

THE CITY AND TOMB OF DAVID ON ACRA,
COMMONLY CALLED OPHEL.

“VERIFY your references,” said a great writer, especially, I would add, if you touch the Jerusalem controversy. Through neglect of this safe rule, in reference to the City of David, Captain Conder has fallen into a few errors, which in self-defence I must unmask.

(1) He claims the authority of Mr. Fergusson (*Quarterly Statement*, 1883, p. 194), in favour of Acra being west of the Temple, putting him into the same scale with Sir C. Warren. It is startling to find Mr. Fergusson (*cedere nescius*) thus in 1883 turned into a make-weight (against me) in favour of the *western* site, when in 1863 he wrote (*Biblical Dictionary, Jerusalem*) “in favour of the assumption that the hill Acra and the citadel Acra were situated on the *northern* side of the Temple.” If these words can be forced into helping Captain Conder’s theory, then one is reminded of Canon Williams’ exclamation: “Why, at this rate, any passage in any book will be sufficient in itself to settle the whole controversy!”

(2) Captain Conder rightly adheres to the opinion that Uzziah was buried on Ophel, but 2 Kings xv, 7 (as already pointed out), distinctly states of Azariah (*i.e.*, Uzziah) that “they buried him with his fathers, in the City of David.” Therefore the City of David, in whole or part, was on Ophel. What could be clearer? Captain Conder, however, does not admit this conclusion. He thinks (*Quarterly Statement*, 1884, p. 26), “that every passage in the Bible is satisfied, without its being necessary to place the City of David (on Ophel), in a practically impossible position.” Now he is an unsparing opponent of “final denial of some or other statements of the ancient accounts,” when Josephus is treated as untrustworthy. It is the more surprising, then, that overlooking, as it were, 2 Kings xv, a still more ancient account, he should put himself in one scale with the oldest record in the other, and then describe Ophel as an “impossible position.” Others will rather conclude that his theory is impossible.

(3) “*Sepulchres within Jerusalem transferred outside the walls.*” (*Quarterly Statement*, 1877, p. 134; also “*Handbook*,” p. 341.) The idea of a procession of Jews bearing in solemn pomp a rock-cut sepulchre out of the Holy City suggested difficulties. Accordingly a friend or two verified for me Captain Conder’s reference to the Tosiphta (Baba Bathra, chapter I), on which he builds his theory that the Tomb of David is probably to be identified with the Tomb of Nicodemus (so called), since the latter is “the only undoubted Jewish tomb in Jerusalem.”

It is quite time to verify this reference when Captain Conder can state that his theory “has been favourably received by many persons well acquainted with the history of Jerusalem,” a success which I have to own has not yet crowned any theory of mine. I reflect, however, that commonly the worse the error, the more it is believed.

Now as Captain Conder refers us to the Tosiphta, I presume he himself

is ready to stand by what it really says. Professor Theodores kindly gives me the following *literal translation of the whole passage*, which I beg to present as our contribution to the "Pilgrims' Text Society":—

"All graves are cleared except the grave of the king, and the grave of the prophet. Rabbi Akiba says: Even the grave of the king, and the grave of the prophet are cleared. Then people said to him: Were not the grave of the house of David, and the grave of Huldah the prophetess in Jerusalem, and never did a human being touch them. He said unto them: Hence it is shown that there was a passage for them by which the impurity was carried off to the brook Kidron."

Here first of all, as I half suspected (1883, 151) the Tosiphta says not a word about transferring (*i.e.*, transporting) sepulchres, but merely about bringing bones, &c., out of graves, as foretold in Jeremiah viii, 1.

The word פנה which Lightfoot had rendered by *removere*, is used in Genesis xxiv, 31, where surely Laban does not transfer the house to oblige Eliezer, but only prepares or clears it out; and again in Leviticus xiv, 36, where the plague-stricken house would hardly be transported to the priest, but rather emptied before he came into it.

Thus the rock-cut tombs which the Tosiphta implies had existed within Jerusalem are no doubt still in existence. Indeed, part of Ophel is, I believe, simply honeycombed with them. Therefore, if only one old tomb within Jerusalem is known at present, it does not follow that it is David's tomb, any more than a fresh tomb discovered near Jerusalem on its northern side is necessarily the tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa.

Further, Captain Conder finds in the tomb of Nicodemus ("Handbook," p. 342) a peculiarity answering, he thinks, to the description which Josephus gives of David's tomb. I do not myself detect the points of agreement; this, however, is of no moment, inasmuch as, if the tomb adopted by Mr. Conder be really David's, the Tosiphta supplies the missing link with a vengeance, in a *peculiarity three-quarters of a mile long*, for a passage from the tomb of Nicodemus to the Kidron could hardly be shorter.

Let us hope the Turks will permit some one to search for this passage, although I do not think it will ever be found. Yet what a triumph for Captain Conder if it could be traced to Tophet!

If he now rejects the Tosiphta, his theory at once falls to the ground, having no foundation left. As to the trustworthiness of the Tosiphta I need not give an opinion, as I rely for the true site of the City of David not on R. Akiba, but on Nehemiah. I will only point out that a position on the eastern hill is in the closest harmony with the tradition current among the Jews in the second century, while Dio Cassius speaks of the sepulchre of Solomon as collapsing in the reign of Adrian. Thrupp notes that the Paschal Chronicle relates that the sepulchres of David were entered from Gibeon twenty furlongs from the city. Can Gibeon be a corruption of Gihon?

After this successful sally on unverified references I invite the critics forthwith to make fresh approaches against Zion, the city of the *Gibborim* (Prov. xxi, 22) before the garrison completely demolishes the besiegers

lines, beginning with Colonel Warren's "Parallel" on his invisible Zion ("The Temple or the Tomb," p. 22).

If, however, my opponents, especially the R.E's, will accept the inevitable and join me, so much the better, as their professional skill would be most valuable in searching for the entrance to the Tomb of David on Ophel (so called).

Is it not to such work that the Committee are beckoned in the oracular couplet of an anonymous pilgrim ?

"Est operæ pretium tumuli lustrare cavernas ;
Regia monstrabit putre sepulcra lutum."

Zion Sought and Found, vol. i, p. 7.

This has been freely rendered—

'Tis worth your while 'mid Ophel's caves to pry ;
'Here David sleeps,' his mouldering clay will cry.

NOTE ON JOSEPHUS AND THE LXX.

JOSEPHUS may have derived from the LXX his mistaken notion that Zion and the City of David, which are used as equivalent terms in the historical passages of the Bible, only meant just the same thing as Jerusalem.

This seems probable from the following :—

- (1) In 1 Kings viii, 1, the LXX substitute *Zion* for *Jerusalem*.
- (2) In 2 Chron. xxviii, 27, "In the city in Jerusalem" (Hebrew), which means "the City of David at Jerusalem," becomes in the LXX *ἐν πόλει Δαυίδ*.
- (3) 2 Chron. xxv, 28, "In the city in Judah" (Hebrew) becomes in the LXX *ἐν πόλει Δαυίδ*. Possibly this was the true reading.
- (4) In 1 Kings ix, 15, a confused reading may possibly give *τὸν φραγμὸν τῆς πόλεως Δαυίδ* as equivalent to the wall of Jerusalem.

Thus in saying that David called Jerusalem the City of David Josephus is totally wrong ; but in saying that king after king was buried in Jerusalem, he is merely sacrificing the precision of the original Hebrew, which names the exact part of Jerusalem in which the royal sepulchres were situated, *i.e.*, in the City of David, or Zion (*Quarterly Statement*, 1883, p. 154).

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