people from a large area, and various other activities take place at the site, including an escape room, outdoor training (ODT) games, tours and lectures for local audiences. The main participants are thousands of children and young people, but prisoners from the nearby Zalmou Prison have also taken part in the excavation as part of their rehabilitation programme. Soldiers from the Israeli army unit that specialises in digging tunnels have also participated in the excavation of the underground hideout complex (Figures 5.12 and 5.13).



**Figure 5.13:** Excavating an underground hideaway.  
(Photo: Einat Ambar-Armon, courtesy of IAA.)



**Figure 5.14:** Golan children digging in the Golan synagogues.  
(Photo: Einat Ambar-Armon, courtesy of IAA.)

**The Golan Synagogues.** To date, 30 ancient synagogues have been exposed in the Golan, a concentration unmatched elsewhere in Israel, reflecting the extent of the Roman to Byzantine Jewish settlement in the area, and the teaching of the culture of the Jewish community in the Golan in these periods. Synagogues have been exposed at En Keshatot, En Nashut, Deir Aziz, Majduliya and many other sites. The synagogues were built of huge ashlar basalt blocks and the buildings were adorned with impressively high-quality artistic decorations.

The IAA Golan Synagogue project began in 2015, with the aim of creating a bond between the Golan population and the ancient synagogues. The IAA initiative is carried out together with the Golan Regional Council Education Department and is led by IAA archaeologists living in the Golan. The young people that participate in the programme learn about archaeology, the periods represented at the sites, the Jewish settlement in the Golan and the ancient synagogues. In addition to learning in the classroom, there are activity days in museums and digging days at the sites. The programme has created a strong bond between the pupils and other participants and the ancient synagogues (Figure 5.14).

### **Discussion: Community Archaeology and the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic, which in Israel first spread in March 2020, dramatically affected lifestyles. We choose to add to this chapter a short section on the effect that the coronavirus had on the connection of the general public with archaeology, showing how the roots of community archaeology were strengthened. The COVID-19 pandemic presented a great challenge that required adaptation to the new situation, but the reaction to the pandemic differed in different places. For example, Alexandra and Sydney (2020) described their relatively quick reaction to the situation in Washington, and the replacement of classroom learning with virtual programmes.

In Israel, during the pandemic, some existing educational activities continued to take place under the changing restrictions of the Ministry of Health, and some new activities were initiated. While much of the country went into lockdown, the IAA was defined as an essential body and continued to work, specifically due to its affiliation with development and construction work. The IAA invited people from the vicinity to take part in local salvage excavations and thus helped people, such as tour guides, who had been furloughed from their regular jobs. The number of volunteers also increased significantly, and the pre-army programmes continued. All of the activities were carried out with masks and according to the Ministry of Health's distancing restrictions. The many unemployed and the difficult economic situation led us to reconsider and to contribute towards strengthening the connection of the community with archaeology. We provided a series of lectures on Zoom and virtual tours for thousands of people, who could thus 'visit' distant hidden sites around the country and keep in contact with the IAA activities.

## Conclusions

While the IAA educational initiative is not a new idea, the former IAA director general Israel Hasson renewed the concept in 2015 and made it a central feature in the IAA vision. Today, after seven years of educational activity and a wealth of initiatives, it can be said that the concept underlying the educational activity of the IAA is that archaeology belongs to the entire community and not only to archaeologists. It is not sufficient to uncover archaeological sites and to carry out conservation work. Without the interest of the community, sites will be damaged, covered over by dirt and vegetation, and even destroyed. The interest, excitement and involvement of the community and the general public must be an integral part of the IAA vision, so that archaeological sites will be preserved for future generations – the main aim of the IAA. The hard work at digs, and the important finds retrieved, enhance the values of physical labour, cooperation, local community iden-

tity, sense of belonging, acceptance of different people, enhanced responsibility and cooperation.

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## Notes

- 1 After this chapter was completed in 2021, Eli Eskosido was appointed as the new IAA general director. The educational and community activity continues and is now expanding to other fields in education, including a strengthening of the IAA's relationships with regional councils and cities, which has led to more visibility and an intensification of the processes. An examination of the consequences of these changes lies beyond the scope of this chapter.
- 2 This refers to those who come from treatment and support frameworks and services, as well as those who are at risk and/or in danger due to, e.g., having dropped out of school.
- 3 The excavations are geared to exposing finds and to research and publish the archaeological and historical understandings gleaned from them. Since many of the sites are subsequently destroyed, the aim is to save the ancient finds and the data, hence the term 'salvage'.
- 4 The complex is part of a broad phenomenon that is known in Judaea and in the Galilee, whereby underground spaces were hewn in the bedrock below Jewish settlements, as part of a defensive system to protect the local population against the Roman army in the first and second centuries CE. More than 400 hiding complexes of different dimensions are known, some for families, others for communities, some originally water systems and ritual purification baths (*miqveh*) that were cancelled when the spaces were converted into hiding complexes (see Shvitiel and Osband 2019).

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