

Remembering Rabbi Kret

■ This past Yom Kippur night in Baltimore, I walked home from shul with my son Avi, who was visiting from New York to assist me with Yamim Noraim *davening* at the shul I have served for more than fifty years.

As we walked, he asked me where I had first learned the *nusach* for *yom tov davening*, and I told him that it was from someone named Rabbi Yaakov Kret.

During World War II, as part of the Novardok Yeshiva, I was sent to Siberia, along with *chaverim* and Rabbi Yehudah Leib Nekritz. After the war, the yeshiva was re-established in Salzhelm, Germany. It was there that Rabbi Kret led the *davening* on *yom tov*, and it was from him that I learned the *nusach* I use for the Avodah of Yom Kippur.

As a matter of fact, I told my son, it was Rabbi Kret who “made my *shidduch*” with my first wife, Avi’s late mother. I remarked how I had not kept up with Rabbi Kret and probably had not said his name aloud for sixty years.

Days later, Avi called me from New York, having just opened a copy of *Jewish Action* (which he had had in his briefcase, but had not looked at) and seen the wonderful tribute to Rabbi Kret by Chava Willig Levy (fall 2007)! The *hashgachah* of his name having come up as the article waited to be read by my son brought a piece of the past into the present for me.

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An Author Speaks

■ It was a very pleasant surprise to discover a review of my book *The Moon’s Lost Light* in the fall 2007 issue of *Jewish Action*. In particular, I wish to thank Rabbi Mayer Twersky for having shown an unusual *ayin tovah* in his review.

Although he himself, has written on the subject of women and Judaism, he transcended human nature by praising someone else’s work on the same subject.

As for the “handful of critical points,” my response is far too long for a letter to the editor. There is, however, an issue not dealt with in the review that I find necessary to mention.

The review states that I see today’s feminine equality as having its source in Jeremiah’s prophecy of *nekeivah tiseveiv gever*. This is definitely true, but *The Moon’s Lost Light* also explains that much of the redemptive powers, including *nekeivah tiseveiv gever*, fell to negative forces. This means that much of what we see now is an impure imitation of the real thing. In other words, my book is in no way suggesting that we give a stamp of approval to the often perverted demands of today’s feminist movement.

Rabbi Twersky never implied otherwise, and he stated explicitly that there are important points in the book that are not treated in his review. Nevertheless, one who did not read the book could get the wrong impression, so I thought it important to mention this point.

Devorah Heshel

The Debate Continues: Where is King David’s Tomb?

■ In the winter 2007 issue of *Jewish Action*, in a letter to the editor, Rabbi Dr. Ari Zivotofsky takes issue with my article concerning the location of the Tomb of David. In the interest of our mutual concern for truth, I must set the record straight.

In the summer 2007 issue, we both presented our points of view as to where we believe King David was buried. Ancient Jerusalem consisted of two hills: the Eastern Hill and the Western Hill. Dr. Zivotofsky believes that King David was

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buried on the Eastern Hill, the area south of the Temple Mount, and I am convinced that King David was buried on the Western Hill, the traditional site of King David's Tomb on Mount Zion.

Near the beginning of his letter, Dr. Zivotofsky states "...As I [Zivotofsky] showed previously, a verse in the Book of Nechemiah and a *Tosefta* place it [the Tomb of David] near the Shiloah and next to the Kidron Valley" (implying that his "Eastern Hill theory" is correct).

I read and reread the quoted source in Nechemiah (3:15-16), and I cannot fathom any clue from it at all as to which hill contains the remains of King David. Concerning the *Tosefta* he quoted, which reads "...a tunnel led from the Tomb of David into the Kidron Valley," Dr. Zivotofsky argues that since the Kidron Valley is east of the Eastern Hill (nowhere near my Western Hill), King David must have been interred on the Eastern Hill. However, as I pointed out in my article, the text of the *Tosefta* is highly questionable. The same *Tosefta* quoted in *Mesechet Semachot* (near the very end) reads "the tunnel of the Tomb of Hulda the Prophetess" instead of the tunnel of the Tomb of David. Moreover, the commentary to the *Talmud Yerushalmi*, P'nei Moshe (*Nazir* 9:3), states clearly that the tunnel was from the Tomb of Hulda and not the Tomb of David. Dr. Zivotofsky has not offered any Biblical or rabbinic evidence for changing the millennia-long tradition that King David was buried on Mount Zion.

Dr. Zivotofsky mistakenly writes that "any 'tradition' that places the tomb [of David] on Mount Zion is not of Jewish but is rather of Christian origin." Wrong. Josephus Flavius, who lived in Jerusalem and served as a high priest in the Second Temple, places the City of David and the Fortress of David (and hence the Tomb of David) on the Western Hill. Josephus was Jewish.

Dr. Zivotofsky continues, "In his final footnote, Rabbi Reznick cites archaeologist Meir Ben Dov to support his arguments, but he quotes the source out of context." He then goes on to state that Ben Dov supports the Eastern Hill

location and not the Western Hill location. Wrong again. I did not use Ben Dov's statement as support for my arguments—had I done so, I would not have relegated it to a footnote. I was merely pointing out that Ben Dov's statement—"One should not reject out of hand the location of the graves [of the Davidic monarchy] in the Upper City [Western Hill]"—shows that the location of King David's Tomb is not as open and shut as previously thought by the archaeological community. Ben Dov also stated that "a number of scholars" have reverted to the old theory that King David was buried on Mount Zion. If the location is disputed by scholars, how can Dr. Zivotofsky be so certain of his position?

Dr. Zivotofsky finds fault with my rejecting some of the conclusions of the archaeological community while accepting some of its other conclusions. I do not follow his logic. Because I disagree with Dr. Zivotofsky on this issue, does it therefore follow that I must disagree with him on all issues? It is perfectly reasonable in the academic community to accept some conclusions of a scholar, while rejecting others.

Disappointingly, Dr. Zivotofsky fails to address the significant points of my article. The Prophet Isaiah was critical of Chezekiah for rebuilding the wall of the City of David, in the process causing residents to relocate. That wall has been found! Its identification is beyond question. (Even the Biblical minimalist, Dame Kathleen Kenyon, agreed with its identification.) That wall, the wall of the City of David, is on "my" Western Hill and not on the Eastern Hill.

In our original articles, Dr. Zivotofsky and I disagreed about the location of the water source called Gihon. I cited the verse in Chronicles 2 (32:30), which says that the Gihon was west of the City of David. I maintained that the Gihon was a pool located to the west of "my" City of David, situated on the Western Hill. The verse supports my view. Dr. Zivotofsky claimed that an underground stream running along the eastern slope of the Eastern Hill is the Gihon, illustrated by a map that accompanied his



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article. “His” Gihon is not west of “his” City of David, but rather east of it. Either the author of Chronicles is wrong or his map is wrong.

Dr. Zivotofsky also claims, “Rabbi Reznick is against moving mountains but seems to have no problem relocating water sources, in both time and place.” On the contrary, every map, without exception—beginning with the thirteenth century Psalter Fragment—that includes the Tomb of David, the City of David or the Gihon places them on the Western Hill. (Readers can search the archives of medieval maps of Jerusalem at <http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/maps/jer/html/date.html> and it will be evident that I have not moved the Gihon, but rather it is some nineteenth- and twentieth-century revisionists who have relocated the stream.)

Regarding the question as to when the Sultan’s Pool (my “Lower Gihon”) was built, Dr. Zivotofsky believes that it was constructed during the late Second Temple (Roman) era. I do not wish to take up space or the reader’s time here, but suffice it

to say that Sir Charles Wilson, the godfather of Jerusalem archaeology, wrote that he was certain, as I am, that the Sultan’s Pool was already in use during the era of Kings David and Solomon.

Was the Jerusalem of King Solomon a tiny ten-acre estate located on the Eastern Hill, or did the Jerusalem of the United Monarchy span both the Eastern and Western Hills, encompassing more than 100 acres? That is the question.

Rabbi Leibel Reznick
Monsey, New York

In his series of letters regarding the location of King David’s Tomb, Rabbi Leibel Reznick has a noble motive that I actively support: to perpetuate and defend *mesoret Yisrael*, Jewish traditions. But the “tradition” he is defending is neither traditional nor Jewish.

There are actually two issues being discussed here, and it is important to disentangle them. One is the location of King David’s Tomb. The second is whether in King David’s time the City of David included both the Eastern Hill (the modern Ir David) and the Western Hill (modern Mount Zion) or just the lower Eastern Hill. A corollary issue is whether the water source and pool known today as the Shiloah and Gihon, respectively, are correctly identified.

The topic that I originally wrote about in *Jewish Action’s* summer 2007 issue was the location of King David’s Tomb. I repeat my claim that the tradition that places it on Mount Zion begins with ninth-century Christian sources. Rabbi Reznick emphatically writes that I am mistaken, yet brings no contrary proof. His citation from Josephus is irrelevant because while it places the Western Hill within the City of David, it makes no mention of the location of King David’s Tomb. Although the location of the tomb was known to Josephus, nowhere in his writings does he specify it, and he thus cannot be used as a source.

I prefer to rely on traditional sources when looking for King David’s burial site. Nechemiah 3:15-16 clearly states that King David was buried near the Shiloah Pool. According to traditional sources (as

shown in my previous letter), the pool is at the southern tip of the City of David, which places the tomb on the Eastern Hill. These verses are so explicit that I cannot fathom what Rabbi Reznick means when he states that “I read and reread the quoted source in Nechemiah, and I cannot fathom any clue from it at all.”

The other traditional source, the *Tosefta* in *Bava Batra*, is complicated (see *Tosefta Kephshutah* for many sources about it). Chasdei David (on 1:7) even cites a source that argues, based on the *Tosefta*, that King David was buried outside the city walls! But according to the traditional reading and understanding of the text, the *Tosefta* places the tombs of both King David and Hulda the Prophetess in reasonable proximity to the Kidron Valley, which all agree is just east of the Eastern Hill. And I am wary of tampering with the traditional reading.

Having stated all of this, I will gladly be the first to admit that I do not definitively know the location of King David’s Tomb and, furthermore, that there is no way to conclusively identify it. It may be at the southwest corner of Robinson’s Arch, as some modern archaeologists claim, or it may even be somewhere on Mount Zion. But I find the latter highly unlikely considering that there is neither supporting evidence nor tradition to corroborate it, unlike the location suggested by Raymond Weill, which is the southern end of the City of David.

The second issue of contention concerns the boundaries of the City of David at the time of Kings David and Solomon. Clearly, the site was originally settled more than 4,000 years ago on the Eastern Hill near the only natural water source in the area. There is also no question that by the middle of the First Temple period (eighth century BCE), Jerusalem extended over both the Eastern and Western Hills. It is thus not surprising that Isaiah (who lived at that time) would describe a wall in the current Jewish Quarter as being a wall of the City of David (i.e., Jerusalem). It is comparable to a writer in 2008 describing Har Homa as being in Jerusalem, while to a nineteenth-century visitor that very land would be uninhabited territory. The only



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question is, when did the city expand westward? The archaeological wall that Rabbi Reznick is fixated on is of no significance in determining the city limits in King David's time. When Jeremiah wrote in the Book of Kings that King David was buried in the City of David, he may have been referring to the expanded city of his time, but I am more inclined to believe the more logical assumption—that he meant the city as it existed in King David's time, which modern scholarship confines to the Eastern Hill.

In answering the question of the city's limits, I must again plead ignorance. There is no way to identify King David's city beyond a doubt. The best we can do is use the available archaeological evidence and techniques combined with our written sources. (Unfortunately, unbroken Jewish traditions *in situ* are virtually non-existent due to the near-*Judenrein* nature of the city after the Bar Kochba revolt and again after the Crusader conquest.) And the evidence today points to a relatively small city centered on the Eastern Hill. That conclusion, though accurate today, may someday change, but we do not have access to future scholarship.

To cite a conclusion from 140 years ago, as Rabbi Reznick does, simply because it was written by a leading researcher of the time, is disingenuous. No one should cite outdated work. No modern archaeologist dates the Sultan's Pool to

the tenth century BCE, and clinging to such a position can only be explained by placing the desired conclusion before the existing evidence.

Rabbi Reznick admonishes me for ignoring the "significant points" in his article, leaving me no choice but to address the verse in Chronicles that he cites in his letter, which completely undermines his theory. Rabbi Reznick writes that the verse (2 Chronicles 32:30) states that the Gihon was west of the City of David and that "either the author of Chronicles is wrong or his [my] map is wrong." But all translations render the verse as "Chezekiah diverted the Gihon 'ma'arava' [westward], to the City of David." The entire verse reads as follows: "He, Chezekiah, stopped up the upper source of the waters of Gihon, diverting them underground westward, to the City of David. Chezekiah was successful in all his endeavors." The verse states that Chezekiah diverted the waters westward into the city, implying that the Gihon was to the east of the city, as all maps—other than Rabbi Reznick's—show. Rabbi Reznick's translation of the verse in his original article ("Chezekiah ...diverted it straight down to the west side of the City of David") is an error which has led him to reject the traditional site of the Gihon in order to defend the Christian tradition regarding the location of King David's Tomb.

The above leads me to conclude the following:

Neither Josephus nor anyone else before the early medieval period placed King David's Tomb on Mount Zion.

The Sultan's Pool was put into use approximately 1,000 years after King David reigned.

The Book of Nechemiah describes King David's Tomb as being near the Shiloah.

The Book of Chronicles 2 places the Gihon east of the City of David.

Neither the boundaries of King David's capital nor his burial site can be identified with certainty. Current evidence points to King David's Tomb not being on Mount Zion and likely being in the City of David, and to the Davidic capital as being on the Eastern Hill. Alternate theories are always welcome in a scholarly discourse, but one is not entitled to skew the facts in order to "prove" a preconceived belief.

None of this should be construed as denigrating a site at which Jews have prayed for centuries. I firmly believe that Mount Zion has religious significance to the Jewish people and should remain in Israeli control as a site of prayer and pilgrimage.

Rabbi Dr. Ari Zivotofsky
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